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Learn to Listen and Apply

Closing session, Scholarship Training Program for India

24 April 2011, Chennai, India



Dear brothers and sisters,

I am happy to be here, especially to thank all of you for participating, and sister Dolly and brother Alberto for taking on the onerous duty of organising these training programmes almost four, five times a year

Volunteer Corner

New!

What is the Volunteer Committee?

Greg Karch

The purpose of the Volunteer Committee during a gathering is to place willing abhyasis in jobs where they are needed. Service and volunteering are central to the experience of our gatherings, which depend on abhyasis helping with a variety of tasks. Some- times abhyasis choose tasks in advance while at other times they jump in spontaneously, recognizing an immediate need. In fact, the experience of being at an ashram is what it is because abhyasis volunteer time, as those who have done so have learned.

The Volunteer Committee serving our recent Heart's United seminar found a spirit of service pervading there. The committee members sought to fill a host of tasks with volunteers who were willing to show up and help. Beyond this the committee is striving to identify ways to enrich and

I have heard most of the talks on the CC [closed circuit] TV in my office because I can't sit for long here, and I don't want to disturb you. In many ways my presence disturbs, because it makes timid people worry, guilty people angry, frustrated people suspicious, and in so many ways the reactions are different. I once read a Chinese proverb which speaks of the 'presence of the absence'. It was very revealing – how you must be absent physically, but present spiritually. When you are present physically, "Well, he is there. So what?" But if you are absent and your spiritual presence is there, as many people say that they always feel the presence of Babuji Maharaj (I don't know in what way they feel it, but they do say so), then it is something very extraordinary, very potent with possibilities for us, because in our hearts perhaps there is the knowledge that the physical presence is only a physical presence. As Babuji used to say, "Cows are there, crows are there, dogs are there. They are all physically present. What is so wonderful about a human being present?"

The presence of the human being must signify at least to himself or herself that I am here for a purpose. My purpose is not merely to be here. I have to be here with all my faculties intact within me. I must not be here thinking of home, or of so many other things, and saying, "Well, I have been here nine days. What for? I have heard talks. What for?" Am I going to act upon what I have heard? Is it just going in one ear and out the other? Or, in some mysterious way – if my presence is an integrated presence of my body, mind and soul – it should be stored here and released as and when necessary.

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/literature/online/speeches/rev.master-speech-on-24-april-2011>

improve the quality of volunteer service at our future gatherings.

To this end we are beginning a regular feature in "Echoes of North America". As you have worked in the kitchen, meal serving lines, bathroom cleaning, setting up the meditation tent, bussing dishes, supplying water, and a host of other tasks, are there experiences you would like to share? Are there suggestions you would like to make that would improve tasks at gatherings? Maybe you have ideas that would improve how the gathering works. You may have reflections about what serving in a volunteer capacity has meant to you. You might simply have an amusing story to tell.

Please submit your stories, reflections and recommendations to the editors of "Echoes of North America" for this regular feature. Those serving on the Volunteer Committee will review your submissions to keep a focus on the volunteer function between gatherings. We look forward to your feedback as we bring greater focus to this important area of our spiritual journey—service and volunteering.





See the Mission Anew

Janmarie Connors – Indianapolis, IN

May 5-14 Seminar, Param Dham Ashram, Bangalore

For ten days in May Revered Master brought together 25 abhyasis for a conference conducted by Dr. Ichak Adizes, an abhyasi who is also a world-renowned change management professional. During this event a profound transformation occurred for me personally and for us as a group.

Doctor Adizes tenaciously worked each day, essentially holding up a mirror and requiring that we thoroughly examine the framework by which we carry out our master's sacred work, a framework composed of every abhyasi who volunteers to serve. From my perspective, one of the greatest advances made during our time together was the thorough internalization of the mission of our Mission and the place it must occupy in our hearts as we formulate and carry out work.

In short, our organization exists to create and maintain an environment where spiritual transformation is available for those who seek it. A close look at this statement reveals the sole purpose or credo for anyone who serves. And it broadens the context, excluding no one, because it is the internal environment of each abhyasi which collectively forms the very ground from which spiritual transformation emerges.

Master made several important clarifications about our mission and approach. He said, "We're not missionaries, we are responding to the seekers" and "There is no social service, there is only duty... we must be willing to help." Additionally he said, "Everything we do is to bring abhyasis to spirituality" and "inner quality attracts."

These clarifications simplify what we tend to complicate. With Master's steady guidance, Dr. Adizes helped us examine the myriad ways in which we fail to remember whom, why, and how we serve. For example, if you thought your value to the organization and consequently to Master was because of your expertise as a web designer, IT professional, financial wiz, organization head, or trainer extraordinaire, you were missing something. Best to wear any role like a loose garment, easily shed to match the ever-changing need of the moment. And if you looked at the organization structure as a top down hierarchy for accomplishing SRCM work, you had to look again.

The process we used to examine the various roles and structure needed to carry out Mission work was not based on who does the work or even what work is to be done. Rather, we learned to first and always answer the question "why?" Why is the work being done? The answer never varies. The purpose of all Mission work is to create and maintain an environment where spiritual transformation is available for those who seek it. In this context, the organization hierarchy is actually inverted, as each function exists for the purpose of serving, heart-to-heart, fellow abhyasis with whom we interact. So, as Dr. Adizes noted, abhyasis populate the top of the chart (in fact, the entire chart) with Master at the base, selflessly serving all abhyasis without discrimination. At one point, Master commented that a true hierarchy has no top or bottom.

The Mission and our master also inform us that how we carry out Mission work matters. All Mission work must be grounded in mutual trust and respect. Master chose the phrase, "One for all and all for one", as a lively and upbeat way to deliver a sobering message. "We are all inextricably bound to one another," and "we need each other" to accomplish our soul's

purpose for which we have incarnated. Without mutual trust and respect, the atmosphere itself becomes a barrier to spiritual work. Going forward, possibly the single greatest gift we can give to our master, to each other, and to our Selves is to internalize the mission and the spirit of service in such a way that we create and maintain the optimal environment where spiritual transformation is available for those who seek it.



Meeting with Our Master and Dr. Adizes

John Barlow – Boston, MA

Recently I attended a workshop led by Dr. Adizes, founder of the Adizes Institute – an institute dedicated to developing a unifying theory and practice of change based on mutual trust and respect. Dr. Adizes was in Satkhol with Master during Basant and had presented some of his ideas there, which led to the 10-day seminar in Bangalore at the Param Dham Ashram. The two words that can best sum up my experience there were 'heartfelt' and 'transformational'.

The first three days were to have been a pre-seminar refresher course to familiarize us with the Adizes methodology, taught by brother Sunil, who works for and is trained in the Adizes organization and methodology. On day two Dr. Adizes arrived and joined the group. Thus began the beginning of thinking in a new way, learning new ideas and then seeing if and how they could be applied within the Mission.

During the ten days all the participants changed a great deal – our thinking changed, our understanding changed, and the outcome of this workshop reflects that change. We accepted that the language that has been used in describing roles within the Mission hasn't really reflected what was intended for those roles. Every role is first and foremost a chance to serve, and that should be reflected in the name. For instance, what we currently call a 'Regional Coordinator' may be better reflected in the name 'Regional Serving Prefect'. What we call 'Outreach' may be more precisely called 'Heart Speaks', and so forth. Therefore going forward, all titles will emphasize the serving nature of our Mission and those that volunteer within it.

There were two significant possibilities that we hoped would be addressed during our meeting. One was to develop a structure that would reduce our master's workload. The second, as a Mission and with Dr. Adizes' help, was to create an organizational structure that would support significant growth while fostering agreement on ways of being together, solving problems, and approaching decision making; all the while supporting the essential serving nature of the Mission.

While transformational change is not easy, we have now moved on to implementing the changes, based on mutual trust and respect, which our Master supports in full, knowing well that to be successful will require the efforts of us all.





Touring the US, April 2011

Santosh Sreenivasan

By our master's grace and benevolence, I had the priceless opportunity to spend five weeks visiting various centers in the US and Canada, being more immersed in his remembrance than I can recall in the past twenty years of being an abhyasi! As our group traveled around the continent, the daily routine was packed with sittings, satsanghs and very meaningful time spent with dear brothers and sisters – an ideal environment for intense focus on the spiritual life. It is nearly impossible to crystallize into discrete ideas what was imbibed so deeply. Perhaps it will take a lifetime for me to fully digest what he made possible during this journey. What is evident however, is the enormous wealth of spiritual experience that awaits each of us if we truly turn our attention towards the goal – without allowing ourselves to be restrained in the clutches of our mundane lives.

We experienced the warmth and love of a brotherhood united by the same higher purpose. We felt the truth of his presence being invoked whenever abhyasis came together in remembrance. We were often moved beyond words by the profound depth of feeling while meditating together. And one could only marvel at the fact that we barely scratched the surface of what our dear and revered Master has been doing for decades, and what he continues to do every day with such calm, silent, seemingly effortless dedication. Despite being on the move every day, and hopping between countless cities, homes, beds and bathrooms, I was amazed to notice an abundance of energy and lightness within myself. I am normally fatigued by far less activity when I travel for my

professional work, or when I'm in my normal routine at home. Perhaps here is a secret providing insight into how and why Master keeps pushing himself at a pace that none of us can keep up with for long!

Another revealing truth lies in Master's instruction to me to go 'with a clean slate' and not allow myself to think that I already know about life in the US, despite having lived there earlier! With this I believe he turned a switch within me, because every part of the trip was truly unique! This ability to experience things anew, full of wonder and as they are in the moment – free from mental projections and biases – is a precious gift that allows the spirit to soar. I realized that we approach everything in life – even as abhyasis – with so much expectation or bias that we are blind to the infinite possibility in each experience. It requires the master's effort to lift us out of our own situations so that we get a glimpse of life truly lived with the heart, in the moment.

The culmination of the trip at the Molena Ashram for Revered Babuji's birth anniversary celebrations was a fitting finale, where people, hearts, experiences and lives came together in an unforgettable oneness full of his loving presence. One cannot easily find words to express sufficient gratitude for such an experience as this trip has been. The hope and prayer is that each of us lives in a way such that Master's light is allowed to shine so brightly that it becomes all that is visible.



Molena Gathering

Hearts United – Growth Through Service

Heather Wrede

It was a gift to arrive at our Molena Ashram before the gathering began, finding brothers and sisters already creating the amazing transformation needed for the comfort of the 1200 who would soon follow. Although the amount of work necessary to prepare for the gathering was daunting, there was a strong sense as new arrivals joined in, that Master was watching over, making sure everything was in order. In those quiet days before most arrived, Master's presence was in everyone there and all around the grounds especially as we worked.

On Friday, the official start of the seminar, it was a joy to see how many abhyasis arrived to be part of this Hearts United celebration. Master's choice of theme felt perfect, and as the weekend unfolded, the profound depth of that choice became even clearer.

There is no way to know or even describe what takes place at the heart level. All we can do is to continue to cooperate with

him and to open ourselves more and more to be able to receive all that he wants to give. Although there were the usual bumps in the road due to cleaning, there was an expansion as though we had been filled with a love that extended beyond our physical bodies into eternity, uniting us with each other and every thing. This feeling reached a peak as Brother Santosh spoke after satsangh on Babuji's birthday.

Such a gathering also presents opportunity for service, when the heart is pulled to do so. A deep sense of joy and contentment comes from such participation, along with the chance to meet and get to know brothers and sisters who have been in the Mission for decades and especially to learn first-hand the details of how such a gathering is organized.

Sunday brought the bittersweet ritual of good-byes and the realization that this special time of being gathered in the cocoon of our Master's love without distraction from worldly obligations was coming to an end.

Again, the ashram was quiet. By Monday there was just a handful of local abhyasis cleaning up. It could have felt overwhelming to see the size of the job at hand, but by just





diving in to the work, we did not feel the work. We didn't think about much, in fact, as we went about the process with awareness of Master in our hearts instead. The extra time gave us a chance to digest all that had been given while remaining in the atmosphere of unity and love.

Those of us fortunate to have been there were given a tremendous gift. In quiet moments Master seems to remind us of the importance of nurturing this gift through constant focus and attention to our abhyas. We must tend it every day, keeping it close to our hearts so that one day we can become this love that will unite the world.



Hearts United near Molena **Pat Bolles, New London, CT**

We arrived for the Hearts United gathering on April 28th, one day after several tornadoes had damaged homes and businesses near Molena. We approached our motel unaware, assuming the cause of the slow traffic was rush hour or an accident. However, once there we found that every vacant room had been opened to families who had been displaced by tornado destruction the night before. The lobby TV showed local scenes of breathtaking devastation and we heard personal stories of those who encountered nature's fury. The next day TV news reported that supermarkets were allowing those who lost everything to come get whatever they needed, asking those not affected to donate what they could to defray the costs.

"Hearts United" took on new meaning as all around us people opened their hearts to their spiritual brothers and sisters in need. The local news and images took my breath away, but the immediate response to the needs of others left me with a warm feeling that all hearts were united in this event.



Rebecca Farley **Hurricane West VA Center**

I had the opportunity to go to India in August 2010 for the North American seminar where I met Master for the first time. It was life changing. The feeling of being part of a huge spiritual family pervaded the seminar. One of the speakers

said that when you are in Master's presence, your heart begins to beat in sync with his. That thought has stayed with me.

When I recently went to the North American seminar at the Molena Ashram, I met many of the abhyasis whom I had met in India. I experienced that feeling of being part of a spiritual family all over again. One could feel Master's presence everywhere. It was almost as if we might turn a corner and see him there at any moment. I thought about the beating of our hearts in sync with his. Hearts united. What a wonderful event!



Hearts United Through Friendship **Jaya Joseph, Detroit Center, MI**

The Hearts United gathering in Molena has been the best weekend of my life so far. I met many new people, experienced some wonderful satsanghs and discovered quite a bit about myself. Some of us had planned a teen program for the gathering during which we met all the kids our age at the ashram. Being a part of that fulfilled me in a way I can't even begin to describe.



Every spare moment at the ashram was spent with my friends, old and new, and we had the most amazing time doing nothing but talking with each other. Some of the teens had recently started meditation, so it felt wonderful to be able to go to satsangh with my friends, people whose presence I appreciated more than anything else in the world.

It's been a few weeks since the gathering, but I continue to keep in touch with the wonderful people I met there. I know that all of us can't wait till the next gathering.





The Journey Begins the Gathering

Jean-Pierre LeGrand, Montreal

I reached the border well past midnight. After the usual formalities the customs officer glanced down at my vehicle, softened up a little and said, "You say you have to be in New Jersey by 11 o'clock tomorrow morning... Think you'll make it?" I was a little nervous about the morning rush hour but what neither of us knew was that the bus I would be taking would be delayed until 3:30 p.m. because of a brake problem (someone said we were on Indian time). Yet we arrived in Molena right on time for the 9:00 a.m. satsangh on April 29.

The idea of chartering a bus is just beautiful: it's easier on gas (and emissions) and you can travel all night while sleeping! Also, the gathering starts as soon as you get aboard and it lasts until you get off on the way home. You get to meet new abhyasis, share insights, stories and anecdotes, like this one: Reportedly, Master was recently sitting outside his cottage in Manapakkam with 20 or so abhyasis and told them he would give a sitting to anyone who would recite the Ten Maxims. It turned out that this wonderful opportunity was lost. I can only imagine how he felt.



Owning the Mission

Raghav Adharapurapu, Saratoga Springs, NY

The April 30th sitting at our recent Hearts United gathering was exceptional. We all felt it. For me, the thought came that seeds of love had been sown in the heart making the heart particularly tender. This made it possible for a number of subtle epiphanies to transpire throughout the day.

The case at hand is volunteering for Mission work. Over the past 6 years of practice, I have always felt comfortable with the three M's and felt that I truly owned them: they are mine. However, as with anything else in Sahaj Marg, the subtler aspects are often more revealing than the obvious outward appearances. Recently when I was unable to put my heart into some simple Mission work, I was at loggerheads with myself, unable to figure out why/how I let this happen! The answer came to me in a flash after the 9 o'clock prayer during the April 30th gathering – I obviously didn't own the Mission.

I hit my head in disbelief and remembered the little story of an old and wise master who wanted to find a caretaker for his new ashram under construction. After asking volunteers what



New Road Sign, Molena

they were doing, the master anointed the disciple who enthusiastically claimed that he was building *his* ashram. I realized that night that ownership must spring from the inner conviction that the Mission is one's spiritual home as well as spiritual workplace. Within it you work for/on yourself in an environment in which all the hearts are united and beat for the common purpose. I am reminded of Master saying that work should be used to change oneself at the physical, mental, intellectual, ethical, moral and spiritual levels. I cannot find any nobler opportunity than exists in the Mission where all these levels are possible simultaneously.

Refining the Practice—One Step at a Time

Brian Jones

A few months ago the Cleveland Center took up Maxim 3: fix the goal. We worked on it all together for two months. This was a new approach for us, working on only one aspect of the practice at a time, refining it as best we could. One of the obstacles on the path, as Babuji explained, is that we try too many things at one time. By simplifying the information and working together as a center we experienced wonderful results and noticed a major shift in the morning meditation practice.

Now we are taking up cleaning. Both fixing the goal and cleaning require a spirit of determination, which strengthens the will, building a strong base for the entire practice. For our half-day gatherings, everyone brings a reading that supports the topic. We then review what Master has said about cleaning and then practice what we have learned. Each Sunday there is a brief reminder about cleaning. Four weeks later we have a group review of our progress and then further refine our individual practice. One month later we share personal observations about how the cleaning process has become more effective.

Having the support and feedback of all the sisters and brothers is creating a positive center-wide focus and momentum.





SPURS

Master's Presence at SPURS Leesha Govender, West Virginia

Although I have been practicing Sahaj Marg since 2007, circumstances have prevented me from meeting Master in person. Nevertheless, my longing to be in his presence motivated me to visit SPURS Retreat Center. From the time I made my plans Master began preparing me for being there. Upon arriving at SPURS I felt as if Master greeted me first, before Brother Tom came to welcome me. I immediately felt happy there, leaving my world behind automatically. Master's presence was intense; his transmission was always around me. Every minute was a divine experience.

I was among five other sisters, yet I was alone with my master. It was wonderful to be able to sit amongst others and still enjoy being alone. Whenever I chose to meditate, I had a different experience. Although there is no schedule to follow, it is important to use all this time for Master: think about my personal changes, spiritual growth, accept my emotions and write my feelings, changes and experience in my diary. Looking deeply into myself and seeing changes in my character, I asked myself if my character is becoming that of a true abhyasi.

On my second day, I had tears of joy when suddenly a sister's hiccup behind me evoked laughter—Master knew I needed to express my joyfulness in laughter, not tears. Over the weekend my love and appreciation for Master grew. The importance of sadhana became clearer. Sadhana now has become my way of life and I look forward to doing it. I couldn't get enough of his divine grace. I know now that Master doesn't have to be there physically for me to have my thirst and hunger for spirituality satisfied.

I'm also thankful to brother Tom and sister Mary Lou Stoner for their time and amazing work in taking care of the retreat and for making sure that all the abhyasis are comfortable during their stay. I encourage all my brothers and sisters to experience a stay at SPURS. Go without expectations, leave your heart open and allow Master to take over. Whatever you find at SPURS you can take back home with you.



Seven Days' Egg Boiling at SPURS Judith Polston

I had a feeling of being cooked like an egg in boiling water – from the inside by my own inner cleaning process and from the outside by the elements – energy of the other retreatants, a feeling of imposed silence or the low whispering so difficult to hear. These elements were a pressure from the outside. The thin shell or layer of protection held me together like the shell of an egg while the cooking was being done.

Retreat and silence are obviously different for everyone. I had a thought that outer silence may or may not lead to inner silence. One type is a retreat requirement while being in silence is an inner condition. Silence was essential for me to go inside, observe what was taking place within and do the work required. This process led to more and improved diary writing.

Going back to my egg analysis, the pressure from within was burning up samskaras while the pressures on the outside, including the constant connection with Master, made for an amazing journey. I couldn't escape learning lessons or being aware of changes taking place.

So much happened at SPURS: deep cleaning, deep meditation, joyfulness, painful magnification of the mind to reveal what is needed. It can feel painful as if birthing a new being. I am grateful for this experience, which is continuing since I've returned home. In the end one emerges as a new being and is forever grateful for the most loving, most needed gift that our master has given us in SPURS.

UN Day

UN Day of the Family, Austin, TX

On 15 May 2011, the Austin Center observed the United Nation's International Day of Families at the Circle C Metropolitan Park. It was a beautiful Sunday morning with several families and children in the park where the atmosphere was apt for praying in the silence of the heart. The event started with an introduction to the Sahaj Marg universal prayer. This was followed by fifteen minutes of universal prayer for the benefit of families all over the world.



The prayer was followed by a group activity titled, "We Are a Rainbow", based on the theme Love and Compassion. All children and adults participated in the activity, which culminated in a discussion about how although we are dissimilar from each other physically yet we are, at heart, similar since we are all human beings. The idea is to love all. The children then presented a song titled, "We Can Build the World of Love", and the event concluded with an informal picnic.





UN Day of Families at the Sunderland Ashram Barbara Lockhart



Sahaj Marg centers worldwide celebrated the UN International Day of Families on Sunday, May 15th. The theme for this year's event was Confronting Family Poverty: not material poverty, but spiritual and moral poverty. Eleven abhyasis and friends at Sunderland Ashram gathered after Sunday satsangh for a family style breakfast. The table setting itself, with pretty tablecloths, flowers in vases, coffee, tea and homemade treats represented the concept of the universal family spending time together enjoying and caring about one another. While cozying around the table, we shared reading aloud Babuji's letter written in 1957 to the UN connecting the Sahaj Marg Mission to the United Nations Mission. We were moved by "River of Peace", a song written by one of our sisters. The words were written years ago but matched the essence of the day: "Some may say you are a poor man if you have no gold, I say you're rich, not by your money, but how much love your heart can hold." After we all helped clean up from breakfast, we watched a presentation emphasizing the qualities of a human being. We spent our last 15 minutes in silent prayer-meditation before dispersing for the day.

Report on the SRCM/UN-DPI Relationship By Joshua Pollock

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission's NGO (non-governmental organization) status with the UN DPI (United Nations Department of Public Information) was formally established in 2005, on the 60th anniversary of both institutions. The Mission's formal association with the UN DPI promotes humanity joining together to work for the good of all.

Revered Master has chosen specific UN commemorative days to be observed annually by centers of the Mission worldwide with great hope for the future of humanity. Emphasis is placed on the efficacy of prayer and the necessity of a spiritual basis for the transformation of this world into a loving place, devoid of selfishness and inhumanity. The Mission has a great, yet unobtrusive, role to play in this regard.

Most recently on May 15th, abhyasis took part in commemorating the UN International Day of Families. It was a collaborative effort between abhyasis from all corners of the world and with Master directly involved in the preparations.

The next UN commemorative day is International Youth Day, on August 12, 2011. Following is a complete list of UN Commemorative Days observed within the Mission:

May 15, 2011: UN International Day of Families
 August 12, 2011: UN International Youth Day,
 September 21, 2011: UN International Peace Day
 November 20, 2011: UN Universal Children's Day
 December 10, 2011: UN Human Rights Day
 Prior to each UN commemorative day, a team of abhyasis assembles and distributes an information packet to all centers for their use.

Gatherings

Winnipeg Gathering

Our small but vibrant and growing centre of Central Canada, Winnipeg had long awaited the weekend of our gathering, May 21-22. Saturday began with drizzle and a pleasant atmosphere for the deep and blessed satsanghs conducted at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. A reading and a viewing of beloved Babuji's video "Journey in Time (II)" followed the morning satsangh. An open house meeting was conducted for invited brothers and sisters interested in Sahaj Marg. Sister Kim provided details about our Master, Mission and method, following which we watched a DVD, "Questions and Answers by Beloved Master" (13th November 2009, Kharagpur). A short reading followed Sunday morning satsangh. Then we watched a video of questions and answers conducted recently in Fort Langley (B.C.) with brother Santosh Sreenivasan, which helped us have a better understanding of the basics of our practise. A sister completed her introductory sittings and our centre is happy with her addition. The divine presence of our beloved Master was felt throughout and even after in our hearts. Please visit us—we will be delighted to welcome all abhyasis for future programs at Winnipeg Centre!



Weekend Spiritual Seminar at Birch Bay, WA. March 18 – 21, 2011. Induja Lakshmi

Sixty Abhyasis and children of Seattle and Vancouver gathered Friday afternoon, 18 March 2011 for a spiritual retreat. The seminar topic, Brotherhood, was apt in light of the recent tsunami in Japan. On Saturday when we divided into three groups to share our thoughts we naturally focused on the importance of the universal prayer as the way to participate in sharing the concern and pain of all humanity.

After our discussions on Saturday, while we listened to a letter from a tsunami victim, we felt the pain of the people in Japan. At the same time we realized that in a way the survivors are relieved to be free of all the material benefits of technology, money, and related comforts. People are caring for each other by sharing their limited food and resources. Indeed, Nature even at its disastrous worst, teaches us to get in touch with our true Self, strengthens us to endure pain and connects us in brotherhood. We realized that this universal experience applies, regardless of whether or not a person practices Sahaj





Marg, and that it is our duty as abhyasis to pray for unification to prevail. As one sister pointed out, "We should have the tsunami in our hearts [so that we] reach out and make the difference."

We concluded our day with a DVD made by abhyasis during the seminar for Russians in Kolkata, India. The DVD augmented our shared thoughts on Brotherhood and brought to light our shared feeling of love towards the Master, which binds us together. As long as we strive to be connected to the source through our sadhana, we will be bonded together through this very special love.

Ashram Update

Activities in and around NJ Ashram AMC Team, Cranbury Ashram

On March 29th, brother Santosh Sreenivasan and sister Janmarie Connors kicked off their North American trip from the New York City Center where satsanghis filled TRS Suites to capacity. The next day we were at the Cranbury Ashram



where the morning was spent in meetings about the progress of the renovation project and plans for the coming months. Santosh and Janmarie also interacted with all the abhyasis sharing their personal experiences around sadhana and

association with Master. In the evening, many abhyasis gathered in Edison for satsangh in a blissful environment. In addition to satsangh there was also an interactive discussion among abhyasis followed by a viewing of Master's message to North America. Before making their way to the Sunderland Ashram, Santosh and Janmarie visited the Philadelphia Center.

Spring has finally arrived at Cranbury, and with it a flurry of plans and activities. Abhyasis come regularly to visit and work at the ashram on weekends. We are finalizing the contract for the major renovation projects. The contractor has been identified and discussions are in progress. Some suggestions made by the township are being incorporated into the final plans. We hope to welcome more brothers and sisters over the summer months.

VBSE

VBSE Program at National Gathering Jyoti Sadhwani

During our Revered Babuji's 112th birth celebration at the Molena Ashram, the children's activity tent turned into a place of learning, reflection, and self-expression. The children were offered the choice of attending a VBSE session on either Environmental Morality or Love & Compassion. Children attending Environmental Morality learned about our dependence on forests and how forests bring balance to nature. In response, some children suggested that *The Lorax* was needed in today's world, while others suggested that in order to save the trees teachers should not assign written homework. In the Love & Compassion session, children (and parents) first examined differences by imitating different animals whose names they had drawn from a basket. Afterwards, it was very interesting to listen as different groups



identified something that makes us unique and something that makes us the same. Some children pointed out that their hair color is different, but that being in elementary school made them the same. There was one group in particular that had difficulty finding any differences. The children participated enthusiastically in these sessions that were enjoyed by all.

To volunteer or to initiate a program in your center, contact Jyoti at sadhwanij@gmail.com.





Announcements

Announcement for Upcoming Abhyasi Training Programs (ATP)

The following centers will be offering an Abhyasi Training program, which is a compilation of various texts, transcriptions and audio of the Masters, the Mission and method. This informative presentation on the basics of Sahaj Marg is quite useful to support the foundation of our daily practice. For further details contact the presenter or your regional coordinator.

June 18th, Saturday, Dayton Ashram (Beavercreek, Ohio).

Contact Uma Mullapudi at rmullapudi@aol.com

June 18th, Saturday, Nelson, B.C. Contact Judith Polston at judithp57@gmail.com

June 19th, Sunday, Detroit, Michigan. Contact Satyendra Savanur at smart2m9@gmail.com

July 17th, Sunday, Vermont Center. Contact Margery Anderson at margerymom@gmail.com

Teen Camp Announcement, August 10-12 Explore Spirituality while Connecting with Other Teens

Plans for the upcoming Sahaj Marg Teen Camp are well underway! The camp, designed for youth aged 13-19, will be led by college-aged abhyasis and will give participants the chance to explore spirituality while connecting with other Sahaj Marg teens through team-building, adventure outings

and other awesome summer camp activities. The camp will be held at the Molena Ashram from August 10-12 (arrival on the 9th and departure on the 13th requested). To receive information about registration, please email Shelly at iluvsascha@gmail.com.

"A Picnic in the Park" – North New Jersey A gathering for family, friends and neighbors

On Saturday, August 20, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., the North New Jersey Center is hosting its traditional one-day gathering for abhyasis, families and friends at Schooleys Mountain Park, East Springtown Road, Long Valley, NJ: Satsangh at 10; lunch at noon; coffee/tea and snacks at 3:30. Activities abound, including boat rentals, hiking trails, volleyball, athletic fields, natural amphitheater, a 470-foot floating bridge and many organized games and activities. Please join us, and bring all your family and friends, especially those with children, along with any outdoor toys/games/sports for the kids. (RSVP by Sunday, August 7th, to help us prepare the lunch. Contact Chris Curran at 908-930-3430 or at srcm_north_jersey@yahoo.com).

Calendar June-September 2011

DATE	WHERE	EVENT	CONTACT
June 17-21	Maui, Hawaii	Theme: Constant Remembrance	Betsy Cammack betsycammack@yahoo.com
June 24-26	Ohio	Theme: Be plain and simple, to be identical with Nature	Pat Valente valentepatrick@yahoo.com
July 10	Detroit MI	Children's Program	Seshikala Puvada
July 23-25	Molena GA	Master's Birthday Celebration	Kasinathan Muralidharan Kasinathan.x.muralidharan@questdiagnostics.com
July 23-25	Beavercreek OH	Master's Birthday Celebration	Vijay Chitkara vchitkara@sbcglobal.net
July 23-25	Austin TX	Master's Birthday Celebration	Prashanth Srinivasan prashanths2005@gmail.com
July 30-31	SW & Black Rock, CT/ME	Master's Birthday Celebration at Sunderland, MA	Colleen Sackheim colleensackheim@yahoo.com
Aug 9-12	Molena GA	Teen Retreat Weekend	Tracie Pape tracieo@sbcglobal.net
Aug 14	Sunderland MA	UN International Youth Day and Extended Satsangh Day	Colleen Sackheim colleensackheim@yahoo.com
Aug 20	North New Jersey	A picnic in the park: A gathering for family, friends and neighbors	Chris Curran srcm_north_jersey@yahoo.com
Sept 9-11	San Luis Obispo	Camping Weekend at Lake Lopez	Bill & Diana Waycott dwaycott@gmail.com
Sept 10-11	Plainsboro/ Long Island	Regional Gathering at Sunderland	Colleen Sackheim colleensackheim@yahoo.com
Sept 10-11	Richmond VA	Regional Gathering at Shenandoah, VA	Micheline Meola michmeola@aol.com
Sept 17-18	Beavercreek OH	Regional Gathering	Vijay Chitkara vchitkara@sbcglobal.net

