

SAHAJ MARG MEDITATION

Handbook

[emblem]

SHRI RAM CHANDRA MISSION

www.srcm.org

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Welcome to the Practice of Sahaj Marg Meditation

This introductory handbook has been prepared to help you understand and follow the practice of Sahaj Marg in the most effective way. It is presented under three main headings that reflect the most important aspects of Sahaj Marg: the Method, the Masters, and the Mission.

The essence of any spiritual practice is in the practical experience of it. In order to fully evaluate the effects of Sahaj Marg, it is suggested that you try the practice for three to six months, and during that time period leave aside any other practices you may currently be following. If you have questions, please contact a preceptor for clarification.

The method of Sahaj Marg meditation is offered by Shri Ram Chandra Mission, a non-profit organization that has its headquarters in India. The present spiritual Master, Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (Chariji), lives in Chennai and welcomes sincere aspirants to visit him there or at one of the seminars held world-wide throughout the year.

The practice of Sahaj Marg is known to have helped thousands of spiritual seekers around the world. There are no fees or other obligations for learning and practising the method, the sole qualification being a willingness to give it a sincere try. If practised regularly, Sahaj Marg is sure to help you in your spiritual endeavours.

We wish you all the best in your pursuit of the goal of human evolution to the highest.

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Introduction

SAHAJ MARG

Sahaj Marg, meaning “natural path” or “simple way,” is a system of practical training in spirituality. It is in essence the traditional practice of raja yoga (yoga of the mind), remodelled and simplified to help people achieve inner perfection, or God realisation. According to the teachings of this system, God is simple, and therefore the way to reach Him¹ must also be simple. Sahaj Marg offers a natural method of meditation by which the mind becomes regulated and refined into a capable instrument helping us to evolve to the highest possible spiritual condition.

It is in the context of family life that almost all human characteristics are perfected, and therefore the Sahaj Marg system is specially developed for the average householder. It teaches that every human faculty has its legitimate function and that the proper use of all our faculties leads to a balanced life. Thus there are no dogmas or rigid methods of austerity to be followed. Sahaj Marg does not recognize differences of race, sex, or indeed any other differences between individuals, and all are qualified to practise it, the sole criterion being willingness to participate.

THE GOAL

Our goal is explicitly spiritual: Oneness with God. The Sahaj Marg method rests on the precept that God is all-pervasive and therefore pervades every heart. So we meditate on the Divine presence in the heart in the form of light, allowing that presence to become a reality in our daily lives. At the same time, we live fully in the world, embracing the duties and responsibilities of family and community life.

¹He/Him will be used when referring to God following common convention.

TRANSMISSION

A unique feature of Sahaj Marg is the art of yogic transmission (also called *pranahuti*: *prana*=life-force; *ahuti*=offering). Transmission is defined as the utilization of divine energy for the transformation of a human being. This ancient technique was rediscovered by Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (Lalaji). This capacity was passed on to his disciple, Babuji, who in turn perfected it and passed it on to his successor and spiritual representative, Chariji.

When the transmission is directed into our hearts, we are filled with a force higher than ourselves. With our co-operation and sincere practice, spiritual progress is not only accelerated by the transmission, but it actually expands our own limited capacity for growth.

Another effect of transmission is that it clears away past impressions and complexities (*samskaras*) that have built up in our minds and hearts and which condition our behaviour. As these past impressions are erased, material life approaches a balanced existence.

Spiritual transmission can be felt by anyone who practices Sahaj Marg even for a brief period. It can be received directly from the Master, who is an adept in the art, or from preceptors who have been trained by the Master to do this work on his behalf.

CLEANING

Fundamental to the philosophy of Sahaj Marg is the concept of cleaning away the impressions or *samskaras* which block our spiritual progress. These impressions exist in each one of us and manifest as action associated with past experiences or habits. They form the basis of our decision-making process directing our unique personal expression. Therefore, so long as they persist, action along certain lines is compulsive. The cleaning of the system is thus of paramount importance.

PRECEPTORS

Someone who practises Sahaj Marg meditation is called an *abhyasi*. A preceptor is an *abhyasi* who has been prepared and permitted by the Master to introduce people to the Sahaj Marg system and conduct group meditation. Preceptors also give individual sittings, directing the transmission and cleaning the deeper impressions and impediments of the *abhyasi*. Just as the daily impressions may be cleaned by your own efforts, the deeper impressions can only be removed by a capable Master. The Master works through the preceptor to do this deeper cleaning.

The Method

The Daily Practice

MORNING MEDITATION

Sit in meditation for an hour thinking that divine light is present in your heart. Do it in quite a simple and natural way without forcing your mind. Never mind if you do not see the light there. Start with a mere supposition, so to say, and sit meditating in one posture with your attention turned towards the heart in a natural way without any effort to concentrate. Try to be unmindful of the thoughts arising at that time. Begin the morning meditation by mentally saying the Prayer once (see below).

To meditate means to think about or reflect upon one thing. Of course it is important that the object upon which we meditate is consistent with our goal. Here we are involved in God realisation, or Self-realisation, so the object cannot have any name or form. But since it is impossible for most people to meditate on the abstract, the Masters of Sahaj Marg have given us the subtlest possible object of meditation: divine light in the heart.

In practising the method, please sit quietly with eyes closed, with the suggestion in the mind that your heart is filled with divine light. In the Sahaj Marg system there is no special posture (*asana*) prescribed. We choose a position in which the body can be comfortable for one hour. If you find you have to change your position, merely adjust and continue with the meditation. However, a seated posture is essential, because if you meditate while lying down, the relaxation produced will put you to sleep.

Regarding the light in the heart, you are not meant to see, or try to see, an actual light. It is a mere suggestion that the light is there. Try to hold this idea, or thought, continuously for one hour. You will of course have other thoughts, but we are taught to ignore them. When we attend to a thought, it takes on a power of its own, becoming stronger and stronger. When we ignore the thought, we find it drops off! There may be other thoughts in its place, but they are treated in the same way. The Masters say, "Treat them as uninvited guests and they will go

away.” If you do this systematically and with alertness you will find that in barely a few months time, it is possible to experience a state of thoughtlessness; it is of course necessary to remember that thoughtlessness is not our goal.

All these thoughts come from inside us, from the impressions or samskaras, which have built up over time. If we attend to the thoughts when they arise, they grow in intensity, adding to the store of samskaras that already exists. But when we do not attend to them, they are not empowered and the inner store of samskaras is quickly depleted.

The prescribed period for morning meditation is one hour—no less. In the beginning, you may start with thirty to forty minutes and work up to a full hour. Most of us spend a good bit of time just getting settled before we actually begin to meditate, so if we stop after thirty minutes, we may find that we have not really meditated. We are not advised to meditate for more than an hour at one sitting, but if you have spare time, there is no harm in breaking the meditation, relaxing for ten minutes, and then meditating again for another hour.

Morning meditation should begin before sunrise. It is at that time when the night meets the day that Nature is in perfect balance. When we meditate at that point of balance, we are helped a great deal in our progress towards the goal. If you cannot meditate at dawn because of job or family demands, simply do so at the beginning of your day, whatever time that may be.

EVENING CLEANING

Sit for half an hour with a suggestion to yourself that all complexities and impurities—including grossness, darkness, etc.—are leaving the whole system through the back in the form of smoke or vapour, and in their place the sacred current of the Divine is entering your heart from the Master’s heart. Do not meditate on those things that you want to get rid of. Simply brush them off.

The evening cleaning is to be done when our whole day’s work is over, not before. During a day full of thoughts and activities, we accumulate many impressions. By doing the cleaning when the day’s activity is over, we try as far as possible to get rid of the impressions gathered during that day, just as we bathe to cleanse the outer body.

The method for doing the daily cleaning is to sit comfortably and to imagine that the day’s impressions and complexities are going out of your body from the back in the form of smoke or vapour, and that in

their place the sacred current of the Divine is entering into your heart from the Master's heart. As cleaning leads to a state of vacuum, which is automatically filled with divine grace, we may go into meditation. If such a state is felt, we open our eyes for a few seconds, restart and continue cleaning.

The cleaning is a very active process in which we are supposed to use our will power to remove our own impressions. Please note that in the morning meditation there is no use of will power, whereas in the cleaning, the will is involved very definitely and specifically.

The cleaning process actually removes the basis of those tendencies which manifest in our actions and behaviour. These tendencies come from the impressions (samskaras) we have created in the past. The cleaning thus allows us to become more natural, more ourselves.

In tandem with this process, meditation progressively regulates the mind, giving us a degree of control that helps prevent the formation of further impressions. In this way, meditation and cleaning balance and support each other for our spiritual evolution. Meditation by itself is like having a powerful car stuck in the mud; cleaning by itself is like having a beautiful road with a car on it with no engine. So cleaning is thus of paramount importance for our spiritual progress.

PRAYER

Just before going to bed at night, sit in a supplicant mood and repeat the Prayer mentally twice or thrice. Then begin to meditate over its true sense and try to get lost in it.

*O, Master!
Thou art the real goal of human life,
We are yet but slaves of wishes
putting bar to our advancement,
Thou art the only God and power
to bring us up to that stage.*

At bedtime for about ten minutes, repeat the prayer a few times mentally and meditate on its meaning. It should be the last thing you do before the day is brought to a close, so that from the prayer-meditation you can go directly to sleep.

This same prayer is to be repeated before we start our morning meditation, but only once. It plays no part in our evening cleaning process. It is not to be used over and over (like a mantra) during

meditation or throughout the day, as even too much of a good thing creates grossness.

This prayer has no element of begging, demanding, or requesting in it, but contains just three statements of fact. The first line says: *O Master! Thou art the real goal of human life.* “Master” in this context refers to God and God alone, the ultimate Master who resides in each and every heart. Thus this statement is useful for persons from any religious background. The first line really says: *God! You are the real goal of human life*, reminding us of the true nature of the goal we are trying to achieve.

The second line of the prayer says: *We are yet but slaves of wishes putting bar to our advancement.* Here we are not asking God to remove or change our wishes. We are merely recognizing, with an attitude of humility, that we are the creators of our problems. We humbly state that our desires are standing in the way of our spiritual progress. If effectively used, this prayer will help us prevent the development of future desires.

The third line says: *Thou art the only God and power to bring us up to that stage.* Here, we acknowledge the fact that we cannot progress solely by our own effort. We recognize that God alone can help us and can take us up to that higher stage of existence.

So, the first statement puts the goal before us: *You* (God) are the real goal of my life—not your powers, not your beauty, not your riches, not even the universe, but *You* alone. The second phrase identifies the only impediment to our progress, namely our desires. And the last line states that God himself is the only means by which we reach the goal.

We can therefore put our Mission prayer in ordinary language, and say: *“My beloved, you are the real goal of my life. What is standing between us are my foolish wishes and desires for your powers, your beauty, your wealth. You alone can give me yourself.”*

The most important and unfailing means of success is the prayer. It connects our link with God to whom we surrender ourselves with love and devotion.

—Babuji

Practice of Sahaj Marg

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Further Practices

In addition to the meditation, cleaning, and prayer, there are further practices in the Sahaj Marg system that aid in our spiritual evolution and character development. These include: constant remembrance, the Ten Maxims, the universal prayer, and the spiritual diary. All of which serve to bring the idea of Divinity into our daily life.

In Sahaj Marg, we are encouraged to live full and natural lives as householders. It is in the family life that the spiritual principles of love, tolerance, morality, patience and acceptance are nurtured. These further practices are of great assistance in our journey towards becoming balanced and spiritualized human beings.

So progress means:

1. *willingness to become what I have to become;*
2. *subjecting myself to the forces that are going to help me;*
3. *avoiding all that is going to pull me back.*

—Chariji

I may assure you that you can win laurels in the spiritual field if only you turn your attention towards God, and proceed with will, faith and confidence, no matter how adversely you may be placed, surrounded by all the worries and miseries of a household life.

—Babuji

CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE

Meditation, cleaning, and prayer constitute the main framework of the Sahaj Marg method. What infuses it with life and feeling is the practice of constantly remembering God, the divine Master, in the midst of all our daily activities. Some people think that constant or even frequent remembrance of God is not practical in a life filled with worries, worldly attachments and responsibilities. But practice and experience will show that constant remembrance is actually a simple process, once we begin to divert our attention toward God in the real sense.

A good method is to have the thought, at the beginning of any work or activity, that the divine presence within you will be guiding your thoughts and actions. Then simply proceed with whatever it is you have to do, treating each task as part of your divine duty, entrusted to you by God, whom you are to serve as best you can.

The practice of remembrance will eventually lead you to the subtle constant thought of the Divine in all your activities. As it becomes rooted in your heart, every action will become a duty merely for duty's sake, without selfish interest or concern about results. In this way universal love becomes predominant and we begin to love every being in God's creation without any feeling of attachment.

The systematic practice of meditation and cleaning will go a long way in bringing about an inner condition of remembrance. When constant remembrance is truly established, meditation itself becomes unnecessary. In Sahaj Marg, the practice is ultimately the means of developing love for God, the divine Master. If and when that stage is achieved, our work is more or less finished.

*I do not ask you to detach yourself from the world, but
only to attend to everything with a conscious idea of the
Divine.*

–Lalaji

*One thing alone is sufficient: try to love. Generate that
love for the Infinity, for the Divine, for God, Master,
whatever you may call it, in your heart.*

–Chariji

THE TEN MAXIMS

The work of a true spiritual Master is internal transformation and, as abhyasis, we are the beneficiaries of that work. But character development is our own responsibility. Here, the Ten Maxims, which were introduced by Babuji, are a great help and should be incorporated into our daily practice as soon as possible.

The Ten Maxims are guidelines to be used in balancing our everyday lives. Some maxims focus on the practice of meditation, while others guide us to be natural or to remove existing prejudices. Still others open the way to self-examination and introspection.

The first maxim regarding rising before dawn can be a stumbling block, particularly for Westerners. But if you are unable to apply the first, go to the second, or whichever one you feel you can work on. The

important thing is to start somewhere so as to train the will in a positive direction.

As a whole, the Ten Maxims cultivate in us an attitude of humanness. We have to try to maintain and develop this attitude, recognizing the fact that we may not yet have truly attained it. Sahaj Marg teaches that we start life as animal human beings. From there we develop into normal human beings and eventually progress toward divinization. For this we must use the self to train the self, just as in meditation we use the mind to regulate the mind. The Ten Maxims, if applied in our day-to-day living, provide excellent tools for self-training in the ongoing work of character development.

The Ten Maxims of Sahaj Marg

1. Rise before dawn. Offer your prayer and meditation at a fixed hour, preferably before sunrise, sitting in one and the same pose. Have a separate place and seat for worship. Purity of mind and body should be specially adhered to.
2. Begin your meditation with a prayer for spiritual elevation, with a heart full of love and devotion.
3. Fix up your goal which should be “complete oneness” with God. Rest not till the ideal is achieved.
4. Be plain and simple to be identical with Nature.
5. Be truthful. Take miseries as divine blessings for your own good and be thankful.
6. Know all people as thy brethren and treat them as such.
7. Be not revengeful for the wrongs done by others. Take them with gratitude as heavenly gifts.
8. Be happy to eat in constant divine thought whatever you get, with due regard to honest and pious earnings.
9. Mould your life so as to rouse a feeling of love and piety in others.
10. At bedtime, feeling the presence of God, repent for the wrongs committed. Beg forgiveness in a supplicant mood, resolving not to allow repetition of the same.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

At 9:00 P.M. sharp every abhyasi, wherever he or she might happen to be at the time, should stop work and meditate for 15 minutes, thinking that all brothers and sisters are being filled up with love and devotion and that real faith is growing stronger in them. It shall be of immense value to them, which their practical experience only shall reveal.

—Babuji

The fundamental elements of our practice—morning meditation, evening cleaning, bedtime prayer-meditation, and constant remembrance—are strictly for ourselves. They are meant for personal spiritual growth and development. The nine o'clock prayer is the one feature of the practice that is for the general welfare of others.

The method is to sit quietly for approximately fifteen minutes, thinking that the hearts of brothers and sisters everywhere are being filled with love and devotion and that true faith is growing stronger in them. This should be done at 9:00 P.M. local time. Thus at any given time, abhyasis in different time zones are focusing on the prayer around the world. Their combined thought creates a continuous beam of transmission of human love, human concern for others, human concern for the well-being of others. There is a certain cumulative effect that far exceeds the sum of the individual efforts. This prayer for general well-being will also surely contribute to your added well-being.

KEEPING A SPIRITUAL DIARY

The diary in Sahaj Marg is a progressive record of our spiritual development and evolution, the nature of which becomes evident when we re-read our entries after a year or so. When we are driving up a mountain, we hardly see anything of the road either above or below us because of the twists and turns along the way. But when we reach a sufficient height we can look back and see the terrain over which we have come. Similarly, we gain perspective, understanding and knowledge of our growth by maintaining and reviewing a spiritual diary.

The diary is most helpful when you express yourself honestly. It should be a candid and open record with nothing hidden. Such an account makes it possible for you to look into yourself with absolute candour and to assess your own condition simply and easily. It also helps you to accept yourself as you are, without feelings of shame or

guilt, and to take corrective action through the methods of the practice and with the Master's support.

Suggestions of what to note in the spiritual diary:

- Condition: how do I feel? Light, calm, subtle, centred, disturbed, gross, agitated, etc.
- Progress observed: More tolerance, self-confidence, simplicity, openness, discipline, acceptance, awareness, sense of responsibility; Less dissatisfaction, aggressiveness, etc.
- Difficulties encountered: Fear, resistance to change, unsteadiness, selfishness, laziness, greed, guilt, desires, fantasies, emotional problems; lack of will, confidence, sensitivity, etc.

Individual Sittings and Group Meditation

INDIVIDUAL SITTINGS

While the surface impressions are cleared away through the daily cleaning practice, it is in individual sittings that the deeper cleaning takes place. This deeper cleaning, in conjunction with the transmission, removes impressions or obstacles on our spiritual path and acts as a catalyst to promote spiritual growth and advancement. An attitude of humility, openness and the patience to accept whatever comes, will also help.

Note that the preceptor's role is that of a conduit for the Master's work of removing the deeper complexities. Sittings (individual and group) are most effective when both the abhyasi and the preceptor have the inner attitude and expectation that the sitting is being given by the Master.

Abhyasis are expected to receive individual sittings from a preceptor once a week or once every two weeks. Individual sittings last about thirty minutes. When receiving a sitting, either group or individual, we use the method of the morning meditation except we do not begin with the Prayer.

After the sitting, please take a few minutes to reflect on your condition, feelings, thoughts and experiences (if any) felt before, during and after the sitting. These can be noted in your diary, and the preceptor may ask you what you felt. This exercise increases the sensitivity for both abhyasi and preceptor. This is also a good time to seek any necessary clarifications on your practice.

GROUP MEDITATION (SATSANGH)

It is equally important to attend Satsangh once every week, or more if possible. Abhyasis should arrive at least fifteen to thirty minutes before the meditation time to settle in and do a few minutes of cleaning

in preparation for receiving the transmission. When you arrive, please remove your shoes at the door and sign the register book.

Note that men and women sit separately in Satsangh. This is unusual in Western culture, but Satsangh is a very special event, where precision and clarity are essential. The preceptor's work takes into account unique male and female energies, and in this respect the separation allows for more effective work. It also helps us focus on the real goal and forget our surroundings so that we can more easily slip into the depths of meditation.

After the group meditation, we sit quietly for five to ten minutes to reflect on feelings, thoughts, experiences and our spiritual condition felt before, during and after the sitting and to note these in the diary. This is usually followed by a reading from one of the Masters' works. Information about upcoming Sahaj Marg seminars, local events or other Mission news may also be announced.

Note that even on days you attend Satsangh, the regular practice of morning meditation and evening cleaning should be done.

9:00 P.M. FRIDAY SITTING FROM THE MASTER

The Master gives direct, "long distance" sittings to abhyasis around the world who have no access to a preceptor. These take place at 9 P.M. local time every Friday, and even those who get regular sittings from a preceptor can benefit from them. The sittings usually last from thirty minutes to an hour, during which time you simply sit for meditation as you would for an individual sitting.

The Masters

THE ROLE OF THE MASTER

In Sahaj Marg, the Master acts as a guide to the aspirant in much the same way as an accomplished mountaineer is a guide to the inexperienced climber. He knows the terrain of the journey first-hand and is able to lead us safely, surely and expeditiously to the goal. There is only one objective behind the Master's relationship with us, and that is our spiritual welfare.

The term "Master" is another word for "Guru", or spiritual guide. However, in Sahaj Marg, the concept of Master is more closely aligned to the idea of divinity or divine essence. Here, divinity is found in many forms, i.e. the ultimate Principle or God, the divine presence in a human being like a living Master, and also the divine centre within each one of us that is referred to as our Self. Thus, in Sahaj Marg the Master represents the divine principle as manifest in all aspects of creation: a) as the Ultimate, b) as the spiritual guide, and c) as our inner divinity.

For our purposes, the definition of a Master is also "one who has mastered himself." That is to say, such a person is no longer a slave to the ego or to personal desires for worldly gains, and is consequently free to be of genuine service to others. The term in no way implies a relationship of servitude on our part. On the contrary, the Master in Sahaj Marg has the unique capacity to *create equals*, i.e. *other Masters*. He is always striving to lead us toward our highest potential, not to fulfil any need of his own, but solely for the sake of our Self-realisation.

It takes time to develop faith in the guide. The first step is the building of trust, through experience. During this process we are asked only to keep our hearts and minds open to the infinite possibilities of our inner relationship with the Master and to co-operate with his work by doing the practice as prescribed. In this way we avail ourselves fully of the spiritual assistance that is being offered.

In Sahaj Marg it is recognized that a living Master is indispensable to our spiritual progress. We present here a short biography of each of the three Masters of the system.

Lalaji

Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, U.P.
1873-1931



Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, affectionately known as Lalaji, was the first Master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission and rediscovered the ancient art of transmission. He belonged to a distinguished family of landowners, originally from the district of Mainpuri in India. His father was a tax superintendent and his mother a devout woman who passed away when Lalaji was only seven years old, leaving upon him the imprint of her strong faith.

From childhood Lalaji was inclined towards God and also displayed a deep love and aptitude for music. He was educated by a private tutor and learned Hindi from his mother, receiving his later education at the Mission School in Farrukhabad. After his mother's death, he was brought up by another lady with whom he shared a lifelong affection and regard.

Shortly after Lalaji's marriage, his father died. Within a brief span of time, he also lost his elder adopted brother and all that remained of his family's ancestral property. Accepting these misfortunes with grace and courage, he went on to work for one of his father's associates in Fatehgarh.

It was Lalaji's conviction that a normal family life was most conducive to self-development and that any sincere seeker could progress to the highest level of spiritual attainment while fulfilling the duties of a householder. He rediscovered and refined the ancient raja yoga method of pranahuti, whereby divine energy is transmitted by the Master into the heart of the aspirant in order to expedite his or her spiritual development. Thus the highest spiritual goal, previously reserved for ascetics and renunciates, was brought within the reach of all.

His personality, mode of living and general behaviour earned Lalaji the respect and affection of his neighbours. He was much loved by Hindus and Muslims alike, and though he loved his followers with all their faults, he was also a strict disciplinarian. In contrast to the

practices of his time, he was very much against rituals and idol worship and in favour of the remarriage of widows as well as the education of women.

Display of any kind was repugnant to Lalaji, and he advised aspirants to stay away from powers until they reached their goal and discipline was perfected. He felt that every aspirant needed a spiritual Master, and that great care should be taken in selecting one. His doors were open to all, and he would frequently transmit to his followers until 2 o'clock in the morning. He regarded morality as essential to Self-realisation and love as the greatest spiritual practice.

On August 14, 1931, Lalaji passed away, leaving Babuji to continue his work for the upliftment of humankind.

Sayings of Lalaji:

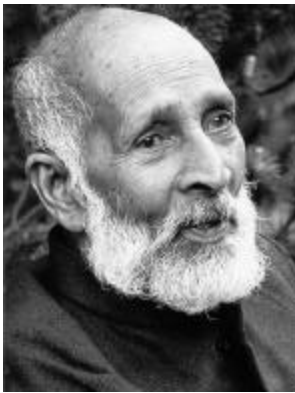
God has hidden himself inside your hearts and exposed you. Hide yourselves and expose God! This is the real sadhana (practice).

Afflictions are gifts from God. There are many secrets in them.

Never offer advice unless invited, otherwise it is likely to yield bad results. If you find fault with anybody pray for his freedom from it.

Babuji

Shri Ram Chandrajji of Shahjahanpur, U.P.
1899-1983



Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India. He was named Ram Chandra after one of the great figures of Indian history. His father was a lawyer and noted scholar who educated his son extensively in English, Urdu and Persian, perhaps hoping that he would follow in his father's footsteps. But from an early age, Ram Chandra's craving for spiritual realisation overshadowed all other interests.

He became a court clerk from which his affectionate nickname arose ("babu" meaning clerk, the suffix "ji" is an honorific, an expression of respect often appended to names and titles in India). He held that position in the Shahjahanpur district court for more than thirty years. He was married at the age of nineteen and his wife, Bhagwati, bore him two daughters and four sons before her death in 1949.

On June 3, 1922, Babuji first met his Master (Lalaji), a man with the same name as himself, who lived in the town of Fatehgarh not far from Shahjahanpur. Lalaji recognized Babuji as the man who had appeared to him in a dream years before, the one who was destined to succeed him as the leader of a great spiritual renaissance. Though teacher and disciple met only a few times before Lalaji's death in 1931, the thought of his Master remained constant in Babuji's mind and heart from their first meeting until he passed away in April 1983 at the age of 83.

His conversation was punctuated by Lalaji's name, and no honour that Babuji could show his Master was enough to express the great love that existed between them. "I went on with it regardless of all other things," wrote Babuji in his autobiography, "till I reached the level expressed by my Master in the following words in a dream when he left the mortal frame: *I became 'Thee' and Thou 'I'. Now none can say that I am other than thee or that thou art other than me.*"

Babuji was by nature the humblest of men, yet moved by a vast pride in his great Master. The communication established between them after Lalaji's death continued throughout Babuji's life and filled his diaries with both astonishing visions into the nature of reality and practical instruction on how to lead a spiritual life. He lived a balanced life, neither pleased by good words nor displeased by bad, with a temperament of humility without excessive modesty.

Of his spiritual condition he wrote, "There seems to be uniformity in love. Ties of relationship seem to have been severed. I have as much respect for my servant as for my respected father. I have as much love for the sons of other people as I feel for my own son. I also consider gold and earth to be the same. I see the pious and the wicked with one eye."

In 1945 Babuji founded Shri Ram Chandra Mission, naming it after his Master. In the early days, he would travel to places where he had no friends or acquaintances, tour the city or town transmitting divine energy. The fruits of this labour are now visible in the widespread network of Sahaj Marg centres throughout India. In 1972 he began travelling to offer the method of Sahaj Marg to the people of various countries outside of India. He was accompanied on these travels by Chariji, who was General Secretary of the Mission at that time.

Sayings of Babuji:

The end of religion is the beginning of spirituality. The end of spirituality is the beginning of Reality, and the end of Reality is the real Bliss. When that too is gone, we have reached the destination.

Three obstacles in the path to Realisation: 1) We try but there is no attempt; 2) We try too many things at the same time; 3) We do not have confidence in ourselves.

We have set up a tiny creation of our own, in the form of our individual material existence, having layers after layers of grossness and opacity. What is now to be done is to shatter off those layers of opacity one by one and assume the absolute state as we had at the time of creation. This is all the gist of the philosophy of our system, Sahaj Marg. We are, so to say, to dissolve this tiny creation of our making or to unfold ourselves.

Chariji

Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari
b. 1927



Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari was born on July 24, 1927, in the village of Vayalur near Chennai (Madras), in the south of India. Known to his family and close friends as Parthasarathi, he is affectionately called Chari, or Chariji, by his associates. His mother died when he was five years old, and his father never remarried, choosing instead to devote himself entirely to his responsibilities as a parent and provider.

Because his father's work as a railway executive required frequent relocation of the family, Chariji and his two younger brothers spent their early years in many different parts of India. In his autobiography, Chariji remembers his childhood and youth with great nostalgia and writes with love and affection about the extended family that surrounded him during those years. The loss of his mother nonetheless had a profound effect upon the young Parthasarathi, leaving an emptiness that followed him into adulthood.

From an early age Chariji was a voracious reader and developed a keen interest in music. A passionate student of the flute, he excelled at playing the instrument but was persuaded by elder relatives to give it up. After earning a bachelor's degree from Banaras Hindu University, he took his first job with Indian Plastics Limited in chemical engineering. He travelled abroad in this capacity and spent two years in Yugoslavia studying plastics manufacturing techniques. He and his wife, Sulochana, were married in 1955 and two years later had their first and only child, a son, Krishna. It was also in 1955 that Chariji joined the T. T. Krishnamachari group of companies, thereafter rising to the position of Executive Director of the Indian Textile Paper Tube Company. His work required him to travel extensively inside as well as outside of India.

Chariji's conscious spiritual aspirations were awakened at the age of 18 after hearing a lecture on the Bhagavad Gita. He took up a detailed study of this book as well as other religious and spiritual texts.

At the age of 30, he began Vaishnava traditional instruction in the Hindu religion. Seven years later, in 1964, he met his Master (Babuji) and started the practice of Sahaj Marg meditation.

While continuing to fulfil his familial and business responsibilities, Chariji was vigilant in his spiritual practice and dedicated to the work of Shri Ram Chandra Mission. As General Secretary, he contributed greatly to the publication of Sahaj Marg literature and to the strengthening of the organization as a whole. Over the years he became Babuji's most devoted disciple, accompanying him on travels abroad and ably assisting him in his spiritual work.

Babuji characterized the ideal human being as a person having "a Western mind and an Eastern heart," adding that such a person would be needed to guide the Mission successfully into the future. In Chariji he saw this blend of qualities as well as the crucial ability to instil discipline in others. Babuji passed away in 1983, leaving instructions that Chariji should succeed him as spiritual representative and President of the Mission.

Chariji's labours have resulted in remarkable growth and expansion in the Mission's activities all over the world. In recent years he has travelled extensively, conducting seminars and giving instruction on the Sahaj Marg system of meditation. His book *My Master*, a personal tribute to Babuji has been published in nearly 20 languages. His other books include diaries of his overseas travels with Babuji, an autobiography, and numerous volumes of his talks in India and abroad, interpreting, amplifying, and representing his Master's teachings.

In Sahaj Marg it is understood that the Master is the greatest servant. Observing Chariji, one sees this principle in action. His entire existence is presently devoted to the cause of spirituality in the service of others, a service that he undertakes with unwavering faith in the divine support of his Master.

Sayings of Chariji:

We should practice first, then try to understand.

A growing lightness of mind and spirit is the surest test of spiritual progress.

Where to find a Guru? Where to find a system? There are so many. Well, let your intuition guide you. As Babuji Maharaj has said, it is simple. A sincere prayer will bring the guru to your door. If you have one goal, it is easy to find guidance.

The Mission

SHRI RAM CHANDRA MISSION

Shri Ram Chandra Mission was established in India in 1945 by Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (Babuji) in loving memory of his Master, Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (Lalaji).

The Mission has been registered in many countries, with the following objectives:

- To educate and disseminate amongst all people the art and science of Yoga, made to suit present day conditions and needs.
- To promote the feelings of mutual love and universal brotherhood, irrespective of any distinction of caste, creed, colour, sex, religion, nationality, etc
- To conduct research in the field of Yoga and establish Research Institutes for that purpose.

Thanks to the loving care of the founder and his successor, Chariji, the Mission has grown far and wide over the years with centres now in Europe, the Americas, the former Soviet Union, Asia, Africa, Australia and the Middle and Far East, as well as several hundred centres in India. Spiritual training is offered by the Master and by more than a thousand preceptors, who are doing this work all over the world.

Shri Ram Chandra Mission is an organization of volunteers. There are no fees to begin the meditation practice or to attend weekly group and individual sittings. All are welcome. Abhyasis of the Mission are supported in their spiritual development by:

- The contact with a living Master who has himself achieved what we are striving for.
- The highly effective method of cleaning which we use to reduce the reservoir of samskaras within.
- The use of divine transmission (pranahuti) by the Master to further clean the aspirant's heart.
- The ongoing encouragement and support by the preceptors, who are available in centres throughout the world to offer weekly group and individual sittings as well as introducing new entrants to the system.

ASHRAMS

An ashram is a place of retreat where we try to live in accordance with principles that sustain our inner growth and evolution.

Shri Ram Chandra Mission has many ashrams throughout the world—currently in India, South Africa, Northern and Southern Europe, and the United States.

Generally, ashrams are located on several acres of land with a meditation hall, dormitory style housing and a kitchen providing simple food. Large and small seminars and celebrations—some of them hosted by Chariji—are held at the ashrams throughout the year. Information on upcoming seminars is posted on the website: www.srcm.org.

The Babuji Memorial Ashram in Manapakkam, India is situated just outside of Chennai (Madras), near Chariji's residence. It is the world headquarters for the Mission and receives many thousands of visitors annually from around the world. With prior permission, abhyasis are welcome to visit there at any time. See your local preceptor for information.



Babuji Memorial Ashram, Chennai, India

PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are recommended for beginners. To purchase these books ask your local preceptor or centre co-ordinator. A complete list of publications, tapes and videos can be found on the website: www.srcm.org.

My Master, P. Rajagopalachari

A beautiful narration lovingly told by Babuji's spiritual representative, Chariji. It relates his growing love and understanding of his Master, a uniquely simple yet spiritually profound man. This book describes Babuji in such a way that the readers feel as though they had also met this wonderful personality.

Reality at Dawn, Shri Ram Chandra

An essential work by Babuji explaining the purpose and goal of life and how one attains that goal with the help of the Master. This book is also found in *Complete Works of Ram Chandra*, Vol. 1.

A Sahaj Marg Companion – The Natural Path, Clark Powell

A comprehensive book of questions and answers that evolved from the need to address issues in spirituality frequently raised by Westerners. It is written with the hope that it will be of assistance not only to those considering Sahaj Marg as a possible practice, or to those already practising Sahaj Marg, but also to anyone interested in spirituality, no matter what path they may follow.

Thus Speaks

A set of three books containing inspiring quotations from each of the three spiritual Masters of the Sahaj Marg system: Lalaji, Babuji and Chariji.

Meditation - Sahaj Marg Educational Series, Volume I

A collection of extracts on meditation compiled by the Sahaj Marg Research Institute from the published books of the Mission by Lalaji, Babuji and Chariji. The topic is covered in two sections: What Meditation Is Not, and What Meditation Is.

Cleaning - Sahaj Marg Educational Series, Volume II

A collection of extracts on the topic of cleaning compiled by the Sahaj Marg Research Institute from the published books of the Mission.

THE EMBLEM



The emblem represents a complete picture of the system followed in Shri Ram Chandra Mission. The writing at the bottom denotes that the organization was founded by Babuji (Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur) in the memory of the first guru of the system, Lalaji (Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh).

The swastika mark near the bottom represents the point from which we start on our spiritual journey. A common symbol in both the Old World and the New, and in many different religions, the swastika here symbolizes life, the sphere of forms, rituals and practices of various types.

Above the swastika mark, the path of Sahaj Marg (σῆμαρ;) cuts through the mountains of difficulties and obstructions set up by our own selves as well as Nature. We march on this path through different spheres of light and shade of varying levels of grossness, growing finer and finer at every step until we attain the highest stage of spiritual evolution.

The sphere of light created by the rising sun denotes the spiritual era started by Lalaji. It permeates the space, commanding over the regions we started from and pass through on our path of Sahaj Marg.

“Satpad” (σῆμαρ) is just below the topmost portion of the emblem. This region of light, though in a very refined state, is but a reflection of Reality.

“Om Tat Sat” (That Thou Art, οἶμα τῆσ) is the highest attainable region as shown by the top of the emblem. It is a region of neither lightness nor darkness; it is unchanging and eternal. It is the pure and absolute state from which our present existence has evolved and may be denoted as the sphere of Eternal Peace.

Expanding from the Center

The Living Tradition of Sahaj Marg

by Clark Powell

This article first appeared in the magazine
Yoga International (Jan/Feb 1995)

The Raja Yoga system known as “Sahaj Marg” is still relatively obscure in the West, even among Yoga aficionados. This is largely due to the fact that Sahaj Marg has been a low-key, word-of-mouth practice. Works by the lineage of Sahaj Marg Masters, published under the auspices of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), are difficult to locate, and beyond the abhyasis or practitioners of Sahaj Marg, few are aware that SRCM centers have been established world-wide since the Mission was founded in India fifty years ago.

What is Sahaj Marg? There are no easy answers to this question, just as there are none for questions like “What is Zen?” or “What is Sufism?” Sahaj Marg (which may be translated as “Natural Path” or “Simple Way”) has no surface and its habitat is Infinity; thus by definition Sahaj Marg resists definition. Given the hopelessness of description, then, we must remain content with classifying, comparing, and giving historical accounts. These are outer matters and have little to do with the essence of Sahaj Marg, for spiritual Sadhana is not only a “study” but also a “practice,” and as such can be understood only through actual experiment.

Though its method may seem novel to some, those acquainted with the great Dharmic traditions will find Sahaj Marg a natural extension of the continuing refinement and accommodation that living yoga has always emphasized. Sahaj Marg is a practical method designed to give the direct experience of realization, right here, right now, in the midst of our daily situations. This has always been the heart of all spiritual traditions, as Vivekananda observed: “Religion consists in realization. We all know as a fact that nothing will satisfy us until we realize the Truth for ourselves. However much we may argue, however much we may hear, but one thing will satisfy us, and that is our own realization; and such an experience is possible for every one of us, if we will only try.”

WHERE RELIGION ENDS

All religions begin with the experience of God, the realization of a single person such as Christ or Buddha or Mohammed. After the founders pass on, their followers codify their teachings, and if these teachings are deep and true and helpful enough to stand the test of time, eventually they crystallize into a religion. But the original experience of its founder remains the bedrock of each religion, and to the degree that his followers can partake of that experience themselves, the religion remains valid and transformative, rather than degenerating into a set of mechanical rituals or a dry body of moral rules and social expectations.

We should not denigrate religion, for religions are regulating systems for societies and the preparatory schools for spirituality. My Master is of the opinion that while it is a wonderful thing to be born into a religion, it is a tragedy to die in a religion. We must transcend mere belief and conformity, and experience the Truth of the scriptures for ourselves. My Master told me that Christ, for instance, to keep his experience alive and to pass the light along, had to transmit this experience to someone, a human being who then would be the temporary vehicle of the essence of his Master, until he in turn passed it on to the most fit of his own disciples, who would pass it on again, and so on, down through the ages. Whether Christ actually transmitted this to Peter we do not know, but the Catholic Church has at least recognized the necessity for a living Master and the reality of such transmission in the doctrines of apostolic succession and the office of the pope as vicar of Christ.

Sahaj Marg also affirms the necessity of a realized Master in human form to assist most people in their journey Home. A true Master comes to serve, not rule, for as my Master's own Master taught, "God is the real Guru or Master and we get light from Him alone. But as it is extremely difficult for a man of ordinary talents to draw inspiration from God directly, we seek the help of one of our fellow beings who has established his connection with the Almighty." In Sahaj Marg, "Master" simply refers to one who has mastered himself, and who has the ability to make Masters like himself. Thus, though the Masters of the Sahaj Marg lineage are each unique in terms of physique, personality, taste, and temperament, in their most essential Nature they are one and the same person.

TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION

Sahaj Marg is usually presented as a refinement of Raja Yoga. Ultimately, however, it must be understood as a distillation of the yogas of Jnana, Karma, and Bhakti as well. As outlined in the Bhagavad Gita, these four primary yogas (there are dozens of other yogas in India and the West) are suited for varying natures. Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of love and devotion, is designed for those with strong devotional or emotional temperaments; Jnana Yoga, or the path of discriminating intelligence, is said to be the path for intellectuals and philosophers; Karma Yoga is for those with active natures who are inclined toward activity and service; and lastly, Raja Yoga (called the “King” of yogas, as it involves the mind or “king” of the body) uses an experiential approach through which the yogi directly realizes oneness with the Absolute.

The fallacy common to the Aristotelian Western mind is to separate these paths into four rigidly exclusive systems. The fact of experience is different, for at a certain level these four paths all intersect and blend: Jnana or knowledge pushed to its extreme becomes Bhakti or love, which at its fullness is wisdom; Karma Yoga in its highest form is but the expression of Jnana and Bhakti. The sincere practice of Raja Yoga very quickly dissolves into the other three, since only a fool would attempt this practice without a qualified guide, and soon the techniques of Raja Yoga are lost in the greater truth that is the love for the Master, a merger in Him which is expressed by the great dictum of the Bhaktas, the All-embracing *tat tvam asi* (“that thou art”), and propelled equally by the discriminating wisdom of negation expressed by the jnana yogis as *neti neti* (“not this, not this”).

These four yogas arrive at a place where all paths end and merge, which we may call whatever we please, since words don’t matter at this point: the kingdom of God, the Source, the Center, or the Impersonal Absolute. This is why Vivekananda advised yogis to be like a bird, have Bhakti Yoga as one wing, Jnana Yoga as the other wing, and Raja Yoga as the guiding tail feathers. We could extend his metaphor and imagine the manifestation of flying as Karma Yoga.

Sahaj Marg reminds us that yoga, and in particular Raja Yoga, is not and never was a frozen practice, fixed at some point in the distant past and codified by Patanjali around the second century A.D. in his Yoga Sutras. Even the highest concepts and most honored methods must evolve as the situations of men change. Methods which were suitable for a bull-cart society may not be so suitable in the vastly different world of the late 20th century. The Way to the living God is not a Procrustean bed that forces all to fit into its fossil methods or die

trying. One of the reasons the Divine descends again and again in the form of Masters is to provide us with an approach that is more natural to our time and place, to enliven the great traditions and honor the spirit of the methods by bringing a flexible and workable revision to the letter of those traditions. After all, the purpose of any method is to bring men and women back to the Source from which they have come. A method has no value beyond that. Indeed, as Buddha taught, the method may be dispensed with once that goal is accomplished, just as the boat is left behind once the river has been crossed.

Those acquainted with Raja Yoga will be familiar with Patanjali's Eight Limbs, the Ashtanga steps of Raja Yoga. These have usually been viewed as steps leading to the final union of self with Self, of human with divine — which is what the word yoga, or “yoke,” implies. Whether Patanjali ever intended his “Eight Limbs” to be considered as sequential and consequential stages is debatable, but Sahaj Marg takes a simultaneous and global approach to the practice of Raja Yoga. A classic image of the practice of Raja Yoga is that of climbing the rungs of a ladder: First one works on Yama and Niyama (the moral and ethical limbs), then Asana (posture), then Pranayama (movement of energy through breath), then Pratyahara (withdrawal from senses), and then Dharana (concentration) and Dhyana (meditation) to culminate finally in Samadhi (absorption). An image more apt for the practice of Raja Yoga under Sahaj Marg might be that of a sphere expanding from its center, for Sahaj Marg begins at Patanjali's Seventh Limb, Dhyana or meditation, and allows the rest of the practice to grow naturally from this seed.

THE CIRCUMFERENCE IS NOWHERE

Contrary to some notions, Sahaj Marg teaches that meditation is easy and requires no preliminary steps for anyone who has a normal state of mental health — in fact, Sahaj Marg teaches that only by meditating can we learn to meditate! The psychologically dangerous aspect of Pranayama has been superseded in Sahaj Marg by Pranahuti (pranaahuti, literally “offering Prana”), by which an individual can transmit spiritual reality directly from the center of his or her existence to the center of another individual's existence.

Pranahuti should not be confused with the more familiar spiritual transmission known as Shaktipat. Pranahuti is an extremely subtle transmission, described as a “forceless force” or “powerless power,” and is devoid of all qualities, including even the Shakti (power) that informs Shaktipat. Nor is Pranahuti equivalent to what is termed Diksha, since Pranahuti does not confer or connote initiation by the

Guru. In short, it is the utilization of Divine energy for the transformation and evolution of human beings into Divine beings. Pranahuti is a very gentle process and is imperceptible to all but the most sensitive recipients, although anyone can sense its effects as they gradually unfold over time. As my Master told me, normally we do not feel Pranahuti; we feel only its results.

The yogic transmission of subtle or Divine energy by one whose own life-force, or Prana, is realized at such a high vibratory level that it can awaken the dormant Prana in others across any distance by the merest thought or Sankalpa was known to adepts in the distant past, but had fallen into a sort of honored desuetude until it was re-discovered as a useful technique for 20th century by Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (1873-1931). Lalaji, as he is affectionately known, is said to have attained realization of the Absolute in a period of just seven months, to have had no Master, and no former incarnation. Lalaji remains a mystery; he was known only to a few in Uttar Pradesh, but was beloved by both Sufis and Hindus.

The art of Pranahuti was transmitted by Lalaji to his most fit disciple, who by coincidence also bore the name Ram Chandra. This disciple, now known as Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (or more simply as Babuji, since he worked all his life as a “babu,” or clerk) perfected the practices of Sahaj Marg, distilling a natural and simple method of meditation from the traditional procedures of Raja Yoga, established Shri Ram Chandra Mission in 1945 in honor of his guru, and upon his death or Mahasamadhi in 1983 transmitted his essence to his disciple, Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari. Chariji now embodies the Master and carries on the work of Shri Ram Chandra Mission. Like the other Masters of his lineage, Chariji is a family man and had worked all his life in an ordinary job until his retirement a few years ago. The usefulness of ordinary life is emphasized not only in the philosophy of the practice, but has been demonstrated practically by the Masters of Sahaj Marg.

Ordinary life is the accepted arena of spiritual practice under Sahaj Marg. As a bird needs two wings to fly, so a human being needs two wings of existence, the spiritual and the material. If either is neglected for the other, life becomes exaggerated and unnatural. Neglect of the material existence results in dependence, and neglect of the spiritual results in a fundamental unhappiness. To realize complete perfection, we must balance both sides of our lives, and treat everything that comes our way as part of our spiritual Sadhana or practice. Sahaj Marg emphasizes that realization is for everyone, not just for sannyasins, lamas, monks, or nuns. Indeed, family life in one's own home is an

ideal ashram for learning sacrifice and love. Sahaj Marg flatly rejects the romantic notion that to realize God or Self we must renounce society and adopt arduous practices. God dwells not in the Himalayas, Babuji used to say, but in the human heart.

THE CENTER IS EVERYWHERE

Sahaj Marg insists that the highest spiritual attainments can be realized by anyone at any time in any place. In recognition of this understanding, Pranahuti or yogic transmission can be received not only directly from the Master, who is an adept in the art, but also via preceptors who have been personally prepared by the Master to serve as conductors of Pranahuti. Over 900 preceptors now serve worldwide.² These preceptors can be likened to transformers in neighborhoods that direct and regulate the energy from a distant power plant for individual use. Preceptors are themselves abhyasis (practitioners) who are still evolving at varying levels of spiritual maturity. It's entirely possible for a preceptor to give a sitting to someone who is at a much higher stage than the preceptor himself. The term "sitting" is used in Sahaj Marg to describe a meditation in which the Master or a preceptor meditates in the presence of a group or with an individual to clean the subtle body and transmit Prana. This is normally done while sitting face to face — or more precisely, heart to heart.

Those who have attempted to establish themselves independently in a long term daily rhythm of meditation may appreciate Babuji's observation: "Serious difficulties arise when meditation is practiced independently in accordance with methods prescribed in books. One has to keep on struggling with the mind in order to suppress its unceasing activities. This continues all the time and there is practically no meditation at all, since all the time given to meditation is lost in struggling against thoughts and tendencies. What Pranahuti does for the spiritual uplift of a person and removal of complexities in a short time, independent efforts cannot achieve even in a full decade." In Sahaj Marg, this "removal of complexities" is called, simply enough, "cleaning." The habits, tendencies, and hardened impressions which defeat our efforts toward realization are gently yet thoroughly removed. The effectiveness of subtle cleaning cannot be understood until it is experienced.

² As of July 2001, there are over 1700 preceptors worldwide.

THE SIMPLE WAY

What, then, does one actually do in Sahaj Marg? According to the teachings of Sahaj Marg, God is simple, and the Way to God may also be simple. Thus there are no rituals in Sahaj Marg. Do's and don'ts are few. There are no secret mantras or mudras, no arcane Asanas, no special clothes, no changing of names. Really, there is nothing about Sahaj Marg to believe or disbelieve, because the practice involves direct experience. Sahaj Marg asks us not to believe, but to observe; not to trust, but to test. Anyone over 18 years of age who is willing to give a sincere effort is invited to do so. One can begin the practice by contacting a preceptor for the introductory sittings. No fee is asked for these or any other sittings from a preceptor. Sahaj Marg teaches that spirituality cannot be sold any more than the sky can be sold, for no one owns it.

The daily abhyas or practices are quite simple. The abhyasi is asked to sit comfortably and meditate at the beginning of the day focusing on the heart (a preceptor can detail the method). At the end of the day, sit again for at least 30 minutes, but this time, the purpose is for cleaning, and again the technique is quite simple. Weekly Satsanghs or group meditations are helpful, along with individual sittings from preceptors. Abhyasis are encouraged to keep a diary of their inner life, and most soon notice a feeling of Shanti or peace, a sense of lightness, and an awakened intuitive ability. Though these experiences are not uniform, they are common in the beginning, and many other experiences and conditions will follow. Sahaj Marg recognizes a plexus of subtle Granthis or knots beyond the traditional Chakra system of Kundalini and other yogas, and abhyasis during their practice make the Yatra or voyage through various spiritual regions as they approach the Center. At various stages obstacles are encountered, sensations occur, and visions or dreams may be seen, but with the guidance of the Master the abhyasi will not be distracted and can move on toward Reality.

So the basic practice takes about one or two hours a day – we begin our day with meditation, end it with another, and enter sleep in a state of prayer. By an art called “Constant Remembrance” the abhyasi can eventually extend these meditations to 24 hours a day. Curiously enough, many find that the simplicity of the practice is its major difficulty, especially since Sahaj Marg claims to aim for a level of human perfection beyond that which even Patanjali described. This claim can be easily tested, for Sahaj Marg was designed so that even the busiest person could integrate a profoundly transformative spiritual practice into his or her daily life.

Glossary

ABHYASI: Aspirant; one who practices yoga in order to achieve union with God.

ASANA: Posture, pose, usually yogic.

BHAGAVAD GITA: An essential scripture of Hinduism.

CHAKRA: Centers of super-vital forces located in different parts of the body.

GURU: A spiritual teacher or Master.

KARMA: Action.

PRANAHUTI: Process of yogic transmission by a realized Master. Derived from *prana* meaning life and *ahuti* which means offering. Offering of the life force by the Guru into the disciple's heart.

RAJA YOGA: Ancient system or science of meditation followed by the great rishis and saints which helped them to realize the Self or God. Usually used for meditative practices, as distinguished from hatha yoga (mainly body postures).

SADHANA: Spiritual practice.

SAHAJ MARG: The natural or simple path.

SAMSKARA: Impressions.

SATSANGH: 1. Spiritual assembly; 2. Being with Reality.

SHRI: An honorific title roughly meaning "Mr." or "Sir"

VIVEKANANDA: A great saint of India who lived in the early 20th century.

YATRA: Inner spiritual journey. Literally, voyage, journey, pilgrimage.

YOGA: A system of Hindu philosophy showing means of emancipation of the soul from further migration. From the word "yoke" meaning "connect" or "union". The state of yoga is the state of union of the soul with the ultimate divine soul. Any practice or sadhana that leads to the state of Yoga is also termed Yoga.

Further information on the system and upcoming seminars with the Master are available from the Mission's web page at www.srcm.org or from a preceptor.

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