

SMSF Newsletter

Volume I No.4-2006

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

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

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

Featured in this issue

Spiritual training: CREST

Bangalore hosted its first batch on Aug 9. We cover an update on the inaugural program as well as on short-term courses that are in progress. Updates on a new retreat center in Austin, USA, Berlin, Europe, and STP-2006 are also featured.

Health: We cover the medical center activities organized by Medical Center of Manapakkam, Satkhola and Allahabad.

Education: We cover SMSF essay writing competition conducted in schools of India.



Inaugural Batch at CREST with Rev. Master

Messages from Master at CREST, Bangalore

Excerpts from the inaugural speech on 9 August 2006

"...You are all people from whom I hope to learn something of how such courses should be conducted, what should be the course content for the future..."

"...we are going to try to offer education so that mind knows what this is all about. The intelligence does not have to speculate; it absorbs what is given to it and makes use of it ..."

"... some background of world religions, world cultures, world nuances of how people live, the ability to appreciate without criticism, that as the people are many, so are the ways of life, so are the modes of education; so are cultural mores; so are even truths,..."

"...I hope these courses will develop a broad-minded approach with Love and respect to each one's own tradition, and love, respect and forbearance for all other cultures and religions because what this world needs today is not knowledge. It is patience, it is tolerance..."

Inaugural Batch at CREST Bangalore

CREST Centres will be resident schools where abhyasis in batches of fifty to hundred will undergo intensive training for one month. The training will cover aspects of religions, spirituality, psychology and our civic responsibilities. First training took place recently in August 2006

ANNOUNCEMENT

CREST Seminar - 2 (second batch of training) is expected to be held from Dec 17 through Dec 30 at Bangalore CREST campus.

Master personally invited 82 Abhyasis for the inaugural course. They were from countries across the world - USA, Africa, Europe, Singapore, Russia, Australia and India. When the invitation went from the Master, the response was euphoric.

They all assembled in CREST on 8th August. Master inaugurated the course with his blessings on 9th August. Master had chosen 42 of them to speak on various aspects of spirituality. He had given each one of them a topic. The delegates had made thorough preparation on the assigned topics. The presentation took place at the rate four or five presentations per day. Each presentation was gripping. Master himself personally attended a few presentations. Others he watched from his cottage through closed circuit TV.

The atmosphere was charged with spiritual thinking, spiritual thought and spiritual conversations. At unexpected moments, Master came out and held congregations with the Abhyasis.

Questions from Abhyasis made the Master talk expansively on various spiritual and temporal matters, and the subtle process of sadhana and living.

Running through all these were Master's immiscible humour, drawing peels of laughter from the congregation. It is a vision reenacted; the vision of Ashrams of yore where Rishis Yagnavalkya, Agasthya, Vishwamitra and Gauthama taught their disciples in the sylvan settings of an Ashram.

Master did not invite faculty from outside. Had the faculty come from outside, there would have been just classroom lectures. But Master made the Abhyasi delegates themselves delve deep into the assigned topic and bring the essence of it by deep study and contemplation. There was research all around into ancient wisdom.

The delegates were from various walks of life. They were good in their chosen paths; but to research and make a presentation on the subtle intricacies of

spiritual truths - that was a great challenge for quite few of them. One could sense the palpable tension and the constant preparation. And one could see the tension melting away from the delegate's face after the presentation and the audience giving them a standing ovation. Quite a few were greeted by a 'shabbash' by the Master himself. This indeed is training.

There was much sadhana during this course. Everyone was doing personal meditation. There was satsangh everyday. There was the proximity of the Master and subtle dialogues with the Master. There was also the 9 o'clock prayer for universal peace. The course was an exercise in education.

Master said in his inaugural address that the course was for his education! But education it was for those who organized it and those who took part in it. It was an education in community living. Delegates, who are used to comforts at home, lived in community life, sharing common facilities and eating common, simple ashram food. Not a grumble from anyone!

It is an education in the greater possibilities of the self when confidence and Grace touch the self. Given the short time, the delegates delved deep into their subjects and brought out forgotten facts and truths to the gaze of the audience. When the work was done, they marveled at what they can do!

Our volunteers! They were a picture of devotion of duty and discipline. Invisibly they provided service. In a subtle recognition of this, Master gave them His blessings by a special satsangh for them, joined them in a lunch and gave them gifts.

On 23rd the course came to an end. And the delegates departed with Master's valedictory words reverberating in their hearts!" If you will it to happen, if you invoke His grace to support your will, you can almost do anything".

Source: Br. Jagannathan

Short term Courses started at CREST Bangalore



Meditation hall at CREST, Bangalore

After the big inaugural batch CREST had been idle for quite some time. Some pending civil works were getting completed. After these works were finished, CREST was "crestfallen" after Master and abhyasis left.

That is when Master gave the go ahead signal for having some short term courses in CREST - a course for a week. A course would be about intensive, concentrated sadhana combined with refining one's thinking about the philosophy of Sahaj Marg and the nuances in the practice of Sahaj Marg.

But he made it very clear that it is not a sightseeing place or a resort where one can saunter in for relaxation and merry making. Its basic character as a center for learning, education, research and sadhana shall remain intact. Whoever comes to CREST shall come for spiritual progress.

The one week courses have started in full swing. CREST has already done these courses in English, Kannada and Tamil. The course will not have more than 35 participants. Eighty percent of the accent is on the Sadhana.

The daily schedule is packed - Wake up at 5 am - do personal meditation from 5 am to 6 am; walk for an hour, attend

satsangh at 9 am; participate in classroom presentations and discussions; do shramdaan (voluntary work) for an hour; cleaning at 6 pm; introspection in silence for an hour; do 9PM universal prayer; and do bedtime prayer. Of course there will be spells of spiritual entertainment, like seeing DVD presentation of Saints of India, Mahabharatha, Ramayan, etc. It is a week of intensive community living, community eating and community labour as guests of Master; in the thought of Master. The lectures and presentations were from preceptors and abhyasis with experience. The presentations were specific, well researched and well collated.

The feedback was not mental, it was elemental. The delegates were one in reporting that they had experienced the intense warmth of Master's love. There were tears in their eyes when the course closed and they had to bid adieu. "We feel we are going from our parental homes to our in-laws' place" commented a few abhyasis

These short term courses will go on. You are welcome to join one, and experience CREST.

Source: Br. Jagannathan



Pictures of Berlin Ashram

For further information regarding SMSF in Europe contact:
Alberto Lafranchi,
ch.vp@sahajmarg.org

and Pierre Studer,
ch.tr@sahajmarg.org



Pictures of Retreat Centre, Austin

Berlin Ashram – A Foundation Project for Europe

During Master's visit in Berlin early in June this year, Master had the opportunity to visit a property in the Eastern part of the city. It is a very well refurbished industrial building of the early 20th century. Rev. Master liked the property and its location very much. He said: *"it is a very modern set of apartments very well built, well ventilated, airy, big, good ceiling height and with some permission to build also, and view on three sides."*

On 18 August in Bangalore Rev. Master chaired an SMSF Executive Committee meeting during which the decision was made unanimously to acquire 650 square metres in this building. A small working team has taken care of the negotiations, the thorough analysis and complex preparations which an important project like this requires. It took more than two months to finalize the project and Rev. Master has just given His final agreement. In a few days, Alberto Lafranchi, vice-president of SMSF will sign the deed in Munich, Germany, and Santosh Khanjee will sign it later in November.

Rev. Master has described the importance of this project for Europe in these terms:

New Retreat Centre at Austin, USA

Rev. Master had approved the idea for a Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation Retreat Center for the Americas earlier this year, on the auspicious day of Janmashtami (Lord Krishna's birthday), during the Inaugural CREST course earlier this year. It is with great joy and happiness we share that Rev. Master has approved the purchase of a 28-acre ranch property in Austin, Texas.

The future home of SMSF-Americas Retreat Center will be located about 15 miles south of Austin. It presently has a primary 3 bedroom home (Master's Cottage) and a 1 bedroom guest home (Caretaker / Director's Cottage) with a work room which may be converted into a meditation hall. It is a working ranch with a lot of usable flat land, a creek

"I don't need to emphasize the necessity to acquire this building because we need our definite base in Germany and after the reunification of Eastern and Western Germany. Berlin has been the new Capital, it has historical importance, it has national importance in Germany, it has importance in Europe, it has been culturally very significant in the past and at the moment it is comparatively much cheaper than buy the property in West Berlin".

Rev. Master has also underlined the spiritual relevance of the project: *"may this project prosper and help all Germans, Europeans, to find peace, solace, because the future of this world is most uncertain and it is definitely going to be worse each day over the previous day. We can see it happening and these places that we acquire will probably be heavens of peace, sanctuaries of protection and places where we can sit in peace, receive His Grace and even if you die you find your way to immortality."*

We are very grateful to Rev. Master for giving us this wonderful instrument for our spiritual growth.

Source: Alberto Lafranchi

and livestock corral type fencing around the entire perimeter of the property and a secondary fence around the house. It is located in the hub of Yoga/spiritual activity in Central Texas.

Rev. Master gave us the following guidance on the purpose of a retreat center during his talk on 9th Aug 2006:

"... souls yearning for rest from glamour of this world, from the insistence on money-making, from the demands of power structures - lay all that behind us, and go there and relax, bring our souls to pristine purity and meditate, introspect, do some writing if you wish to do so ..."

Source: Br. S. Krishna Sai, Austin, Texas, USA

An initiative is underway to build a database of physicians to better serve this cause - Sahaj Marg Physicians Group. (SMPG Contact: Murthy Gokula (RGOKULA@HOTMAIL.COM OR MURTHYG@MSU.EDU))

Medical Centers at Manapakkam and Sathkol and the new Medical Center at Allahabad have been undertaking many activities towards imparting medical services to the needy. Medical Camps are regularly held in Madurai.

Medical Center News

Medical Camps at Madurai

A medical camp was held on 3 Sep 2006 at Madurai. Strength of patients who attended is given below.

	Male	Female	Children
New	24	71	36
Old	24	54	43
Total	48	125	79

An eye camp was held on 17 Sep 2006 at Madurai. Strength of patients who attended is given below.

	Male	Female	Children
New	31	86	6
Old	16	31	4
Total	47	117	10

Source: Br. S. Palaniappan

New Medical Center at Allahabad is fully operational

In our Ashram at Allahabad the Health

Center is running very well. I am seeing more than 60 patients on Saturday, the day of my visit and same is the case with other doctors visiting on other days.

Many patients are so poor that it is difficult for them to arrange for two meals, what to say of medicines and treatment. Our center is providing them with very good quality medicines.

I am really amazed how I see so many patients in such a short time without any fatigue or irritation and how I always look forward to Saturdays to be there in the Ashram.

Source: Br. Nalin Misra

Specialist Camps at Satkhol

Specialist camps were held at Satkhol from 8th to 10th September 2006. Statistics are shown in charts below.

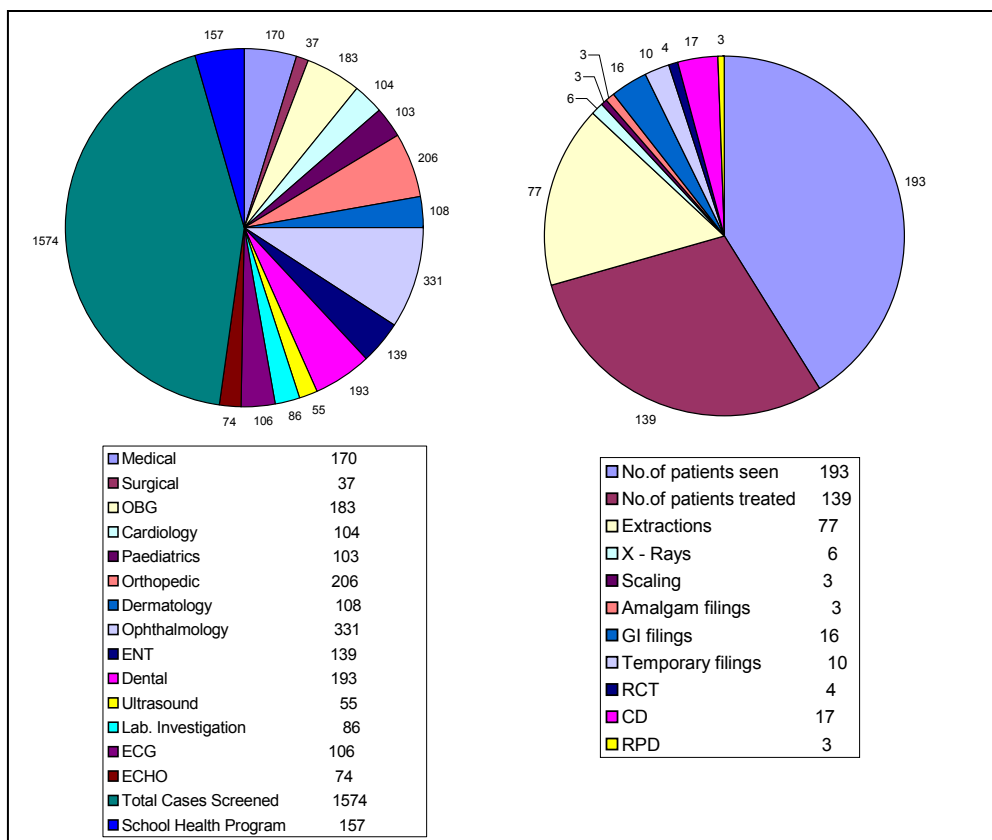
Source: Dr. C. K. Prasannakumar



Beneficiaries lining up at Satkhol specialist camp



Volunteers at Satkhol specialist camp



STP 2006 Update

This year again, the World Head Quarter of the Sri Ram Chandra Mission is getting ready to receive the candidates for the Scholarship Training Programme. STP sponsors abhyasis to travel from selected countries to India and attend a 4 week training at Master's side, in Master's home, Babuji Memorial Ashram, all chosen by Him for their potential to carry on the Mission's work in their respective countries.

During this programme, the participants are given the opportunity to live a total spiritual experience so as to imbibe the principles of Sahaj Marg and make the daily practice become a second nature. They get a correct and in-depth understanding of Sahaj Marg philosophy through daily classes and talks from faculty members and learn how to pass on the message of Sahaj Marg with confidence.

Most of them have never come to India, or even never left their country. They have never had an opportunity to meet Master. And suddenly, He extends his divine hand and invites devoted abhyasis from every corner of the world to take a step forward in their Sadhana and come to meet Him! To spend time with Him, ask questions and listen to Him during formal and informal sessions. This is the great gift and what makes STP a turning point in the life of the participants. To see and feel Master's care for you and others, to live at His side and always feel His eyes upon you definitely changes the life of an abhyasi and the abhyasi himself.

Master is finalizing the programme in all its aspects, the coordinators are already at work, and the candidates must be getting ready for this unique adventure, the adventure of a lifetime.

Source: Sis. Dolly

Essay writing on Spiritual topics

The word essay has been derived from the French verb *essayer*, which means, 'to try' or 'to attempt'. An essay is a short work of writing that treats a topic from an author's personal point of view.

It is very common practice to write essays on literature topics with an intellectual bent of mind, backed by competitive spirit. Whereas it is not so common to find essays written based on non-literature topics like art, music, spirituality etc. where it is based on ideas springing from the heart and not so much from the mind.

It is this unique effort to open up the heart of young blossoming buds, which Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation (SMSF), a wing of Shri Ram Chandra Mission, is attempting by conducting Essay writing for Schools and Colleges every year on spirituality related topics. This event is happening almost for a decade every year.

It's main aim is to induce the spiritual bent of thinking in today's youth, so that they start thinking about the real purpose of life and it's meaning, and they are able to look for right guidance to mould their lives in a proper way.

The essay is conducted in English language at all India Level and also in all regional languages at Zonal levels. The topics are chosen in such a way that they are 'soul searching' and induce the spiritual bent of mind. It is to be noted that the topics are chosen from Rev. Master every year and he insists continuously upon the need to conduct this event every year.

The Essay is conducted for different age categories. One is junior category for the age group 13 to 17yrs and is mainly intended for secondary school students. The other is senior category for the age group 18 to 30 yrs and is meant for young adults. The topics are chosen in such a way that the level of difficulty is

appropriate for each age category.

The Topics for the year 2005 were:

Juniors: "Work as would play; Play as you would work;"

Seniors: "Morality is the Minimum wastage of all resources"

The topics for the year 2006 are:

Juniors: "Love is an ennobling force"

Seniors: "Once desire is out of scene, Life is always disciplined"

The Essay writing provides ample opportunity for volunteer work in the Mission. It gives the volunteers an opportunity to speak to general public about Shri Ram Chandra Mission and its activities. Also it is a noble work that involves ennobling young minds and hearts about the subject of spirituality indirectly; in fact it is our firm belief that it is a subtle way of preparing the young people for nature's work. So, from all perspectives this is a noble work to involve each one of us into this.

Apart from schools and colleges it is open to the general public who fall into the age category mentioned above.

The Essays are evaluated at all-India level for English language alone and at zonal level for all regional languages. Based on the evaluation, best essays are awarded prize certificates as a token of appreciation; also participation certificates are distributed for short listed good essays. However it is worth noting that this is mainly to appreciate the effort of pupil materially; however the real benefit is for everyone who has made an effort to take part in the event and write the essay.

We pray and hope that in coming years more and more people take part in this event and receive the grace of Rev. Master and evolve spiritually.

Source: Sis. Madhuri