

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/welcome/newsletter/index.html>

For suggestions on the newsletter, contact Smsf.newsletter@sahajmarg.org

Featured in this issue

STP: We feature a report on the STP 2008 program.

CREST: A new CREST centre will come up at Kharagpur. We feature the foundation stone laying event.

Health: We cover the medical centre activities organized by Manapakkam Free Medical Centre, Hyderabad Centre and Jaipur Ashram.

Education: A prefect workshop was held in Berlin. A library has been opened in Berlin ashram.

SPURS: We include a report on SPURS retreat ranch at the close of 2008.



(above) Rev. Master at Malampuzha with scholars of STP 2008

STP 2008

The programme started in the train from Chennai to Coimbatore: 27 scholars, 8 coordinators from all over the world were traveling to Malampuzha retreat center for the first half of the programme. Brothers and sisters from Uruguay, Kazakhstan, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Bahrain, Thailand, Hong Kong, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Iran, Australia, Malaysia, Japan, Colombia, Brazil and Sri Lanka were trying to get to know each other in the noise of the Indian train!

We passed Tiruppur where Master was supposed to be and arrived in Coimbatore where a first surprise was waiting for us. Master was in Coimbatore on a private visit and had arranged for the scholars to meet him before proceeding to the retreat center. The time spent with Master was unforgettable as for most of them it was

the first meeting with their Master. In these minutes spent in His presence, he looked deeply at each scholar as they introduced themselves and their country. We could see the joy in Master's eyes, the great world traveler and language lover, to see brothers and sisters from all over the world who had been invited for this unique programme.

The group proceeded to Malampuzha retreat center to start the programme.

There are 5 modules in the programme:

1. *Emphasizing on the importance of a regular Sadhana.* One satsangh per day and individual sittings every other day. The atmosphere of the retreat center was also very conducive for introspection. One hour of reflection called Golden Silence was observed at the end of each day followed by the individual

About STP

Scholars Training Programme (STP) is a yearly program supported by SMSF where selected abhyasis from around the world travel to India for a period of around a month to be trained in many aspects of Sahaj Marg.

Applying for Retreats

Abhyasis who wish to apply for retreats either at the Malampuzha or Panshet centres may find more information about these facilities and the retreat program at:

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/welcome/retreat/index.html>

Abhyasis who wish to enroll for retreat programs may now apply online at the following URL:

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/sm/IndiaRetreatCentersApplication.do>

Please note that all applications must be verified from your local prefect, which will be facilitated through the application process.

cleaning and a DVD from the Hookka collection.

2. *Understanding of the practice.* First week, talks on the practice were delivered by faculties with Q&A at the end of each session. In the second week, the group was split according to language and each group was carefully guided on how to explain the practice to a new comer, preserving the purity of the system.
3. *Learning to pass on the message.* A sister, professional in communication, has spent several days with games and activities to provide the basics of communication as well as the tools specific to the Sahaj Marg system. The workshop was tailored for the need of this programme as everything is continuously translated in 7 languages (English, French, Russian, Farsi, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese)! During the last week held in Chennai, each group will prepare an open house in their own language.
4. In the second part of the program, the scholars will get to know the *Mission and its actions* through talks and interactions with several departments in the head quarter. Topics such as "SRCM and U.N.", "What is SMSF?", "Publications", "The websites" are organized, as well as a visit to LMOIS.
5. Talks on "Love" and "Morality" were delivered in Malampuzha. Further talks on different topics from the literature of Sahaj Marg will be given in Manapakkam such as "The role of the Master", "Change as inside so outside", "Personal character is the foundation for a spiritual life", "The importance of reading Mission's literature".

What prevails throughout the programme is the feeling of universal brotherhood that develops among the brothers and sister in all the activities. This feeling soon reached the volunteers in Malampuzha who were happy to



interact with the scholars. A few outings were organized reinforcing the bonds. On 24th of December, scholars invaded the kitchen to prepare an international Christmas dinner to thank the people of the retreat center. Master had arranged for a Christmas cake to be delivered. On it was written: with Love and Master's blessings. Scholars also organized a Christmas show in which all local people and scholars felt happy to participate. Two days later, our hosts replied with a real Kerala feast. Indeed they took care of us lovingly!

Revered Master has been guiding this program all along. The talks were inspired and inspiring. The speakers were happy to share stories of their association with Master and their enthusiasm was contagious! The activities, talks, topics and choice of DVDs came always at such a right sequence that we could not help but feel His presence behind the scene.

During his stay in Malampuzha, Rev. Master took the time to spend many informal moments with the scholars answering their questions and clearing their doubts, giving each one specific attention. He took the group on his visit to Thrissur and Palakkad.

He addressed the group formally before his departure to Chennai on the 20th of December and insisted on the importance of changing ourselves now, if we want to change the world.

"Change yourself and your world will change."

Source: Sis. Dolly Nicolai

Foundation stone laid for CREST at Kharagpur



CREST Centres are resident schools where abhyasis in batches of 50-100 undergo intensive training for one month. The first CREST Centre was set up in Kaggalipura near Bangalore. The second CREST Centre is coming in Kharagpur near Kolkata.

Interested Abhyasis / Prefects may propose a subject and deliver a lecture at CREST training seminars in Bangalore. Application forms can be downloaded from <http://www.sahajmarg.org/wel/come/crest/CREST-FacultyApplication.doc> and emailed to crest.faculty@sahajmarg.org.

On morning of 29th December, Master woke up early in the morning preparing Himself for the auspicious day ahead when He was going to lay the foundation stone for CREST at Kharagpur, the second campus after Bangalore in India. Master proceeded at around 7am or so and was followed by a convoy of around 35-40 cars or so; in addition, 6 buses had already left early in the morning from Kolkata for the Kharagpur site.

Master reached the site around 9:30 am or so and soon took a tour around the 5 acre facility. While the facility is in early stages of development, the lovely little lawn and greenery already suggest that another Master-piece is in the making! As Master walked around the campus, inspecting it, he used humour and direct instruction to steer the crowds away from following Him in masses by saying, "Follow me spiritually, not otherwise" and a little while later, "You see, there are 25 people following me just to tell others to stay away" (laughter).

The original plan was to lay the foundation stone and then proceed for satsang but Master is never short of surprises as He moved to the meditation hall. Master conducted a 40 min satsang after which He gave a superb talk, full of His contagious enthusiasm, fire,

conviction and of course His divine blessings. Some highlights include:

- Appreciating that many people had actually made the time to attend the auspicious occasion and indicating that a lack of time for a particular activity is nothing but a lack of inclination and will directed to a particular activity, Master said: "Time does not get us time".
- Continuing on the same note and awakening us to the right interpretation of duty/responsibility, Master said, "Our responsibility to our 'self' (the heart) is far greater than any other responsibility on this earth." To clarify and re-emphasize this, He talked about how even our responsibility to our respective families has its limits and is subservient to this higher responsibility; naturally, our material welfare He said, is only a means to help us on our spiritual journey and should be limited to that role. He said that our getting married and having children is to propagate the human race and give another soul an opportunity to spiritually evolve and reach its destination through this life; hence the first child is called 'Dharmaja' (born out of duty to society) while subsequent progeny are



(above) Pictures from foundation stone laying event at CREST, Kharagpur

- called 'Kamaja' (born out of desire).
- Talking about the Purusharthas (the goals of human life as enjoined in sanatana dharma - dharma, artha, kama and moksha) and clarifying the limited role of religion in this, Master in no uncertain terms asserted, "Hindusim or Religion is not our dharma, they are meant to only help us along the way"; continuing on the futility of worshipping Gods, observing rituals etc when a higher spiritual approach was available, He clarified, "That is why Babuji called the Gods, mere functionaries of nature; they are MERE functionaries". To provide the final stamp of authority on the limited role of religion, Master said, "That is why Babuji said, God has no religion and religion has no God" and with a stroke of his hand (from left-to-right, sweeping his right hand, forefinger out), re-asserted, "No religion!" For this statement to serve as a permanent reminder, he even suggested that people stick this up on top of their mirror so that they may see this everyday while adorning themselves!
 - He therefore, emphasised the need to place our loyalties carefully, and said, "In spirituality, loyalty and faith are two very important aspects", to be placed thoughtfully, in the right things. He talked about our typical misplaced loyalties in everything unreliable - politics, corrupt political leaders, bosses in our official life, our caste/religion.
 - Confirming the all embracing role that spirituality plays in ennobling one's life, He said and transmitted His conviction, "Spirituality is the one thing that integrates all of life by clarifying and purifying our conscience". He said that how such a person with a political conscience awakened by spirituality acts without prejudice but with best of all in mind.
 - Master then compared and contrasted the role of this CREST facility with that of Bangalore. He said that like in the Bangalore facility, this too will have lectures and discussions on comparative religion, with the idea of creating a shared understanding of the foundational role that religion plays;

he added, "Religion has a foundational role to play but like all good foundations, it should not be seen and should be submerged. Religion has no business to be visible in our lives!" He went on to say that this CREST will place a special emphasis on 'Ethics and Morality' and clarified that morality is a much broader term than the limited way in which we typically understand it, especially in India, to mean non-adultery alone!

- Continuing on this topic and educating us that 'fear of punishment' should hardly be the driving force in human life, Master said, "We do not want God fearing people, but want God loving people." Master amplified by saying that no father would like to see his children grovelling before him but would instead want them to come to him with their head held up high in the understanding that they are children of such a father, "We should be proud to be children of such a father, not because 'I am something', for the 'I' has no place in spirituality".
- Explaining therefore that when the pride is over such a Father who unites us all, the question of good or bad in individuals becomes irrelevant and the need for variety is on the other hand critical, Master said, "The spectrum is required to have white light and in the same way, the external variety is unified through spirituality where the essence is common to all." Re-emphasising the need for love to appreciate this, he said, "So we should look upon people not with mercy or compassion - let us leave that to religions - but with Love." He recalled the famous saying of Vivekananda and delivered it with perhaps the same fervour of this patron saint of Sahaj Marg by saying, "Do not scorn at these fallen sisters of ours for if they were not there, you, you and you would be there (finger pointing with each you!)" Through these inspiring statements Master equalised all of existence.

After lunch, Rev. Master proceeded back for Kolkata and took a flight for Chennai the next afternoon accompanied by almost 40-50 abhyasis.

Source: Br. Rishabh Kothari, Sahaj Sandesh

Report on SPURS at the Close of 2008



(above) Pictures from SPURS retreat ranch

The information on SPURS is available on the web at: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/spurs>.

Abhyasis may submit the participation requests online at <http://www.sahajmarg.org/spurs>. Once the requests are processed, abhyasis will receive a confirmation along with a welcome package that contains detailed information on the program and the facility

Please e-mail austin@sahajmarg.org for any questions or information.

We're happy to report that 101 abhyasis took advantage of the opportunity to come to SPURS Retreat Ranch in 2008 for deepening their connection to Master and their commitment to reaching the Goal. This figure includes 93 from the United States, 4 from India, 2 from Canada and one each from France and Venezuela. The length of stays for these 64 sisters and 37 brothers who came to SPURS varied widely, with three-day stays being the most frequent length (40 chose this length). One sister was able to be here for thirty days—the maximum length Master has allowed.

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

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

The best way to report on the impact SPURS is having on abhyasis is to cite a few anonymous observations made by brothers and sisters who have come to

SPURS in the past three months. So, we will close this report in this way:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Tom Stoner, Resident Prefect/Caretaker, SPURS Retreat Ranch

Berlin Prefects Workshop

From 1988 to 1989 Master conducted several preceptor seminars in Europe and His speeches were published in the preceptor books vol. 1 -3. Since then, the preceptor seminars have only been held in India. With an increasing number of new preceptors in Europe there is a need for systematic training of both new and older preceptors in Europe. Therefore, we have planned a series of training workshops to be held once or twice a year in the larger European city ashrams.

The first workshop was held in the Berlin Ashram from 28th October to 2nd November. Around 150 preceptors from all over Europe participated and were warmly received by the Berlin abhyasis who did a great job to ensure a well organised seminar.

The topic for the workshop, chosen by

our revered Master: "Personal Character is the Foundation for a Spiritual life." The workshop consisted of a series of lectures where the topics and speakers were selected by Brother Ajay Bhattar, and in between there were moderator led group discussions, who gave the participants an opportunity to delve deeper into the topics. The combination of lectures and group discussions turned out to be an effective learning process that was well received by all.

The preceptors went home with an understanding of the urgency that as abhyasis, they need to work on their own character before they can help others to change themselves. We have Master's permission to organise the next training workshop during His next stay in Europe in 2009.

Source:Poul Juul

Berlin Ashram Library



Berlin Ashram now has a major spiritual library. The books were selected and confirmed by Master and are similar to the books at CREST Bangalore library. There have already been donations for about five hundred books, some in English and some in German. At the moment the library is positioned in a corner of the main Ashram hall and consists of a beautiful wooden cupboard, a low table and two sofas. The library will be open to everybody, not just the abhyasi community, with

the intention of serving as an important and voluminous resource for those interested in spirituality. We are thankful to Master to now have the first spiritual library outside of India and hope that more libraries will soon follow. The Berlin Ashram library is a presence library where people can come to read the books on sit but cannot borrow books. The opening times will be announced soon.

Source: Br. Sebastian Sylla

Free Medical Centres (FMC) at Manapakkam, Satkhol, Jaipur and Allahabad have been undertaking many activities towards imparting medical services to the needy. Medical Camps are regularly held in Madurai.



(above) Pictures from Specialist Camp at Hyderabad

Medical Centre News

Medical Camp at SRCM Madurai by SMSF, Chennai

Medical Camp was held at Madurai on 2 November 2008 between 8.30 AM and 1.30P.M. Beneficiaries are as follows:

Cases	Old	New	Total
Men	74	36	110
Women	186	38	224
Children	88	42	130
Total	348	116	464

Source: Br. P. Palaniappan

Medical Camp at Hyderabad

The medical center at the Zonal Ashram, Tumukunta, Hyderabad organized a Free Diabetes And Hypertension Detection Camp for abhyasis from all over the city on 7 December 2008 from 10.15 AM to 1.30PM. All abhyasis who were above 35 years of age and were not known diabetics or hypertensives were screened.

In total, 211 blood glucose estimations were done; 20 new hypertensives and 7 new diabetics were identified. In all, about 15 medical volunteers and 10 general volunteers participated actively in the camp and the entire event was conducted in an atmosphere of love and joy.

It is tentatively planned to organize a similar camp for consultation and review for all the known hypertensive and diabetic abhyasis of Hyderabad center on the first Sunday of January 2009.

Source: Sis. Madhumathi

Free Medical Centre at Jaipur

During this month services were provided on Sundays from 10.30 AM to 12.30 PM.

Department	Date	No of Patients	Panel of Doctors
General Medicine	05 Oct 2008	4	Dr. Arun Garg Dr. Anju Sharma Dr. Man Prakash Sharma
	12 Oct 2008	10	
	15 Oct 2008	9	
	26 Oct 2008	1	
	Total	24	

Team Members

- Dr. Asha Mathur
- Dr. Vinod Chaturvedi

Volunteers:

- Br. Ram Deo Prajapat

Source: Br. Manoj Nagar

Sahaj Marg Physicians Group (SMPG)

SMPG is an initiative involving physicians, medical students, residents, nurses and others in the medical community to offer medical services to the needy through SMSF Medical Centers. As part of this initiative, a database of names of the physicians from all branches of medicine has been completed. A group email address has been set up - smpg@sahajmarg.info.

Source and SMPG Contact is Murthy Gokula (rgokula@hotmail.com or murthyg@msu.edu).

Free Medical Centre - Manapakkam

FMC has served a total of 2708 out-patients and 5 in-patients for the month of November 08. Following are the details of the medical activities conducted by Free Medical Centre, Manapakkam in November.

Department	No. of Patients	Panel of Doctors
General medicine	2220 (Nov)	Dr. U. Ravindran Dr. R. Sulochana Dr. K. Sudheshna. Dr. E. Ellanchelian Dr. G. Raja Amarnath Dr. Shristi Swami Dr. N. Neelima Dr. V. Jyothi

Speciality Clinics

Department	Patients (Nov)	Panel of Doctors
Cardiology	8	Dr V. Vanaja
Dentistry	74	Dr. Swati N. Bhagat Dr. Jagadish Kumar Dr. T.S.R. Anjaneyulu
Dermatology	33	Dr. M. Jayaraman
Gastro-enterology	11	Dr. Manimaran
Homeopathy	272	Dr. S. Balaji Jayasankar Dr. Malathi Mohan Dr. S. K. Ram Subramaniam. Dr. Sudha Jagadish
Ophthalmology	16	Dr. Harshitha Bakshi
Paediatrics	27	Dr. B.I. Sasirekha
Physiotherapy	2	Br. Rajendran
Psychiatry	2	Dr. Mythili
Pulmonology	41	Dr. I.M. Palaniappan
Urology	2	Dr. Sanjay Sharma
Total	488	

Staff	Nursing Assistants	Volunteers
Dr. Shristi Swami S. Meenakshi S.Thangam	R. Rathi G. Nalini	V.Rajapurna Janaki Sudha Ammukutti

Source: Br. Dr. Ravindran Ulaganathan