

SATSANG



PGS: A Unique School

by Eleanor and Oliver Lockhart

This school has given me everything...I have learnt that a teacher can be a friend...I have experienced teaching which you can't describe in words.'

'It is the best school I've ever been to. At PGS, the syllabus is tough, but because of the way they teach you, you won't feel it's tough....I love PGS.'

'This school changed me a lot – it made me a better person.'

'This is the place where I have more friends than at home: they are the ones who encouraged me when I couldn't speak English; they are the people who console me when I am sad; they are the people closest to me after my family.'

Together, we have worked at six different schools around the globe, and have never heard such warmth and praise for a school coming from its own students (let alone, students still at the school!) Visit the tranquil haven that is the Peepal Grove School, and you too will hear these sentiments echoed time and again: in the classroom, in the hostel, on the sports field. We were

equally surprised to hear of students' reluctance to go home at the end of term. During lunch, a table of hungry children was asked what they would do if the world was going to end in a month; most of them replied that they would 'stay here for three weeks, and then go home'.

New children enter their first class looking like a toad blinded by a torch: scared to ask a question and scared to answer one. In most cases, it only takes a few months for the school to work its magic. Slowly their confidence grows – at first, their hand might rise to offer a response that they are sure of, and then later, as they discover how to enjoy learning, their hand is up all the time, with questions, answers, thoughts, deductions. Possibly the most important change of all is a willingness to tackle the unknown head-on, to give an answer that is their own and not one that they have been told to give. It is this ability that we believe singles out PGS from the crowd of private schools across India, all claiming

to offer 'personalised learning' and a focus on 'critical thinking'.

Students bond across the years. It is not unusual to see members of Class 4 chatting with Class 10, or mixed teams straddling the entire student body, playing sport together. These friendships promote a strong sense of unity and belonging, as new students are quickly enveloped into the PGS family. Is it this network of connections that has created the foundation of what makes PGS so special? Or is it the peaceful environment, or the open green, or the equal relationships between staff and pupils? Happily, there seems to be not one, single factor but a blend of many that has produced an environment which challenges yet nurtures, which sets a child's mind free yet gently guides.

Eleanor and Oliver are teachers at the Peepal Grove School.

CONTENTS

PGS: A Unique School
by Eleanor and Oliver Lockhart

In Memory of a True Satsangi

Satsang Foundation Adopts a
School

Sri M's Message on Gurupurnima
Trivandrum

Pilgrimages are for Learning
by Bhavani Devi

A Plea
by Sheila S. Rao

Satsang Vidyalaya:
New Facets

New Releases by Hima
Communications

Upcoming Events

In Memory of a True Satsangi

Smt. V. Indira Reddy

(18.04.1926 – 16.05.2012)



Indiramma came to this world with her share of joys and sorrows as everyone does. What singles her out is the attitude with which she lived with what Providence had dealt out to her. We bring a short introduction to this “Woman of Substance” whose purity was such that even the memory of her is uplifting.

Her parents Sri Koti Reddy and Smt Ramasubamma took an active role in the freedom movement against the British rule. So, naturally, Indiramma grew up in an atmosphere heavy with the nectar of patriotism and high values inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. These values stayed with her throughout her life.

In 1958 she went to Chennai to check-out a mysterious *sanyasi* who was being compared to the greatest hero in her life, Swami Vivekananda! From then on, Indiramma’s spiritual journey came under the loving guidance of Pujya Gurudev H.H.Swami Chinmayananda.

Indiramma lived in Pulicherla (Andhra Pradesh) after her marriage to Sri V Surendranath Reddy, son of Sri BV Reddy and Smt Parvatamma. They had three children, Madhusudan Reddy (married to Soumini Reddy), Shobha Reddy (married to Dr TN Vijayanarayana Reddy) and Vikram Red-

dy (married to Nitya Reddy). Both Sri BV Reddy and Smt Parvatamma were spiritual people with high ideals. Their home was frequented by many *sadhus*. Sri BV Reddy was an institution unto himself. With determination and common-sense, he started a business Nutrine Confectionery from scratch that grew to enormous proportions. He not only improved the living standards of his family, but kept an eye on the betterment of the entire village.

In 1960, when the children were still very young, Indiramma lost her husband. Who would expect a healthy 37 year old man to die? Devastated, she sank into a dark pit of grief with not a ray of hope. The pure love that flowed towards her from her in-laws, who were themselves grieved by the loss of their son, gently lured her out of the abyss. Trained since childhood to face adversities, Indiramma met the challenges in life like a true soldier, with faith in the Divine and her Guru as her only weapon. Swami Chinmayananda writes in his letter dated 22.6.1960 (Madras) to Indiramma “....Indeed I have found in you one fine disciple of Vedanta. I salute the courageous wise girl in you. Honestly, my admiration rises to a kind of reverence to you...”

In 1993, Swami Chinmayananda passed

away. After 35 years of guidance from this great being, Indiramma found herself marooned on the spiritual path. She once again pulled herself out of grieving. Her Guru had left the world but was ever alive in her heart. She lived the spiritual ideals that she believed in and by sheer example, influenced not only her children but all with whom she met.

It was in 1999 that she met Sri M. She saw in him a selfless teacher who spoke from first-hand experience. On the very first meeting, Indiramma was tempted to invite him to Pulicherla but hesitated to voice her desire, when suddenly, at that very moment, Sri M said, “I will come to Pulicherla... we can have a retreat.” She was stunned! Sri M had read her mind!

Indiramma’s happiness knew no bounds when she was given the opportunity to host Sri M and a small group of Satsangis at Pulicherla. At the turn of the century, we welcomed the year 2000 with a retreat. Her motherly care, humility and reverence to the Teacher touched everyone present. The very fact that Sri M held many more retreats under Indiramma’s loving care, speaks of his respect and admiration for her. Retreats were held in Pulicherla to welcome the year 2001 and again in Jan 2002; then in 2003 at Chittoor, Indiramma, along with Madhu and Soumini were once again his hosts. This goes to prove that she was special to Sri M.

In the words of her niece, Anita Reddy, to whom she was “more than a mother” she is remembered as follows :

“For all those who knew Smt. Indiramma, and whose lives were touched by her selfless love, grace and divinity, she remains a living legend. Lit by the flame of her Gurudev Pujya H.H.Swami Chinmayanandaji’s teachings from 1958, she remained His most devout and ardent *sadhak*, until her passing away on the 16th of May 2012. Blessed by Gurudev to “Serve, Love, Purify, Meditate, Realize and be Free”, she started the Chinmaya Mission center, conducting Balavihar, Devi groups and summer camps in remote villages, in and around Pulicherla, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh. Her sincerity, simplicity, humility and nobility in thought, word

and deed transformed those who came in touch with her. Her close association, deep love and reverence for Pujya Swami Tejomayanandaji also remained her guiding light till the end. Smt. Indiramma walked the path of Gurudev's teachings, living in practice "the art of giving love – a love that transports a devotee into a breathless state of perfection".

Uma Singh, one of her admirers, remembers her thus :

It is my good fortune, to have come across dear Indiramma. She is my ideal of a strong lady – gentle, graceful, hospitable and caring. She shared her time and spent her resources to help whoever she could, without reservation. Besides exploring the outer world, Amma always found time to delve into the inner world – meditate regularly, read scriptures, attend retreats. It seems to me Amma has used her life well and I am sure she is with her Ishtadev, Ramji."

Once again quoting Swami Chinmayananda in his letter dated 18.10.1986 (Bombay) – "Often during II Chapter revelations, your face reflected the holiness and light of Sri Ram. I noticed it..." Indiramma could not have had a better compliment from her Guru... to resemble her ishta-devata! Can this be possible without devotion of the highest kind?

As remembered by her daughter-in-law Nithya Reddy :

Sri M, upon hearing of Amma's passing on, said, "a grand and illustrious life has come to an end. She was a wonderful lady". Amma's gift to me was her guiding me to Sri M. She always said, "Put your faith in Him, you have no idea who He is!" When I asked, "Who and what is He?" She replied, "It is not my place to tell you about his greatness and power".

I am now reaping the benefits of Amma's 'knowing direction!'

We profoundly miss her awesome presence. Yet, how can we grieve a life, a journey, a story lived with such fortitude and unwavering faith in the Guru and Divine? – A treasured legacy that she left behind. We the recipients remain honoured and humbled.

Amma remains an epitome of Indian womanhood!

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

Satsang Foundation Adopts a Rural School

On the 15th of July 2012, Satsang Foundation together with Ramanarpanam Trust inaugurated the Satsang Rural School in Siriguntahalli with the blessings of Sri M.

Shri Pranab Mohanti Joint Commissioner & DIG Crime, Bangalore, Smt. Sunanda Ali, Principal, Peepal Grove and Smt. Anita Reddy, Trustee Ramanarpanam Trust, recipient of the Padma Shri Award and Person of the year of Namma Bangalore Foundation, also graced the event.

Parents, teachers and children welcomed the guests with tribal songs and a dance on the theme of unity. Addressing the parents, Sri M assured them that their children will be taken care of and provided quality education. Ms Anita Reddy thanked the village elders for allowing their children to be sent to school.

With classes starting from UKG up to 2nd Standard, the school has a total strength of 35 students and 3 teachers. It has a kitchen and a classroom to accommodate 40 children. Apart from education, the school also provides mid day meals which are

transported from Satsang Vidyalaya, Madanapalle every day. While most children live at a walking distance from the school, a jeep has also been arranged to take children and teachers who live further away.

This is the second attempt at providing basic education to the children of this area. In 2002, when the school was first started, it faced opposition by villagers who rejected admission of children from lower classes, and therefore had to be shut down.

This time around, village heads were spoken to and explained the need for co-existing in harmony, placing education above their differences. It was only after this, that the school was re-adopted by Satsang Foundation.

The Satsang Rural School sits on a small hillock 15-20 kilometers away from the city of Madanapalle. It's been fondly named Ma Konda – My Hill School, giving villagers a sense of pride and ownership to the school.

As reported by Ambika Rao



Sri M's Message on Guru Purnima

3rd July, Trivandrum

For me, Guru Purnima is very often a sad day because I always think of Babaji. After I left Babaji and came down and till 1985, all my Guru Purnimas were very happy because I invariably met him somehow. After his samadhi in 1985, every Guru Purnima is a sad affair for me. Even though I should not be sad. What we learn and what we understand and what we experience is that everything is temporary. The only reality is the Supreme Being – but it's not easy to totally cut oneself off from these things. Once when Swami Vivekananda heard from a friend that a very close associate of his had passed away, he started weeping bitterly. The other man was shocked. He said, "He's a sanyasin, he's cut himself off from everything, why would he weep so bitterly when I say somebody has passed away who is so close to him." Swamiji said, "Do you mean to say, that to become a sanyasin is to turn your heart to stone? He said, "In fact, if



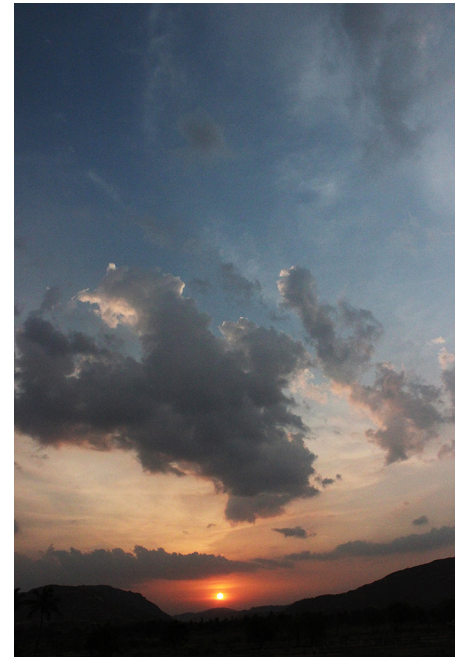
you become a sanyasin, the whole world is your family. Everyone is your near and dear. I am not weeping for someone in my family, it's the pain that you feel for others. In fact the heart doesn't turn into stone, it turns soft." I am not saying soft in the sense that one gets frightened or something, what I mean is that it melts when there is pain or sorrow all around. Now, personally I believe, it is my experi-

ence that I would not have reached anywhere on any spiritual level without the blessings of Maheshwarnath Babaji and Sri Guru Babaji, because the material they received in their hands was quite a tough material to shape. It had to be put repeatedly into the fire, pulled out with tongs and hammered into shape. Knowing that material like this can be hammered into shape, gives us great hope that most people can be hammered into shape. It is a very happy feeling you get when you realise that if I can go why not others? I am saying all this because this is Guru Purnima. The importance of the teacher, the respect you pay to the teacher and the remembrance of the teacher is the subject matter of Guru Purnima.

You know the ancient teaching - Akhanda mandala karam, vyaptam yenu characharam? Guru is not just the human being or the human form that sits before you. That has importance but the essence is more important. The essence is when a spiritual person has touched a certain level of consciousness, he becomes - Akhanda mandala karam, vyaptam yenu characharam. It means he actually becomes One with the all pervading Supreme Reality. He doesn't become one but he goes and only That remains. When I am not there, then there is only one entity.

So the word Guru actually means disperser of darkness, disperser of that which is hidden. The word *Gu* and *ru* means rudra the destroyer of guhya, that which is hidden and is in darkness. So that is the function of the Guru and if we are lucky we find a good teacher. I always used to think also that if the Guru is lucky he may find one disciple. Because disciples are not easy to come by. Nowadays we have more gurus than disciples.

You must have read in the book about my first day in meditation at Arundhati cave. Babaji said "now fix your attention" ... First I was taught to look at the flowing river with open eyes because I complained that when I closed my eyes I would get lots of thoughts. I get this complaint from lots of people - "I am sitting but nothing is happening, my mind is wandering". Babaji said, "If you close your eyes and your mind wanders then open your eyes and look at the river. Don't meditate particularly on



anything - look at the river, just look and watch."

It's a big mistake to think one can directly go into deep meditation and have no thoughts at all. You have to fix your attention on something and that thing has to be something of interest to you or else you cannot fix your attention. And when that continues for a long time like a dhara then you are not disturbed by other thoughts. Babaji said, "Open your eyes and meditate". After many days of doing that he said, "Now you can close your eyes and fix your attention on the ajna chakra". So I said, "Should I visualize anything in the ajna chakra? He said, "Think of a beautiful white lotus with two petals, fix your attention there and chant Om." I said "Ok" and sat down to meditate. Babaji was sitting close by and after sometime he asked me what the shape of the lotus with the two petals was. I asked why? He said, "Does your ajna chakra look like a masala dosa?" That day for some strange reason I was dying to eat masala dosa. What I mean to say is that he could see what was going on in my mind. So he said, "Now you cannot meditate on the ajna chakra". In the evening I was taken to Madras Café in Rishikesh and given masala dosa. After that I sat down to meditate and it was all fine. I am not saying you should all eat masala dosas, what I am trying to say, is that a teacher who knows your heart is such an important

factor in one's spiritual progress.

So, living with such a person, walking with such a person, eating, drinking, sleeping, you pick up things which are not from the books. Meanwhile I have to add, it need not necessarily be worshipping the Guru all the time. The true seva to a teacher is that you follow what he says you should do. If you don't do what he asks you to do, there is not much point in worshipping him. It will help of course after many births. But if it is urgent, if you want to move forward in the spiritual field, you should certainly show respect to the teacher and show more respect to the teachings - what he wants you to do, how he wants you to live, how he wants you to handle your mind. These are important factors without which you are actually not allowing the spiritual teacher to do his work. Suppose you don't know the way to the East fort and I am standing at the gate here. You come to me and say, "Sir I don't know how to reach the fort, show me the way". I can teach you. I can say, "Turn left, go straight, come to the fort, turn to the right, go in." Now if you want to reach East Fort, if you want to have a darshan of Padmanabha Swamy then you should walk, you should go on the path being shown. Instead of that, if you stay here on the road, garland me, light a lamp, do aarti, you will not reach there. You have to walk, you have to go the path that has been shown to you, this is important to note. So it is not only that you respect the teacher, it is also very important to follow the teachings.

Apart from that in the progress of a sad-

hak, an individual, each person's psychology is slightly different from the other. It is an individual management of the sadhak, therefore a teacher should be capable of figuring out what is suitable for a particular person. Which is why before giving kriya yoga, I plainly explain to everybody that Kriya is not the only way to the truth, there may be many other ways to the truth. Bhagwad Gita has 18 chapters - you can say there are 18 ways to the truth. Not only 18, there are many more. Because each individual is different, each background is different, the genetic heritage is different, there have to be different approaches. While Kriya may help you on the path, it does not necessarily mean that it is the only way to the truth or it is some kind of highway to the truth. There is no such highway. The only highway is sincerity and a great desire to find the truth, that is the highway. You can do it through bhakti, through jnana, through karma, you can do it through innumerable means.

In the Gita, Krishna is the guru and he is teaching Arjuna who is his disciple and they are so close to each other that Arjuna can ask him anything he wants, it's such a close relationship. And while he does that, Arjuna learns. In every chapter you will see that Arjuna's understanding of the matter becomes more and more clear. And when it is not clear - he asks. Gita is a yoga shashtra which is a practical method to attain. It is also a Brahma Vidya which is the teaching of Upanishadsu Brahma Vidyayam.

The first chapter of the Gita is interesting, it is where we stand, most of us stand,

that is Arjuna Vishada yoga. It is such an important chapter and often people skip and go on to Dhyana yoga and so on. But, Arjuna Vishada yoga is where most of us stand, the yoga of Arjuna's uncertainty and confusion or sorrow. Arjuna doesn't know how to proceed, where to go. This is the situation where every sadhak starts - first chapter of the Gita. And, the guru here is Krishna himself. Here is the man who is considered to be the manifestation of the Paramatma - who has assumed the role of the guru, holding the reins of his horses and controlling them. So, as soon as Arjuna admits that he is confused, that he is insecure that he is in sorrow and needs to be led, then Krishna steps into the picture. So the first step I did for myself was to admit to Babaji "I am confused, I am insecure, I don't know, please help me out". I held his feet and I said, "I am not going to let these go. I will always be at your feet until you kick me out". Luckily for me he didn't give me a kick, he accepted me and he said "Chalo, chalte hain." Very simple words, how simple this sounds - 'come let us walk'. I would also plead now, even though I am not Maheswarnath Babaji, that on this Guru Purnima let us say "Chalo, Chalte hain." It's enough that we tarry and hesitate and walk around in circles, now let's march forward. So, this is what I want to remind you on this occasion.

At night we are going to light the dhuni. The dhuni is something Babaji always kept, wherever he went. Because, he belonged to the Nath Sampradaya which always lights a fire wherever they go. I have been exempt-



ed from it but on two days I am supposed to light the dhuni- one is on Shivaratri and the other is on Guru Purnima.

Now the dhuni is the external symbol of the internal fire which is called the Nachiketas fire - Nachiketa yagna. When Nachiketas goes to the lord of death, Yama, and asks him, "What is the fire that takes one towards that which is deathless?", he says "Light the fire inside you." This fire, which the dhuni represents, is the flame of attention. It is the fire of desire for higher things. This dhuni, which is lit in the essence of your being, in yogic terms in the Manipura chakra, is that which consumes all the impurities, turns them to ashes and leads one to the Pure which is above. And it is this fire that is described as the Nachiketa yagna. Nachiketas lit the fire of desire for the Supreme. He has an all consuming fire which is the desire to find only the truth and he starts with almost the same status as Arjuna in Arjuna vishada yoga because his name is Nachiketa - one who does not know. Na - chiketa - one who does not know. So not knowing is a great virtue - you start from there. If you say I know then one cannot proceed further.

So today again my second request, I would plead that you light this fire of desire towards the highest so that we move towards that which is the essence of all being and which is the all pervading supreme reality. Now if you are saying that it is an impossible task, I would say no! If this man sitting here in front of you can do that, I think you all can. The first step is to start your sadhana and do it as if you are consumed by a fire. Your enthusiasm should be lit like a fire not like a dhuni which has been sprinkled with water - then you hear only the sizzling sound but there is no action. So, this is my second message on Guru Purnima. Now the third is as important... last but not the least. If you are a sadhak, if you are sincerely trying to reach the ultimate goal of Supreme Reality, if you want to merge your identity in that which is all pervading, you should start by practicing in your daily life the feeling that all living beings are a spark of the Supreme Being. You cannot leave anybody out. Whatever be the kind of person, there is a living spark inside that person, you cannot hate anyone. If they trouble you, you should not trouble them. If they cause pain to you consider that as a manifestation of God who is teaching you a lesson so that you are passing through the way - forgive them and bless them with light and life and energy. Bow down to the Guru - Sri Gurubhyo Namah and then bow down as if you are bowing down

to every single living creature on this earth and consider that creature to be a spark of the Divine. Now if you have someone whom you especially hate and don't like, visualize that person before you. This is what Babaji taught me because I had that problem. There was someone whom I really didn't like - if I sat down to meditate and saw that person or saw someone calling someone with the same name, I used to get stiff. Babaji said - precisely think of that person, visualize that person before you. Put your hands together and say you are a manifestation of the Supreme Being. It is a difficult thing to do, very difficult. Think he is the manifestation of that Supreme Being, bow down and offer a flower at his feet. Say - you have taught me very good lessons, thank you very much, and then sit for meditation. Believe me in 3 days I was not thinking in such terms about the person and my meditation was absolutely clear and fine. Really speaking the spark of the Divine is in everyone, it is not reserved for any specific one. The only thing is, in some people it might manifest in higher percentages and in some people it is hidden, but it is still there. But if I have found it then I also see it in others. So if you lead a life of that kind, follow the teachings that are being taught to you by your personal teacher. Don't let that fire, the all consuming fire

that takes us to the Supreme Being, don't let it go off at any time. Continue holding onto it because this life is so uncertain. It is here today, gone tomorrow. We all know that. Actually death is not something to be afraid of, it comes to everybody but if you can learn to die to all things which you are attached to, then death will hold no more fear. The fear of death is not so much the fear of unknown but it is the fear of losing that which we consider near and dear. If someone guarantees that when you die you can take your car, your house, your wife, property then nobody will be afraid. It is the fear of losing this, not so much the fear of the unknown. But nothing and nobody belongs to us, actually. If we understand this and live in this way then life will become completely different. So this is my message on Guru Purnima. Sri Gurubhyo Namah.

SPONSOR A CHILD

"Serving the less fortunate without any expectation for the self is Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is not about ceaseless actions for the sake of it; a blacksmith also pumps bellows all day." – Sri M

WE VALUE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

You may contribute A) Sponsorship B) Material Contribution C) Voluntary Service (professionals can conduct workshops on dance, drama, traditional art forms etc.) For voluntary service contact Mr. Stephen Mathew, Director Ph. +918500199929.

TAX EXEMPTION : a receipt with a tax exemption stamp is issued within 30 days of the contribution. All donations to The Satsang Foundation are exempt under section 80G of Income Tax Act.

CONTACT US :

TSF Donor Support – tsf.donors@gmail.com

The Secretary – secretarytsf@gmail.com, Mobile (O) 9343671537

The Treasurer at (O)9341254570; (O)9632268686

Or visit www.satsangvidyalaya.org

Please mail cheque or DD in favour of "THE SATSANG FOUNDATION" along with duly filled in form addressed to the Secretary, The Satsang Foundation, 48/49, Wheelers Road, Cox Town, Bangalore – 560005, India.

Please do not forget to mention your name and 'SATSANG VIDYALAYA' on the back of the cheque or DD.

Thank you

Shri Gurubhyo Namah

Pilgrimages are for Learning

by *Bhavani Devi*

This was the first time such a large group was going on a pilgrimage. We were going to Badrinath and Kedarnath after the release of the autobiography and were eager to see the places connected with Master M and Maheshwarnath Babaji. Master had chosen the peak season – the most crowded season. Knowing by now that he must definitely have had a reason for this, I knew I just had to wait and watch for facts to reveal themselves.

Now, back to the mundane world and ruminating on our pilgrimage, I feel that we were given an opportunity to see our own limitations physically through the hardships we faced, and mentally through the attitude with which we faced them. Stress brings out the dirt lurking in the inner recesses of the mind and only when we see it can we clean it. This is what a pilgrimage is meant to do, I think.

I am sure each of us has our own impression of the trip, however, I agree with my friend BK Menon when he says, “The trip will remain in our memories as one of those unforgettable ones, not just because of the greatness of Kedar and Badri and of Sir but also because of the diverse group of people from diverse backgrounds and places, who gelled and went on as a single group.”

15th May 2012 (Delhi to Rishikesh)

I was excited to meet the new entrants with whom I had interacted on the mail, but had not yet met. It was a treat to see the excited, energetic, happy faces, all set for adventure in the Himalayas!

At 6 am Master M came to Nehru Park looking glorious in his cream coloured kurta and mundu, wearing a rudraksha mala and a chandan tilak, holding his trishul and chimta wrapped in a red cloth. The moment we saw him, a hush descended upon us and immediately, an atmosphere of sanctity set in.

The entourage started at 6.30am with Master's car at the head. We were on our way to Cheetal Restaurant where we stopped for breakfast. Despite the numbers, our group was orderly and punctual. At Rishikesh, Kamaljeet and his team welcomed us with a drink plus a surprise gift pack, which had a rudraksh mala, a typical UP ‘gamcha’

(thin cloth towel) and a small bottle of Ganga-jal ideal to take for the abhishek to Kedarnath.

It was hot under the shamiana opposite Master's room at Narayana Palace Hotel, where lunch was served, but nobody seemed to mind. Food was good and the yatra had just started.

In the evening after tea, we went for a walk by the river with Master. It was blissfully peaceful squatting on the soft sand and casually chatting with Master and friends, enjoying the beauty of Mother Nature and paying homage in our hearts to the soothing Ganga flowing by. We forced ourselves to head back for the orientation.

16th May 2012 (Rishikesh)

Today was a Retreat day routine, with meditation, a walk, satsang in the morning; and meditation and satsang in the evening. After fixing the next day's program, we were all free to go for the Ganga-aarti.

An upsetting piece of news descended upon us after the morning walk. Bereavement in the family of our dear friends Shobhakka, Vikrambhai, Anita and Vijaybhai forced them to abandon the trip and head back. Indiramma, Shobha and Virkram's mother, had passed away.

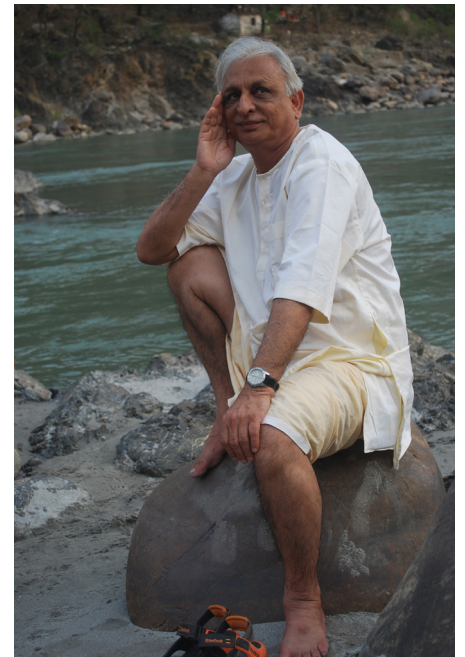
17th May 2012 (Rishikesh to Son Prayag)

Vashisht Guha was a 45mins drive en route to our destination. We left Rishikesh at 6 am to spend at least an hour here. We reached in batches and made our way over the rocky terrain to see Arundhati cave. By the time I reached, Master was in the cave and everyone had formed an orderly queue to bow down to him. There sat Master, in the spot that held fond memories of the learning phase of his life with his Master. It was amazing how despite the numbers, everyone got a chance to pay their respects and sit and soak-in the atmosphere saturated with a ‘fullness’ that is hard to describe. On our way back to the ashram, one of the participants, Mr. Sahay, slipped and was unable to move. Within seconds the young satsangis around him organized a stretcher and carried him to the ashram, where the doctors in our group attended to him. Un-

fortunately he and Deepanjali, his daughter had to abandon the trip at Son Prayag.

After going into Vashisht Gufa in groups, we had our breakfast and continued towards Son Prayag. It was amazing how Kamaljit managed to find spots to feed us on time. On that day we had a long drive. His planning was so good that in the middle of no-where, he found Shanti-Kunj restaurant to feed us. Food tables were placed right across the entrance in the open! This can happen only in India! But it was ok as there was a dorm for us and a smaller room for Sir to rest inside.

There was confusion when I reached Son Prayag, but with the help of the captains it was sorted out. It was a high-action evening. We had to segregate the luggage that was to go to Kedarnath and that which was to be left behind. Segregation of cars ac-



cording to departure of trekkers, pony and helicopter had to be done. The ribbons separating the Hotels at Kedarnath had to be tied too! By Master's grace, the night ended peacefully, except for the disturbing fact that Master had developed fever with a cough and cold.

18th May 2012 (Kedarnath)

Next morning, we took off at 4.30am with our packed brunch, but got stuck in a traffic jam. We decided to walk the extra km



rather than wait for the traffic to move. Gauri Kund and the walk up to Ghoda-Padao were full of people pushing and shoving. As we approached the place where the ponies were tied, the smell of mule urine mixed with mule dung hit us! There were mules going up, some coming down, the palkis carried by four bearers to a passenger, moved rhythmically up and down demanding space and streams of humanity moved like ants running from a deluge!

I was with my cousin and niece. I shall always remain grateful to them for motivating me to finish the unending trek. Every time my will weakened and I was tempted to take a ride – my cousin encouraged me to go further.

Unless experienced, one cannot know what it feels like to take on hardships voluntarily. How can one explain the feeling of seeing the faith and determination of the simple folk? With rubber slippers, or no footwear, a stick in hand, wearing thin cotton sarees or dhotis and thread-bare sweaters – old and young people walked with joy and faith. I could not help comparing ourselves to them – clad in several warm layers, trekking shoes, warm socks, a pitthu (coolie) to carry my knap-sack and yet groaning about the heat, dust, crowd and the endless path! We certainly learn a lot about ourselves on a pilgrimage.

Ram Bada is the halfway (8km) point where there are eating spots and where most people rest and refresh themselves. Thereafter, the incline increases and the trek gets tougher and tougher! We were resting after Ram Bada when, to our utter surprise we saw Umi astride a pony waving and shouting to us. Soon after came Agi on her pony and then the breathtaking sight of Master on a pony holding the trishul, wrapped in a red cloth, held across his

chest! He trotted past us with his dimpled smile and kind look, and before we could digest the sight, they were all gone!

It was getting dark. We could see Garud Chatti but no matter how much we walked, it just did not get closer! By now I was stopping after every few steps. My mind could not push my body – I thought I wouldn't make it. I was so close that I did not want to take a pony and yet so far that I was just not getting there. We were getting breathless. After a whole day of excellent weather, it had begun to drizzle now. We kept walking slowly.

In the dark, on the already crowded path, hungry ponies returning from Kedarnath hurtled towards us. Gosh, a stampede! We had to save ourselves from being mowed down by them on the one hand, and the palki boys, carrying their passengers danced their way up from behind shouting "Side"! If you did not get out of their way, then trouble! As we approached Garud Chatti, we saw Shailesh! What a relief! He kept the hungry mules out of our path and helped us through the last bit through rain. We reached around 9 pm. We had taken 15 hours! Others who had taken palkis and mules and the fitter and younger had reached earlier during the day.

19th May 2012 (Kedarnath)

Kedarnath temple is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva and is an ancient Hindu temple dating back to over a 1000 years. The temple stands majestic in the middle of the crowded street, which is at the heart of the town. Even more majestic are the lofty peaks known as the Kedar Khand range, which stand guard above the temple protecting the jewel that lies nestled in their mighty arms.

To the left of the temple, as we faced it,

was the path that led to the Shankaracharya Hall which Kamaljeet had hired for our satsangs. This was a great idea as it was comfortable and had a dais where Master could sit.

Master spoke of the sanctity of the place where we were gathered. In that awesome atmosphere, he gave the initial Kriya over the mike to all present! He had once again answered the unspoken wish of many. After satsang, the group was left free to explore what was left accessible after the heavy rain and snowfall.

Bhairao Ghati and the cave where Master and Babaji had lived were the two popular choices. Master was better but still not fully recovered. He decided not to go anywhere, but could guide those interested to go to his old cave. The path to the cave was visible from the spot where the people were made to alight from their ponies. To the left, as we faced the temple, a footpath (pag-dandi) could be seen, that led to the cave, the mouth of which had a wall with a door. The filming team and many others found it. It has been filmed, so those of us who missed out on it can see it later, at least.

Evening satsang was at the Hall again, after which we were free to do what we liked. After 10 pm the batches for the abhishek began. The temple is different at night. It is quiet and peaceful with sadhus warming themselves around a fire, some ash-smearing sadhus sitting in meditation and some just lying around creating an atmosphere of the austerity that Shiva signifies. The outer room of the temple has stone statues of the Pandavas guarding Lord Kedarnath. They were smeared with ghee. A very beautiful metal Nandi-bull sits in the center of this room looking towards His Lord. We inched our way in the queue towards the innermost sanctum where Lord

Kedarnath dwells. Just as we step from the outer room into the room that is before the main sanctum (the middle room), to the right, is a statue of Devi Parvati who is worshipped after Lord Shiva, when one is on his or her way out.

Sitting in front of Lord Kedarnath and performing the abhishek was a purifying, gratifying, satisfying act! The Lord is in the shape of an uneven rock that is said to be like the hump of a bullock (the form Shiva had taken when hiding from the Pandavas). The pundit tried to show me the form of Ganesha but I could not see it. We were given ghee to smear on the Lord and at the end of the ritual our forehead was pressed on the Lord. It felt so good.

20th May 2012 (Kedarnath – Gaurikund - Rudraprayag)

We had to trek down and reach Gauri Kund by 12 noon. Palkis would be available only at 12 noon and after hearing stories about people falling off ponies that was our only option. Setting aside our reservations



about loading a poor man with our weight, the paap-factor etc and catering to the need of our aging bodies, we took pitthus, who carried us in baskets on their backs! How comfortable I was in body and uncomfortable in mind- but not for long. The steady steps of the pitthu lulled me to sleep. And whenever I woke up, the beauty of Mother Nature distracted me completely from the suffering of my load-bearer. Finally, we reached Gauri Kund. We encountered others who were on foot and cheered loudly as we passed.

There was confusion at the pick and drop point. After waiting for about half an hour, a mini bus arrived and we rushed to grab our seat. It was as if Master had sent it just for us, as all the passengers were from our

group! En route we picked up others and reached Jagatraj Hotel at Son Prayag for lunch and moved on to Rudraprayag for the night.

At Rudraprayag we had to wait for the luggage from Kedarnath. Kamaljeet and his team need to be applauded for their hard work in organizing the transportation of huge pieces of luggage! It is indeed commendable that more than 167 pieces were taken up and brought back... and not one piece went missing!

21st May 2012 (Rudraprayag-Govind-ghat- Badrinath)

After breakfast we started for Govindghat where langar had been arranged at the Gurudwara, which is at the starting point for Hemkund Sahib where the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, is said to have done intense sadhana. The langar consisted of a simple wholesome meal of dal, roti and kheer. I felt the full meaning of the wonderful prayer... “For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful”!

There is a wonderful custom followed in Gurudwaras. When volunteers come around serving food, if we want an extra roti, we must hold both hands aloft and ask. A feeling of gratitude to the Guru rises in the heart the moment that roti drops into one’s hands! After the meal, we sat in silence for a while at the main Gurudwara and then slowly, made our way back to the cars. Master looked distinguished in his orange turban and an orange cloth draped over his neck.

We drove directly to our hotels in Badrinath. Badrinath temple is picturesquely located on the banks of river Alaknanda. The temple is the highlight and heart of the bustling Badrinath town, which has come up around it. The spectacular Kedarkhand range of mountains, along with the Nar and Narayan peaks, shine with a radiant light and glory and lend a heavenly aura to this beautiful holy town. Hotel Narayan Palace and the other hotels were close to each other, but all were a good distance from the temple. I had to meet the Rawalji as an abhishek had been arranged for Master with a few others. I took some Malayali friends with me to meet the Rawalji’s assistant who is from Kerala too. We found the Rawalji’s residence near the temple and made the necessary arrangements.

We had an abhishek ticket and as Master was not going for it, we held a lucky draw for those keen on the abhishek and the lucky 3 people went for the abhishek

at 4am next morning. Master was keen to have a good darshan of Lord Badrinath, and later, meet the Rawalji. The same was arranged and all went well.

22nd May 2012 (Badrinath)

This was the day we had fixed for satsang at Charan Paduka and lunch at Khak Chowk. We were to set out after breakfast, but my sister Umi, being misinformed that Master had left for Charan Paduka, ran away without breakfast. Somehow, I did not follow as it was early, and the scheduled departure was after breakfast.

We pitched into an idli-vada breakfast and then started our trek to Charan Paduka. Just like Kedarnath, this trek was much more difficult than I remembered it to be. Somehow, we managed to inch our way up. Master started after us, but with his steady stride, he caught up and even over-took us. By the time we reached, Master was seated on a rock opposite the Charan Paduka rock, looking regal in his orange turban and Kashmiri ‘Phiran’, surrounded by all the satsangis sitting silently, basking in the glorious, serene atmosphere that is hard to describe. I was late and so went across to bow down to the Charan Padukas of Lord Adinath. When doing so, I heard the melodious sound of a flute! Surprised, I looked towards Master and silhouetted against the snowy slopes, facing him, was Vijay Sekharan with a flute to his lips! An unforgettable sight, an unforgettable moment! Master then sat with his head bowed, eyes tightly shut, unmoving and lost in another world. We were inspired to bow down to this great Being that sat before us connecting us to Divinity. No one felt like moving but, slowly and reluctantly, we had to make our way back saying good-bye to this heavenly place and Rishi Ganga that flows nearby.

Khak Chowk comes en route, just near the beginning of the trek to Charan Paduka. It is an ashram that offers food to whoever comes at whatever time. There is a small modest shack-like temple in the middle of a courtyard. We sat in rows against the wall, under the beating noon sun with not a tree or shady spot in the compound. We were served in spotlessly clean thalis by smiling ashramites ready to serve as much as we were ready to eat! The feeling with which we were fed, the humble call, “Puri-Ram... Kheer Ram... Mahaprasad (rice) Ram...” will stay with us forever. The food was delicious – dal, kadhi, a sweet and sour pumpkin chutney, rice, puri and kheer. I am sure no one will ever forget that Khak

Chowk meal.

We took the much-needed nap and at 3.30pm we took off for Mana in our cars. Unfortunately, it began to drizzle and the place was so crowded that we abandoned the idea of going to Ganesh Guha, Vyasa Guha, Bhim Pul, etc, (though later I heard that some people made a quick dash to see them). We headed back to the hotel, but not before treating ourselves to a cup of the most delicious ginger tea. It was decided that we would have a satsang later in the dining hall to make-up for the abandoned program. Sir told us about how he met Bajji in Vyasa Guha.

23rd May 2012 (Badrinath – Joshimath – Kirtinagar)

We wanted to leave Badrinath early so that we could spend a little time in Joshimath. But we left after breakfast at around 8.30am. It was hot, but fortunately, the cars drove to a convenient parking lot close to the Shankaracharya Mutt. There is something very peaceful about Joshimath and especially the ashram. With Master M, we saw the spatikh (crystal) linga, the ancient tree kalpa-vriksh, the cave where Shankaracharya did tapas for 5 years, and then we went to the very old Narsimha Temple, where Lord Badrinath is brought in winter. It is said that the temple had existed even before Shankaracharya came. This was a long walk from the Mutt, but Master strode towards it and we followed. What a lovely temple complex. It was worth the walk. I was so happy to see the Nava-Durga temple too.

Lunch was arranged at Peepalkoti in a restaurant en route. Again, Kamaljeet had found a place in the middle of no-where. The drive to Kirtinagar was long and by now many in the group had bad throats, fever, cold etc. The high activity, dust and change in temperature from cold to hot, I'm sure, were the causes.

24th May 2012 (Kirtinagar - Haridwar)

In the morning we had meditation on the terrace and a short satsang. During the satsang Master spoke about how life is also like a pilgrimage with all its difficulties and obstacles and how we must develop the qualities of kindness and compassion for others and learn to care for others around us. The terrace overlooked the Ganga where some people sat and meditated by watching the river flowing by. After breakfast we took off from Kirtinagar and headed for Haridwar – an approximately five

hours drive. To the delight of all, we had checked into a 4 star hotel with the softest pillows and coolest air-conditioner possible! After all the bumbling about, this was a treat that Kamaljeet must have bent backwards to get us!

After the initial confusion of checking-in, we ate lunch and took the much-needed nap. In the evening, all were free to explore Haridwar in groups and some went to Har Ki Pauri for the Ganga-aarti.

Master had the final satsang in the conference hall. He spoke about his driver and the adventures he had had with him including a visit to his home, among other topics. The drivers were such good people that a personal bond had developed between them and their passengers. Amidst claps we thanked them all as they came and bowed down to Master, taking his blessings. They were followed by Kamaljeet's hard-working team of attentive escorts, wonderful cooks and helpers, but sadly, Kamaljeet was absent. We were longing to clap the loudest for him, but alas....

Next day we were to head back to our own world, carrying this experience in our heart and hoping that the lessons learned would be put to practice.

25th May 2012 (Haridwar – Delhi)

We announced that those who had not eaten at Mohan Puriwala should try those puris for breakfast. Each car with their passengers left with their own plans. We were the last to leave the hotel but by great good fortune, we reached home around the same time as Master's car.

Thus this pilgrimage ended. I had learned the limitation on an aging body and how the never-aging mind can fool it. I had also learned the limitation of my mind – when I did not use it, the body trudged along without a problem. Observing how the simple folk did their yatra taught me how fear is conquered by faith. These are only a few of the lessons. I pray the learning continues through the pilgrimage of life!

Jai Ho!

A Plea

by Sheila S. Rao

How many years I have yearned to be one with you
Or is it lifetimes?
Only you can tell

What is the reason you hold back from me?
You told me I have responsibilities to fulfill
And I need to wait.
Yet already I feel,
In the depths of my being,
That I am a figment of my own imagination.

It is you, isn't it that lives my life?
Then who is that who believes
That nothing in my little world can move without her?
She is someone I barely know any more.

I cannot wait any longer
And what I need to do
To be one with You
Is in your hands alone.
They say the seeker enjoys the path that leads to you
But for me the path is strewn with thorns and stones
Aimed at my heart.

The whiff of your perfume that
Told me you were nearby,
Makes me feel I am closer
But I dare not rest in any certainty.
You have moved away from me before,
Just when I thought I had caught up with you
And I was swept up by life, quickly, soon after

Take me with you
Or bless me with Your presence.
Come before me I beg You
And let me be absorbed in You
So I can face the world
And live life doing mundane things
Exchanging empty words with people caught
Up in their own worlds.

I want to understand with all my heart
When my life is lived by you
Why do I need to be here?

Satsang Vidyalaya: New Facets

Satsang Vidyalaya, Madanapalle has embarked on a new and exciting phase with renewed focus on excellence in academics. We have on board new and highly qualified faculty members led by Mr. Stephen Mathew, recently recruited as Director – Education. Mr. Mathew has over 18 years experience in the field of education and is supported by a competent team of well trained and certified teachers.

Support from Learning Wing Educational Systems, Jalandhar in training and educating the teaching staff in new and innovative methods of teaching and refreshing their knowledge levels have gone a long way on this journey. Ms. Deepa Dogra and her team from Learning Wings have been putting in immense effort to help the school achieve it's vision of providing quality education to children of the local Sugali tribes and other minorities. Providing them equal opportunity to compete in mainstream society and helping them live a dignified life, have been the leading objectives of the school.

With close to 200 children with 47 new admissions this academic year, the school has received approval from the authorities to start Class VIII, adorning the garb of a High school. The new Director and staff of the school are committed to the task of making this school, the best in this in this Mandal, thus making the vision of our founder, Sri M, to provide the best of academics to a less privileged community, a reality.

Construction of three new class rooms and an administrative office room is close to completion and should be ready for occupation very soon.

This academic year has seen many a celebration with Independence Day, Rakhi and Krishna Janmashtami being celebrated with joy and happiness.

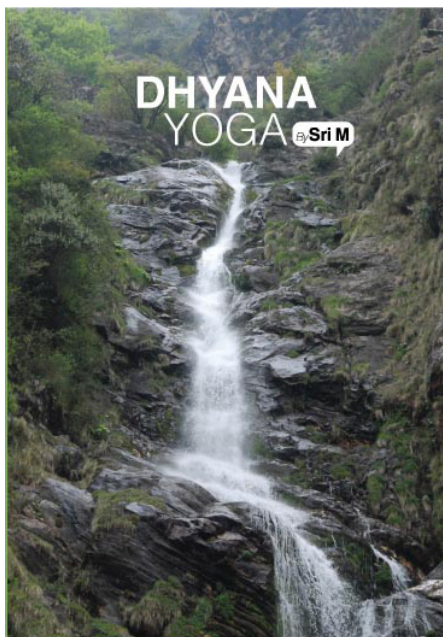
Independence Day saw many cultural programs that included children's speeches in Hindi, Telugu and English. Patriotic songs and folk dances depicting patriotism were part of the program. The National flag was unfurled by the Correspondent of the school, Mr. C. Ravindran and sweets were distributed on the occasion. The event was well attended by parents and students.

Please visit: www.satsangvidyalaya.org



New Releases by Hima Communications

For more information or to purchase please visit www.himacom.in



Dhyana Yoga is a discourse on the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.
3 DVD's
Rs. 350



Dubai Satsang is a record of the retreat with Sri M at Ras Al Khaima in Dubai, in 2012.
1 DVD
Rs. 350



Kodagu retreat was held at the scenic countryside at the foot hills of Thadian-damol, the highest peak of Kodagu in Karnataka.
1 DVD
Rs. 350

Upcoming Events:

For details please visit www.satsang-foundation.org

1. Srimad Bhagavatham	Sapthaha Nada Brahma Sangeetha Sabha, JLB Road, Mysore	Sept. 8th to 14th
2. Release of Tamil Edition of Sri M's Autobiography	Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chennai	Sept. 21st or 22nd
3. Release of Marathi Edition of Sri M's Autobiography	To be decided, Pune	Oct. 20th to 22nd
4. Retreat at Brindavan	Hotel Anand Krishna Van	Oct. 23rd 25th
4. Discourse on Katho Upanishad	Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi	Oct. 26th to 28th
5. Public Talk- Purushothama Yoga	Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bangalore	Nov. 4th to 6th
6. Retreat at Sadum	Peepal Grove School	Dec. 21st to 23rd
7. Retreat at Coorg	King's Cottage, Coorg	Jan. 11th to 14th
8. Public Talks	Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Madikeri	Jan. 14th to 15th

