



SATSANG

“For *sadhaks* the most important thing to understand is to light the inner fire that consumes all other thoughts other than the reaching of perfection – that is the central meaning of the *dhuni*.”

— Sri M

The *Dhuni* was continuously kept ablaze at Haridwar for the Kumbh Mela with Sri M

Kumbha Mela

24–27, February 2010, Haridwar
– Swami Yogaratna

I had always thought that I'd never get a chance to go to the *KUMBHA MELA*. It was one of those things I'd postponed for the 'next life time'. But when I got a text message inviting me to go, and just a few days to confirm, I immediately checked the calendar, and then decided to accept this once in a life time opportunity. How else would one get the opportunity to go to one of India's biggest spiritual festivals? And in a group too, so that one didn't have to think about anything, not even booking the air ticket from Bangalore to Delhi. The icing on the cake was that we were going with 'Sir' Shri M!

So there I was, no thinking, no planning, except to arrange a relief teacher for my students – and luckily for me, a good friend was happy and eager to help out. The most difficult thing I had to do was to find out what time the airport bus left and what time I should get up - 2.45am!

Almost at the same time, out of the blue, my old

childhood friend Nina, sent an email asking if I knew how her good friend Evelyn could go to the *Kumbha Mela*. Wow! I immediately asked the organisers, no problem at all. And Evelyn and I started back and forth emailing every minutest detail, as she is extremely well organised.

As I'm usually always late, I didn't want to miss out or inconvenience anyone this time, so I made sure of arriving at the airport 90 minutes, as stipulated, before departure, and was the first to arrive, armed with hot drink in a thermos and yummy home made bread sandwiches, very kindly prepared by my new live in guest. Soon some friends arrived, and recognised and befriended me. After an uneventful flight where I enjoyed views of India from the sky and time to read, we arrived and I started recognising other familiar faces from 'The Satsang Foundation' yet I was feeling nervous of living in close quarters with semi strangers – my mind said "Well, you're a *sannyasi* so you can handle everything!" "Accept everything, reject nothing give everything take nothing!" In a central park in Delhi we stopped for tea and snacks. There we met Shri M and we were able to pay our respects to the leader of this spiritual journey to the holiest river in the world, at a most auspicious time, *Kumbha Mela*.

Continued on page 6...

Q & A with Sri M

Excerpts from an Interview on All India Radio in Madikeri, Coorg January 2008

Commentator – Sir we are very happy, you have come to Coorg. We welcome Sir Mumtaz Ali, who is also called as Mr. M, to Madikeri. Sir we would like to ask a few questions.

Question – Sir in the path of spirituality, do we have to have a Guru? If so, why do we have to have a Guru? And also, why do anyone have to take to spirituality?

Sri M – The first question can be easily answered. The 2nd question, why do we have to take to spirituality is a very serious question. You really can not answer in a few words. But I will try. We will come back then to the 1st question.

The thing is, most people are satisfied with normal life. They belong formally to a religion. They all go to church. Or they go to a temple. Or they may go to a mosque. And they are happy with that. They satisfy themselves. They do their work. They come back.

There are some people who are not satisfied with that. They want to go into the deeper meaning of life and this happens many a time, when we are faced with certain serious life situations.

Suddenly someone you love, dies. For instance. You don't know what to do. Because here was a person with whom you could talk, you could communicate and suddenly the person has gone away. So you begin to think. Is that person there? Is he gone? If he has gone where has he gone? What was it that was alive until now, with whom I had the relationship?

So all these questions come up. That is when one begins to search for a spiritual meaning in life. There are some who even in that situation, will say, 'Well it is nothing. What is gone is gone and forget about it'. They also have some kind of a religion. Could be religion of the bar. Or something else to divert their attention. But some are not satisfied. They want to seriously find out. Whether they find out or not, we can not guarantee. But the search begins there.

What am I? Where am I? How am I related to this world? This is the spiritual search.

When you are embarking on such an exploration into largely unexplored territory, it is a good idea to find out if there is someone who has traveled on that path and

perhaps, reached there. We can't say for sure, if he has reached or not. How can we judge? Unless we get there ourselves.

So then we take the help of someone who probably has traveled before us. Maybe senior to us. Who has moved forward. Seems to have reached some kind of balance of mind. So then, we begin to go and meet that person. Try to find out what is going on. I think that would be called the guru. Beyond that, I think after a while, the guru may become an obstacle to our search. This is my understanding.

In the beginning it is necessary to have a teacher. But after that a true teacher will slowly make you independent—Stand on your own feet. Because you can not be dependent always.

Suppose I am standing here. And you don't know the way to go to some place. Some estate, let us say. I am at the gate and you are coming and asking how do I go to that estate? Do I know the place? Suppose I know. Suppose I am a *kodava*. I have been living here for many years. I would say, 'OK you go this way. Then you turn right. Then you walk. On the left side, count six and that is the house'. I can say that if I have lived here.

Now if you have to reach that house. What should you do? You have to walk. Or go in your car or whatever. You have to move. You have to go there and find out yourself. I can't do the walking for you. I can only guide you.

Instead of that, instead of going there and finding the house, if you stay here and garland me and light a lamp and do *arti* to me, you will not reach there. So you should understand that a teacher is necessary to guide us. But once, you are hungry, you have to eat your own food. Nobody else can eat for you.

Your question, whether you need a teacher? Yes. You would need a teacher. For anything you need a teacher. But the teacher should not become more important than the taught or the teaching. That is the danger always. For which we have to carefully watch ourselves.

Question – Is death the end of our life? Is there rebirth?

Sri M – You know this question which you have asked, I can give you an answer to this question. If I give

you an answer to this question, how do you reckon, if I am speaking the truth and I am not speaking the truth. I can tell you what I believe. Suppose it actually makes no sense. So instead of finding out, after death what happens or does life exist, it is good to examine death. Because then from there one begins the journey. What is death? What does death imply?

I am sitting here. I live in a place. I have a family. I have my relatives. I have my desires. I have my likes. I have my dislikes. All these things make me what I am. I am part of all this. Probably if somebody said to me, that you are going to die tomorrow. And when you die, you can also take your house, and your car and your wife and your girl friend and your children and your wealth and everything with you when you die. I will not be afraid of death.

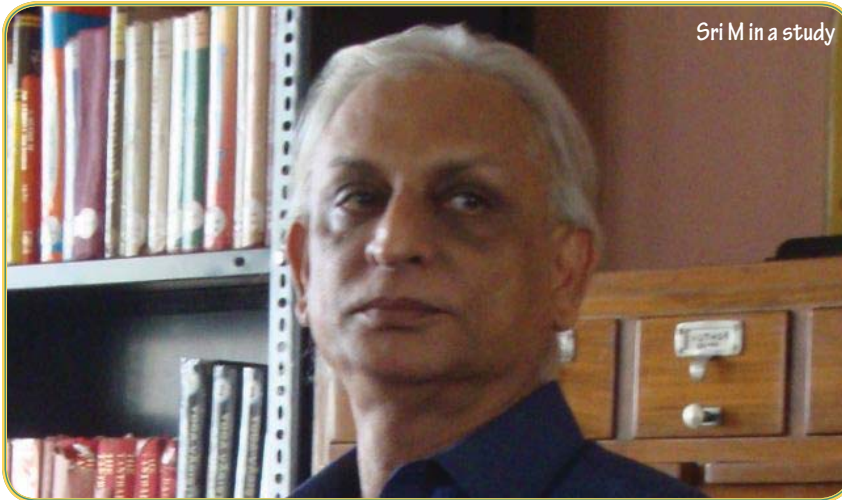
My fear is not death actually. My fear is, leaving that which I am attached to. That is death actually. Even physically, I don't know. Who knows what is going to happen. Plus, I have to leave all that is near and dear to me. This is the greatest fear of death.

While we are alive, it is difficult to understand what happens after death. When we are dead, we don't know if we can come back and tell anybody. So it is a no-win situation both ways.

However, we can certainly understand the implications of death while we are alive. I think, that if we understand the implications of death while we are still alive, we probably will be able to sort out what death is. Which is, as we discussed just now, the fear is mainly that we will have to leave all the attachments that we have. All the things that give us happiness, that give us pleasure. This we have to leave behind.

Let us say, a doctor says, your system is so and so. 18 blocks are there in your heart. We can do nothing about it. Your kidney is failing. In 3 days you are going to die. And we accept that we are going to die. What would I do under such circumstances? Actually I know I am going to die. You will find this story in the *Srimad Bhagwad*. Parikshit is cursed that he will be bitten by a snake and he knows he will die in 7 days' time. He is sitting on the banks of the river, waiting to die. He knows he is going to die. And then Sukhadeva comes along and gives him the teaching. That is the *Bhagwad*.

So unless and until some such experience takes place in us, we will not be able to solve this problem of death. If we can work on this idea called death, immediately and see if it is possible to live without attachments. It is very difficult. Is it possible even for a day to say, I am going to die so let me see what happens. Perhaps



Sri M in a study

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— SRI M

from that will come an understanding of what death is. And then we will probably know what will happen after the death actually takes place in the physical body.

Questioner – Sir, the world speaks of Rama, Krishna, Christ, Buddha and there are so many names. Whom should we consider as great? Or is there anything which is more powerful, and greater than these names?

Sri M – Regarding this question, which you have asked, I think over thousands of years different people have come and gone. Different beings. Different human beings have come and gone. According to their spiritual stature and according to their spiritual achievements, we have given them a godly stature. Right?

Why are they being give a godly stature? Because they seemed to have understood, first who they were and what was their connection with outside world. And they sort of, sorted out the spiritual search and attained it. At least we think they have.

So therefore, we give them great respect. And we try to understand what they said and try to understand from their life's experience. And so on. It is always easier to understand from a biographical story, rather than from plain notes. In the same way, then there are scriptures like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. There are so many books in story form trying to describe to you what happens in spiritual quest.

If you ask me if something is greater than that I would say that the greatest thing that should be given our respect is the Supreme Reality which is behind this whole universe.

So, even if you respect a personality and you consider that person great, it must be because of the content not because of the form. That does not mean we should not respect. My father or my mother also have form and I respect them. But I may respect my teacher perhaps more – whose spiritual content is greater.

Shivaratri Satsang

Madanpalle, 12th February 2010

We meet again this year for *Shivaratri*. There are many reasons why *Shivaratri* is celebrated and night vigils are kept and people fast during the day. Now, this is a very important day in the year. Actually every fourteen days after the full moon, it's supposed to be an important day, but when it occurs in the month of *Magha* then it is celebrated as *Shivaratri*. It comes every fourteen days actually – on the fourteenth day of the month.

Now the concept here is the concept of *Shiva*. In the night one sits on a vigil like a yogi - you know *Shiva* is the symbol of *Maha Yogi*. Even in our *Parampara* - the *Nath Parampara* - the first *Guru*, the first teacher is supposed to be *Adinath* and *Adinath* is none other than *Shiva*. *Shiva* and *Adinath* are indistinguishable. Since *Shiva* is considered to be the *Maha Yogi* and since *yogis*, according to the description of *Krishna* in the *Bhagavat Gita*, are those who stay awake when others sleep and sleep when others are awake, therefore *Shiva*, who is considered to be the *Maha Yogi*, *Adinath*, is considered to be the source of all the *Nath Parampara*. Of course when you say *Nath Parampara* it means the *Yogi Parampara*. It is one of the most ancient Orders from where the practice of *Yoga* has come. So therefore, people sit at night and meditate and try to go deep within oneself to show that what is night to the ordinary man is day to the *yogi*, and what is day to the ordinary person is night to the *yogi*. Which means—what one would naturally and normally be attracted to in this world is not very attractive to the *yogi* and what you are not attracted

to, or, we are not attracted to, is very attractive to the *yogi*. Our attraction is usually in the outward world, the *yogi's* attraction is to the inner world. So therefore this night is a symbol of turning inwards.

You know how *Shiva* is represented? *Shiva* is represented with three eyes, two like us and the third which, normally, we do not have. So when *Shiva* meditates he closes these two eyes. People always ask if *Shiva* is God why is He meditating, what is He meditating upon? Which means, even when you have a concept of *Shiva* as *Shankara*, to meditate upon the inner core one has to shut one's eyes and go inwards. It's a symbol of going inwards than outwards.

Therefore when *Shiva* meditates with His eyes closed, the third eye opens, which is called the eye of knowledge, the eye of understanding. It's not any organ situated here, you cannot open the third eye with a screwdriver. You can only open it through unfolding of the inner wisdom, that is the third eye. So *Shiva* represents that. *Shivam*, in Sanskrit, also means auspiciousness and bliss. It can also be used as a substitute for *ananda* - which we all seek. Therefore *Adinath* is considered to be no other than *Shiva* who taught the path of the practice of *Yoga* so that one may turn inward and find the source of one's being, the source of all happiness and the source of all knowledge. This is the concept of *Shivaratri*.

Now you look at the idea of *Shiva*, how beautifully it has been created. Most of the other Gods and Goddesses require a lot of paraphernalia to be worshipped, look at *Maha Vishnu* we need all

paraphernalia to worship Him. But you have a concept of *Shiva*, who wears a tiger skin or deer skin which is found in the forest, smears his body with ashes, has matted hair because he cannot be expected to have a dip everyday. He doesn't need to have a dip because the *Ganga* is supposed to descend from Him. This concept of *Shiva*, who sits cross-legged like a yogi, either in *Siddhasana* or in *Padmasana*, has a crescent moon on His head. The crescent moon is a symbol of *Shakti*, you see it in *Durga* and *Kali*, the *Navadurgas* all have a crescent, now crescent is also the last digit of the moon either when it is going off or when it is coming back. Therefore it is considered to be the sixteenth letter of the sixteen lettered *Shri Vidya*. This little moon, the crescent moon is an ancient symbol which has been popular in many parts of the world. This crescent moon is a symbol of *Shakti* and moon is also called as *Soma*, therefore *Shiva* is called *Soma Shekhara* - one who keeps or collects or retains *Soma*. Now *Soma* has two meanings. One is the moon, as the physical moon, the other is that, the imagination is always associated with the moon. The moon in Greek is called *Luna*, therefore when you are going close to *Shiva* you become more and more lunatic. In the sense, your reason is not the ordinary sanity that we normally have, but something is slightly turned off. In this world of inner exploration you can't stick to two plus two is equal to four, you have to go a little off the tangent. It may be six or five or eight, which is not Newtonian mathematics, it may be Quantum, but not Newtonian. Some holy men behave like they are mad. Although you think they are mad, they think you are mad.

Soma is also that which when imbibed, causes the consciousness to ascend to different levels. Like the *Soma* which was drunk in the *Vedic* ages to transform the mind, to raise it from the ordinary state of consciousness to a higher state of consciousness. Some people say that *Soma* is a herb, maybe, which is lost now, but the real *Soma* is that which the yogi feels when his energies or, when his consciousness ascends to the highest center in the human body. That is *Soma* and it really intoxicates you, so much so, that you don't need to have any intoxicants ever! And *Shiva* is the carrier of that *Soma* therefore He is called *Soma Shekhara*.

Shiva can be *Shankara*, as you see in form, or *Shiva* can be the

absolute Supreme *Brahman* who is also called the *Om*. In *Kashmir Shaivism*, *Shiva* has no image, He is the Supreme Being. Now what does this mean to us - all these matters which we have discussed? Does it have any implication for us or are we just sitting down in the night and meditating, does it have any meaning? What you must understand is that there are two more symbols of *Shiva* which are very, very important. One is the snake, which is around His neck, and that snake represents wisdom. In some ancient religions snakes have always represented wisdom, especially the ones with the hood. You'll see it in the headdress of the Egyptian Pharaohs,



Sri M and others in a Satsang

who followed a wisdom religion. The snake also is the symbol of the *Kundalini*, which remains inactive in most people but resides in all human systems, and the level of wisdom and higher consciousness that a person ascends to is when this energy uncoils itself and moves upwards. Of course, in an anatomical hall you cannot see any snake lying anywhere in the body, it's not that! It's not a physical thing! It's a symbol of energy rolled up in potential form which has to be awakened by the yogi and *Shiva* again is the symbol of that awakening where the human being becomes a God.

One more thing that I have to tell you is that *Shivaratri* also, traditionally, is supposed to be the day when *Samudra Manthan* was done and the poison came out. You

know that story about the churning of the ocean - the *Manthan* - and when the churning took place, first a very powerful poison called '*Halahala Visha*' is supposed to have come out. It would have enveloped the world but for the fact that *Shiva* was supposed to have drunk it up. It stopped in his throat and it became blue, so He is called *Neelkantha*. Now this is a fact which is applicable to all yogis, not only to *Shiva*. When you churn your mind in meditation, which means, when you delve deeper and deeper into the layers of your mind, the first thing that comes out is not *Amrit*. The first thing that comes out is poison, because, that's the only way it can come out and disappear, which is why, many people who start the practice of *sadhana*, after a while, give up *sadhana* and take on to other things because that poison has come up. They get carried away by the poison, or they drink the poison. There is no *Shiva* nowadays, unfortunately, to drink the poison for us. This is something which every practitioner of spiritual exercises should keep in mind —that when you practice and go deeper and deeper, all the tendencies that have been hidden in your subconscious mind till now, bottled up, they will all come to the surface, that is the poison.

Now that is where you might get some help from a teacher, who knows how to handle it, otherwise, everything will go berserk. It has to be someone who knows how to handle this poison. Suppose somebody thinks that he is not angry at all but he has other qualities which he would like to deal with, and then he starts intense and sincere *sadhana*.

After six months he finds that his anger level has gone up. Why? Because that little bit of anger which was inside us and which is usually hidden by smiles is coming out. We hide! All that is hidden has to come out, if it doesn't come out it cannot evaporate and go. It's almost like heating water to make tea - you heat it, the bubbles have to come, the glug, glug sound has to come, then it will become vapour. So you have to watch out at that time. That's another important symbol of *Shiva's* story of drinking the poison.

The third important aspect is the *Tandav Nritya*. *Shivaratri* is also considered to be the day when *Shiva* did His *Tandav Nritya*. It is also supposed to be the day when He met *Parvathi* in the Himalayas. Here *Parvathi* indicates *Shakti*, *Shakti* indicates *Kundalini*, *Shiva*

indicates that energy, that Supreme Consciousness, which is seated in our *Sahasrara Chakra*. So when they say *Shiva* met *Parvathi*, it means, that this energy, which is known as *Shakti*, has ascended the *Sushumna* and touched *Shiva* and they are together. In fact, the coming together of *Shiva* and *Shakti* is what is celebrated by *Shankara* in the beautiful verses called the *Soundarya Lahiri*.

I think the most important thing we should stress on today is the *Tandav Nritya*. They say that when *Shiva* dances the whole world shakes and is about to collapse, He pulls Himself together, otherwise everything will collapse. This is a symbol. You know, we are taught in our *Parampara*, that when *Shiva* or *Adinath* dances his *Tandav Nritya*, he destroys all images, he explodes all the images that we have created and without that destruction of the old and the stratified and the calcified and the fossilized, nothing new can come up. Like death! What would have happened if all the people who were born in this world were still alive? But people move, they come, they go, new people come. Now that going is destructive and that is the dance of *Shiva* - who is also called *Maheshwara*, the destroyer. Now that "destroying" is only a "transforming" because unless the old goes no new can come up, that is, on the physical side. The psychological side is relevant to the yogi who is always in search of his true identity, or, true consciousness. True consciousness means to go beyond all images, not images that you see around you. But the images that we build up in our mind and *Tandav Nritya* is a beautiful expression of the breaking down of all the images that we have created. So many images! Look inside our mind and you will see that we have hundreds of images and it is because of these images that we get hurt, our ego goes up, we have all the problems, everything! I believe that I am an intelligent man, now somebody pricks it by telling me that you are a bloody fool, I get terribly upset. Why? Because I have created an image that I am an intelligent man. Nobody can be one hundred percent right, therefore you could be wrong, can we think that way?

One of the functions of *Shiva's Tandav Nritya* is to destroy the images that we have created. We create so many images- I am so and so, I am this, I am that - finally what happens? Because of the image you are not able to explore, you are not able to listen. You put blinkers on your eyes and look in one direction and walk. It's like horses with blinkers- they can't go this way or that. This destruction of all images is the most important function of *Shiva* and the night is supposed to be the time when the outside world vanishes from our mind

and we go into the realms of inner consciousness. And *Shiva* sits there guiding us on to this tour, this journey into the inner, where we go breaking image after image, image after image, and then we come to the Source of Consciousness, because of which, the mind is able to create and this is the most important aspect of the concept of *Shiva*.

What we should bear in mind on *Shivaratri* is to think about all these concepts, which we discussed today, and when we sit down here to meditate, with the fire, in the night, we should meditate keeping our mind on these matters. Say break down all my images. But be careful, I don't know if you can survive with all images broken. It's very difficult! Very few people can really survive with all images broken and those are the people who are generally free.

So, the *Tandav Nritya* of *Shiva* is meant to free you from all the conditioning, all the images, all the attractions and repulsions that keep you rooted to the understanding that you are an individual different, and not the same as everybody else. So if you are ready to embrace the dancing *Shiva*, then you are free, if you are not, then you are not free. You can choose. *Shiva* is not a dictator, although, one of the symbols that *Shiva* carries is the *paasha*. Do you know what is a *paasha*? It is a noose. You see in the *Tandav Nritya* that in one of the hands there is a noose, this noose is called a *paasha* - which can be thrown and pulled. Now this noose is only thrown by *Shiva* on those who are ready to take the noose, it is not thrown at random, because, most of the time even when *Shiva* throws the noose people duck out, they don't want to be caught in that noose. Believe me, it is a beautiful noose, once you are caught there, which is also the reason why *Shiva* is also called '*Pashupathi*'. *Pashu* means all the instincts which we have as animals and this is the noose that pulls that animal and makes it do exactly what He wants, this is called the *paasha*. Therefore He is called *Pashupathi*. We all are actually *pashus* although we think we are *manushya*, deep down we are all *pashus* and *Shiva* is the Lord who presides over us, so He is called *Pashupathi*.

I must tell you this story which comes from a different tradition. If you go to Delhi, there is a railway station called Nizamuddin. It's built because of the name of a great saint, a *Sufi* saint, who used to live there, called *Hazrat Nizamuddin*. The story is that he never went for public prayer except on Friday, the rest of the days he would sit quietly in his room and meditate. He was a great practitioner of meditation. On Fridays he would go for public prayers. Now, because he went on Fridays for public prayer, large crowds used to gather

there, mainly to see him. He had this peculiar habit that when he went on Friday for the public prayers, he used to tie a black blindfold and go. Everybody used to wonder, 'What is this?' He had to be led to the mosque because he had this blindfold. One day one of his close associates asked him, "Sir why do you tie this blindfold? Can you tell me?" The saint said, "Do you want to try?" The man said "Yes Sir, if you don't mind". The saint said, "Okay, you take the blindfold today", and he gave it to him. This fellow went to the mosque, before the prayer started, everybody was sitting down, lots of people. He covered his eyes with the blindfold and he was shocked, terrified! Because through the blindfold, which was acting like a kind of optical filter, he saw that all the people sitting had human bodies but they had animal heads. The fellow sitting next to him looked like a wolf, the fellows sitting near were like a cat and tiger although their bodies were all human. He got terrified. He was sitting next to the saint and he said, "Sir, please take this off, what is this?" The saint said, this is their real characteristic. They have only human bodies but they are '*pashus*'. Now you know what *Pashupathi* means!

The *linga* also represents *Shiva*. This is a unique concept, it's unique in the world, that there is no need of a human image of God. God can be represented by a simple symbol, which is the symbol that stands like a pillar. You know the pillar is the support, without a pillar you cannot have anything horizontal. The whole edifice stands on pillars. Today also, if you want to have big buildings, you have pillar foundations. That represents *Shiva* as the single principle around which all other activities take place, but, for the activity of the *linga*, you'll find that in any place, in any temple, there is a *linga*, there is another little thing down, that's called the *yonis*. It is the womb. It is usually *linga-yoni*, so the whole of production, creation, movement, everything depends on the *linga* and the *yonis*. Which means, as the energy of the *linga* is there, so also there has to be a womb to receive it. So *Shiva* and *Shakti* here together, represent the entire creation of the Cosmos. It is so simple that you just need a little stone kept there, *Shiva* doesn't need any elaborate offerings, give him a '*bilwa*' leaf and a little cold water. That's how a yogi's life is as well. He doesn't need anything, he needs water to drink and perhaps some food to eat and he is happy with that. Therefore, *Shiva* represents the perfect Yogi. *Shiva* represents that symbol of the creation of the entire universe.

Now there is a mantra which is invoked whenever you say *Shiva* and

Continued on page 10...

...Kumbha Mela, Continued from page 1

The bus journey was blissfully long, enabling me to keep enjoying my book, in between wondering whether Evelyn, a new comer to India, had noticed this or that which I saw from the window. Lunch stop helped in further orientation to the group, with Shri M and Evelyn. She was smart enough to find the coolest breeziest place where we could chill out while awaiting others.

At last in Haridwar, we arrived at 'Camp Nirvana' after dark but there were so many bright neon lights that we could easily find our luxurious tent and settle in ready for a late dinner with blissfully plenty of tomato soup! Unfortunately one of our members, Shri, tripped and fell requiring stitches to her cheek which our travelling Doctor Rajendra Prasad was easily able to minister same evening at the local hospital.

These tents are so luxurious that they have carpet inside and out, an attached bathroom complete with luxury basin, shower stall, toilet mounted onto a wooden stand and hot water on tap. Poor Evelyn crashed as soon as we arrived while the rest of us had the good fortune to hear Shri M's introduction to lineage in the 'Nath' sect and how he got the name Madhukar Nath from his guru, Babaji, who he lived with in the Himalayas for 3 years, as we sat around the *dhuni* (spiritual camp fire). Shri M also showed us how to use the *Chimta* (tongs) and explained the significance of the *Trishul* (trident). He initiated us into the *Nath* mantra for that retreat and told us that for this time, we could consider ourselves as *Naths* (Wow!).....

That night I went to sleep, not tired, but buzzing with excitement at being blessed by the direct disciple of Babaji.

Next morning, usual 4.30 am wake up and cold bath. Followed by hot tea (5.30) and meditation with Shri M (6.30). Although I have known Shri M for well over 15 years, this is actually the first time I was attending his meditation. It was like my usual meditations, struggling with monkey mind only a little shy at being in group and in Shri M's presence.

Asanas by Uma Singh at 7am were a welcome way to follow instead of lead, and gave the body a wonderful warm and loose feeling that brought energy and suppleness to the rest of the day. After breakfast we had our 2nd satsang with Shri M in which he started telling us more about the *Naths* and the *Goraknath's* text - the '*Goraksha Shataka*' which means '*Hundred verses of Gorakh Nath*'. During the talk Shri M spoke about a few commonly held misconceptions such as on *Hatha Yoga*.

He said, "Many people have the misunderstanding that *Hatha Yoga* is something to do with *asanas*. In the *Nath Sampradaya* when you say *Hatha Yoga* it does not mean physical exercise. What it means is that the system recognizes two types of energies operating in the body on either side. One is called the *Ida* and the other *Pingala*. The *Ida* is the left and *Pingala* is the right. Just like you have two nostrils. They are supposed to be the two *pranas* active in the system, in the right and left. *Pingala* on the right is plus and *Ida* on the left is minus. I am deliberately saying plus and minus avoiding the terms positive and negative. That's because minus does not mean negative and plus does not mean positive. It is like two poles of a battery—two terminals of a battery. Neither of them can be called negative or positive except that they do two functions. One sends and the other receives and they are equal and they are very important otherwise there is no circuit created. So it is like the anode and cathode.

The right side *pingala* which is the plus is represented by the sound '*Ha*' and *Ida* which is the left is represented by the sound '*Tha*'. When you say '*Hatha*' it means that which involves the movement of energies here and there to form the right circuit and there can be a spark that ignites the *Muladhara* and the energy begins to act through the central channel which is called the *sushumna*. This is the meaning of *Hatha*."

Shri M then read and explained some of the verses from the *Goraksha Shataka* which deal with the practice of *yoga*. The text talks about the best *asanas* suitable for the practice and how the fruits of this *yoga* bring an end to the misery of this world. It mentions that "this by which the mind is tuned away from sensual enjoyments and is attached to the supreme spirit is a ladder to final release; this is the cheating of death."

At lunch time we had the good fortune to be able to give free feeding to 50 *Sadhus*, who came in a bus. I was thrilled to see the variety of *sadhus* because though I've been a *sadhu* (*sannyasi*) for over 25 years, I've never had the chance to mix with many outside of our own ashram (Bihar School of Yoga) and found myself too shy to introduce myself and talk to them though I felt so good to be in their presence. It also reminded me very much of my main ashram (Bihar School of Yoga, Rikhia Peeth campus) where we fed the poor and children and local villages regularly. I felt a little uncomfortable 'gawking' at the *sadhus* but enjoyed joining in their pre-prasad (food offering) *kirtan* (singing), and enjoyed at the end when departing they vied to sing and impress Shri M with their wisdoms. As one devotee said "What hardship they

endure, all for the search of truth!" Could we live like that?

That afternoon we all 60-80 of us went for our big 'dip' in mother *Ganga*. I had no idea what it would be like, imagining a sea of humanity stampeding towards Mother *Ganga*. But the *Hari Ki Powdi* area of Haridwar was very orderly, so orderly that there were police with rifles and machine guns at check posts at strategic points. Bags were searched.

After walking towards the river in awe of our new surroundings being a *sanyasi*, I was keen to get a head shave before dipping (there are 2 types of *Sadhus* in India, those that never cut their hair and grow dread locks that are usually wound around their heads, and those who keep a clean shaved head; both practices symbolizing detachment from physical vanity). Luckily, our wonderful guide, Kamal Jeet Singh of Skylark Nature Tours, took us (Evelyn and I) to the barber section, a quaint *ghat* (river bank) studded with barbers on their mats under an electric pole that advertised the government rates of Rs 25 for head shave and various barber services. Nearby there were little wooden box stalls with *sadhus* holding court and offering special *poojas* (ritual offerings). After the head shave, the hair is offered to *Maa Ganga* (immersed in her furious waves). Evelyn also decided to renounce her hair and enjoyed giving up to *Maa*.

By the time we went back, most had already had their dip and were on their way to the opposite bank of *Hari Ki Powdi*. So we quickly went towards the bank. The water was a beautiful aquamarine and fresh as if alive and full of energy, rushing past at an alarming rate so that we had to look for a fairly safe place. The banks were well constructed steps with chains you could hang on to. We chose our spot and went in, in such hurry that I forgot to take my glasses and watch off. I kept the glasses beside the leg of a nearby wooden box stand and forgot totally about the watch which also had a chance at bobbing up and down in the waves like us two bald goons, cleansing our sins away. It was so fresh and invigorating! We filled up our bottles with holy *Ganga* water and headed to the change area dripping like drowned rats. Luckily there is a separate area where women can change, while being harangued by the tough boisterous women owners of wooden beds used to put your stuff on. Sweet and innocent, we raced back up the stairs to the other bank where everyone was watching the *Ganga* flow in front of the numerous little temples with all sorts of *sadhus*, *pandits* (priests) and devout pilgrims, singing, chanting, praying and dipping to remove their sins and woes. This was really the only 'crowd' we saw the whole time.

Everyone was sitting silently and peacefully. I was able to get very close to the bank. There were government men selling donation tickets for the upkeep of the pilgrimage site, they sounded like auctioneers but it was quite entertaining and I think a great way to collect donations! As the sun went down the loudspeaker music of chanting and *pujas* got louder and life savers began coming up and walking on the bank. I was imagining hoards of pilgrims pushing us all in while they vied to get to *Ganga Maa* at sunset to put in their little offerings (a leaf boat with flowers, and flame) for blessing their ancestors. I put one in for all my students and friends (this is for you!). As the light faded, the temple lights got brighter and the bells got louder until on the stroke of sunset, suddenly the loud speaker began to blast *Ganga ki Aarti* and all the *poojaris* started waving their lights and the colour and sound of devotion was all encompassing. This was all reflected in the river which was like a rainbow coloured heaving serpent, rushing past (shades of *Kundalini*?). People here and there started offering their leaf boats to *Maa Ganga* with fervent prayers for Blessings.

We all finally rose up and started following our Master with elevated spirits. As we walked back to collect our shoes and then to the buses waiting for us, other pilgrims, seeing Shri M's stature and his devotees all following, started coming and paying their respects by touching his feet.

Back at our Camp *Nirvana*, our heads were in a whirl and we dispersed for dinner, *kirtan* and the *dhuni*. Shri M had suggested that devotees should mind the *dhuni* for an hour each right through the day and night so that it was kept alive ceaselessly (*ahkanda dhuni*). I felt bad that I hadn't volunteered at the beginning, so I asked for a chance and was lucky enough to get one immediately while others were eating. Luckily there was someone there to show me how to do it and I got the hang of how to place the logs and branches on so that they burn slowly and easily without becoming a roaring fire, smothering in smoke or going out completely. Then I sat and relaxed in front the fire, gazing into it and remembering the scenes of people sitting in front of their own hearth in European homes. The fire was really mesmerizing and I was wondering how come I had never realised just how beautiful a fire can be. I got so involved in its attraction that I started mentally talking to the flames, asking them to communicate

to me, to reveal their mystery to me. They kept dancing like little fairies or nymphs, almost teasing me. Whether it was the little fairies jumping up and down to a silent music, reaching their arms to the skies or, the cool blue shy smudges hovering around the coals or the slender white arms wrapping themselves around the logs, it was more and more captivating until I felt drawn to the fire, inch by inch until I was almost touching it. Yet I didn't feel at all sleepy, in fact I felt more and more fascinated, wanting to penetrate into this secret.

Finally the spell was broken and I went to bed in order not to be up all night and sleepy the whole of the next day. The *dhuni* reminded me also of *Tratak* (candle light meditation) and *Sai Nath's Akhanda Dhuni* and I wanted to know more and more



Evening prayers at Har-ki-Pauri, Haridwar

about it.

Early the next day even before 5.30 tea, quite a few were already at the *dhuni* soaking up its heat, life and mystery.

After another intense meditation in the presence of our *Nath* Master, and loosening up with jovial humour, we had a wonderful *satsang* from Shri M on the significance of the *dhuni*. This was a wonderful way to impress on us the mystery and energy of the *dhuni*, bringing to life in our minds what was already burning in our hearts. Few excerpts from his talk :

"Looking at the fire is one of the most beautiful experiences especially at night. I was taught to completely open your eyes and watch the flame. And then to close your eyes and visualize it inside. It actually burns off many of the leftovers from our past just as it does physically. It is the symbol of burning away of all desires. That only a fire can do. You cant wash away all desires with water but fire can burn away everything. And it also keeps you constantly exposed to the fact that this is the end that we are all going to come to. The same thing

– ashes. That is a constant reminder. When you watch the fire see how beautifully the flames come and how warm and nice it is... but you also see that the wood is constantly burning. You cannot keep the same wood. Tomorrow it is gone and become ashes. This also illustrates time as it moves, which doesn't leave anybody.

Fire is a great symbol of the spirit and I personally believe that fire has a life of its own when it is lit. It is not just a fire which is an inanimate object. It has a life of its own which relates to you in a certain way. When you sit for a long period before the *dhuni* and meditate on the outer fire, it helps to light the inner fire."

"The fire always goes up, means the spirit however it may descend to the earth, it still has the aspiration to go upwards. This is also a symbol of

the *Kundalini* fire that burns inside and is lit through deep meditation."

"For *sadhaks* the most important thing to understand is to light the inner fire that consumes all other thoughts other than the reaching of perfection – that is the central meaning of the *dhuni*. And unless it is a fire it is not going to work. Once your enthusiasm is fired by it, then

it will work. It also shows that one cannot aim for it unless you one has decided that all is well and fine but now I have to move on. Without this basic notion *sadhana* does not work."

"And leaving it on continuously burning means that this is not merely a symbol that we do it one day and forget about it when we go home. But this desire for perfection burns eternally within us all the time. That is the symbol of leaving the *dhuni* burning continuously."

"The *dhuni* also indicates bringing about light in darkness. Starts of course with a spark which comes to someone who has emptied all his contents and is open and receptive to what is coming. All that you carry – the tons of cabbage on one's head – has to be burnt to ashes before something new comes out. When that happens the third part of the mantra is fulfilled – *Mriyora ma amritam gamya*. From death I have moved into the deathless."

Many of us received initiations from Shri M that morning, simple and profound, like only a real Master can give - a spiritual link to the ancient

traditional lineage of *Nath's* and *Babaji*, so subtle and mysterious that only by sincerely following the instructions for daily practice can we imbibe the secret essence of the Masters.

After the 2nd day of *Sadhu Feeding* after which Shri M and the *sadhus* talked, some of us raced up to *Manasi Devi* temple on top of the hill over looking *Hari ki Powdi*.

The deities: *Sri Manasi Devi* and *Gayatri Devi* were beautiful and the whole temple had an ancient and classical air. The trip up and down in the cable car was absolutely fantastic! We had panoramic views of Haridwar and the *Ganga* and the ground directly beneath had been planted with masses of coloured flowers which added greatly to the joyous atmosphere.

To get there we had to race through the winding streets of local markets which were full of temple wares and pilgrimage paraphernalia adding richness and depth to our experience.

We got back in time to accompany Shri M to the *Juna Akhada*, the living place of the *Naga Sadhus* which literal means 'naked holy men'. Actually they 'clothe' themselves in ash, rubbing the ash from their *dhunis* over their bodies keeping them warm and purified by the ashes. The

akhada was an area of lots of tents separated by winding lanes and with our big group it was difficult for all of us to go in and see the *Sadhus*. Some seemed to be 'out of it' and others austere sitting erect by their *dhunis*. The walk through the *akhada* and a glimpse of the way the *sadhus* live was quite an experience!

Our last evening by the *dhuni* back at Camp *Nirvana* was highly charged! After our walk thru the *Sadhus' Akhada* and knowing it was our last night, everyone was expectantly crowding around the *dhuni*. *Bhajans* and *kirtans* were sung and luckily I had enough courage to pluck up to offer

singing and all enjoyed raising spirits further till we formally thanked Shri M and he blessed us by giving each one a *tilak* (annointing the third eye) with ashes from the *dhuni* which had been infused with everyone's mental mantra chanting as they had tended the *dhuni* throughout our time there, and with

Har-ki-Pauri, Haridwar

[Inset: Sw. Yogaratna and Evelyn]



the *bhajans* and *kirtans*. When I received Shri M's blessing, I said to him "I would much rather receive your *tilak* with ashes from your *dhuni* than any other *sadhu* in the *akhada*" and he said "Have you



Sri M and others around the *Dhuni* at the camp *Nirvana*

ever smelled such sweet ashes from a fire before?" This made my day, the whole retreat! We were truly blessed!

A finishing note by Gagan: I think the entire experience was so overwhelming with the *sadhus* coming to our camp, our visit to the *Juna Akhada*, the tranquil Goddess river *Ganga ma*, radiant *Guru Nath* form of Sir, the fragrant *bhasma tilak*, the group initiations and Sir's *chimta*! All woven together in a retreat which was like stepping back into time and experiencing the glory of The *Nath* teachers!

Where they learn...

To discover

DISCOVERING THE SATSANG VIDYALAYA

The people at the Satsang Vidyalaya probably do not see themselves as exceptional. However, they are role models for a hundred children or more, as they look to embrace life and meet its challenges head on. Come with us and meet some of them here.

Like us, you will also delight in knowing that these children have cleared the Zila Parishad exams with distinction and have gone on to the next step in their education ladder - on to higher classes in government schools.

Krishnaveni, was a little child playing carefree, She was happy to go to school - The Satsang Vidyalaya, close to where she lived. One day she developed considerable pain and discomfort in the eye - so much that led her to believe that there must be some cure for the malady, that a doctor would know. Though she got well, soon enough, the determination in her remains of what she felt. She wants to study well and become a doctor - an Eye doctor!

She has a good friend and classmate - Pushpalatha, who studied with her in The Satsang Vidyalaya and is also interested in becoming a Doctor - as she wants to help people by serving them. She says that she is fortunate to get the quality education that is required, to realize her ambition and goal along with the hard work and study which she puts in.

Bharathi & Sahana, are from a family of six brothers and sisters. They have no father. Their mother works in a hospital close by. Sahana is very good in academics and is the top scorer for the school. Bharathi looks up to her sister and wants to follow in her foot steps.

Smt Indira is the Principal of The Satsang Vidyalayas since the last eight years and going by the way the

school has grown, her involvement and passion for the children, is self-evident

Indira started her career as a teacher. Early on, at 'Neelbagh', David Hosborough, was her mentor and shaped her thinking. David, an Englishman, had founded Neelbagh, a rural school for the needy, at Rayalpad, close to Madanapalli. Indira has also served in Rishi Valley, another exemplary school.

Indira cares deeply for the children and the teaching staff. She is a one-man army in marshaling facilities, shaping the curriculum and driving the pedagogic approach.

Should you be staying in Madanapalle for more than a day, it is likely that you will eat at the school mess and you are sure to bump into her then and see her magic in action.

We wanted to make the school real to you, so we have introduced these few faces to you from the school.

Today Indira and 9 other committed teachers/ support staff help more than 130 children believe in themselves and their bright future. follow in her foot steps.

Memoirs of a trip

TO TRIVANDRUM AND KANYAKUMARI

MARCH 2010

- SRIKUMAR M

It was, as always, quite uplifting... travelling with Sir, especially this time to many places of spiritual significance in Trivandrum and Kanyakumari. I would try to visualize whenever he recalled moments of the experiences with many masters he had met during his early days. This is a general recollection of those moments with Sir. Some of the details of his discourse on 'The Alphabet of Reality—Om' are also part of this short recall.

In Trivandrum, we entered every place that Sir visited with eager hearts to, hopefully, assimilate a past experience for posterity. We visited the house of his friend and were told by the friend's sister that Sir's predictions from the time he was 16yrs old had always come true for them. Saw the courtyard behind Sir's childhood house where the first meeting with his master had taken place.

We visited a saint's *samadhi* where once used to be a forest with a lot of snakes. Sir used to meditate there and had heard the sound of 'Om' chant coming from the *samadhi* on a few occasions. This saint had asked for some air vents to be made for his *samadhi*. Sir also had some terrifying experiences during meditation at this particular place. Gopalaswami Pillai mentioned in Sir's book '*Jewel in the Lotus*' used to meditate here.

We also visited the place where Poojapura swami used to stay. Sir said he used to kick people to bless them, presumably to clear or activate the energy centres in the body. He had once kicked Sir pretty forcefully.

In Beemappally beside the sea, we paid obeisance at the tombs of Beema Ameen and Abdul Qader (her son). Long time ago, two coffins were found floating beside the sea shore by the locals. When they opened, the mother and son sat up and decided to stay in that village. These saints used to treat people with psychiatric disorders and also people who were possessed. The area around the campus of the tomb is lined with dwelling for people who need treatment. After the saints passed away, their tombs serve as healing centres for the mentally

disturbed patients. Next to this was the tomb of Kaladi Mastaan where too, we paid our obeisance. Sir had requested the qazis at both the tombs to chant prayers while all us stood with folded hands in supplication. We prayed at the tomb of Thuckalay Peer Mohammed Sahib enroute to Marudvimalai.

Climbing Marudvimalai to the cave where Sir used to meditate took us about 2 hours. Sir used to meditate in this cave for 3-4 hours in *sheersasan* with legs in *padmasan*. He has met several saints like Naina swami here during his visits. Sir said this is definitely a power centre. Marudvimalai ('medicine mountain' in Tamil) is home to the *sanjeevani* herbs that fell here when Hanuman carried the *sanjeevani* mountain to Sri Lanka during the war with Ravana. It is awe inspiring to think that a few boulders from Hanuman's cargo could have created such a big mountain. We rested outside the cave in the cool air after a tiring and hot climb. Personally, I have never felt the enormity of these physical efforts when Sir is around (Kailash trekkers would agree). Marudvimalai has attracted a number of saints including Sri Chattambi Swamikal, his teacher Ayya Vaikunda Nathar and others. We had visited the ashram of Swami Abhedananda in Trivandrum and this ashram was one of the many dedicated to Sri Chattambi Swamikal. We reached our destination, the Vivekananda Kendra in Kanyakumari in the afternoon. During the 2-day stay at the *Kendra*, we had meditations, yoga sessions and *satsangs* with Sir. I really liked the walk with Sir to the beach for viewing the sunrise. It was breath-taking to view the greatest force of nature reveal itself with such beauty and grace. In comparison, one wonders at the ego, a smaller force which manifest itself with false pride in violent forms when there is so much to learn from watching the wonders of nature.

During the *satsangs*, Sir answered many questions with characteristic clarity. He mentioned that in order to become a disciple, one has to be ready because mental strength and the effort that is required are enormous. He said that the force that comes from realization is more powerful than a nuke bomb and one has to be prepared for it. He also stressed on non-consumption of external chemical stimulants during practise of *kriya*. This includes



Smt. Indra and her students at The Satsang Vidyalaya



The Satsang Vidyalaya, Madanpalle provides free education to rural children from the tribal areas of Sugali Thanda.

The school runs a sponsorship programme whereby education of children can be sponsored at an annual cost of INR 7,500 per child.

For details contact: Smt. Jayasri Achuta Rao (098863 11999), C.N. Bhushan (09341254570), or write to: satsang.foundation@gmail.com

avoiding frequent intake of strong tea and coffee.

In the *MahaGanapati* Temple at Trivandrum, Sir gave a talk on the alphabet Om and the relation with Lord *Ganesha*. Lord *Ganesh*, being the son of *Shiva* and *Parvati*, is supposed to represent the whole of consciousness, the *Om*. If one looks at Lord *Ganesha* from the side, his figure gives the visualization of Om as written in Sanskrit. He holds the *Pasha*, *Ankusha* and the *Modaka* or poppy fruit in his hands. The *pasha* is used as a noose to pull a *sadhaka* towards the supreme consciousness. The *ankusha* is used to goad the seeker repeatedly to tread the path of realization. The holding of the *modaka* symbolizes that Lord *Ganesha* holds the fruit of realization or the supreme consciousness in his hand. What I found inspiring was Sir's description of the meaning of the rat, the carrier of *Ganesha*. If the rat, a lowly creature, found commonly, is a carrier of *Ganesha*, who is the supreme consciousness—Om, means we can also become of the carrier of this consciousness or become one with it.

Sir had also elaborated on the *Mandukya Upanishad* at the start of the trip at the palace in Trivandrum. While it is pointless to try to repeat what he said about Om, the central topic in the Upanishad, the interesting point is about the meaning of *Mandukya*. While some say that it was written by a sage called *Mandukya*, it means the following: *mandukya* means a frog; a tadpole by losing its tail in water, becomes a frog and jumps on to the land. It becomes amphibious i.e. it is able to survive in the material world (land) and also swim in the ocean of spirituality (water) after losing its tail (the ego). May we all lose our tails forever...

...Continued from page 5

that is called the *Shiva panchakshara*. It's called *panchakshara* because it has five letters. 'Om', of course, is the '*pranava*', which is added to all mantras, and then you have '*na'ma'shi'va'ya*'. So it's called *Shiva panchakshara*. Now all these five letters represent the ascent of consciousness through the different psychic centers of the human system. When the *Shaiva Siddhanta* practitioners practice meditation on the *chakras*, they start with *Om* (gesturing to the centers in the body), *na ma shiva ya*—fixing each letter on each center. This *panchakshara* has so many variations that, chanted in different ways, it brings about different effects in the consciousness. Sometimes it is chanted as "*na ma shi va ya*"; sometimes it is chanted as "*shi- va ya na ma*"; sometimes it is chanted as "*va shi va ya na*"; "*va ya na ma shi*", there are different variations, depending on which teacher teaches you and for what purpose. 'Om' is usually added, one or two *bijaksharas* are added and it is chanted according to the effect. So you see this whole theory and practice is the symbol of *Shiva* as the Supreme energy, in co-operation with *Shakti*, which creates the entire universe, and it is linked to our inner system by which we can actually touch those parts of the energy which are active in us. It's a whole topic of what we call *Shaivism*. The '*bhasma*' is put because *Shiva* is also represented as living in the cremation ground— a place where everybody fears to go— which shows that every one will end here... destruction! So, if somebody can stay and win over that where everybody ends, then he is an ultimate winner and, therefore, he smears the ashes from the cremation ground. "*Bhasma antam shariram, bhasma antam*

shariram'— so says the *Ishavasya Upanishad*. Finally that is what happens, ashes, and *Shiva* represents that. What does it mean? It is actually auspicious to have '*vibhuti*'; why? Because your body has been turned to ashes and your soul has ascended to the higher spheres. It's something to celebrate, not something to cry about. Actually when a child is born in the world it comes crying. I have never seen a laughing child. The first sound you hear is its cry, because somewhere deep down in its subconscious I think it feels —'Oh God! Now we have entered!' Generally, even when you go, you go crying, or we go crying! We are saying that we cannot do anything about coming crying, but we can do something about going laughing. Now that going back laughing can happen only if you understand this concept of *Shiva*. I am not saying that by twelve thirty we would have understood this concept of *Shiva*. I'm only saying that if it is understood, then you can be free, and this may be a good starting point, when we sit down with the fire. I hear that some wonderful people are going to also chant the *Soundarya Lahiri*, so hopefully, we can also enjoy the bliss of *Shakti* and *Shiva* coming together. And look at the fire and see how your inner energies may be turned to the pure *agni* and transported to the higher spheres.

In the *Nath Parampara* wherever the *yogis* go, they light a *dhuni*. *Dhuni* is a very important part of their tradition. It is the fire that is lit outside, it represents the fire that is inside. The fire in the *Vedas*, in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, termed the *Nachiketas* fire— the fire of *Nachiketas*— the fire of sacrifice, the fire that burns up everything and leaves only the pure consciousness intact. This is the concept of *Shivaratri*. *Shivaratri* has started, thank you!



Sri M and others at Kanyakumari



Swami Vivekanand Memorial, Kanyakumari



SRI M AT THE INDIA CLUB, DUBAI

SRI M'S DUBAI VISIT

JANUARY 2010
- K N REDDY FROM
DUBAI

Thanks to the efforts of at Dubai that we were able to work out an itinerary for Sri 'M', (hereinafter referred to as Sir) to make his visit to the UAE (Dubai & Abu Dhabi) a delightfully enriching experience for us all. Also, when Sir decides to visit, we have always experienced several issues being resolved by themselves leading to joyous experience for all.

Sir's visits to the UAE have always been filled with joy and laughter for us as we get to interact with him. We have also managed to receive profound insights into spiritual uplifting from the Master.

Personally I have felt great joy in his presence, but then such is the state of my *Sadhana* that when he is not around, every now and then I slip back into my usual *samsaric* follies that impede sustained growth of the spirit for consistently experiencing that inherent joy which he so easily brings out in us in his presence.

Many of us went to receive Sir at the airport on the 28th of Jan '10 in the afternoon and we drove him to the offices of Manav Enterprises at the DAFZA. Sonjib was at his emotional best, attributing to divine grace and Sir, the meteoric growth of Manav in spite of the difficulties being experienced during the downturn. After this we went to the guest-house of Manav where Sir was going to stay overnight. We meditated at 1830 hrs after which we all had a great dinner.

Next morning being Friday, we all attended the morning meditation

at 0630 hrs and then had breakfast. There was an outing to Al Ain in a bus with around 40-50 people. The journey was great with people exercising their vocal chords. We come back around evening after sighting some flamingos from afar in Dubai's bird sanctuary. We had meditation at 1830 hrs after which we all had dinner.

On Saturday, Sir and some friends went to Abu Dhabi and returned in the evening from Abu Dhabi and went to Params' place in Sharjah where we were with him. Sir blessed Param & Siham's new born baby boy and we all had great time and then were served dinner.

Next morning was Sunday, the first working day of the week over here. Sir visited a few friends after which Sir went for lunch. Towards evening Sir attended a get-together at a sky scraper in Dubai. This meeting was at a place they call the "Third Eye" an independent group that promotes spiritual discussions and *pranic* healing etc. Here I was fortunate to listen to Sir in what I felt was really an absorbing & powerful discourse. After this one of the families here had a big gathering waiting for Sir's *darshan* at their place where we all had dinner after which every one paid their respects to the Master.

Next morning, meditation was at Sudha's place where there was a sizeable gathering. After breakfast, Sir came to our place where there were several one-to-one meetings. That evening we had arranged for a small function at the India Club wherein Sir would speak to a gathering of 60-70 people. Also on display and sale were Sir's books, CDs and DVDs. We did experience brisk sales. Prior to Sir's discourse Sudha had arranged for 3 musicians and we were treated to live rendition of *bhajans/carnatic* music. A lamp was also lit to start the function. Sir spoke about his experiences right from his young age, those beautiful years he spent with his Guru in the Himalayas, and several other experiences which was absolutely a treat to watch and listen Everybody listened in rapt silence as the master communicated various facets of spirituality in his own inimitable style. This was followed by dinner. Sir came home to retire for the night.

Next morning (2nd Feb) was started with meditation after which we had breakfast. More people had one-to-ones till lunch time. Ladies together made lunch for all of us. That evening we took Sir to the Burj Khalifa up to the 121st floor (the tallest building in the world). We all had a great time at the Dubai Mall as we went around the aquarium as well. Sir's flight was that night and we all paid our respects to the Master and fondly wished him goodbye.

IN YOUR LOVE

*I'm but a child in your arms
You knew me before I was
You will know me after I am
But I still do not know myself*

*You gave me mum and dad
Who taught me life's lessons
I have tried to learn them
And I'm still learning today*

*Life has been good at times and
Life has not been so good at times
My mind fails to understand
Why life cannot be happy at all times*

*A deep yearning was stirring
Even when the child in me was
Until it grew so big that the adult in me
Now asks what exactly am I looking for*

*Then you came along and took my hand
Your look showed me the depths of love
Your words were balm to my heart
Your longing now engulfs me*

*Night and day, day and night
All relationships seem merged in you
I now know my anchor
Please don't let me go*

*In your love let me be
Wherever you may place me
Whatever happens to my lot
Hold me close to your heart*

Shaila Saldanha (Australia)

WITHOUT YOU

*It is obvious
I am no Arjuna
But I have an invisible chariot
On the flag of that chariot
Is sitting an invisible Hanuman
I haven't seen him*

*But incidents indicate
I have a charioteer too
Like Krishna
Who has saved me so many times
From total destruction.*

*I do get wounded
Once in a way
But without this charioteer
This chariot and this Hanuman
I would have been
Completely annihilated*

*So many times so long ago.
Why am I saved
Again and again
What merit do I have
What is to be achieved through me
And why does that not get done?
Who knows?*

Ajai Kumar Singh

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MYSTIC SOJOURN

*I was here in Heaven
Amidst the hell-bare nescient dusk
Where the devout warrior sans untruth
To redeem his glad communion of trust*

*I was here in Heaven
In this world wearied flesh
When the iridescent light of God's honeycomb
Devoured the illusory titans of darkness*

*I was here in Heaven
Amidst the coldest despair of vanity
Where valour feeds on fear that feeds on nescience
From the chief nourisher of unstained desire*

*I was here in Heaven
In this blissful fire of irised hues
Where immortality drew a wealthier breath
From the relics of ancient death*

Abhijit Jadeja

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