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Shri Ram Chandra Mission

The **Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Shahjahanpur)** (also named **SRCM**) is a non-profit organization, a new religious movement. It was registered in 1945 in Lucknow, India, by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (aka Babuji) (1899–1983) in memory of his spiritual teacher, Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (aka Lalaji) (1873–1931), whom he met a few times before Lalaji's death in 1931, and to promote the method of Sahaj Marg which Babuji invented and registered in 1945.^[1] The Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Chennai) was registered in San Luis Obispo, California, USA, in 1997.^[2]

Beliefs and practices

The stated purpose of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission is to "awaken the divine consciousness and support on the path of evolution", and according to the movement, its modified form of Raja Yoga starting at step #7 of Patanjali's Raja Yoga^[3] is not based on "mechanical methods involving austerity and penance unsuited to current living conditions" but on "simple and natural means". The proposed practice claims to be seeking to be "universal", "easily practiceable" and one can quickly "get to find yourself in what is sought unsuccessfully on the outside".^[4] The Sahaj Marg system uses the cleansing of the past impressions (samskara), meditation on the heart and the support of a living (self-titled and self-appointed) spiritual master.^[5] The role of the spiritual teacher is said to be essential, according to the books published by the SRCM, as "he is well aware of all issues and all matters of spirituality and is claimed to have walked the path to realization or enlightenment of the soul, thus ending the cycles of life". He allegedly knows what to do for the traveler.^[4] "He is regarded by the practitioners as "a living example, a teacher by his writings and by his words. "It is God who is the true Guru, Master, and from him (God?) alone that we receive the light", wrote Ram Chandra in his book *Reality at Dawn*.^[6]

Organization

The current President and spiritual Master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California, USA in 1997 (SRCM California-1997), is Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (aka Chariji) (b. 1927). The current President and spiritual master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in Lucknow, India in 1945, (SRCM-Shahjahanpur-1945) is Navneet Kumar Saxena, the founder's grandson. Chariji was the disciple of the founder, Sri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, (aka "Babuji") who himself was taught for a short while by Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, aka "Lalaji" having met him a few times.^[7] The SRCM claim that Lalaji rediscovered a very old method of spiritual training, the so-called inherited knowledge of the sages of ancient India, and which is based on the transmission of divine energy or "pranahuti".

Lalaji and his lineage claim that Lalaji was the first "non-Muslim" Master of the Naqshbandiya Sufi Order and that his Master was Hazrat Maulana Shah Fazl Ahemad Khan Naqshbandi Mujaddadi Mazahari r.a. (Huzur Maharaj) of Raipur (Kaimganj), Uttar Pradesh, India. Lalaji was initiated on January 23, 1896 at 05 P.M. and was conferred full Master-ship on October 11, 1896, which he remained to his death on Aug. 14, 1931. The teachings of Lalaji are the teachings of his Master, Huzur Maharaj, of whom he was declared "a perfect copy" by an independent panel of other religious disciplines.

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission is now present on all continents, and books by Sahaj Marg are now translated into twenty languages and used in many ashrams.^[8]

Reception

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California in 1997 (SRCM California, 1997) and headquartered in Chennai, India, is an NGO recognized by the UNDPPI (Department of Public Information) as a "non-profit organization" in Denmark, the United States and India.^[9]

In France, the SRCM is organized as a non-profit organization established in 1986, but has been classified as an orientalist cult with over 2,000 members in the 1995 report established by the Parliamentary Commission on Cults in France.^[10] Around 1995, it counted about 60 tutors for 600 abhyasis.^[11] The anti-cults association GEMPPI denounced the "indigence doctrinal and philosophical talks among followers, unrelated to the Eastern religious systems". Its President stated that one sole life of total and absolute obedience to the Master of SRCM is supposed to interrupt the cycle of reincarnation. "Critical reflection and autonomy of thought are stifled in this ideological movement which claims to be revolutionary in its ideas".^[12]

In Belgium, the 1997 parliamentary report established a list of 189 movements which contained the Shri Ram Chandra Mission.

The inclusion in the parliamentary report on cults has been criticized by lawyer Lawrence Hincker, who said that "this system of meditation, called Sahaj Marg, does not lead to a life away from the world. It integrates all aspects of man, whether physical, mental or spiritual, without charge or austerity or penance or self-negation".^[13] According to the sociologist Bruno Étienne, an expert on religious issues, the SRCM publishes books as any other group but does not proselytize, and has never been convicted: "To us, it is fully a NMR (new religious movement), modern religious group, although based on an ancient tradition, and subject to serious arguments advanced by others more knowledgeable, we do not understand why it is criticized on the list of the damned".^[14] Raphaël Liogier, Director of the Observatory of religious and university professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Aix-en-Provence, said he did not understand the inclusion on the cult list of an association that is fully recognized in India.^[15] The Centre d'Information et de Conseil des Nouvelles Spiritualités (CICNS), a French association for the defense of religious freedom and conscience, said the movement is victim of slander on the Internet.^[16]

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External links

- SRCM (California-1997) Official site (<http://www.srcm.org>)
- Critical views on Shri Ram Chandra Mission France (<http://www.prevensesctes.com/sriram.htm>)
- Lalaji's NaqshMuMRa Nexus (<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaajinilayam/home>)
- Sufi Saints and Sufism (Dr. RK Gupta) (see section on Lalaji in Sufism (<http://sufism.weebly.com/>))

Sahaj Marg

Sahaj Marg (Hindi translation, the *easy* or *natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1] [2] [3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called samskaras) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 - 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

Sahaj Marg is offered free of charge to peoples all around the world. Sahaj Marg system of meditation is practiced by over 400,000 practitioners (abhyasis) in over 92 countries.

The daily practice includes:

- Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
- Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);^[5]
- A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes) ;^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

- Group meditation sessions known as 'Satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (Sat = Truth and Sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;^[5]
- Cleaning sessions or individual sittings with a preceptor (trained prefect) are also available free of charge and they can be scheduled on a one-to-one basis.

Generally individual sittings are taken every other week but if necessary they can be had every week based on preceptor's availability.^[6]

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, it's founder and president, called "Babuji."^[6] Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and died in April 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique called pranahuti^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicants' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.^[6]

Controversies and schisms

There are some break away groups and some controversies have spun out on who controls the domain and trademark names of the group after the death of its founder in 1983 (Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur). The court verdict was given in favor of his nominated representative.^[9]

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[10]

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Sahaj Marg

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Practice

The daily practice includes:

1. Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
2. Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);
3. A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes);^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

1. Group meditation sessions known as 'satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (sat = Truth and sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;
2. Cleaning sessions.
3. Universal prayer: The fundamental elements of sahaj marg practice—morning meditation, evening cleaning and night-time prayer meditation—are primarily meant for personal spiritual growth and development. The universal prayer is a feature of the practice that is dedicated to the welfare of all. The instructions for the prayer are as follows:
 "At 9:00 P.M. sharp every abhyasi, wherever he or she might happen to be at the time, should stop his or her work and meditate for fifteen minutes, thinking that all brothers and sisters are being filled up with love and devotion and that real faith is growing stronger in them. It shall be of immense value to them, which their practical experience only shall reveal."
4. Constant remembrance: Meditation, cleaning and prayer make up the basic elements of the sahaj marg practice. Practice becomes dynamic and infused with life and feeling when it leads to the remembrance and experience of our connection with the divine within. One cultivates this ongoing connection through a specific training of mind and heart referred to as constant remembrance.

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, its founder and president, called "Babuji." Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and left his mortal coil on April 19th, 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique taught by his master Lalaji called pranahuti^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicans' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.

Whispers From The Brighter World

Four Whispers (books) have been published, the last released in May, 2012. Fifth whispers(book) released in may 2013

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