



mu NEWS

CHINMAYA MISSION® WEST BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2005, No. 109

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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide to individuals, from any background, the wisdom of Vedanta and the practical means for spiritual growth and happiness, enabling them to become positive contributors to society.

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Gurudev's Message



In the gray areas of choice, why are you afraid? With whatever data is before you, go ahead and choose an action, and carry it through. Even if the action chosen turns out to be a mistake, what does it matter? What do a few mistakes matter in one's long span of life? From the experience of a mistake learn to discriminate more keenly. Don't be afraid to act while doing the action. If you realize it is a mistake, don't become indecisive again and leave the action. Continue with the action and tell the mind, "Now you suffer! You chose it; you suffer!" and thereby learn to evaluate actions correctly and develop discrimination.

In order to face challenges, a lot of courage is necessary. Do not run away. You must learn to face the situation. The courage to face it comes only when the mind is strong and poised; only then can it rediscover its own efficiency, ability, and beauty of performance—all of which ensure success in life.

Source: Say Chees!

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Editor: Brahmacharini Aparna Chaitanya

Printing & Distribution: PigMint Press, Redway, CA

Design & Layout: Waters Design, Redway, CA

Cover Photo: Odalis Valdivieso

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Things My Mother Never Told Me

Q&A with Brahmachari Uddhav Chaitanya

Continued from CMW News, September 2005



There seems to be a lot of Vedanta in The *Matrix*. What was your take on the movie?

Yes, the first *Matrix* movie has a lot of Vedantic concepts in it, with some great scenes and great lines, like these:

- When you are ready, the teacher comes searching for you.
- ‘Neo’ unscrambled is the ‘One.’
- When Neo is taken out of the Matrix, they unplug him from the system. This unplugging is like *sannyasa*, wherein the *brahmachari*’s tuft (hair) is cut off, symbolizing the cutting off of all attachments.
- The Matrix world (*maya*) is like a dream world for awakened masters. The masters can come and go at will, and control it as they want.
- The red pill and blue pill are *preyas* (the path of pleasure) and *shreyas* (the path of goodness) from *Kathopanishad*. One keeps you in the dream world and the other brings you out of it.
- The agents (artificial intelligence) in the Matrix have the ability to pop up anywhere—the infinite and indescribable power of *maya*.
- There are three agents, just as there are three *gunas* through which *maya* functions.
- The evolved child, who was bending the spoon, said, “Just remember: There is no spoon.” This line finds its resonance in *Mandukya Upanishad*. You can control your dream because 1) it’s just a dream and 2) it’s your dream.

What does it mean when we say everything is a dream? Does it mean you can walk in front of a truck?

(*Laughing*) Yeah, you could. It’s your choice. But I wouldn’t advise it.

The scriptural reference to this waking world being a dream-like existence is to point out the non-existence of the ego, to remove the misconception that the Self is bound by the instruments of body, mind, and intellect, and the world of multiplicity.

To transcend this waking world—the waker, waking, and waking world—all have to be renounced. Many of us are willing to give up the waking world in hope for a higher state, but we are not willing to disregard and discard the waker also. The only way out is to translate this truth into all our expressions.

How do we rightly translate this overwhelming concept into our daily life?

Like this: Any action being done, though done through the prompting of *vasanas*, should be done with one sole intention, in this order: to purify all instruments, to disidentify with all instruments, to get established in Being. At every moment, come to focus on the Existence that is, not on the apparent plurality. Focus on the essence, not the superficial. Practice is the only thing required.

When the scriptures talk of *sadhana*, the seeker interprets the goal as something he has to seek and attain by his active doing, which he labels as his ‘*sadhana*.’ But by thinking like this, the whole purpose of *sadhana*—to stop becoming a doer and enjoyer—is defeated. So, for the ‘doers’ in us, the scriptures instruct us to purify the mind through *puja*, *japa*, and *dhyana*—the purpose of all three is purification. Here ‘purification’ means disidentification with the instruments and the ego. *Bhagavad Gita* states, “*Gunah guneshu vartante iti matva na sajjayet.*” *Vasanas* express through our instruments, which interact with the world. But for this interaction to take place, the existence of the ego is not required as such—it is all just ‘happening.’

But if *gunas* or *vasanas* alone are ‘doing,’ and all desires, thoughts, and actions are just their automated expressions, then all identifications, choices, and even *sadhana*, are also *vasana*-prompted. So where does self-effort come in?

‘Disidentifying’ from the instruments and the ego is the process of allowing *vasanas* to express and exhaust themselves without any doership or enjoyership. Disidentifying from the instruments results in dissolving the misconception called ego.

Learn to disidentify. Practice. This is self-effort. In and through all desires, thoughts, and actions, keep your focus on the Changeless, not the changing *vasanas* and their expressions; they will keep coming and going.

Raise yourself from *tamasik* to *rajasik* to *sattvik*. *Sattvik* desires, like the desire for *satsanga*, will automatically drop off when it is time. But *rajasik* and *tamasik vasanas* don't drop off automatically; it takes a lot of self-effort to overcome them. In the *sattvik* state, it is much easier to consciously disidentify, but in the *rajasik* and *tamasik* states, automatic disidentification is impossible; a lot of effort is required.

It's one thing that *vasanas* have to express and exhaust themselves. But how do you stop generating *vasanas*?

There was a parable circulated via e-mail; the author is unknown:

One evening, an elderly Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that rages inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One wolf is evil. Its faces are of anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, lies, and ego. The other wolf is good. Its faces are of joy, peace, love, humility, generosity, truth, and faith."

The grandson reflected on these words for a few minutes and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The wise Cherokee replied, "The one you feed." Stop feeding your *vasanas* and they will stop generating. Feeding means identifying with, getting worked up by, being influenced by, over-valuing.

But isn't this disidentification also the result of *vasanas*?

Yes. So develop such *vasanas*—this is the greatness of *satsanga*. *Satsanga* creates *sattvik vasanas*. There are *vasanas* (*rajasik* and *tamasik*) that keep you bound in the *vasana*-cycle, and then there are those (*sattvik*) that bring you out of it.

But if my *sadhana*, my going to *satsanga*, also results from *vasanas*, then if one has only negative *vasanas*, how can one ever improve and evolve?

Good question. Come ask this question after you have put forth effort, after have sufficiently developed *sattvik vasanas* and experienced their worth. You will be better prepared to understand then. Right now it will just sound like circular reasoning to you.

Most importantly, when, where, how, and why was the first *vasana* that started all this? How did 'I' ever come to be?

This answer is a fact, whether you like it or not. For sure, there is no first *vasana*. In fact, there isn't a second, a third, or a fourth. But until you see and experience this for yourself, you will keep asking about the first. All is Consciousness alone. All that the *jiva* experiences, including the *jiva's* very existence—all of it is imaginary. For now, when you hear statements in the scriptures about *vasanas* and *vasana*-purgation, sublimation, or exhaustion, just follow the scriptures. They will take you to a point of such acute awareness that you will see for yourself the truth behind all *vasanas*. But for now, the intellect cannot grasp it, and words cannot depict the total picture.

So, since the guru and *ishta-deva* are both objects of my experience, they are also both to be eventually renounced, right?

Yes. But here, you don't do the dropping; they drop of their own accord.

These four things—guru, *daiva*, *tirtha*, and *shastra*—when they come to you in your dreams, don't consider them as ordinary dreams. They are visions. Yes, visions also are relatively real, but they are more significant for the seeker than just another dream. Such visions come in a pure mind, a highly *sattvik* mind that is awake and ready to receive instruction. This doesn't mean that all seekers who have pure minds have visions. These visions depend on individual needs. They just happen; you can't make them appear by wishing for them. Trust that you will get what you need when you need it.

***Bhaktas* speak of 'all this' (the universe and its play) as the Lord's *lila*, and that all this just 'is what it is.' Does this mean Self-realization is pointless?**

Depends on who is asking and who is answering. From the standpoint of Awareness, realization is pointless. From the standpoint of the *jiva*, realization is in two parts: 1) realizing that I am not finite and limited and 2) realizing that I am the infinite and unlimited (which defies description).

As the means to attain realization, we often hear two kinds of statements: "Do your *sadhana* with great fervor" and "Let go of everything and surrender to God." How should these be rightly interpreted? What's the bottom line: Are we puppets of divine will, or do we have free will? Is it one or the other, or is there a percentage of each? Or is it a different factor altogether?

It's one or the other. Believe what you want to believe. Believe what's easier for you to believe. In the end, it won't matter.

Option 1: Surrender and don't take credit for anything. Everything is the Lord's will, so there cannot be any doership or enjoyership—no ownership. This is the difficult one.

Option 2: Take full responsibility for your actions. Everything is your choice, your free will to decide your own fate—*karma*, *karma-phala*, *prarabdha*, *sadhana*. In this, you will see your efforts manifest as divine grace—they are not separate.

But keep your thinking steady: it's one or the other; it's all or nothing. No, there is no percentage, so don't conveniently keep switching from one attitude to the other. Either the Lord holds the reins (you seek to melt in Him), or you do (you strive to realize your true Self). Gurudev described the realization of the *bhakta* as a melting in infinite love and fullness, and the realization of the *jnani* as an explosion in the white heat of meditation. Words will not suffice here; experience will teach you.

For the realized master, it is all divine will. For him, the instruments of body, mind, and intellect are all part of this unreal appearance called world. So if anything is to happen through any instrument, the master doesn't will it or desire it, as a *jiva* does. Whatever is to happen just 'happens' through the instrument. One perfect example of such a *jivan-mukta* is Jada Bharata (see *Shrimad Bhagavatam*).

In all practicality, how do you explain surrender and living in the moment, without planning, saving, etc. to a householder?

Always remember that the purpose of living is to live, not to make a living. Make your life purposeful by living to realize the Self. The result will be clarity, fearlessness, and a sense of freedom in all aspects of life. Everything else will fall into place. Try it and see for yourself.

How do we put letting go of doership and enjoyership into practice? What exactly does 'letting go' mean? For example, does losing enjoyership mean you don't appreciate the taste of gourmet coffee? Does losing doership mean you win a game with the same attitude with which you digest food?

Losing enjoyership means not being influenced by, or a slave to, any sense object. In your example, yes, you can appreciate the taste of gourmet coffee, but what has to be guarded against is that no mental cravings result. Again, appreciation is fine, but you

have to be very careful and alert that it doesn't become a dependency.

Losing doership means not being identified with the instruments of body, mind, and intellect. The moment you identify, doership is born. Yes, it means you play and win a game with the same attitude as you digest food, so that the action is done without any specific recognition that 'you' are doing it. Merely be aware that everything is just happening. This is the ultimate vision that helps us override all *vasanas*. Be an observer of even your own *sadhana*, which itself is a process of disidentification. There are paths in the maze that will keep you lost in the maze, and there are paths in the maze that will lead you out of the maze; *sadhana* is the latter.

What is a *sankalpa*? Is the thought to brush your teeth every morning also a *sankalpa*? If yes, then how can you live without making any *sankalpas*, which is prescribed by many masters?

A *sankalpa* is a thought with clarity, a decisive thought about anything. Yes, deciding to brush your teeth is also technically a *sankalpa*. To not make *sankalpas* means to let things happen; don't plan. When the scriptures advise us to live a *sankalpa*-free life, what they mean is to give up the sense of doership. Actions are not given up, planning is not given up, but the actor and planner are given up. This results in being guided through life, and yes, anyone and everyone can live this way. It is the most freeing, alert, and mindful living of all.

When you see a child fall in front of you, you run to him, lift him up, and take care of him. In this spontaneous action, there was no doership on your part, yet there was an action done. All of life can be practically lived like this. It's not just a vision or a way of thinking; it's a way of living.

From our birth itself we are conditioned and taught to live by making *sankalpas*: planning our timetables for school, striving to get straight A-s (a *sankalpa* for perfection), striving for a promotion, etc. How do we get out?

The easiest way, though not the only way, is *japa*. The practice of *japa* increases your overall concentration. When this concentration is turned toward your Source, your heightened awareness will help you disidentify from all your actions. This is how we come to appreciate and experience each action as it is, each time as the first time. This growth in, and bliss of, independent awareness is what helps us break the *sankalpa* cycle.

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a dialogue

by anonymous

continued from cmw news, july 2005

s: so the answer is to quiet the mind, spend more time in contemplation, and the trio will drop. . . .

t: ask who is asking for quieting and contemplation! let this inquiry be tireless and constant.

s: right. i can't see the truth now, so i 'think' i need to quiet the mind.

t: what nonsense that you can't see the truth! you are the truth and can never see yourself as an object. insist that all frustrations belong to the mind and that i am the illuminator.

s: yes, because in its light is all the 'knowing' and 'not knowing' happening.

t: you are that. hence, 'you' cannot see 'it.' at the same time, 'it' is never out of experience.

s: but even here, it is only an experiencer who is wanting to quiet the mind.

t: yes, there is a thought and an experiencer required to insist, 'i am not this. i am not this.' just like the pole-vault jumper. to know the self, thought is not required. the last pole-vaulting thought will drop by itself. it will get merged into the silence of the self.

s: that's why 'stand back and see' sounds like objectification. see what after standing back? who is standing back? the who is not in reality. . . . okay, i'm frustrated. . . . yes, tireless contemplation is needed. boy, oh boy, do i need to bless myself a lot. i'll have to do *pranam* to myself everyday for this. ha ha.

t: not for the sake of standing back do you stand back. you stand back to know that you are independent. if you insist on standing back, then you will get frustrated when you are not able to do so. but if you are standing back to know that i am different, other than the experiencer, then even in the failure of the standing back, you will see yourself independent of the experience. know the purpose of your *sadhana*. the purpose is not to conclude that the world of plurality exists. the purpose is to know that i am independent of the world, which is only a passing appearance.

s: yes, the purpose is clear.

t: then why fear? i am other than all this. i am independent of all this. do not insist on the experiencer to be free. how can an experiencer ever be free of thoughts, the world of plurality, and the pairs of opposites? the experiencer is a part of the appearance.

s: *mumukshutvam* is needed for pole-vaulting.

t: if you had no *mumukshutvam*, you would not be wasting time with this.

s: but it is not enough. *ajya-dharaya* . . . that love is not there; the urgency is not there.

t: ask who is arguing. why is the wave insisting that it cannot be water? water has no argument to make. it is only the wave who wants or does not want. but when the wave insists, the water has nothing to do with it. similarly, you are 'that.' the dejected one is the limited one wanting some experience. let it ask. what difference does it make to 'you'?

s: only laziness, foolish guilt, anger, useless emotions, and trios. you know, i see myself being lazy and then i ask who is being lazy. it helps a lot. not because it frees me of guilt and allows me to be lazy, but because it lets me think how 'lazy' or 'not lazy' is not 'me.' is this right?

t: see the lazy one and the frustrated one, too.

s: yes.

t: wow.

s: wow, what?

t: wow for that 'yes.'

s: 'yes' for understanding?

t: yes. this should be enough for now. munch on this and experience your glory. can't say experience also. it was never lost—even when the experiencer suffered and enjoyed its limited sorrows and joys.



t: hari om. long time, no hear. . . . never had to happen.

s: thoughts of depression and death . . . very strong this past week. much crying. would keep trying to see all of it as 'not me.'

t: who dies? who wants to die? ask and see that there is no problem to be solved. i am the witness of death also. death is only an experience that happens in my presence.

s: hmm . . . those vedantic thoughts come, but they just leave a feeling of helplessness. yes, i ask. and the fact that ‘nothing can be solved’ is where i am left instead of ‘there is nothing to be solved.’ this ‘nothing to be solved’ is a whole other level. i guess it’s practice, practice, practice. you said, ‘death is only an experience that happens in my presence.’ yes, but when i think this, i don’t care about presence. i only long for escape. i get tired of thinking.

t: when i say i want to die, what i want is to get rid of a particular experiencer. know that when the mind unfolds, it brings to you the trio: the experiencer of the thought of suicide, the thought of suicide, and the pain because of it. it is only a game of the mind. fold the mind and there is no trio.

s: ‘fold the mind’ . . . easily said!

t: folding the mind happens effortlessly when we are able to see the game of the mind.

s: can see the game of the mind. but what does it mean to fold the mind?

t: *haan* . . . the watcher is never tired because there is nothing apart from it to watch. you are taking the experiencer as the watcher. the watcher has no thoughts, no mind to feel. it is beyond the game of mind. so if you feel anything, it is this nasty mind’s play. know this and you have folded the mind—packed the fellow out.

s: i know that my reference to watcher is as an experiencer. i had said this earlier. and in the last dialogue, you had said that that watcher is the last to go—the one who keeps saying, ‘i am that (truth).’ and when you say, ‘if you feel anything, it is this nasty mind’s play. know this and you have folded the mind,’ i know this only intellectually! yes, i understand that it is just an experiencer wanting suicide. but the next experiencer is just saying, ‘give pleasure and no pain.’ it is not saying, ‘let me see that there is no experiencer at all.’

t: who is tired of thinking? the one who wants to insist? or the one who is watching?

s: the one who is watching is tired—not the ‘self’ watching, but a watcher watching.

t: wanting pleasure or happiness is the call of every pft. do not resist it. it wants to go back to its source.

s: explain this more, please.

t: every pft is nothing but ‘i’ alone, conditioned by the limited bmi. how can it (i) feel comfortable with the limited? it is complete. when the pft tries to get happiness through bmi from oet, it gets suffocated. the urge to go back to its fullness always lies behind any desire. know this and become free. we have chosen to be conditioned at our own will. then why should the condition rule us? be free to not to get enslaved by them (the conditionings). knowing itself is freeing. let the knowing become being. you can, because you are that.

s: why does everything make perfect sense but there is no direct experience of it? my knowing is not freeing. this intellectual knowing is still just trio-knowing.

t: why do you insist on the trio-knowing? why can’t you have faith that it is true?

s: explain more on this, please. didn’t understand.

t: *shraddhavan labhate jnanam*.

s: have faith in what?! i am so neck-deep stuck in my petty trios.

t: *shraddha* is a quality by which i come to experience what i believed in. because you are neck-deep in trios, you need faith. but you know who is neck-deep into trios: the pft, which is not the real you.

s: why do i keep bringing in trios to try to know the truth? meaning, why bring in a watcher as an experiencer to watch the mind?

t: who is insisting? who is trying to watch the trio? these questions are asked not to answer them and get lost in the words, in the mind-game. they are asked to ‘see’ the game, not to ‘think’ about the game and disturb yourself with the mind.

having started to ‘see,’ you are already quiet. why ask again, ‘who is the one who is seeing?’ you are going into the theme of the thoughts. i am asking you to see the game of the mind, the trio.

s: how to see and not think? can you give an example? and after that, explain about faith.

t: when you see a flower or mother nature, you see, not think. no commentary. just seeing. this is the time i am in my true nature. it is only when i am interrupted with thoughts that i come down to the level of pft. remember: the calmness you were in seeing a sunset . . . you did not ‘have’ calmness. calmness is my *svabhava*. it can be understood only as absence of mind.

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In His Presence

Clicking into CHYK

by Anjali Cadambi, Niven Singh,
and Sthuthi Sahgal (CHYK)

[Visit www.chyk.net]

At our first CM Portland Youth Camp this summer, for three days, we had the unique opportunity to study our selves, the world, and our interactions with the world; to delve within and discover our hidden potential. While reading the book *Know What You Have* by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, we learned, among other things, how to relate to different environments, including school, social, cultural, and spiritual. We discussed how to deal with peer pressure and how to avoid an identity crisis. We were also presented with some of the most common parental concerns for teenagers, and, after much dialogue, we gained a broader perspective on various issues, including the generation gap. While we can't promise that we as teenagers will completely stop resisting adult authority, we did all come to understand that we aren't always right.

We learned that our personalities depend upon the choices we make, and while we may not completely understand the concept of *vasanas* yet, we know that every interaction, every experience, and every judgmental thought we have, leaves an impression in our mind. These impressions subtly dictate our future actions in the form of likes, biases, and habits. Therefore, in order to rise above the influence of bad habits and inclinations, we must have the will power to discipline ourselves and change our thought patterns. We realize that our actions are entirely related to our pattern of thinking, and that a positive attitude leads to positive actions and maximized potential.

In reflecting on tough questions like the purpose of life, the path to true enjoyment, and religion, we all had different opinions. But everyone's responses revealed some common threads, all of which supported the importance of strong values, discipline, compassion, community service, honesty, and respect for oneself and others.

Our thinking processes were really put to the test, for while we continuously challenged religion with science, we also significantly expanded our minds through our discussions on the unity of all creation, unity in diversity, and the idea of "the One in many, and the many in the One."

After a crash course on the BMI chart, we came to grasp the difference between the worlds of mind and intellect (the emotional and the rational, respectively). We learned that the best way to reach our goals is to express our personality layers with an integrated mind and intellect. Pujya Gurudev writes, "Our desires, thoughts, and actions should be in unison." The reason this integration is so important is because, as Gurudev says, "The inner conflicts created at various levels of our own personality are the obstacles to the achievement of the chosen goal or objective." In other words, the only real obstacles we face come from the chaos within us. With a peaceful and harmonious attitude, we can achieve true happiness in life.

Overall, we realized that as growing members of society, we have opportunities every day to give back to the community that has nurtured us and to also invest positively in our own potential. This being said, no, we did not spend the entire time locked in a room trying to decode ourselves. We found time to take walks, play basketball, clean bathrooms, and enjoy each other's company.

We are grateful to our camp organizers, and most of all, to Brahmachari Prabodhji, for coming to Portland and spending with us three memorable days. Prabodhji made a great impression on all of us through his friendliness, patience, and openness to our questions and opinions. We can, in unison, say that our camp experience is best summarized in the words of *Kathopanishad*: "Arise, awake, and stop not till the Goal is reached!"

CHYKing into Hindu Culture

CHYK, CM Niagara Falls

All human beings experience countless mental conflicts, which tend to be amplified during adolescence. Confusion about "Are the things my parents tell me just their old-school way of thinking? Will fulfilling my desires make me happy? Why should I have to believe in God?" is rampant. Though no teacher or book can directly reveal the Truth, Pujya Gurudev paved a path to allow modern-day youth to gain maturity and wisdom: He gave us CHYK.

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda followed in Pujya Gurudev's footsteps and gave us a real CHYK treasure when he authored Hindu Culture: An Introduction. The youth of CM Niagara Falls experienced the blessings abundant in the teachings of

this work. Their gratitude is offered as worship in the words below.

- Vivek Gupta (CHYK Class Sevak)

Many feel that Hinduism is a way of life, and for me, this is an important aspect of what religion should be. Swami Vivekananda once said, “The Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, walks religiously, marries religiously, robs religiously. . . .” I find these words perfectly depict the true meaning of Hinduism.

This year, by attending CHYK classes, I not only learned about the concept of Hinduism as a religion, but also grew to appreciate it and practice it. My spiritual growth is due to *satsanga*, study, and meditation. I found that the Hindu way of life directs us toward purity and Self-realization. By teaching us to surpass our narrow-minded outlooks and limitations, we ultimately touch the conscious Truth within ourselves.

- Aditi Kanitpuly (age 16)

In addition to learning a lot about Hindu culture in general, there were quite a few specific topics that really hit home for me. One of the most important topics discussed in the book is how to deal with desires. “Desires are not satiated by their fulfillment; the more one tries to fulfill a desire, the more they grow.” This statement taught me that the way to get rid of desires is actually not by fulfilling them. It is of utmost importance to fulfill our duties before pursuing other desires, before asking more questions. To do this, we must correctly understand the principles and foundations of dharma.

The most important point I learned in the chapter on the *Puranas* is, “These tales are not imaginary.” Swamiji discussed the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and cleared all the doubts I had before about the reality of these stories. And I thought: If a knowledgeable and wise person like Swamiji believes in these epics, then they are of real value to me.

- Vikas Gupta (age 15)

In this book, there are a lot of great catch phrases that continue to swim in my mind day to day. This is a very important aspect for me because these words are constant reminders that fill me with peace and teach me to live a pure life.

Hindu Culture is filled with various topics, including the significance of idols, rituals, and traditions, but what I really loved about the book was that it fulfilled my need to learn more about being a better person. Everyone has room for improvement. After reading the book, I feel that I have become much

kinder to others and a lot less selfish. I also learned much needed information on karma; I realized how important it is to do good deeds and how bad actions come back to haunt you.

Another important lesson I learned was about the power of God. I never really fully believed in God, to tell you the truth. I went along with it since I had no logical proof that God didn’t exist. But by the time I finished the book, I fully believed in God. The book made me want to experience God’s power. And I did. And after these amazing experiences, I feel very close to God.

Now, I don’t doubt His existence. And I think of it this way: Even if God were to not exist, there is no harm in believing He does anyway, because this belief in itself fills you with such positive vibrations and thoughts.

- Rohan Wadhwa (age 13)

Hindu Culture: An Introduction by Pujya Swami Tejomayananda taught me many things that I didn’t know about my culture. It gave me a brief tour of Hindu culture, providing interesting facts in an easy and flowing style that is filled with Swamiji’s personal examples, anecdotes, and humor.

This text made me realize how old Hinduism really is. It made me think about the differences between Hindu culture and other cultures. For me, the most important chapters were on vegetarianism and idol installation. They answered a lot of questions I had had and also discussed details that I didn’t know.

Although I haven’t read books like this one before, I learned a lot from this book and look forward to reading more of Swamiji’s works and other Chinmaya Mission publications.

- Bharat Bhaga (age 15)

Journey to the Source

by Rupali Gupta

We are in Noida and it is June 1, 7:00 a.m.; the much anticipated day is here! Our three *acharyas*—Brahmacharis Uddhav, Vinayak, and Prasad Chaitanya—and our group of 33 *yatris* are all gathered in the satsang hall in the CM Noida ashram. Most of us are from CM Dallas and already know each other. There are quite a few youngsters also—two kindergarteners, a ninth grader, and a couple of college students. The mood is upbeat and enthusiastic despite the heat and the missing luggage of a couple of *yatris*. Brahmachari Govindji, *acharya* of CM Noida, welcomes us and speaks to us about the significance of the *Char Dham Yatra*. He tells us that few get an opportunity to go on

yatra and fewer still avail the opportunity. We all sit together and enjoy a sumptuous breakfast, then gather in front of the larger than life *murti* of Shri Hanumanji on the ashram's front lawn. We chant *Shri Hanuman Chalisa* before we take off, invoking His grace and protection.

The term '*Char Dham*' is used to indicate four of the most revered Hindu pilgrimage destinations: Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath. My *yatra* is on two levels: the physical journey itself and the spiritual journey of Self-discovery leading me to my Source. I began my journey taking lots of pictures and notes, but both efforts quickly tapered off; so this account is part travelogue and part personal experiences and impressions.

The journey begins. We start off in two buses. Our bus has most of the youngsters and Uddhavji. What a combination! Most of the people in our bus, with the exception of a few others and myself, are well-equipped with MP3 players, headphones, digital cameras, camcorders, cell phones, CD players, PDAs, and all kinds of electronic gadgetry. Such are the rigors of the modern *yatra*!

First stop: Haridvar/Haradvar, the gateway to the abodes of both, Lord Shiva and Lord Narayana. The afternoon is hot as we go up in *udan khatolas* (trolleys on a ropeway) to the Mansa Devi Temple. The heat and crowds are incredible, but these are nothing compared to the surreal upliftment you feel when you experience what you have longed to do for a lifetime! A beautiful view of the city can be seen from this height.

Next comes a refreshing dip in Har-ki-Pauri, after a slip and a fall! What joy to see the *acharyas* play

in Mother Ganga's lap and pay tribute to her by chanting *Ganga Stotram*. Twilight falls and we stand on the bridge watching the reflection of the golden hues of floral diyas floating in the bosom of the Mother. What an enchanting sight!

The days quickly start to blur. What did we do and when did we do it? My memory fails me as I try to reconstruct those 12 days. From Haridvar we depart for Barkot, which is on our way to the first *dham*: Yamunotri. We stay in a luxurious campsite at Barkot. Yamunotri is the source of the River Yamuna. In the evening *satsanga*, Vinayakji speaks to us about the significance of the *yatra*, telling us that our trek to Yamunotri is not just a trek to the source of the river; it is a journey to the Source. This phrase stays with me for the rest of the *yatra* and I contemplate on it throughout. I have traveled thousands of miles, come halfway across the globe, to journey to the Source that is within me—how ironic, yet how typical!



to be continued



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s: appreciation of nature is not seeing; it is thinking, right?

t: appreciating may be a part of the thinking process, but just seeing or being is not.

s: the force of the trio—keeps coming—quite strong.

t: the pft will be born because of the force of *vasanas*. so what? someone may call you a man. why should you start believing it if you know that you are a woman? so too, from *guru-vakya* and *shruti-pramana*, i know that i am not the pft,

and hence, not a part of the trio. thereafter, let the thoughts insist on you being a part of the play—why believe it?

s: but my immediate reaction to a surging *vasana* is that if i know it's coming, then make sure to resist it. but this, of course, is being said by another trio only.

t: resisting is also a part of the game. 'see' this wanting to resist and it (the resistance) is gone.

s: is it gone? it seems to return again quite soon... but now tell about faith.

to be continued

Pujya Guruji's Health

September 9, 2005

To: The Chinmaya Family and All Well-Wishers

Hari Om.

As you are aware, there was a slight setback to my health in July. However, I am now fine and the 13th Vedanta Course in Mumbai started as scheduled on 7th September, the day of *Shri Ganesha Chaturthi*.

My steady recovery is the direct result of the timely medical help and many *pujas, japas, homas*, and prayers that you all undertook for my well-being.

I am truly overwhelmed by your love and concern for me and thank you all for the same.

With Prem and Om,

Tejomayananda

Lord Krishna Raises *Chinmaya Govardhan*

by Brahmacharini Arpita

By the grace of Pujya Gurudev and the blessings of Pujya Guruji, a new Govardhan, "*Chinmaya Govardhan*," has been raised by the hand of the Lord in northeast Florida, just outside of St. Augustine—for me, the dream of a lifetime come true!



With Pujya Guruji's encouragement and full support, a series of seeming miracles led us to quickly find and acquire, on February 23, 2004, a beautiful 17.7-acre property with a newly renovated house and extra barn. The environment is quiet, natural, and perfect for Vedantic studies and spiritual retreats. Sunshine streams down through graceful cedars, pines, palms, and majestic oak trees draped with Spanish moss. One can stroll meditatively along paths dotted with grapefruit trees, persimmon, and a spring profusion of azalea and camellia flowers,

and listen to the breeze whispering through 50-foot tall bamboo groves. When there has been enough rain, a little "Yamuna" gushes in the form of tiny waterfalls under a canopy of fern and banana trees. Here one can easily imagine the divine cowherd Himself, Shri Krishna, wandering happily with his *gopas*, peacocks, and cows!

Pujya Guruji's First Visit

We were extremely blessed in July 2004 to have Pujya Guruji come up during the *Mahasamadhi* Camp in Orlando, Florida, to visit and bless the center for the first time. Having only three months to get settled in was no mean feat, and without the kind help of many good friends, who flew across the country to lend their aid, it could not have been possible. I am very much indebted and thankful to them all.

Every day built up to the ecstatic moment when Guruji finally arrived at the front door, where we received him with the *purna kumbha* and many smiling hearts. After Guruji was shown around the property, we had a beautiful evening *satsanga* with a small group of people from Orlando and the local area, both Indians and Westerners, who came to meet Guruji for the first time. The whole atmosphere was permeated with Guruji's love and song. Then a lovely dinner was served to all by the ladies from South Florida.

The Case of the Missing Flute

There is another event worth mentioning, in which Shri Krishna played a mischievous, anxiety-provoking trick (of course): His flute was mistakenly routed to Washington, DC (from India) on the day before Guruji was to arrive (and now it was too late to be FedEx-ed). Several hours of panic and near-despair finally turned into a strong lesson in surrender to God's will, realizing, at last, that *I* needed to become the Lord's instrument *first* by just doing my best and giving up attachment to my own ideas of what "perfect" meant. Miraculously, the flute showed up the next morning in the hands of Swami Dheeranandaji, who personally flew it down from Washington, where he had kept it, in the meantime, on Pujya Gurudev's *padukas*!

An apparently hopeless situation once again shone as a blessing from the Lord and Pujya Gurudev. Then I really understood why Lord Krishna had

stolen butter from the *gopis*: to turn their minds to Him alone.

Radha-Krishna Installation

Early the next morning, the *pujari* from the Hindu Society of Northeast Florida arrived to install our gorgeous Shri Radha-Krishna deities that had arrived from Jaipur just two weeks earlier. Knowing Shri Krishna's *lilas*, could it have been mere coincidence that Panditji's name, Sreenathji, was exactly that of the famous *murti* of Lord Krishna holding up Mount Govardhan?



All went beautifully. Pujya Guruji himself carried Shri Krishna, while Shaila Nadkarni and I had the privilege of placing Shri Radhaji on the altar for their *sthapana*. A Chinmaya devotee had made beautiful new outfits for them and also offered a lovely necklace and pendant of Gurudev's OM for Shri Krishna. As the morning sun rose in the east and the ceremony was concluding, Shri Radha-Krishna shone in our hearts, dazzling in golden light. Then came the final, joyous moment when Pujya Guruji placed the golden flute in Lord Krishna's hands.

Guruji's First Yajna

With such an auspicious beginning, we couldn't have been more blessed in that Guruji immediately gave us dates for our first *yajna*: July 14-16, 2005.



Even though the hurricane in 2004 left us without electricity for a week, the Lord made sure to protect us from any major damage. Joy and anticipation of the 2005 *yajna* inspired us to work hard throughout the year to start

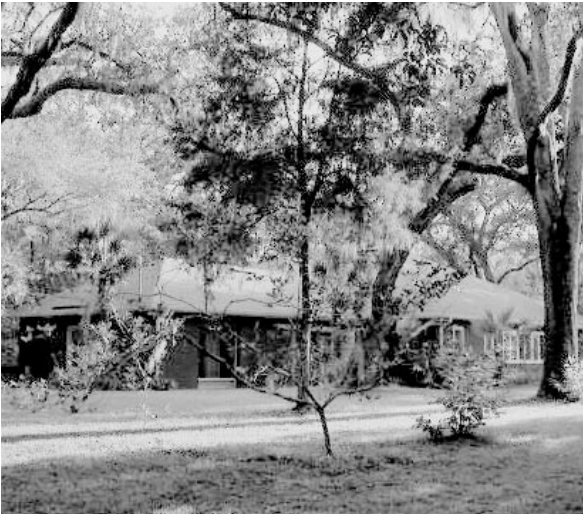
Vedanta classes and get the center more organized. More friends, devotees, and local Chinmaya Family members lent valuable help and loving support before the event with cleaning, organizing, landscaping, and *yajna* setup, including food preparations and the bookstall. I am deeply grateful to every one of them.

The *yajna* was arranged at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Jacksonville. Guruji arrived on July 14 and we had a successful three-day series of talks on Shri Ramana Maharshi's *Upadesha Sara*. Almost half the audience consisted of Westerners, who were thrilled to meet Guruji for the first time. *Satsangas* and meals were held back at *Chinmaya Govardhan*, where devotees could meet with Guruji and also enjoy the beauty of the center. In addition, we professionally video-recorded all of Guruji's lectures, *satsangas*, interactions with devotees, etc.; the sessions will soon be available on DVD. Although the blessed time with Guruji flew by much too fast, we are immensely grateful for every moment.

Chinmaya Govardhan Vedanta Spiritual Center

As in all Mission centers, the primary goal of Chinmaya Mission St. Augustine, *Chinmaya Govardhan*, is to honor and serve Pujya Gurudev's vision by sharing the Vedantic knowledge he gave us. The name *Govardhan* itself expresses beautifully what we hope to achieve here, since *vardhana* means that which uplifts, nourishes, or gladdens, and *go* refers to the Vedas, mind, senses, earth, cows. As the Lord showed in His *Govardhan-lila* that He is the ultimate refuge of all beings, so too, we envision *Chinmaya Govardhan* as a place where people of all backgrounds can seek and live the Truth through Vedantic scriptural study and Self-inquiry, where body and mind can be uplifted through healing awareness and devotion to God, where we can practice living in harmony with the environment. We also hope that *Chinmaya Govardhan* will be used as a special, small retreat center for youth and children, where they can be engaged in creative projects, surrounded by the beauty of Nature. More uniquely, *Chinmaya Govardhan* will ideally serve as a bridge between the East and West, attracting more seekers from the Western audience.

The center is located one hour from Jacksonville International Airport and is 20 minutes away from St. Augustine's beaches, Nature preserves, and other tourist attractions. We had our first retreat on the auspicious weekend of *Radhashtami*, and will plan similar retreats on a monthly basis. Plans to renovate the barn for larger-scale programs are under consideration.



We welcome our Chinmaya Family to visit or participate in a retreat. May Shri Radha-Krishna beckon you to the groves of their eternal love at *Chinmaya Govardhan*!

Course in Vedic Rituals

Originally printed in Vedanta Vani (CM Bangalore Newsletter)

Indian culture is admired the world over for its beauty and depth. There is either a scientific or spiritual rationale for each aspect of Hindu culture. Following our traditions with understanding makes it more meaningful; otherwise it is mere superstition.

In the early stages of spiritual growth, rituals have a significant place. Selfless service, *japa*, *puja*, *sandhya-vandanam*, etc. enable one to develop an integrated personality. But one needs to perform these with the proper understanding to bring about the desired effect; this is the vision of Puja Gurudev and Puja Guruji.

To fulfill this need, Chinmaya Mission is proud to dedicate “*Chinmaya Veda Vidya Peetha*” to Puja Gurudev, the great master who spent his entire lifetime in raising the dignity of Indian culture and philosophy in the eyes of the world.

Chinmaya Veda Vidya Peetha offers interested students a free course on the knowledge, significance, and performance of *agni-karya*, *vratas*, *upasanas*, *homas*, and other Vedic rituals. Candidates in the age group of 12 to 25 are eligible for this course. They are provided free meals, clothes, and accommodation during their two-year stay. Candidates are taught how to perform *nama-karana*, *griha-pravesam*, *upanayana (janeyu)*, and marriage ceremonies; *puja vidhi*, Sanskrit, astrology, and English. The course is held at the *Chinmaya*

Sandeepany ashram in Chokkahalli (Kolar District), Karnataka, India.

Devotees who would like to support this noble cause may choose from the following: Candidate Sponsorship (for one or two years): Rs.20,000 per year; Patron: Rs.10,000; Donor: Rs.5,000. Donations, payable to “Karnataka Chinmaya Seva Trust,” may be sent to: Chief Administrator, Chinmaya Mission, CMH Road, Indira Nagar, Bangalore 560 038 India.

Orienting Senior Citizens

by Sajjan Singh

Central Chinmaya Vanaprastha Sansthan (CCVS) is an India-based organization formed to educate and support, in various ways, elderly persons over the age of 50, in their transition from *grhastha* to *vanaprastha ashrama*. CCVS conducts unique reorientation programs on the national level, and Chinmaya Mission Rewa conducts them on the local level.

This year, CM Rewa conducted one such reorientation program on September 12-16, at Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya University. Swami Prashantananda and his team of resource personnel administered the event.

Over 60 elderly members, half of them from a local old age home, attended the five-day event. Each day began with yoga and meditation, followed by talks and interactive discussions on spirituality, health, financial planning, social relationships, and psychology. The undercurrent in all the presentations was an emphasis on the gradual detachment from worldly pursuits, while engaging in selfless social service for the purpose of spiritual upliftment.

The university’s Vice Chancellor Gyan Singh presided over the closing function and distributed certificates to the participants. The feedback from the attendees was positive and welcoming. Some participants informed after the event that the atmosphere in their old age home had become more congenial and many felt they had found a new purpose in life. All the participants resolved to live as a family by helping each other and taking up some social service as their *sadhana*.

Corrections: CMW News, September 2005

News: The article on CM Ottawa’s retreat in Gatineau Park was written by Anu Ramachandran.

CMW Conference Feature: Chinmaya Mission has a center in Bahrain, not Saudi Arabia.

Sadhana-Sadhya Viveka

Talks by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

Transcribed by Bela Pandya; Continued from CMW News, July 2005

Know which means is meant for which goal; otherwise there is only utter confusion. Be regular in your practice. If you do something once in a while, it will not change your life. If you always do . . . what you always did . . . then . . . you will always get . . . what you always got. We pray only once in a while and then wonder about our spiritual progress. We eat carrots only once in a while and then say we eat healthily. For our good health, our *niyama* has to be on a daily basis; it will not happen otherwise. Even for a sportsman, a vigorous game by itself is not considered exercise. He has to stretch and exercise daily to keep his body fit. He cannot say, “I get my exercise when I play.”

Singing, dancing, art—for everything, what is required is practice, practice, practice. One day, a man went to a great musician and asked him, “How soon can I become as great musician as you?” The musician replied, “Overnight.” The man was surprised. The musician said, “Yes, practice for 20 years and it will come overnight.” Work hard. *Sadhana* must be done continuously, everyday. Like we eat and sleep everyday, we must pray everyday also. To have purity of mind and clarity of knowledge, our *sadhana* must be done daily. Some *sadhana* is to keep the mind pure and some *sadhana* is for clarity of thought. Never lose sight of this.

For example, Gurudev has given us a scheme of study for study groups, but 99% of the time, people do not follow it. We can read any book at any time, but in the study class, if we follow the given scheme and text, the mind will remain focused. Otherwise, the mind will take liberty everywhere. When you sit for *japa*, your mind will go somewhere else. So when you start a task, remain focused on it. Swamiji [Gurudev] used to say, “Let your mind be where your hands are.”

In some study groups, they start a comparative study of *Gita*—commentaries by different authors. This results in utter confusion. When I came to *Sandeepany* to study, I once asked Swamiji a question. He replied, “You have come here to study Vedanta. So . . . study [don’t ask questions].” After that, I did not ask a single question. Whatever text was being taught, I just focused on that text. The *shastras* are

meant to answer all your questions—even those that normally do not come even in your wildest dreams. You just study. You do not have to ask.

So far, we have seen that means are required to reach a goal. The nature of the means depends upon the nature of the goal. Goals are of two types: one is that which we have already gained but do not know it, and the other is that which has not yet been gained. For the former, the means is knowledge and knowledge alone. For the latter, appropriate knowledge and karma are required. This is a general understanding of *sadhana-sadhya-viveka*.

In spirituality, the goal is Self-realization, which has actually already been achieved. The Self is already our essence—there is nothing to be ‘gained.’ But we are struggling only due to our ignorance of this fact. Therefore, *bodhonyo sadhanebhya sakshat mokshasya sadhanam*: knowledge alone is the direct means to ‘gain’ the Self.

Self-knowledge can be gained through the direct means of *shravanam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyasanam* [listening, reflection, and contemplation, respectively], also known as *antaranga sadhana*. The means that directly take us closer to the Self are direct means. Listening [*shravanam*] removes ignorance, and really speaking, there ends the matter. But if we have doubts and questions, then *mananam* is required. For abidance in the Self, meditation [*nididhyasanam*] is the means.

Just to prepare our minds for *antaranga sadhana*, various indirect means (*bahiranga sadhana*) are given. Preparation of the mind is of two kinds: one is for purification and the other is for concentration. We have to choose what means are appropriate for us, what we can do, what we like to do, because everyone’s interests differ. The aim is the same but the means are many.

When they say many roads lead to the same goal, it is only with reference to roads for purification and concentration, but for *moksha*, there is only one means: Self-knowledge. So prepare your mind by whatever means you like, and with that prepared mind, gain Knowledge. Through which language you gain that Knowledge is a different

matter. It can be Sanskrit or any other language, so long you understand that what you are seeking is what you are, and that you are not this body, mind, and intellect.

Self-knowledge is a must. All practices are choices you make. An already prepared mind does not require such practices to attain Self-realization. When Ramana Maharshi was asked questions like, “Is *pranayama* necessary for Self-realization? Are austerities like fasting and standing on one foot necessary?” his response was, “They are not necessary, but they are useful.” *Sakshat sadhana* is how a highly prepared mind attains Self-knowledge.

Bhagavan Shankaracharya says, *patasya vahnivat*, meaning, “If you want cooked food, then fire is the direct cause. But whether you want to cut the vegetables and then cook them, or you want to have the vegetables whole . . . that is up to you. To cook the food, are small pieces necessary? Not necessary, but useful. Which vegetable you want to eat or how you want to cut it, is your choice. But in some form, fire must be there—whether electric, gas, or stove. So too, *jnana vina na moksha sidhyate*: liberation cannot be attained without knowledge.

Before considering our daily *sadhana*, we must first understand the meaning of *sadhana*—it is not doing something. To understand this, we have to know what spirituality is. Spirituality does not consist of activities, in the sense that no activity is spiritual or unspiritual. Spirituality is in the attitude. Even someone fighting in a war can be spiritual. It is said so in *Bhagavad Gita*. Sometimes a noble action can be unspiritual based on who is doing it and with what attitude. So spirituality is not an activity; this must be understood.

With the right attitude and vision, every activity can be spiritual. Reading a book is an activity; so is cooking, painting, or exercising. If a person sings, you can ask him to sing for you. If a person sings or dances, you can ask them to sing or dance. But if you know a person is honest and truthful, can you ask him to do something truthful or show you his honesty? Honesty is not an activity; it is reflected in one’s thoughts, words, and actions. So too, spirituality is a state of being that is reflected in every aspect of your life.

What is important is not what you do, but what you are. In this world, we may applaud people for their spectacular achievements in different fields, but we respect them only for what they are, not what they have. It is said that a man may be worth billions of dollars and still be a worthless person. Our respect for someone is based on what he is. This is called

spirituality. And if you are a spiritual person, every activity can be made spiritual. If a money-minded person goes toward spirituality, there also, he will just make it a business. On the other hand, a spiritual person will make even his business spiritual.

Be clear about what spiritual *sadhana* is. It does not mean doing more; somehow, in our mind, *sadhana* only translates into doing something. Though doing is necessary in life, spiritual *sadhana* is just being. When we understand that spirituality is a vision, an attitude, we see that *sadhana* just means putting forth effort for this inner integration.

In all your thoughts, feelings, and actions, be true to your true Self. *Atma* is *sat-chit-ananda-svarupa*, so everything is *sat-chit-ananda*. Spirituality is thus not in doing a particular action, but in doing every action in a particular way. The most important aspect in *sadhana* is not to make divisions in your life: “This is spiritual and this is worldly. This is private and this is public.” As long as you make divisions, there will be problems. People have problems because their idea of spirituality is in doing or not doing a particular thing; so they always divorce their spiritual and worldly lives. And therefore they say, “As long as we are in this camp, it’s great. But when we go back . . .” Why should you have a division called ‘worldly life’? Life does not make any such divisions between spiritual and worldly. Life is one whole. After getting this training [in the *Dharma Sevak* Course], if you are afraid to go back [into the world], then you have not gained the vision of spirituality.

The other day someone asked me how I differentiate between administrative work and spiritual work. I said, “I do not make such a division. Both are Mission work, so both are spiritual.” There is no need to balance. If there is balancing and reconciling in your life, it means you have created divisions. If you have created contradictions in your life, there will be conflict.

Make your vision one whole, whether you have to conduct a class or perform daily chores. Why can’t daily chores be enjoyed? If you have to take shower or wash your clothes, enjoy it. A simple way to see if you are living a spiritual life is to ask yourself: In whatever you do, is it a job for you, or is it a joy for you? If everything appears as a job, then you are an utterly bound person. If everything is a joy, including washing dishes, then you are a spiritual person. If some things are a joy and some things are a job, then you are still only a seeker.

to be continued

Have faith that all of Nature is governed by the Lord. You do your best, and then whatever comes, accept it with joy. Thus play the game of life. Life is yours. You have no choice but to live it. There is no running away. Play with a sportsman's spirit so that your life is ultimately a success. Live life in such a way that you enjoy it and other people derive inspiration from you to live their lives. Then there is joy and joy alone. This is inspired living.

Source: *The Game of Life*

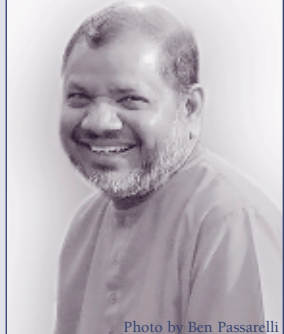


Photo by Ben Passarelli

Puja Swami Tejomayananda's Itinerary: November 1, 2005 - January 1, 2006: Vedanta *Brahmachari* Course
Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Saki Vihar Road, Powai, Mumbai 400 072 India. Phone: (91-22) 2857-8647. Fax: (91-22) 2857-3065.

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Does a realized master have *sankalpas*? Often we hear that a certain master had a *sankalpa* to have an ashram, and so it happened.

From a master's viewpoint, everything is just happening through him, not to him. He has no *sankalpa*—none whatsoever. People go with faith to a master asking for '*prasada*' to help them through a crisis. For the devotee, if this *prasada* is meant to come into his life, it may happen through this mahatma. But it is not by the mahatma's personal desire, will, or bias that a devotee's 'wish' is fulfilled per se.

Can a guru take on the karmas of others? If yes, then doesn't he do so according to his own will?

Yes, masters can take on others' karmas if they so wish. It is completely up to them. There is no rule that there has to be a certain environment, atmosphere, situation, etc. It is totally subjective. Most of them don't mess with an individual's *prarabdha*, but could do so if they wish. But by 'if they wish' here, don't misunderstand that this is their personal desire or will. They are guided to be of help

to humanity as needed—it is spontaneous, but not random. There is too much detail and complexity behind the law of karma for the limited human mind to understand such things.

When masters take on others' karmas, is this what makes them ill?

Yes. The karmas they take on—that *prarabdha*—has to express somewhere and somehow, so it expresses at the body level. But don't make the mistake of thinking that masters have to take on karmas to help people. What masters give is on such a subtle level, and is so powerful and profound, that it cannot even be described. Their mere presence is all the blessing we need.

I knew a master who once saw someone in a lot of physical pain. He led that person, and the others who were with him, to a large stone. He said, "His (the patient's) karma I am putting on this stone and tomorrow you will see this stone broken." That's exactly what happened. The next day, the stone was broken and the patient was free of his pain.

to be continued

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