



# NEWS

CHINMAYA MISSION® WEST BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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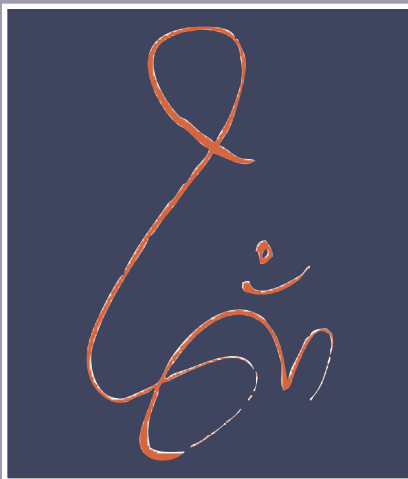
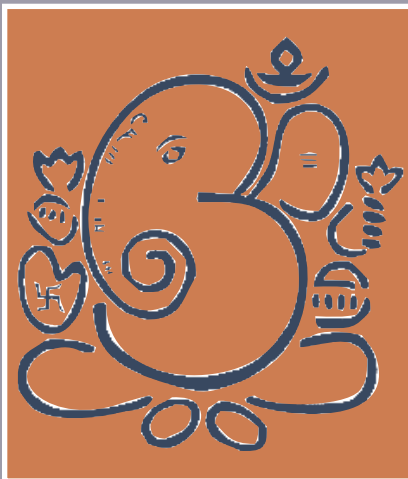
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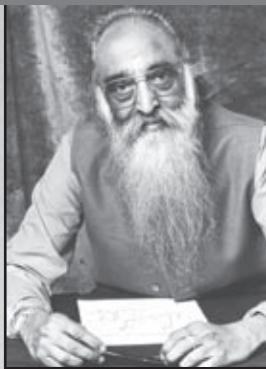
### MISSION STATEMENT

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



*To students of Vedanta, the guru is the embodiment of their Goal. The guru is nothing but pure Consciousness, absolute Bliss, and eternal Wisdom. Anyone who can elicit a continual feeling of faith and devotion in us is our guru.*

*If we expect a guru to transform us to Godhood by a touch, we shall wait in vain. Self-redemption must come ultimately from oneself. The external props, such as temples, idols, and gurus, are all encouragements and aids. They must be intelligently used to help build inner perfection. With inner purity, the student comes to be guided more and more by the intellect. In fact, the real guru is the pure intellect within; the purified, deeply aspiring mind is the disciple.*

*When we come to deserve a master, he shall reach us. Stick to spiritual practices. Be good, be kind, be sincere. Refine your motives by building life upon the enduring values of love, mercy, charity, and purity. Through constant remembrance of the Lord, rise in spirituality. Gurus shall, from time to time, reach such determined and sincere seekers. This is the eternal law.*

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## Things My Mother Never Told Me

Q&A with Brahmachari Uddhav Chaitanya

Continued from CMW News, November 2005

**Are omens and superstitions for real? For example, one tradition says not to step out of the house on the day of the solar or lunar eclipse.**

Yes, many omens are for real, like this one about the eclipses, and not mere superstition. Some may be old wives' tales or family traditions.

**Is there a list of valid omens (to beware of) written somewhere?**

I don't know. But why worry? It is wiser and easier to have more faith in God than in superstitions and omens.

**But most people don't know about the advice given for the days of the eclipses. Are they all living dangerously?**

Yes.

**So we should all be panicking?**

Not panicking, just correcting.

**What about all the people in the world who aren't familiar with the Vedas and Hinduism? Are they 'gone cases'?**

I don't know about that, but BLNL: Better Luck Next Life.

**Seriously, how important is it to follow this kind of advice?**

Stay home. Seriously. Look, all this I have not studied in *shastras*, although I know it's in there somewhere. I happen to know about the advice to be followed at the time of eclipses because this is what my family followed from when I was a kid. So this is what I am going to share with you.

On the day of the solar or lunar eclipse, the radiation from the corona of the sun or the moon, respectively, is harmful. It is the same energy that flows on all other days. But, just as light through a prism breaks into seven distinct colors, each of a different frequency, so too, on the day of the eclipse, this same energy changes in frequency. The frequency by itself doesn't have any positive or negative effect,

but it is our reaction to the frequency that makes the effect in our lives positive or negative.

Eclipses affect everyone and everything because everyone and everything is made up of the same five elements of space, air, fire, water, and earth. The five elements react to different frequencies in different ways. So just be careful during eclipses.

Here are some traditional observances—as much as is feasible for you, do it: Before the eclipse, take a shower. During the eclipse, do *japa*. At this time, it is also advised not to drink or eat. The food in your refrigerator (your junkyard), or on your counter or table—put *darbha* or *munja* grass on every single item, whether it is dry, wet, oil, or pickle. This is probably done to protect the food from radiation. After the eclipse, take a shower.

**So by my not stepping out, my four walls protect me from the negative energy out there?**

No. The four walls don't protect you; that's why you take a shower. Water is a great purifier and washes away negativities. This is also why you do *japa* during the eclipse—to protect yourself from negativities.

**Some vegetarians say that consuming onion and garlic should be avoided. Why is this said, especially since various sciences extol the medicinal effects of garlic?**

First of all, every element on this Earth, in this creation, has medicinal value. But the scriptures advise against the intake of onion and garlic because both of these have a high sulfur consistency. This sulfur element is what makes one more prone to mental agitations. For this reason, both onion and garlic are considered to be *rajasik*.

Using onion and garlic as medicine, according to prescription, may help stabilize one's health and balance, but the point the scriptures make is that if you always keep yourself healthy and your habits *sattvik*, you will not need these two elements to re-stabilize your system. And yes, there are many ways to have perfectly balanced health without consuming



onion and garlic. When in doubt, it is safer to follow scriptural guidelines over your own self-experiments and their resulting consequences.

**There are contradicting views about women performing pujas or entering temples during their menstrual cycle. Can you shed some light on this?**

Woman, by nature, is inherently pure. However, because her physical body is relieving itself of toxins during her menstrual cycle, she is advised to not go to the temple or participate in *pujas*. It is not that men don't have such toxins; it is just that they release their toxins in a different manner.

During her menstrual cycle, a woman is extra vulnerable and weak because these toxins and their release, both, drain her of vital energy. Though it is advised for her to not be around a lot of people at that time, because of her strong vibrations—and for the same reason, not to enter her temple, or chant, or perform worship (*manasa puja* can be offered)—she is advised to best make use of this time by spending it in quietude and meditation. Self-study for women at this time can also be difficult due to strained efforts in concentration. But by channeling their energy through meditation and allowing toxins to release of their own accord, women can revitalize themselves and also shelter their environment. The bottom line is that this time can be looked upon as another opportunity to spend time remembering God, and one can only benefit from this.

Nowadays, with their increased responsibilities and duties, this kind of withdrawal may not be possible for many women, so it is understandable that they do what they can. But spending as much time as possible in quietude and meditation will help a woman better protect herself and her environment. Note that the scriptures advise everyone, regardless of gender, to not spend a lot of time amidst people whenever there is an onrush of overpowering or negative energies within.

**It is said *tapasya* grants great power and helps protect against negativities. What is *tapasya*?**

A good name for your newborn.

**Noted, but getting back to the question . . . most people understand *tapas* as *prayaschitta*, or penance for a wrongdoing, not as a voluntary discipline.**

There are two words commonly used in the scriptures—remember them both: *titiksha* and *tapasya*. *Titiksha* is perseverance with a smile. *Tapasya* is self-induced discipline. The highest

*tapasya*, says Shri Ramana Maharshi, is “*Aham apetakam*,” which means throwing away the ego or the dissolution of the ego. *Pa* means “to hold” and *apa* means “not to hold” or “to throw away,” like *apana vayu* (exhalation).

*Tapas* is performed to discipline the mind and the body. Discipline here does not mean torture. The sole purpose of self-induced discipline is self-purification. The understanding of *tapas* as merely a *prayaschitta* karma is incorrect. Doing *prayaschitta karmas* to correct yourself when you have done something wrong is good and necessary to improve and purify yourself, to bring you closer to the Self-realization. All *prayaschitta* is *tapas*, but not all *tapas* is *prayaschitta*.

*Tapas* does result in some level of discomfort, but you are ready and willing to undergo this because you see it as sublimation, not suppression. It is a purification process to help you grow subtler in your vision and way of life; you practice your austerities by choice.

Practice *yama*, or “discipline with respect to the world,” and *niyama*, or “discipline with respect to yourself.” To find out what *tapas* is right for you, ask your *sadguru*. If you don't have a *sadguru* in your life, follow *dama* and *shama* as your *tapas*. *Shama mano-nigraha*: control the mind. *Dama chakshuradi bahyendriya nigraha*: control the ten sense organs.

**But how much to control? Everyone's level is different.**

First understand the word ‘control.’ It doesn't mean throttling your mind or your sense organs. It means using them in an appropriate, balanced, healthy, and harmonious manner. Use your mind and sense organs in their respective fields of interaction. And when your work is done, withdraw them without retaining any of the crap of the world in your system.

**But all this control just takes the fun out of everything. It implies too much effort.**

Okay, so replace ‘control’ with ‘balance.’ Feel better?

**By ‘control,’ do you mean ‘moderation’? Because there is a saying: “Too much of a good thing is never enough.”**

*Ati sarvatra varjayet*: Over-indulgence is to be avoided. But if you need to test this for yourself, feel free to indulge—see where it gets you!

**Is *tapas* necessary in everyone's life?**

Yes. In fact, it is very, very important.

**What is the significance of spiritual seekers wearing *khadaus*, or wooden slippers? Is this their *tapas*?**

(Laughing) It's a fashion statement. There's a Swamiji who interprets it like this: *Khadaus* don't allow the spiritual seeker to quickly escape, to run away from the world, even though he wants to. The seeker is forced to stay put, deal with the world, and learn to conquer his mind.

Wearing *khadaus* is also supposed to be one way to help a seeker annihilate sexual desires. There are some nerves in the big toe that help one control such desires and *khadaus* work on those nerves. Also, if you are a hyperactive person, wearing *khadaus* reduces your hyperactivity. And because *khadaus* force you to walk slower, you learn not to do or say anything in haste, to think first and then act. There are many other benefits, but most people don't use *khadaus* nowadays because they are uncomfortable.

**How do I know that my *tapasya* is going well? That I am on the right path?**

Peace of mind: all is going as it should be going.  
Lack of disturbances: the world doesn't disturb you.

If you are disturbed, for whatever reason, it means you need to do more *tapas*.

**Is having compassion considered as *tapas*?**

No. Compassion is toward the world. Compassion is about you in the world—this is *yama* (discipline with respect to the world). *Tapas* is *niyama* (discipline with respect to yourself). *Niyama* is about you personally.

**On the spiritual path, we are told to develop compassion, but we are also asked to protect ourselves and be careful about the company we keep. How do we know where to draw the line?**

Gurudev said it best: "When you deal with the world, deal with your heart. When you deal with yourself, deal with your head." The ultimate goal is to realize the Self. But until that goal is reached, you have various responsibilities to fulfill on your life's journey, because you don't live in a vacuum. While doing so, deal with every situation with utmost compassion. Where to draw the line—this is a subjective question so there can't a general statement that fits in all situations, at all times. This is the nature of the trial-and-error adventure of life.

to be continued

**Words Are Perfect**

*Silence beats upon my chest . . . the way a thousand raindrops hit . . . onto the ocean floor.  
Only the fish can hear . . . the pounding vibrations . . . of water purging water. My heart has gills.*

~ Preeti Sharma (CHYK)

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**DISCOVER INDIA 2006**

# a dialogue

by anonymous

continued from cmw news, november 2005

**student:** now tell about faith.

**teacher:** have faith in the words of *shruti* and the guru. your faith will help you ‘see’ and not doubt your knowledge because of the pft’s limited experiences. let the pft say anything. why believe it? i know i was, am, and shall be ever unaffected by the mind and its game. because the mind does not exist in reality; it is only a shadow.

**s:** i know that the pft’s experiences are false, but i am stupidly wallowing in them, reveling in them out of habit. when i am in them, it is not so easy to say this, but i keep pulling back as much as possible to see that i am not this pft. this ‘seeing’ is not the watcher-self but the trio-watcher. so my mind questions at that time: why don’t i ‘know’ what i am if i am not a pft?

**t:** the shadow is seen only when i turn against the source of light. so too, when the light of awareness is shining, how will i see the game of the mind? that is why the prayer, ‘*asato ma sad-gamaya.*’

yes, initially, it is only the pft playing the role of the witness intellectually. so what? the fact still remains that i, the self, am the only real seer. insist on this rather than insisting that the seer is the intellectual pft. when this *samskara* grows stronger, the pft-ness gets dropped—like the salt-doll that jumps into the ocean in search of its source and becomes one with it.

**s:** yeah right, the *samskara* will grow stronger . . . as if ‘knowing’ is time-bound. all i feel is helpless and this helplessness leads to asking, ‘when when when?’ and then comes, ‘when what?! when *moksha*?’ and then comes, ‘there is no such thing because we are not bound!’ and then i just freak out: what is all this?! i know all this is at the pft level, but it is really frustrating to learn ‘watching,’ to keep insisting on playing a game that doesn’t even exist! and there is always this habit of identifying with pain and the one in pain.

**t:** helplessness is only because you mean the pft can’t do anything about it. the truth is beyond its realm. the pft’s only realm is oet. ‘know,’ ‘see’ the pft’s hunger. there is nothing more to be done. you

want *moksha* from what? from pft. ‘that’ you are. just know. know who is identifying with the pain. you know it, isn’t it? then how can that (pft) be you?

**s:** and this is where faith comes in, right?

**t:** yes, faith is the fuel. it keeps us going.

**s:** i am lacking in it. a lot.

**t:** but remember the meaning of faith: ‘the willingness to try,’ ‘coming to experience what i believed in.’

**s:** dejection comes too easily.

**t:** faith comes with hunger, and also by knowing that feeling frustrated will not take me anywhere, that there is way to go about doing things. patience is the second quality required. immense patience—like standing under a heavy waterfall. in the same way, the flow of *vasanas* insists that i am a pft. to withstand this flow, i need patience, *titiksha*.

**s:** this is too much, too tough.

**t:** but it is not worth giving up. somewhere again you will have to pick up. so why not now? the pft cannot rest in peace with oet. it will search for limitless-ness—initially from the world of oet. but when it does not find it in oet because happiness is not there, it will try its search again—this time, within. anything done to get back (to the self) is not enough.

**s:** what is all this? why is it? where do i get strength to do this? i wasn’t born with patience and *titiksha*. now i have to sit and develop these? for what? to know that everything is a game? that it’s all worthless? that self is self and no one knows self other than the self? whatever whatever whatever. i can’t. i just feel like crying.

**t:** self for you is an object to be known, which is not true. know ‘it is me.’ why then you have no right to know yourself?

**s:** i don’t want to know myself! enough!

**t:** cry, shriek, whatever you do . . . it’s still worth it. a great saint said, ‘five minutes of yearning and crying is equal to one hour of meditation.’

s: i am not listening to lies anymore. nothing in this world is real. nothing anyone says is real. i don't know what i am doing here or what getting out means. there is no in and no out.

t: going back is an effort. how can it not show results? crying in helplessness is also a movement . . . progress. it is not still [stagnancy].

s: there is nothing in this changing world of bmi-pft-oet that is still. so we can call anything and everything progress—it's all time moving forward. who cares about progress. whose progress?

t: crying is not an end to the progress. but it (crying) is bringing an end to the efforts. only in helplessness is there complete surrender and in that alone is effortlessness.

s: why progress? to what do we progress?

t: the progress of a *sadhaka* toward its *sadhya*.

s: right . . . the two (*sadhaka* and *sadhya*) are as-if always different and then we are told they are one and the same.

t: yesterday, i read a zen saying: 'if you seek, you can never reach. but if you don't, it will never reveal.' the helplessness of a *sadhaka* is required for efforts to drop. once efforts drop, that alone remains.

s: what does one do to make it reveal? i have prayed and prayed. if i can't push me-ness out of the way, then some one, some grace, some thing . . . please . . . just do it! but now i know that prayers are useless.

t: yearn . . . cry . . . *man-mana bhava mad-bhaktah, mad-yaji mam namas-kuru, mam-evaishyasi yuktvaim-atmanam mat-parayanah.*

s: i am the same—from years ago till now. just one trio then, and another trio now. just a trio. just stuck in this seeming cycle.

t: you, from the standpoint of the supreme, can never be but the same. from the standpoint of the *sadhaka*, you cannot be the same. don't judge your progress. have faith in the guru. when he accepted us, what did we have? why should he nurture someone who is not made for it? and when the faith in you shakes, remember his immense *karuna*.

s: i cannot take more; everything is either dull or painful. his *karuna* makes me cry. i keep asking how long, which is wrong. i have no faith. my intellectual understanding will never mature into direct experience if i don't even know what everything going on means anymore.

t: shaking of faith in oneself is required, or else efforts will become important and the pft will never

die in order to know itself. it has to surrender itself, and its expression comes in the form of efforts. when efforts stop, the divine takes over.

the salt doll offering itself into the ocean: between the offering and the becoming one with the source, is melting. see that all this crying is only melting. the form is still there, but it is melting . . . in his lap alone.

s: i cannot take more lies. my mind has lied all the time. becoming, being, bondage, *moksha*—i feel like i am insane.

t: it's matter of time. when offering, know that the one who is melting was never different from the source. then the form will not be in pain.

s: guru, oneness, *sadhana*, *sadhya*—i dont even know what these are anymore.

t: don't worry about them. you cry. they will reveal themselves.

s: is it right that i dont want to know the self out of love, that i want self-knowledge to escape this world of pain?

t: yes, this knowledge is only for *sukha-prapti* and *dubkha-nivrtti*. unless you find the world painful, how will you try to leave? even when it is not painful, know that it cannot give you permanent happiness.

s: yes. there is only sorrow in this world.

t: this will make you not get attached to anything. let go of that which gives you sorrow: the world of oet.

s: i have last remnants (what i think are last—who knows): attachments. and these are very, very painful every time i even think of letting them go. but i have not gotten a choice about letting go. people and things have just been taken from me.

t: is it worth keeping them? ask! be frank! if the answer is yes, go and indulge in them fully with the hope of happiness. get kicked and confirm that happiness is not there, that they are not worth it. experiment . . . no harm. sometimes time delayed is time gained.

s: but i am gutless and spineless.

t: let the world kick us. this is the only way to drop the ego (pft). if the hot *tavaa* is not dropping from my hand, let it become hotter and i will then have no choice but to drop it. there will be a few small burns. but if it gets dropped once and for all, it is worth going through the pain. do not resist pain. learn from it.

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continued on page 9



# In His Presence

## Sidhabari Bliss

by Sandhya Gavva

Sidhabari, Puja Gurudev's abode, within a Himalayan greenbelt, is a peaceful sanctuary surrounded by unique natural beauty. My first trip to Sidhabari was a revealing and wonderful experience of Gurudev's spirit in and through the beauty and wonder of creation. For the first time, I understood, and learned from, the value of silence and the joy of basking in silence.

Over 230 delegates clad in orange robes had congregated at the *Sandeepany HIM* ashram for the 2005 *Mahasamadhi* Camp. This camp had something for everyone, whether one was on the path of *karma*, *bhakti*, or *jnana yoga*. CM Hyderabad's *acharyas*—Swami Chidatmananda, Brahmachari Anshuman, and Brahmachari Ravi—conducted the classes, some of which were in English, and some in Telugu.

Swami Chidatmananda's talks on "Beyond Suffering" were based on the Vedantic text, *Naishkarmya Siddhi* by Shri Sureshvaracharya, a prominent disciple of Adi Shankara. With lucid expressions, simple logic, and easy wit, Swamiji made us feel fully present in, and appreciative of, the subtler realms of Advaita Vedanta. In his talks, Swamiji elaborated on the nature of human suffering, the cause of suffering, and how to go beyond suffering.

The most memorable day of the camp was the day of Puja Gurudev's *mahasamadhi*. The day began with a *homa* performed by the *acharyas*. Sacred oblations were offered to Lord Rama, Hanumanji, Lord Shiva, and Puja Gurudev. The *homa* was followed by *Maha-rudra-abhishekam*, which included *bhasma-abhishekam* to Puja Gurudev. It was a sight to be seen! The *samadhi* shrine was reverberating with Vedic chants; the atmosphere was highly charged; and everyone felt uplifted.

The day ended with a dynamic and powerful message from Swamiji about Puja Gurudev and how his love for humanity touched and transformed so many lives. The message had a deep and profound effect on all the attendees, who responded with cries of joy and applause; no eye was left tearless.

We all felt Puja Gurudev's presence on *mahasamadhi* day and throughout the camp, which was a complete and blessed experience. Sidhabari is truly a divine place for divine experiences.

## Journey to the Source

by Rupali Gupta

Continued from CMW News, November 2005

From Barkot we drive to Janki Chatti, and from there begins the steep, uphill 5.5 km. trek to Yamunotri. The night before, Prasadji decides how everyone will travel: on ponies or *paalkis*. A few of us want to trek. I am in the group that is going on a *paalki*. At Janki Chatti, we are surrounded by the clamor of *paalki-vaalaas*, ponies, and their drivers. The three *acharyas* soon sort everything out and we are on our way. I surrender to the rhythm of the *paalki* and the reassurances of the *paalki-vaalaas*: "We will take care of you, *Mataji*." Once I let go of my fear, I revel in the beauty of the mountains and the sound of the gushing river from my vantage point in the *paalki*. I am really going to my Source! I understand the fascination of the Himalayas. It is so much easier to let go and just be. The track is narrow and unpaved, but the two-way traffic flows smoothly with constant cries of, "Side! Side!" as pedestrians give way to the ponies and *paalkis*.

We reach Yamunotri. True to his word, the lead *paalki-vaalaa* takes me by the hand and leads me up the steps. The river is gushing with great force and majesty on her way down to the plains. Looking at the river, I am reminded of how Uddhavji tells us to learn from the flow of the river and how she goes over the small obstacles and makes her way around the large ones.

At Yamunotri, there is a temple of Yamuna Devi and also some hot springs. I am still new to this, trying to take everything in. Most of the group takes a dip in the hot springs, and the *acharyas* and some of the youngsters take a dip in Mother Yamuna's chilling waters, but I stay back. The air is cool and refreshing, the crowds not too overwhelming. We go for *darshan* at the temple, cook some rice in the sulfuric hot springs, and take a few grains as *prasada*. The beauty of the surroundings overwhelms me and I do not feel like talking much.

On Day 4, we depart from Barkot for Harsil, and stop at Uttarkashi on the way. In Uttarkashi we go first to the Vishvanath Temple, the abode of Shri Saumyakashisha (Lord Shiva) reposing in "perpetual *samadhi*," as Swami Tapovanji Maharaj says.

On to *Tapovan Kutir*. What a blessing to have *darshan* of Shri Tapovan Maharaj's *kutir* where Puja Gurudev imbibed the knowledge of Vedanta so that



he could impart it to us. Coming to Uttarkashi feels like coming home. I am reminded again that this is a journey to the Source. We have our *bhojan* and then satsang with Swami Dhyananandaji and Swamini Nirananandaji. We also get an opportunity to see the new *Tapovana Chinmayam*, which has a *satsanga* hall to accommodate 350 people and around 20 *kutirs* where devotees can stay during retreats and camps.

We leave the next day to go to Gangotri via Harsil—this turns out to be one of the most memorable parts of the *yatra*.

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to be continued

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continued from page 7

let the asking exhaust out. nothing is from outside. let this hope of someone blessing (from outside) be cried out. all this will only take us to absolute helplessness, and then to effortlessness.

s: see, i knew it! there is no one ‘blessing,’ no one ‘caring.’ all of what they say about unconditional love . . . just words words words. it doesn’t matter; all this is also just words words words.

t: but without crying for help, you can’t get it. i have to cross the ocean to go to india. going to india is important, not the path. it is worth going through any path if it takes me to india. if you do not seek, it will not reveal. be truly helpless and hope-less . . . this is the path of surrender. patience.

s: i am helpless, but i always go (pray) with the hope that someone will help.

t: love to cry. all the asking of help is also required. let it happen.

s: i am not hope-less. there is still desire desire desire.

t: yes, what is wrong with desiring ‘that’? it will happen and it should not stop until you get ‘that.’ do not compromise in this.

s: all those lies that everyone said: call him (god) once and he is there. it makes no point for him to be there if i still can’t see that he is. he must do both.

t: keep crying for it . . . it is required . . . melting is a must . . . you have all the right to complain . . . you are asking for something that belongs to you. nay, it is you . . . ask and you shall get it . . . but stop not till you have reached.

# Change

*Green and gold,  
confer in whispers;*

*flaming orange, blazing red,  
fire on trees.*

*Dancing, twirling, waltzing,  
down on to the ground;*

*merry, gay, happy,  
brown chases brown.*

*Rustling, running,  
crunch, crunch, crunch;*

*cold, damp,  
fire has moved inward.*

*Silent, still, thoughtful,  
I blend with restful earth;  
inevitable, immutable,  
I bring a changeless change.*

*A reminder that  
life goes on,  
despite all odds,*

*bringing calm to  
restless thoughts.*

*Earth meets with earth,  
I creep up roots,*

*I am alight on trees again,  
I am that changeless change.*

~ Chetana Neerchal

## Chinmaya Mission Acharya Invited to the White House for *Dipavali*

Based on a report submitted by Sushila Agrawal



Acharya Gaurang Nanavaty, resident *acharya* of Chinmaya Mission Houston, was invited by the White House to participate in their third annual *Dipavali* celebrations on November 1, 2005. Gaurangji was requested to lead the invocation and deliver a ten-minute talk.

The White House invited and hosted several Indian-Americans from different parts of the US. Senior White House officials greeted and welcomed the guests to the celebrations, which were conducted in the Indian Treaty Room of the White House Complex, in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The celebrations mark a historical step for Hindu traditions in the US. *Dipavali* symbolizes, among other things, the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana. This battle is ongoing even today, in the world and within every human heart. In this battle, the oil lamps of *Divali* are the inextinguishable flames of faith and hope in the ultimate triumph of goodness over evil, where we choose righteousness, or God, above all. *Dipavali* is also celebrated in the Canadian and British Parliaments. May this festival of light be a blessed and joyous celebration for everyone around the world.



## Chinmaya Vibhooti

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust extended an invitation to the Chinmaya Family worldwide in November 2005, to attend the inaugural ceremony of the first phase of the *Chinmaya Vibhooti* project at Kolwan, Pune (India). The inauguration took place on December 25, 2005.

*Chinmaya Vibhooti* is:

- A grateful tribute to Pujya Gurudev by all his disciples, devotees, and beneficiaries.

- A visionary center to keep his vision growing and vibrant by empowering all Chinmaya Mission workers through appropriate training courses.
- A means to bring awareness among people at large about Pujya Gurudev's life and work.

The underlying vision behind this project focuses on the inner transformation of individuals through the knowledge of Vedanta, spiritual practices, and social services, resulting in a more harmonious world for all.

## Chinmaya Mission Halton: Standing Tall by Meenakshi Bhaga

Chinmaya Mission Halton, under the banner of CORD (Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development) at a gathering of non-government organizations (NGOs) and private companies from Canada's Halton region. The conference, led by Paddy Torney, Parliament Secretary to Burlington's Minister of International Cooperation saluted all the attending groups, each of which serve the world through different projects, with the aid of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). CIDA officials were also present at this event, which was held on November 10, 2005 in Burlington, Ontario.

Ms. Torsney thanked all the NGOs for their contributions around the world and reminded the listeners that Canada was one of the founders of the United Nations, and was striving for cohesiveness in world policies regarding poverty, literacy, health and immunization, and environmental and gender issues. She added that CIDA has been active for 40 years. Each year, Canada allots over \$3 billion in aid, not including emergency relief aid.

With a focus on making global equality a reality, Ms. Torsney stated that the purpose of this conference was two-fold: to network and to re-enhance the vision that NGOs value. Invited key speakers included Canadian Catholic Organization (NGO), Canadian Relief Foundation (NGO), Christian Reform World Relief Committee (NGO), Dr. Robert Wood (forensic dentist), Kesu (NGO), Zenon Water Works (private company), Cumis (private company), and a youth from a local high school. Chinmaya Mission Halton had a booth at this event.

Most of the speakers had slides or PowerPoint presentations and they spoke mainly on Canada's

tsunami relief efforts in Thailand and Sri Lanka. The following are some impressive stories.

Dr. Robert Wood, a forensic dentist, was asked by the Thai government to help identify over 45,000 bodies after the Asian tsunami. The Canadian effort was silent but massive. The Thai government asked Canadians to decorate their Wall of Remembrance for the victims.

Dr. Ron McMillan, an emergency physician at McMaster Hospital, presented on behalf of the Canadian Relief Foundation. He spoke about how Canadians were the first to go to Pakistan after the earthquake. Paramedics and emergency physicians from Toronto, Vancouver, and Hamilton had been sent within three to four days.

The youth representing Burlington's high schools told his inspiring story of how a group of students raised \$3,000 to build a school in a remote village in Nepal. They approached CIDA with their funds and CIDA matched their contribution.

Chinmaya Mission youth in Toronto and Niagara Falls are doing a great job along the same lines. Their silent work has yielded valuable contributions, particularly through their annual "International Friendship Walk," through which they raised over \$10,000 in the past two years.

Chinmaya Mission Halton, with the help of its sister organizations in Canada and United States, has helped revitalize a hospital in Ghana, make a prototype health care model in rural Bangalore, and support forestation and adoption in Andhra Pradesh. Chinmaya Mission's work in various rural projects in Sidhahari has been highly productive for the last 12 years.

Chinmaya Mission recognizes and thanks CIDA for its cooperative work with Chinmaya Mission Halton since 1992. With CIDA's help, Chinmaya Mission has helped make lasting differences in the lives of thousands of men, women, and children.

## **'Conscious Parenting' Workshop**

by Brahmacharini Arpita

CM St. Augustine (Florida) hosted its first 'Conscious Parenting' workshop at Chinmaya Govardhan on November 5, 2005. Acharya Vilasiniji (CM Washington, DC) conducted this wonderfully helpful, insightful, and fun workshop designed for parents and teachers.

Workshop topics on better strategies for effective parenting included how to actively listen to a child, handle emotions positively, inspire cooperation,

teach values without preaching, and foster spirituality in the home.

As a coordinator of the CM Washington Regional Center's Bala Vihar program and teacher of adult study groups and CHYK classes for many years, as well as being a licensed clinical psychotherapist specializing in family therapy and par oral counseling, Vilasiniji is highly qualified to lead such workshops.

Through a combination of lecture, audio-visual presentation, role-play, discussion, and meditation, Vilasiniji gave us many valuable yet simple tools for better communication with children—communication that elicits positive responses from them rather than negative resistance, anger, or frustration. The central lesson for participants was learning first how to be centered in oneself and be present for the child in the moment, rather than rushing or giving more importance to other tasks. This was followed by actual words and phrases that communicate acceptance and respect for the child's feelings, enhance the child's self-respect, and empower the child's problem-solving abilities to yield positive responses to life's challenges.

The principles and techniques we learned also help liberate the adult from old habits of parenting (that perhaps we, too, were brought up with), which unconsciously often result in a sense of shame, guilt, frustration, isolation, and low self-esteem in the child, rather than the positive emotions we really intend to cultivate. Practicing these positive methods frees the child and the adult, resulting in greater happiness and harmony for both.

In this age, when children are the greatest victims of our materialism and obsession with outer success, we need to remember Pujya Gurudev's words that children are divine, that "Children are not vessels to be filled in, but lamps to be lit," and "Spiritual values are caught, not taught." This workshop gave us the practical tools to help manifest this truth in our own and our children's lives.

After Vilasiniji's presentation, we enjoyed further discussion over lunch and then distributed Pujya Guruji's *Parenting* booklet as a gift to all the participants. CM St. Augustine plans to host at *Chinmaya Govardhan* other workshops by Vilasiniji on "Parenting" and "Harmony in Marriage."

Pujya Gurudev said, "Our children are our future." To conduct such workshops in your area, e-mail vilasini@chinmayamission.org. To be included on CM Augustine's mailing list for future workshops, e-mail staugustine@chinmayamission.org.



## **‘Performing to Your Potential’ in New York**

by Aditi Sriram

The morning of October 29 was brisk and cold, but that did not prevent a group of dedicated Chinmaya Mission members from gathering at the Old Souls Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, to hear Swami Ishwarananda speak. The chapel comfortably housed the 40-50 audience members, and once the arati had been sung and Swamiji seated, everyone was warmed up and eager for Swamiji to start, their eyes and ears open!

Swamiji opened his lecture with a question: “Performing to your potential or the potential to perform—they’re one and the same thing, right?” Sensing the somewhat awed silence of his listeners he seamlessly eased into some general points about success:

- Behind every success potential has been tapped.
- Having a variety of choices can lead to inconsistency because the mind tends to wander and get distracted by too many possible avenues to success, so the mind must be focused.
- There are two types of leaders: those who walk into a situation and lead; and those who create situations and lead. The latter are consistently more successful people.

In talking about creating situations to lead, Swamiji segued into his next main point: finding one’s niche. Finding your ideal mode of creativity, expression, and happiness, and sharing that with the rest of the world, he said, will benefit others as well as yourself. He asked, “What is it that makes you happy even if the rest of the world doesn’t recognize it? Think quietly about this and you will find your creativity. And success will come naturally.” He went around the room, asking everyone to state their niche. Some confidently declared marketing, dance, writing, and even school, while others smiled and admitted to not being sure.

Swamiji then smoothly transitioned into learning how to live our lives from a pencil (yes, a pencil!). He listed the five main points, and elaborated on them all, pausing from time to time to remind of us the five points, encouraging us to list them along with him, to ensure they were firmly imprinted in our minds. He also drew upon quotes and anecdotes of Pujya Swami Chinmayananda to illustrate a number of points.

### **1. Mistakes are erasable.**

Swamiji cautioned us that although mistakes are not erasable from history, they certainly are erasable

from the mind, for what are mistakes but memories in the mind? “Learn from the past, but don’t live there! You must put the mind where the hand is,” he said, paraphrasing Pujya Swami Chinmayananda.

Through the imagery of a humorous example about the maps placed in all parks, zoos, and other public places—with the large, red arrow indicating accordingly, “YOU ARE HERE!”—Swamiji emphasized the need to have total availability of the mind. He explained how this is possible only by letting go of the past (and any negative memories associated with it). Unlike what we find in universities, he reminded us that life is “Exams first, lessons later!”

Swamiji spoke about the mind in detail and its three channels of disposition: regrets of the past, anxieties of the future and excitements of the present. Swamiji elaborated on the latter two topics during the Q&A session at the end of his talk.

### **2. Unless you are sharp, you will not do your best.**

Advising us to remove “unwanted things”—distractions, bad habits, misinformation—from our mind, and to keep only what is needed—prayer, meditation, love, happiness, faith—Swamiji urged “innocent practice” to allow for daily meditation and focusing one’s mind.

The process of meditation was briefly summarized into four basic stages:

- Recognize the many thoughts in your mind. Don’t participate in them; just be aware.
- Reduce your rushing thoughts to a few thoughts (japa)
- Reduce those few thoughts to just one thought
- Elevate yourself from having no thoughts to experiencing pure awareness.

### **3. Pencils leave marks.**

“Leave a mark!” Swamiji encouraged us. “Be unique! Leave your flavor—prove your irreplaceability!” To quote Pujya Swami Chinmayananda, “Cultured people give happiness wherever they go. Uncultured people give happiness whenever they go [leave]!” Being cultured, Swamiji explained, meant being happy with, and original in, one’s actions. He said, “Freedom is not doing what you like to do. That is the heritage of animals! A man of vision loves what he does.” If you think this way, Swamiji reassured us, you can be placed anywhere and be comfortable. Once you find your niche, live your vision.

Swamiji emphasized originality and the courage to show initiative. Successful imitation is not success, he warned us, and went on to discuss criticism. Do not get discouraged by others' comments, for "only if you do, you will know." He instructed us to combat criticism by denying it politely. "A wise person will let you do what you wish; only an authoritative person will try to impose his views or advice on you. You learn better when you grown on your own."

#### **4. What is inside is what is important.**

At this point, Swamiji took the talk to a higher plane, one revolving around spirituality. The mind and spirit are much more important than the body, he explained. "What is inside is what performs. A body is to a mind what a frame is to a picture. Recognize and appreciate the beauty of the painting, but don't get lost in the frame itself." As Pujya Swami Chinmayananda said, "Do not worry about what is behind or beyond you, but what is within you."

#### **5. A pencil performs best in someone else's hand.**

"We are not dependent beings; we are interdependent beings," Swamiji said, as he urged us all to be an instrument in the Lord's hands. Pujya Swami Chinmayananda beautifully expressed this when he said, "Be the flute in the hand of Krishna." Swamiji elaborated on this, telling us to surrender to the Lord. Allow the situation to happen, and be available (mentally and spiritually) to it. He reminded us all of the powerful words of the Chinmaya Mission Pledge: "May Thy grace and blessings flow through us to the world around us."

He also reminded us all of our humble position on Earth: your body is from your parents and your knowledge is from your teachers. Be thankful to all that has been bestowed on you, and to He who made it possible. If you are humble and graceful, and you act in that spirit, you will generate happiness, and success, wherever you go.

Once the talk had ended, pictures were taken, books were bought, and conversation sparked between guru and students. The audience, which ranged from high school teenagers to college-goers to young professionals to elders, was clearly satisfied. Everyone had come there for a specific reason: Some had heard Swamiji speak before and were hooked; some had been instructed by a parent or friend to attend; and still others were looking for answers to fundamental questions they had been carrying within themselves for a long time. Whatever their motivation, it was clear by the end of the talk that

everyone had resolved at least some of their issues.

There was a marked difference in the way everyone interacted with Swamiji once the lecture had ended. Smiles (both posed for cameras and natural) abounded, and people felt emboldened enough to ask Swamiji personal questions about study habits or career ambitions. In the span of a 45-minute lecture, Swamiji had effortlessly become an intimate friend to everyone in that room. We all eagerly look forward to his next visit to New York.

### **Photo Archives Project**

by Anjali Singh

The Photo Archives Project is a unique collection of Pujya Gurudev's photos (nearly 10,000); it also includes over 200 photos of Pujya Guruji and over 30 photos of Pujya Swami Tapovanji.

The first lot of the Photo Archives Project was brought out in 2001. This lot consisted of CDs containing 721 'Portraits Section' photos and 5,745 'Archives Section' photos (smaller size, for book printing and computer viewing).

The second lot of the Photo Archives Project, consisting of 38 DVDs and 2 CDs (thumbnail photos), was delivered to Central Chinmaya Mission Trust (CCMT) in October 2005. Of the second lot, 35 DVDs contain 287 (Portraits Section) of the best pictures of Pujya Gurudev, Pujya Swami Tapovanji, and Pujya Guruji. These scanned photos are in very high resolution and most of them can be printed in 40x60", in photographic quality.

There are three DVDs in the second lot containing 'Sparkles Section' photos, which are digitally manipulated photos, or photos that have been digitally superimposed with Gurudev's words in blurbs or balloons. Such photos were introduced at the Photo Exhibition during the 2001 Vishva Sannam and subsequently compiled for the Say Cheese book. These photos can be printed directly from the CDs.

The next lot of approximately 450 photos being worked on are mostly medium-sized pictures, 20x30". Thereafter, an additional 3,000 pictures will be scanned in smaller size to be printed as a book. A database will be made upon completion of the project.

Chinmaya devotees wanting to purchase a set of the entire Photo Archives Project may do so by contacting CCMT: [mumbai@chinmayamission.org](mailto:mumbai@chinmayamission.org). Cost per Set: US\$5,000. For specific project or photo queries, e-mail [anjalisinh100@hotmail.com](mailto:anjalisinh100@hotmail.com).

## Sadhana-Sadhya Viveka

Talks by Pujya Swami Tejomayananda

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

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.

Ramana Maharshi's mere sitting and looking was spiritual. When someone is a loving person, there will be love in his mere look. And when there is anger, there will also be anger in that look. Spirituality is being.

Therefore, we have to be integrated in life. Why create divisions and later try to reconcile the contradictions and fill the gaps? Prevention is better than the cure. In order to remind us of all this, we require some 'doing.' Even though the goal is 'being,' we initially need 'doing.' Since the mind has not yet become subtle [in its understanding], it slips.

For example, we say that God is everywhere. This is said, yes, but we see Him nowhere. So we build a temple. And then when we say "temple," it immediately reminds us of the Lord's presence. Therefore, in one way, the temple is required, and in one way, it is not. God does not require any temple. It is we who need a temple so that we become aware of the Lord's presence. For this, we are also asked to do *puja* every day. But remember that when you are doing *puja*, God is not only in the idols; he is also in all the beings around you. So doing *puja* becomes a sort of training. Therefore, 'doing' is also important.

When a student graduates, a ceremony is conducted. This makes the student realize that one part of his life has been completed and now he is moving on to a higher level with more responsibility. Presidents and ministers have to take an oath in a public ceremony; such ceremonies serve as important reminders.

There are some spiritual teachers who condemn every kind of doing and every kind of *sadhana*, but this is wrong. What they say is right in principle, but all people are not the same. I may say I do not want a walking stick because I am healthy and can walk on my own. But if I say that all people who use walkers and walking sticks are useless people, or if I say that all walkers and walking sticks are useless, this is meaningless. We have to understand the needs of all people.

In principle, yes, nothing is required to know the Truth—not even listening. You read a book where the author says you do not require any guru. So, he is your guru. He may say he is not a guru, but actually you have taken him as a guru because whatever he has said, you have accepted. The psychology is simple; there is no point in unnecessarily complicating it. *Mandukya Karika* clearly says, "There is no one who is bound and there is no one liberated; there is no seeker. There is no birth and no death." The scriptures also state that we already know that highest Truth and even 'choice-less meditation' is not needed. All teachings are thus only for those who have not yet understood; otherwise, nothing is required. *Kyaa karne ki zaroorat hai? Apni marzi mein khelo.*

Daily *sadhana* should be understood properly because some people do something mechanically and then get stuck doing it because they do not understand the purpose of doing it. And some people understand all this theoretically, think they have gained it, and therefore do not do any *sadhana*.

Once you understand that the whole purpose of *sadhana* is, at one stage, to purify your mind and make it single-pointed, prepare accordingly. Thereafter, when you study, the purpose is to absorb everything so that you and your knowledge become one, where there is no conflict of "I know this, but I am something different." All *sadhana*



is to bridge this gap so you realize you are That alone. Thereafter, *sadhana* is performed only for this awareness to remain. For complete integration, do *sadhana* every day.

Now we have to find out what *sadhana* we have to do every day. We have 24 hours. Find out how many hours in your day are hours of action, and how many are hours of sleep. Know both. Most of us do not know how to sleep properly. In our sleep there must be depth, not length. There are many people who sleep for eight or nine hours and still feel tired. And then there are others, who sleep for two hours and are fresh because their sleep has depth.

“Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Old proverbs are the only good ones, and the right ones. Your whole life must first and foremost be in tune with Nature. For many people, when the source of energy—the sun—is available, they are sleeping. I do not know if the invention of electricity is a curse or a blessing. The invention in itself is not good or bad; it’s the way we use it.

*Sadhana* is not to be done for half an hour or one hour everyday; it is to be done throughout the entire day, everyday. We have four instruments: body, speech, mind, and intellect. The *sadhana* for the body is to keep it clean; so we bathe (*snanam*). In our Hindu tradition, bathing is also a spiritual act when you invoke the presence of Ganga and other holy rivers—this not only purifies the body, but also uplifts the mind. After our morning bath, it is said that at *sandhya* (dawn: when the night has ended and the day has not yet begun), we have to do our prayers—this is for speech and mind. *Gayatri Mantra* and other prayers are part of *sandhya vandanam*, but if we do not know them, we can just chant the Lord’s name. Chanting the Lord’s name purifies our speech and teaches our mind to be single-pointed. After bathing, prayer; after prayer, japa; after japa, meditation.

Our intellect has to have clarity of vision all the time; this is why we are told to be regular in our *svadhyaya* (self-study of the scriptures). Shankaracharya says, *vedo nityam adhiyatam*: Study the Vedas daily. ‘Vedas’ here refer to that (any scripture) which gives you the knowledge of the goal and the means. Study every day because it will clarify your vision and remind you always; otherwise, you forget.

Now comes the question of how much time we devote to our *sadhana* of *snanam*, *sandhya*, and *svadhyaya*. In the beginning, it can be only half an hour. But depending upon your ability and availability of time, you can do more. Time management is most important. The busiest men and the laziest men both have 24 hours. Know how to use time profitably, instead of engaging in feverish activity without achieving anything productive. Nowadays, ‘active’ means running around a lot, but of what use is this if it doesn’t yield anything productive?

Every kind of work needs x-amount of energy. If you are spending this x-amount, it’s good. But if you are spending xyz-amount, you are inefficient. Efficiency is doing maximum work in minimum time, with minimum resources. A restless mind will make you feel bogged down, where you have to ‘find’ time for everything. Not taking a shower, applying makeup in the car, or eating breakfast in the car . . . the secret is to get up early. Yes, people who work night shifts are a different case, but in the normal course of things, get up early.

Getting up early is very good for many reasons. You will not be distracted with phone calls and such disturbances. In my case, even at 5 a.m. the phone rings. But when you are doing your *sadhana*, disconnect everything. Make this length of time reasonable, not too long. Consistency in *sadhana* will be there only when you do it early in the morning. And the advantage of getting up early is that you also have to sleep early. So watching late night TV shows will also end. And to get up early, you will have to eat lighter food. So you will also sleep better. Each is related to the other.

When I was in Kanpur, I used to take a 6:30 a.m. class. Around 25-30 people used to attend. After a few months, a bank officer told me, “Brahmachariji, before, I used to wake up at 6:15, wash my face, and come here. Then I would go back to shave, bathe, and leave for work. One day, I thought, ‘I am going for a spiritual class. I should not go without taking my bath.’ So I started waking up a little earlier. And after class, when I went back home, there was no hurry at all. Earlier, there used to be commotion in the house when I was getting ready for work. Now, I have so much time to peacefully read or do anything else.”

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to be continued

Through the history of mankind, manifesting in every age—golden or dark—has been man's quest to know his inner Self. Each generation has asked the same questions. The language and terminology may have differed, but the need to know has remained a constant factor. Intrinsically, man knows there is something more, something other than what he takes to be reality.

This turning within, this search for the Truth of one's being, is the practice of meditation. Firm and unshakeable abidance in that Reality is the state of meditation.

Source: *Meditation: A Vision*



Photo by Ben Passarelli

Puja Swami Tejomayananda's Itinerary: January -March, 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.

## Chinmaya Mission Houston Family Spiritual Camp

December 23-30, 2006

conducted by

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## *Dharma Sevak* Course

July 14-27, 2006

*Krishnalaya*, CMW Retreat Center  
Piercy, Northern California

Conducted by

**Puja Swami Tejomayananda**

**Texts:** *Sat Darshanam* and *Panchadasbi*, Ch. 1

This camp is for adults only and is not a family camp. Partial camp attendance is not permitted. Space is limited. Register early.

**Registration:** \$1,000 per person; includes all lodging/boarding; excludes transportation

Mail to CMW (see contact information below):

- 1) Letter of participation with full name, age, mailing address, phone, and e-mail
- 2) A refundable deposit (minimum \$100; credit cards not accepted)

**Arrival:** July 13, **Departure:** July 28

**Transportation** and other details will be given after receiving your registration.

If you move, in order to avoid additional post office charges, promptly send us your new address by mail, fax (707-247-3422), or e-mail ([krishnalaya@chinmayamission.org](mailto:krishnalaya@chinmayamission.org)).

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