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CHINMAYA MISSION® WEST BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2006, No. 114

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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.

www.chinmayamission.org



Dear Readers,

Hari Om. Praṇām.

CMW News was conceived and started by Pujya Gurudev's stalwart pioneer, dedicated worker, and faithful devotee—Nalini Browning. In this issue, on her passing, we pay tribute to her devoted life of service (see page 10). It is of no small significance that this issue also marks a new beginning for CMW News as an online newsletter.

In an effort to save time, money, and most importantly, the environment, CMW News is going paperless. It will be a solely online newsletter from January 2007 onward. Bimonthly issues will be posted in PDF format on www.chinmayamission.org, under 'Newsletter' (issues from 2005 and 2006 are already online). Not to worry—for those of you who prefer hard copy, the same page layout will be kept so you can easily print the entire newsletter on standard-size paper. Just click, print, and go!

CMW News has been, and continues to be, a blessed avenue through which to share, and learn from, our spiritual experiences within our interwoven lives. Thank you for your kind support and constructive feedback over the years. It has been a pleasure to read and delve into so many inspiring stories, heartfelt poems, eye-opening travelogues, dynamic news reports, and spiritually expansive viewpoints. We welcome your submissions, for your inspired words will surely touch a chord in someone's heart and mind, as they did your own.

We look forward to seeing you in cyberspace, to revel in the Mission's breath and breadth.

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His Holiness
Swami Tapovanam

One can worship one's chosen deity with good deeds and moral conduct. Repeat the mantras of the deity; worship His image; meditate upon Him. By such acts of devotion and by the performance of good deeds (of course without desiring their fruits), one ought to purify one's mind and concentrate. Only a mind shorn of all impurities, of likes and dislikes, becomes entitled to follow the path of *jnāna*. The sole means of liberation is the immediate knowledge of the Self, arising out of the enquiry of the Self. That is the goal. There it is we have to reach step by step...

Remember God at all times. It is no spiritual life to spend a few minutes in the morning and evening thinking of God and devoting all the other hours to the thought of sensuous pleasures. Think of the Lord in the midst of work; never for a moment forget Him.

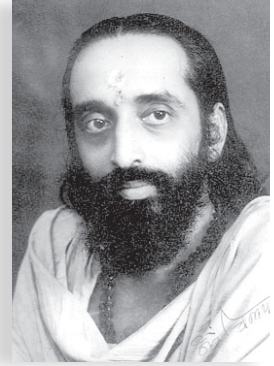
SOURCE: *Guidance from the Guru*, Letter 1



When once the experience of Oneness is gained, we get completely rooted in the spiritual experience of the Supreme. The perception of plurality ceases, meaning, no more do we see the objects as distinctly separate, but in that new Light of wisdom, all of them coalesce to be the One, shining in their new garment of Beauty-Peace-Truth. The names and forms are there, but in and through them all, we come to see the Truth, the Reality, everywhere.

In our spiritual *sādhana*, a stage comes when nothing of the outer world is experienced—neither the objects, emotions, thoughts, nor the body, mind, intellect. Within and without, there is nothing but the blinding flash of Reality. That State, in which there is nothing but Consciousness, and the perceptions of the body, mind, and intellect have totally ended, is “the experience of the whole universe as the Self,” or *sarvātma-bhāva*.

SOURCE: Commentary on *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi*



His Holiness
Swami
Chinmayananda



His Holiness
Swami
Tejomayananda

Message on Chinmaya Ārādhana Day: August 3, 2006

Our prostrations to Pujya Gurudev, the *Virāta Puruṣa* of Chinmaya Mission. The centers in Australia and New Zealand are His feet. His head spans North America. The centers in India form His heart. Others across the globe are His limbs. The Regional Heads are His crown; the *Achāryas*, His eyes and ears. The Mission workers are His hands and legs; our children and youth, the ornaments that adorn His person. The Vedas are His speech. The multifarious activities of the Mission, with its *sevā* projects, *vidyālayas*, ashrams, temples, and research centers, are His vital breath. The Chinmaya Mission is His *vibhuti*, His glory. He pervades all this and extends beyond our comprehension. He is verily *Brahman*. Let us meditate on His cosmic form and realize our oneness with Him. *Hari Om*.

Up, Down, All Around

Q&A with Brahmachari Uddhav Chaitanya in Bentonville, Arkansas

Continued from CMW News, July 2006

Transcribed by Preeti Narain



While living in *samsāra*, how do you with detachment in order to lead a spiritual life?

Is spiritual life detachment from every thing and every feeling? Leading a spiritual life doesn't mean you live in a vacuum. You have the same responsibilities; you are around the same people. Suddenly becoming spiritual doesn't make the people or things around you disappear—though sometimes you may wish it.

Don't ever put spirituality as part of your 'To Do List,' like it is one more task to be completed during the day, as and when convenient. Every moment of our lives should be lived with a spiritual attitude. Living with this attitude means always being cautious and alert, dedicating every thought, word, and deed to the Lord. This attitude is what makes every thought, word, and deed spiritual, not my visiting the temple once in a while. Weekend devotees are weakened devotees.

Don't run away from where you are or what you are doing; spirituality is irrespective of time and space. Even operating a business, done with utmost alertness and awareness, dedicated to the Lord, is spiritual living.

Why do we need temples?

A temple is a central point where all kinds of human sentiments are expressed. In South India, the temples are huge. You may consider this a waste of space, but it is not. The temple complexes are huge, but the Lord sits in some tiny, dark space, way inside. There are five doors (representing our five *koshas*, or "layers")—four you go through, but the fifth, which you cannot go through, is the one into the sanctum sanctorum. This fifth door represents the last door that can be opened for the spiritual seeker only by the Lord Himself.

Traditionally, the temple's outer areas are a center for trade, education (sacred and secular), art, and cultural events. Within this all-inclusive cultural, economic, educational, and socialization hub lies a spiritual powerhouse. Therefore, when you stand before the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum, your

purpose should be solely spiritual.

We need temples because they are highly, positively charged centers where we go to get our batteries recharged, as and when needed. Either keep recharging your lifelong batteries or get battered by life. A temple fulfills different purposes at different levels. Use it wisely.

What is the significance of the *mangala-sūtra*?

I'm the wrong person to ask. Never needed one, never shopped for one, never held one. Well, it would be wrong to say that I don't know anything about it. When it comes to physical utility, I've seen *ammās* use it to hang safety pins and small keys. Men are not far behind; they similarly use their *yajnopavītas* (*janeyu*, or "sacred thread").

A *sūtra* is that which connects one thing to another. *Mangala* means "auspiciousness." That which connects you to auspiciousness is a *mangala-sūtra*. The philosophical and symbolic meanings of the *mangala-sūtra* can be seen in the mantras chanted in a Vedic marriage ceremony. One of these mantras is, "*Māṅgalyam tantunānena mama jivana hetunā kanthe bhadrāmi shubhage tram jīva-sharadām shatam.*"

Marriage is an institution established to bring discipline in life. In Hindu tradition, you don't find talk of divorce. Other than in extreme cases, such as abuse, once we are bound, we are bound for a lifetime—however the other person is. It's not a 'deal or no deal;' it's a done deal.

When I first came to the US, aspects of this culture shocked me. One day, a Caucasian couple told me they had just gotten married—after living together for 13 years. And their three kids were part of their wedding party! This kind of system shocked me then and still remains beyond my comprehension.

Discipline in marriage channels and exhausts physical desires through a sacred and loving relationship, so these desires are not blocked or suppressed. Most importantly, it helps the couple grow in oneness. When marital partners come together, it is not to be equals. This is another concept that throws me off.

How can you be equal? Why should you be equal? Oranges and apples cannot be equal. But together, they can make a beautiful fruit salad. Someone once asked me, “If you have four apples and three oranges in your right hand, and five bananas and a pineapple in your left hand, what do you have?” I said, “Two big hands!”

Uniting in marriage is not to be equal; it is to be one. I once read a beautiful saying on marriage: “Maintain a beautiful relation in oneness. Give 60% to the relationship and expect only 40%. Martial troubles arise because one or both partners give 10% and expect 90%.”

You can give without love, but you cannot love without giving. Giving immensely enhances inner growth, for it teaches you teamwork, sacrifice, selflessness, and respect. When each partner put the other’s needs first, their union is *mangala*. As youth, we learn to first help ourselves. When we marry, we learn to grow beyond ourselves. Helping each other grow is the primary goal. But this aspect has been long lost and has to be reinstalled. Just as you uninstall corrupt software and reinstall a new or improved version, so too, marriage has to be approached with a newer vision and understanding. I’m not proficient in the subtleties of marriage; a successful grandparent who has gone through it can advise you better.

The *mangala-sūtra* connects and disciplines a couple in, to, and for, a higher purpose. The necklace itself is basically made of gold and comes in various designs. When worn, it rests on the chest. Especially for women, gold on different body parts—hand, ears, and chest—has an effect on specific neural points. Women, more so than men, undergo a lot more hormonal changes throughout their lives—from childhood, to puberty, to marriage, to childbirth, to motherhood. These changes are immense on all levels. Gold is a pure metal that affects certain points in the nervous system and helps balance hormonal changes. Thorough research on gold and its effects has been done at an institution near Khandala (Maharashtra, India). Just as silver toe-rings worn by women on their second toe help balance hormones, so too, scientific studies show the benefits of wearing a *mangala-sūtra*.

Nowadays, the *mangala-sūtra* is worn as a fashion statement or just during festivals. Many men also wear their *yajnopavīta* or *janeyu* in the same way. The *janeyu* should be worn 24/7. I had a college roommate who sincerely did his daily *sandhyā-vandanam*, but had a weakness for non-vegetarian food. Whenever he ate non-vegetarian food, he

would first take off his shirt, and then take off his *janeyu*, hang it on a nail, cover it with his shirt, turn his back to the shirt, eat his food, shower, and then put his *janeyu* back on. The sacred thread is to be worn with discipline, for it is a reminder of life’s higher purpose. It is not to be misused or misinterpreted to convenience, for its effects are immensely powerful, as are those of wearing the *mangala-sūtra*.

What is the importance of *Lalitā Sahasranāma*?

Sahasranāma means “1,000 names.” When you count them, there are more than 1,000 names in *Lalitā Sahasranāma*. *Vishnu Sahasranāma* has 18-24 more names. *Sahasranāma* thus refers to the Lord’s innumerable names. This is the simple meaning.

Lalitā Sahasranāma extols Divine Mother and Her various aspects. If you keenly observe the names, 90% of them are the same in every *Sahasranāma*. Cut and pasted. Because, from the essential standpoint, all the Lord’s forms are One, so the attributes cannot be different. Chanting these attributes means singing the glories of the Divine.

The mechanical chanting that we were forced to do as kids was our form of prayer. In my family, until we finished our chanting, we didn’t get food. It was a daily, painful bargain. So my brother and I would finish the entire *Vishnū Sahasranāma* in seven and a half minutes—all-inclusive! I did it for just a few years . . . and look where I landed! So you can see that even mechanical chanting has an effect.

When we chant these names, each name has its own power and effect. If someone in the crowd suddenly screams out, “Hey, stupid!” what is the effect? There is a negative force associated with the words. So too, regardless of whether or not you understand the meaning and depth of each name, our ancient *rishis* created each one with the utmost positive energy.

Some people are happy chanting without understanding the meaning; this is fine. Some people want to understand the meaning of each word and revel in it in meditation; this is the best use of any prayer. But whether or not you understand the meaning, chant the prayer with intense devotion. If you don’t have intense devotion, at least be particular about, and perfect in, your pronunciation. The slightest mistake in the pronunciation of a Sanskrit word changes its entire meaning.

A husband once visited a beautiful place and sent his wife an SMS: “Wish you were here.” When

she got the message, she was furious and called him immediately. The poor guy was so confused and asked her what was wrong. She said, “Do you know what you sent in your SMS? ‘Wish you were her.’ Who is she?!” Imagine . . . all he did was miss one letter!

In addition to pronunciation, you should also know where to pause in Sanskrit chanting. In *na karmanā na prajāyā dhanena*, the meaning is, “Not by action, not by progeny, not by wealth (can one be happy).” *Tyāge naike*: “(Happiness is attainable) only by abandoning the ego.” Now, if you pause at the wrong place and chant *dhane na*, instead of *dhanena*, the meaning changes to, “Happiness is attainable only by wealth.” Therefore, whether you know the meaning or not, at least chant the mantra correctly. You don’t know the chemical composition of a jasmine flower, but you still enjoy its smell and it has its own effect. So too, is the power of chanting a mantra, and its effect is greater and deeper when you know the meaning and contemplate on it.

Regardless of everything, when it comes to chanting, just start. It helps you better tune or focus your mind. It’s also never boring to chant the Lord’s glories. Because that would be like saying you’re bored when talk about yourself. We are never tired of hearing about ourselves; we revel in our personal life. If we learn to love, contemplate, and revel in the Lord, or His names and glories, we will find, and be lost in, the depth and beauty of our Source. The Source is the Lord, and therefore, the Lord’s names are My glories, because He is the Self in all. This is ‘the journey within,’ and it includes Kamsa’s type of *sādhana*, which was constant, though hateful, attention on Krishna. Whatever you do for God, do it perfectly. If you want to criticize God, criticize perfectly, with 100% attention. What matters is your intensity, your focus.

What is the best way to chant ‘Om’?

There are different ways to chant ‘Om.’ But first, it is important to understand why to chant Om. We arrived into this room from different places—through beatings of traffic, responsibilities, and to-do lists—and the remnants of these are still floating around. So, to pull ourselves together, center ourselves, quiet our minds, focus better, we chant Om—to invoke a concentrated mind. By attending a *satsanga*, you cannot create concentration; you need to have concentration to attend a *satsanga*. Just by systematically chanting Om thrice, you can gather your potent energy and cut your mind off from other trains of thought.

Concentration is your ability to focus your thoughts

on a given purpose, for a given time, without being distracted or disturbed in any way—without allowing any dissimilar thought flow. Presently, our thought flow tends to be random: while doing x, I am thinking of y. While sitting here, I am wondering if I locked my car door. From where I sit, it is so easy to see everyone’s different actions and reactions. The variety of facial expressions, searches for keys, and archaeological digs into pockets and purses during the first 10-15 minutes of class, is a priceless and continual drama!

To bring some order into our flow of random thoughts, try breathing deeply. Breathing and thinking have an intimate, hand-in-hand relationship. When we are angry, our breathing is rapid, agitated. When we are peaceful, our breathing is slow, rhythmic. Therefore, to calm down, inhale and exhale fully and deeply—for this, sitting straight is a must. In this posture, chant “Om” as you exhale, and synchronize its length with your breath. By doing this, you cut off other thought flows, conserve mental energy, and generate powerful vibrations. This is a prerequisite to practice the art of listening properly. It doesn’t take long, but it is extremely powerful. ‘Om’ is used for different purposes in different situations. But when chanting it as a mantra, I would say it should be synchronized with your breathing.

Advanced Vedanta Course

The Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) has commenced its new Advanced Vedanta Course on introductory Vedantic texts, with the aim of providing students clarity and depth in important Vedantic concepts. Students who have already completed CIF’s Foundation Vedanta Course, or anyone familiar with the basics of Vedanta, may join this one-year home-study course, which is offered through postal correspondence (\$175) or e-mail (\$100).

The course material is conveyed through 24 systematically designed, fortnightly lessons. Students receive one-on-one attention and feedback from CIF’s *āchāryas* and teachers.

For details on content and guidelines, a free download of the first lesson, or the registration form, please visit www.chinfo.org, or e-mail cif@chinmayamission.org.

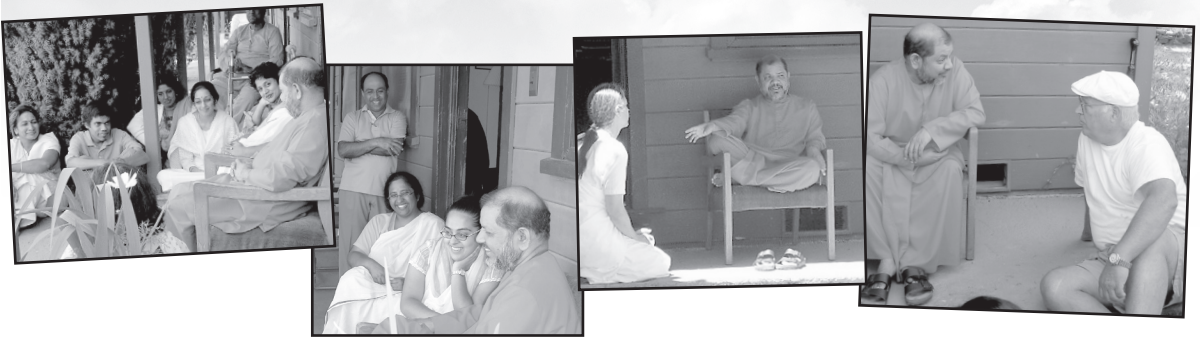
Dharma Sevak Course 2006

A Seeker's Experiences by James Hausman

Photos by John Haring; Selection by Rupali Gupta

Krishnālaya is a safe haven for inquiry into the soul. Home to innumerable spiritual retreats, quietude pervades its atmosphere. It is a place where masters have walked and devotees have prayed. Its rooms are spare and without distraction; its landscaping is tasteful and plentiful, and its *pūjā* rooms are decorated with love.

Situated amidst the tree-covered hills of Northern California, banked by the Eel River, and graced by Swami Tejomayananda, this year's *Dharma Sevak* Course felt like a stint into *Brahmaloka*.



Puja Guruji outside his *kuti*, where, throughout the day, he had informal *satsanga* with various devotees encircling him. This extra QT of love, laughter, and music concerts with Guruji was one of the main highlights of DSC 2006.

It was one of the best camps I've ever been to, and I've been attending ever since I was a little boy. My memories of those earlier camps are not concrete, rather they appear as flitting pictures or vague emotions, the memories of a young child. I remember Puja Gurudev with his booming voice, and how he threw fruits for *prasād*. I remember how, one day, he sent me into the river for exercise, so I swam laps excitedly, but when I returned expecting a reward, he looked at me sternly. I was only a young boy. More than these memories, I don't remember much.



Mananam (reflection) after *shravanam* (listening). In total, four study groups that met every morning to discuss what was taught in class. Guruji enthralled us with the teachings in Shri Vidyaranya Swami's *Tattva Viveka* and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's *Sat Darshanam*.



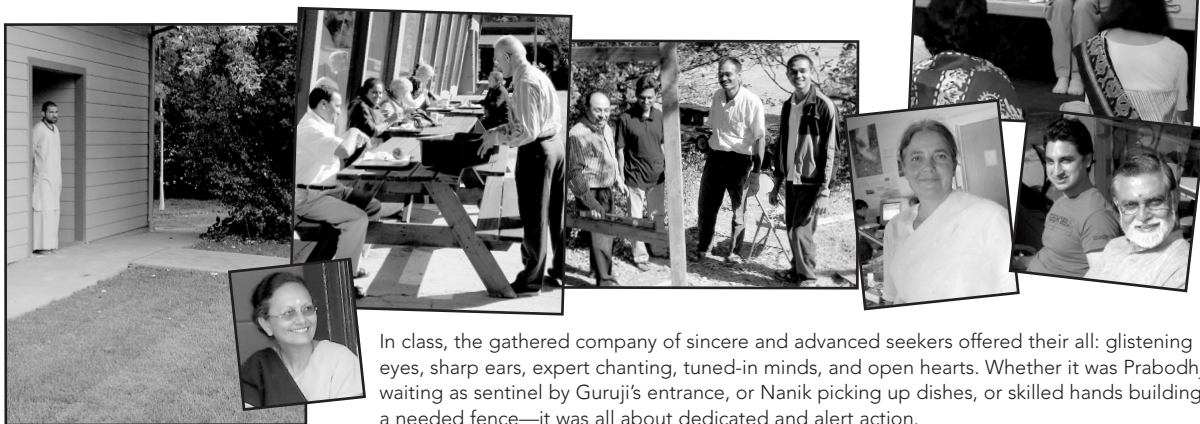
Lolita, Meena, Joshna, Michael, Rosaleo, Nicole, Nanik, and the various delegates who helped out in managing the OM Cooking Command Center, cooked, cleaned, and served hOMemade feasts with plenty of OM loving. The kitchen staff made us all look forward to every meal (but despite our hurry to eat, we always did justice to our *Gita*, Chapter 15 chanting before meals). It seemed as if all the delegates literally spent their days putting smiles on each other's faces—effortlessly.



Relaxation, quiet time, solitude, and so much light and love pervaded throughout that no one could figure out when the camp began, when it ended, and how we all actually left.

Gurudev was fading from my heart until two years ago, when I was reacquainted with Swami Tejomayananda in Anaheim. Since then, Swamiji has completely revolutionized my life. He has made me more comfortable in the understanding that this world is *māyā* by teaching me that this is not a desolate truth, but rather an uplifting one, because this *māyā* is the Lord's, and as such, it is sacred, so we should sport through its profound fictions with reverence, and adoration. Swamiji has taught me how to recognize God's divinity in everything. He has shown me that every moment is a miracle. What he bestows is priceless.

Guruji devised an awesome evening session that featured brief (some of them timed), impromptu talks by all the delegates. Topics included personal experiences with Pujya Gurudev; spiritual thoughts on love, faith, dreams, or enlightenment; and fun and funny thoughts on watermelons, dosa preparation, sari wrapping, and more (yes, you really did have to be there)! There were quiet ones who roared like lions, lions who became deer before their Guru, party people who made everyone laugh, and new public speakers who kept asking if time was up.



In class, the gathered company of sincere and advanced seekers offered their all: glistening eyes, sharp ears, expert chanting, tuned-in minds, and open hearts. Whether it was Prabodhji waiting as sentinel by Guruji's entrance, or Nanik picking up dishes, or skilled hands building a needed fence—it was all about dedicated and alert action.

The *Dharma Sevak* Course fast became a sacred village where ineffable heights of knowledge flowed into our bosoms from the intangible beyond. Together we seekers turned our minds away from worldly concerns and instead focused our thoughts on God. We were gentle with one another: moving slower, speaking quieter. Some latecomers to the camp couldn't settle into this atmosphere, because it was so muted, so peaceful, so out of step with the mundane stresses to which we're all accustomed.

The most striking thing about this camp was how generous Swamiji was with his time. In daily, informal *satsangs*, he would sit on his porch step while we all collected around him like *gopī*s, or like bees to a flower in full bloom; and while a stereo inside his room played *bhajans*, he would dart his watchful eyes at each one of us, radiating love, while the gentle breeze caressed our skin, and under the yellow sun, we reveled. Swamiji seems at perfect peace with the world. He lives harmoniously. In response, we around him began to buzz in the glories of creation. The world grew softer. These were heavenly joys.



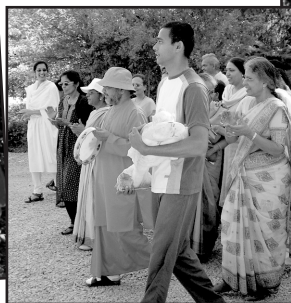
DSC 2006 began with *Guru Purnima* celebrations. Guruji performed the *puja*, offering homage to our *Guru-parampara* on behalf of everyone present. It was a touching and blissful day filled with *Guru-bhakti* and remembrances of, and with, Pujya Gurudev and Guruji.

This was our rigorous schedule: 6 a.m. Guided Meditation; 7:45 a.m. Discourse on Vedanta; 10 a.m. Study Group; 11:30 a.m. Strategizing to strengthen the Mission; 4 p.m. Discourse on Vedanta; 6 p.m. *Bhajans* and *Ārati*; 8 p.m. *Satsanga*.

While my intellect was hopping from revelation to revelation, my heart wavered between heavenly states of divine bliss and insufferable states of purgatory. Sometimes I felt unworthy of the ancient teachings, or too tainted for devotional songs. Guilt came. Then despair. Then repentance. Then suddenly, my ego would assert itself in a very peculiar way . . . I would feel proud for feeling guilty, as if this proved my sincerity as a seeker. But later still, I would feel guilty for having felt proud, and the cycle of guilt, despair, and repentance would begin again. I felt like I was in a washing machine.

The heavenly joys, you understand, came at a fantastic cost. Total surrender.

During the camp we enjoyed several festive ceremonies in all austerity. With Swamiji's blessings, *Guru Pūrnimā* was a delightful day. Following the afternoon *pūjā*, that evening, campers went behind the microphone to share their memories of Gurudev. This was a spiritual support group conducted from our very depths. Later in the camp, we consecrated the new Ganesha *mūrti* in front of Gurudev's *kuṭī*; and at



Lord Krishna's idol at *Krishnalaya*'s entrance was originally established by Pujya Gurudev, but the ravages of time and weather had taken their toll. The original *murti* was thus immersed in the sacred Eel-Ganga River behind the ashram. One of the highlights of DSC 2006 was the immersion procession (with chanting and *bhajans*) of the white marble Krishna and the installment of the new *kunja-vana*, black stone Krishna. Right before the immersion, Guruji said commented on the river looking just like the Yamuna—calm, quiet, and soft.

continued
on page 20

Nalini Browning

December 28, 1931 - September 8, 2006

In the first hour of September 8, 2006, Nalini Browning, long-time Chinmaya Mission member and pillar of strength for Gurudev's work in the West, departed from the physical plane in Oaxaca, Mexico, where she was visiting her daughter Anjali. Her husband Bill Browning was also at her side.



Nalini, an ardent devotee of Gurudev and supremely dedicated Chinmaya Mission worker, was the kingpin of Gurudev's work in North America. Nalini met Gurudev in California in 1965 during his first lecture tour in the US, and from that day forward dedicated her life to his work. In those nascent years of Mission activities in the US, Gurudev assigned to Nalini the responsibility of distributing Mission books in North America, organizing his *yajnas*, and acting as his main liaison in the US. As the result of her dedicated action, the beginnings of Chinmaya Publications in the West were born, the initial Chinmaya Mission newsletters in the West were published, and countless *yajnas* organized. Also through Nalini's efforts, the first Chinmaya Family Camp was organized in the West, at Sonoma State University in California in 1973.

When Chinmaya Mission West (CMW) was officially formed in the US in 1975, Nalini was once again instrumental in bringing the activities to successful completion. Two sister organizations were born: Chinmaya Mission West and Chinmaya Publications West (which, in later years, were merged). Gurudev appointed Nalini as Director on both Boards and asked her to act as Secretary for both organizations, a responsibility that she continued to fulfill until her declining health no longer allowed it.

While the Browning family resided in Napa, California, Gurudev instructed Bill Browning to learn the art of printing. The Brownings then founded Family Press, with Bill doing the printing and Nalini managing the pre-publication work and finance.

For many years, Family Press supported Chinmaya Mission's publications needs by printing newsletters, books, *Mananam*, Mission letterheads, *yajna* and camp announcements, and other printed material.

In 1989, Gurudev decided to move CMW headquarters to '*Krishnālaya*' in Piercy, California, and asked that the Brownings move their residence there. For some years, the *Krishnālaya* site had been left in a dormant state, but through the dedicated efforts of the Browning family, as well as the support of a number of sincere Mission members, the site was refurbished; for many years it has been the venue for *Dharma Sevak* Courses, Chinmaya Youth Camps, and other Chinmaya Mission camps and activities. To this day, the Browning residence is located in one wing of Gurudev's *kuṭi*.

After Pujya Gurudev's *mahāsamādhi* in 1993, Nalini's health began to decline. Despite grave health problems, Nalini continued to support Mission work in whatever way she could, including writing up memories of her time with Gurudev (published in *CMW News*) and helping with *CMW News*' layout and design to the very end of her life.

Nalini Browning's life was synonymous with Chinmaya Mission and Gurudev's work. Her name and visage are known throughout Mission centers worldwide, for she traveled and worked alongside Gurudev not only in North America, but also in India and other countries. With her unequalled tenacity and dedication, and, above all, love for Gurudev and his work, Nalini was an example for the rest of us, the epitome of a *karma-yogī*.

Nalini is survived by her husband Bill, son David, daughter Anjali, grandson Aleksander, brothers Luis and Alan, and sisters Barbara and Irene.

- Rudite Emir

In Nalini's memory, Bill and Anjali Browning prepared a slide show and a memorial booklet with inspiring words from family and friends. These were presented during her memorial services in California, October 6-8.

Evening prayer services, *kīrtan*, and *prasād* were offered on October 6 at CM San Jose, with Swami Siddhananda and Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya in attendance.

Candle lighting, memorial speakers, and a slide show presentation were offered on October 7 at *Krishṇālaya*. This was followed by a remembrance gathering, memorial dinner, *kīrtan*, and musical tributes.

The services ended on October 8 with the chanting of *Tryambakam Mantra* at sunrise, procession to the Eel River for scattering of the ashes, breakfast, and prayers in Richardson Grove Redwood Park in Piercy.

In lieu of flowers for the CM San Jose service, devotees were invited to donate to the Nalini Browning Memorial Fund. All contributions will fund a project at Nalini's beloved *Krishṇālaya*. Devotees may still contribute to 'Chinmaya Mission' (specify 'Nalini Browning Memorial Fund') by mail: 1765 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94303.



Whenever great, noble, and visionary Masters are born in this world, God sends some chosen, blessed souls to serve these Masters and help them in their work to inspire and guide people for their spiritual evolution. Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayanandaji, was one such great Master and Nalini Browning was one such gem of a person who served Pujya Gurudev ever since she met Him. The growth of Chinmaya Mission that we see today in USA has its roots in the early work done by Nalini. We, as the Mission, remain grateful to her. May God's Grace an Pujya Gurudev's blessings be with her.

We join in prayers with Bill Browning, Anjali, and David.

- Pujya Gururji Swami Tejomananda

I am really sad to hear about Nalini Browning's departure from her mortal body. As Shri Gurudev's ardent devotee, she has reached the feet of her Guru. Her life is an inspiration to all our Chinmaya Mission devotees and *sevaks* for a totally committed and dedicated life to Shri Gurudev. We sincerely pray for her onward journey.

- Swami Shantananda (CM Princeton)

Nalini has a history of contributions in terms of love for Gurudev, active work, and being a trustee in the real sense of the word, from the beginning till her end. We have been friends together in Delhi, Piercy, other parts of USA, and even at a *yajna* in Hyderabad, where she was doing Swamiji's [Gurudev's] secretarial work.

- Anjali Singh (CM Delhi)

It is sad to hear the news about Nalini. However, I truly feel that Pujya Gurudev's grace and presence are there to protect her in loving embrace. Those who have known her over the years can vouch for her steadfastness and devotion to Pujya Gurudev and His work. We can all be glad to be given an opportunity to have known a noble soul and pray for her well-being in her onward journey!

- Bina Patel (CM Washington DC)

Nalini literally translates as "lotus flower." In some translations, *Nalini* means "mother of wisdom," and in some, the same as *Gāyatri*, or the "mother of the Vedas."

The lotus flower symbolizes purity and beauty in Hinduism. The lotus is born in muddy water, exists in it, grows in it, is nourished by it, and perishes in it. It is thus nothing but an expression of muddy waters, yet it is exquisitely beautiful and untainted by mud or water.

Nalini lived like the pure and fresh lotus. She gave fragrance, beauty, and love to all. Like a water-drop playing on a lotus petal, she lived without attachment. We, the vast Chinmaya Family, will ever remember her. Nalini has reached the lotus feet of Pujya Gurudev and Lord Krishna.

- Swami Siddhananda (CM Philadelphia)

How can we estimate the importance of Nalini Browning or express our indebtedness to her? She

is the mother of Chinmaya Mission West!

Personally, I feel her loss very deeply. At the same time, I feel she has merged and become Divine Mother now. Knowing that she had a deep connection with Lord Krishna, it seems very significant that she departed on the 8th (of September), the particular number associated with Him. Furthermore, a remarkable dream of Lord Krishna that Bill, her husband, had shortly before her departure is, to me, a further indication of the divine state she has attained. She will be greatly missed on the physical plane, yet I pray that dear Nalini's love and light will ever accompany us and help illumine our path to the supreme Goal.

Thank you, Nalini. We love you!

- *Brahmacharini Arpita (CM St. Augustine)*

The first time I met Nalini, her reverence and devotion to Gurudev made me realize right away that she was very special and one of Gurudev's fondest children. When I told her this was my first exposure to Chinmaya Mission and Gurudev, and that I was not sure if this was my cup of tea, she replied, "Oh, don't worry. Your life will never be like before. You will find a new meaning and purpose, and none of us can repay this debt." How right she was.

Nalini was kind, simple, and above all, a very dedicated, silent, and hard worker. Our Gurudev's choicest blessing will be showered on dear Nalini for lives to come. We will miss her dearly. We shall offer prayers for her family at our *Chinmaya Māruti* center.

- *Gopal Dwarakanath (CM Boston)*

I met Nalini through my work with *CMW News*. I loved her quietness most. And the words that flowed from her quietness. Her column, "The Early Days," which she wrote for *CMW News* when health permitted, described her first experiences with Pujya Gurudev and the birth of Chinmaya Mission in the West. Those flowing, graceful, easy words . . . I cannot express what I feel when I read her work.

Her amazing strength and peace of mind throughout her illness has Pujya Gurudev written all over it. I am sad that I did not get to hear all her stories of Him, but it is a joy to see Him and His glories manifest through true devotees like Nalini. I remain indebted and grateful for Nalini's generous service, love, and spirit.

- *Brahmacharini Aparna Chaitanya (CM Miami)*

Star-Seekers

Chinmaya Bala Vihar,
Grade 6
(Danville, California)

Narayana, Narayana,
Where can we find Narayana?

We looked to the north,
we looked to the south.

We were in desperate
search of Krishna's mouth.

We searched around Niagara Falls,
But all we heard were birdie calls.
We looked for footprints in the sand,
Anxiously searching on sea and land.

Narayana, Narayana,
You came down as Vamana.
In the noon you were Shri Ram,
In the darkness, you were Shyam.

Narayana, Narayana,
Where can we find you, Narayana?
Are our prayers not real strong?
Or did we do something wrong?

Narayana, Narayana,
How can we not find Narayana?
Then it struck . . .
the search has been outside.
Let's take a deep dive and look inside.

Hari Om! In the cave of my heart
Shines a Whole with no parts.
He is my All in all, near and far.
He is my Almighty, my shining star.
Narayana, Narayana,
There only is Narayana.

CMW News Goes Paperless

CMW News will become a solely online newsletter from January 2007 onward. Bimonthly issues will be posted on www.chinmayamission.org. See page 2.

Chinmaya Gokul Inaugurated

by Anil Mehta

“Shri Krishna has appeared in Bakersfield” was the talk of the town when Chinmaya Mission inaugurated its new center, *Chinmaya Gokul*, in Bakersfield, California, on July 9, 2006. The event was presided over by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda and over 400 people attended this joyous event. Other attending CM *ācharyās* included Swami Ishwarananda, Swami Siddhananda, Brahmacharini Aparna Chaitanya, and Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya.



The event was graced by Mohan Priyacharya Maharaj from Kalimpong, West Bengal. Several religious and community leaders in Bakersfield participated in the inaugural ceremonies. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Mormon, Sikhism were represented, and professors from the Department of Religious Studies at California State University in Bakersfield also attended.

Various major political leaders of Bakersfield, including the Congressman, Sheriff, Mayor, County Supervisors, City Councilmen, and Police Chief, offered words of welcome and congratulations, expressing appreciation of the Indian community's contributions in Bakersfield and of the growing friendships in the religious and social arenas.

The ceremonies began with Bala Vihar children chanting Vedic verses and singing *bhajans*. Ravi Patel, Vice President of CM Bakersfield, welcomed all the religious leaders, dignitaries, and devotees, emphasizing the main theme of Hinduism as *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, or “the whole world is one family.”

Anil Mehta, President of CM Bakersfield, gave a brief introduction of Pujya Gurudev, and his Mission and teachings. He also covered the new center's history to date, recalling Pujya Guruji's first visit (when he was *āchārya* of CM San Jose, California).

Naina Patel gave a construction update. Swami Ishwarananda spoke on faith, service, austerity, and love, stating, “Without these qualities, man is a burden on Mother Earth.” He welcomed and encouraged all to take advantage of all the upcoming activities at *Chinmaya Gokul*.

Treasurer Jayashree Manohara offered a vote of thanks to everyone for their efforts in making *Chinmaya Gokul* a reality.

Pujya Guruji's address featured two profound stories. The first was about a boy who was given a world map; it had a human body drawn on the reverse side. The map was torn into pieces and the boy was asked to restore the map as one whole. To do this, the boy used the picture of the human body as his guide. “Discover your Self and you discover Wholeness,” Pujya Guruji said.

The second story was about the challenge at a feast: to eat without bending one's arm. The solution was for each guest to feed the other. “Serve others,” Pujya Guruji said. “This is the only way to make this world a better place. If everyone only takes care of only oneself, the stronger will survive and the weaker will perish.” Guruji urged all to treat everyone with care and to serve the needy. He then released a new CD entitled, *Shri Krishna Charitram*, and a souvenir. Invoking the Lord's grace and Pujya Gurudev's blessings, he prayed for the center's success.

Pujya Guruji and Mayor Harvey Hall cut the ribbons and formally



inaugurated the new center. After ceremonially opening all the rooms in the building (each room has a different name of the Lord), everyone entered the main shrine. Pujya Gururji sprinkled sacred water on the brass *mūrti* of Gokul Krishna and opened the eyes of the marble *mūrtis* of Gokul Krishna and the cow. Other devotees also offered sacred waters to the Lord. The event ended with lunch *prasād* served by the volunteers.

With the addition of this new facility, the CM Bakersfield family is eager to grow and spread peace in the community.

Hanumanji Comes to CM Tustin

Based on a report by Nimmi Raghunathan



Pujya Gururji unveiled a marble *mūrti* of Lord Hanuman before hundreds of devotees at CM Tustin's *Chinmaya Mithilā* center on July 8.

The unveiling ceremony began with *pūjās* to Lord Rama and Lord Hanuman. The large congregation then chanted *Hanumān Chālīsā* 11 times, after which, Pujya Gururji invoked the Lord's grace, unveiled the new *mūrti*, and performed *Hanumān Ārati*.

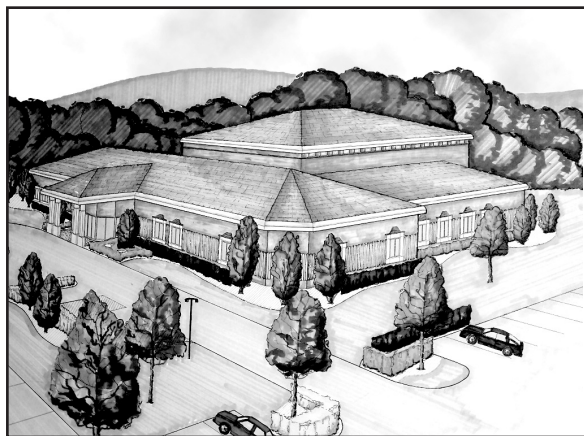
Pujya Gururji's informal address to the gathering contained simple yet profound observations, laced with humor. He said there are two kinds of greatness. One, where you make everyone around look smaller so you appear great, and the other, where you make everyone seem great. The latter, he said, was desirable. Pujya Gururji cited Lord Rama and Hanumanji as an example where it was not just the devotee praising the Lord, but also the Lord generously extolling his devotee's virtues. He said, in turn, Hanumanji, through service and steadfast love, achieved greatness.

Pujya Gururji, whose 56th birthday was celebrated at *Chinmaya Mithilā* on June 30 with *bhajans*, on this day, led the congregation in person, singing the glories of Lord Rama and Hanumanji.

Swami Ishwarananda, in his address, stated that he had seen the new *mūrti* in Jaipur, India, and was

sure that it was "the one" meant for CM Tustin. He welcomed all to participate in the growth of the center and its activities, and invited all to partake of lunch *prasād*.

Chinmaya Yamunotri: Ground-Breaking Ceremony



On the auspicious day of *Guru Pūrṇimā*, July 11, a short ceremony signified the beginning of the construction phase for CM Chicago's *Chinmaya Yamunotri* center in Grayslake, Illinois. The event was attended by Swami Sharanananda (CM Chicago *āchārya*), Shanker Pillai (CM Chicago president), and many *sevaks*.

The ceremonial digging, accompanied by Vedic chanting, commenced the official ground preparation for the construction of the 19,000 sq. ft. building. The new center will house Bala Vihar and Yuva Kendra classrooms and a shrine for Shri Radha-Krishna. *Chinmaya Yamunotri* will serve the Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin areas.



CM Chicago Annual Youth Camp

By Pujya Gurudev's blessings, CM Chicago's annual Youth Camp (held June 26-July 2), had record attendance this year. The *Badri* ashram was graced

by five distinguished *āchāryas* from various CM centers, who taught invaluable lessons to more than 280 children and youth (ages 5-18 years), enrolled from all over the U.S.

Swami Sharanananda (CM Chicago), Swami Prakashananda (CM Trinidad), Brahmachari Uddhav Chaitanya (CM Dallas-Fort Worth), Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya (CM Los Angeles), and Lakshmi Sukumar (CM San Diego), assisted by 18 teachers from the *Badri*, *Chinmaya Yamunotri*, and Indiana centers, expounded the theme of Vedic heritage. Students in grades KG-6 learned “The Value of Values” through select *chaupais* from *Bāla Kānda* of *Shrī Rāmacharitamānasa*. Students in grades 7-8 learned “The Paths of Self-Unfoldment” (*karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, and *jnana yoga*) through select verses from *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. Students in grades 9-12 learned “The Essentials of Hinduism,” focusing on the doctrines of karma, reincarnation, and immortality.

Each day began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 4:30 p.m., and included classes, arts and crafts, *bhajans*, chanting, sports, recreation, and meals. Additional special events included Shri Rama *pūjā*, extempore speech presentations (one-minute talks on random topics, ranging from ‘how to eat a mango’ to ‘how to deal with racism’), and a fun fair (games, dunk tank, fun house, and more). The camp concluded with a cultural program that parents attended, where all classes presented an item based on their respective class lessons.

Camp Coordinator Roopla Khanna said, “The inspiring energy created in this week will be felt throughout the year. Many thanks to all the volunteers who served so selflessly and gave so freely.”

CM Raleigh-Durham Yajna

by Aparna Amin

“Just Be . . . Be Present . . .” was one of the essential themes revealed in Swami Chidatmananda’s week-long discourses on ‘Learning through Relationships,’



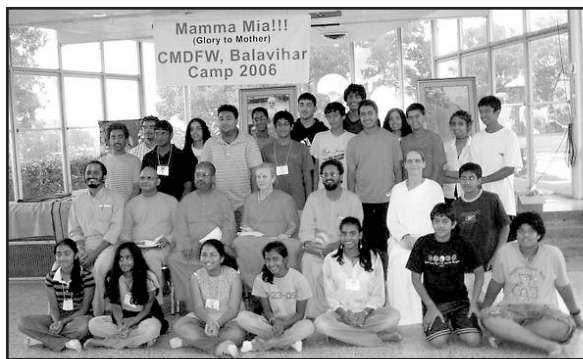
which began June 12 in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Through his practical and often humorous examples, eloquent and enchanting style, Swamiji expounded the meaning, effects, and strategies for managing various relationships.

In addition to the daily evening discourses, a few families attended a weekend spiritual retreat with Swamiji in Carolina’s serene Blue Ridge Mountains. Here, Swamiji conducted evening *satsangs* and morning meditation. All in all, CM Raleigh-Durham devotees reveled in their time and study with Swamiji, understanding well that “every relationship happens for a reason.”

CM Dallas-Fort Worth Family Camp

by Arunachalam Venkatraman

‘Mamma Mīa! Glory to Mother!’ CMDFW’s eagerly awaited, annual Labor Day Weekend Camp had a new twist this year. Adults, CHYKs and elementary



school children were also invited to join in the fun at Lake Texoma, September 1-4.

Mamma Mīa! What a glorious time one and all had as they were immersed in the multi-faceted glory of Divine Mother! Five distinct, concurrent classes for elementary school children, middle school children, high school students, CHYKs, and adults were conducted by a team of six experienced and able *āchāryas*: Swami Shantananda (CM Princeton), Swami Sharanananda (CM Chicago), Swamini Shivapriyananda (CM Toronto), Brahmacharini Arpita (CM St. Augustine), Brahmachari Bhasa Chaitanya (CM Houston), and our very own *āchārya*, Brahmachari Uddhav Chaitanya. A team of *sevaks* organized and managed food, supplies, and other details.

The camp was officially inaugurated on Friday evening after a quick pizza dinner. On Saturday, the camp started at 6 a.m. for all the attendees. While the adults and CHYKs attended guided meditation conducted by Uddhavji, the children learned the

intricacies of different yoga *āsana*s under the able guidance of Sharanji.

The younger kids enjoyed music, dance, arts and crafts, and Nature outings with Arpitaji. Her expertise with the guitar enticed them and lit up their classes with enthusiastic participation. The Nature Walk to collect seeds and leaves by the lake, as well as the trip to the Nature center, where they got to see reptiles and touch turtles, definitely added to their fond camp memories.

The glory of the various forms of Divine Mother—Durga, Lakshmi, and Sarasvati—was revealed to the middle school children by Sharanji. He engaged the kids in lively discussions on values for daily living and encouraged them to present their ideas and thoughts.

Swamini Shivapriyananda wowed (not an easy task!) the high school teenagers with her achievements in both secular and spiritual spheres. The kids could relate to her precise, scientific analyses during discussions. Her workshops were eye-opening and ego-deflating. Swaminiji taught lessons on values with reference to one's inner qualities (*gunas*). The kids got a sense of their place and role in the world, a measure of how little they contribute toward some of their greatest achievements, and how much more are the contributions of the supporting family and social structures.

Uddhavji, ably assisted by Bhasaji, took up the challenge of discussing Adi Shankara's hard-hitting text, *Bhaja Govindam*, with the CHYKs. In the mornings, Uddhavji chose the traditional *guru-kula* style of imparting this knowledge, seated on a circular park bench overlooking the lake, surrounded by the students. The serenity of the atmosphere with the rising sun and the fresh air was conducive for clear and focused thinking. Uddhavji's inimitable style of mixing humor with contemporary examples drove home the lessons of the text.

The adults attended discourses by Swami Shantanandaji on the seventh canto of *Shrimad Bhāgavatam*, specifically, the story of Prahlada. Swamiji's discourses were a rare combination of spiritual knowledge and pithy humor. The Q&A sessions were strong reminders to all the adult attendees to re-assess their life and thinking patterns.

In the joint recreational activities, the various groups mixed and mingled. The children enjoyed playing volleyball, cricket, and ping pong with each other and the *āchāryas*. Sharanji's cricketing talents were rekindled, much to the children's delight! All the kids (and some of the adults) made

colorful and creative tie-dye shirts that they took home as camp keepsakes.

Other highlights of the camp included the 'Cool OM Competition' (so coool!), the afternoon boat ride on the lake (being drenched by Uddhavji!), DJ Uddhavji playing music for *raas*, learning to chant the "world's first-ever rap song (*ayi giri nandini* . . .), Uddhavji applying *mehendi* on kids' hands, listening to the *āchāryas* narrate events from their life that profoundly influenced them in their spiritual journey, Uddhavji reciting "Twinkle, twinkle, little star . . ."—the list could go on and on!

The ever-popular talent show let the kids display their talents and poke some wholesome fun at the *āchāryas* and adults. The camp concluded with a *Sarasvati Pūjā* conducted by Bhasaji and performed by Sharanji.

What did this camp mean to each attendee? The answers naturally vary, but all who attended, whether they were seasoned veterans or first-timers, had a good time and learned something valuable.

CM San Diego Youth Camp

by Lakshmi Sukumar

CM San Diego's (CMSD's) Third Annual Youth Camp for Bala Vihar and Yuva Kendra students (28 from San Diego, 7 from Los Angeles, and one from England) was held at '*Krishnālaya*' in Piercy, California, August 13-19.

The bus pilgrimage from San Diego to Piercy was a 15-hour drive over 800 miles; the campers reached around 8 p.m. After dinner, a brief orientation, and a good night's rest, all were ready on Sunday



morning for the camp inauguration by the camp *āchārya*, Swami Ishwarananda.

The camp theme, '20 Values for a 20/20 Life: Passport to Perfection,' focused on the teachings

of *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter 13. Daily activities included yoga for kids, meditation for adults, Swamiji's morning assembly, *sevaks'* classes on the 20 values, arts and crafts, group discussions to reinforce the values taught, *bhajans*, *ārati*, festival celebrations, chanting of *Gītā* Chapter 15 before lunch and dinner, and recreation (movies, *rāsa-līlā*, picnic and hike in the Redwoods, and games).

Campers were fed healthy vegetarian food throughout, with mostly organic ingredients. The high school students (*yuva sevaks*) performed many chores with great enthusiasm and teamwork. The camp concluded with short skits presented by the children and each child's *guru-dakṣiṇā* offering to Swamiji in the form of a promise to practice a chosen value.

On August 15, India's Independence Day, the children and adults marched from Gurudev's *kūṭi* to Lord Krishna's *mūrti* in *Kunja Vanam*, singing *Vande Mātaram*, led by a student dressed as *Bhārata Mātā* (Mother India). In the evening, the children went to the Eel-Ganga River, which flows behind *Krishṇālaya*, chanted *Ganga Stotram*, and offered *ārati* to Mother Ganga. Swamiji blessed them with sprinklings of water from the Ganga. After dinner, the children watched the movie *Gandhi*.

Janmāśṭami on August 16 was celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm, *bhajans* till midnight, and the procession of Baby Krishna from Mathura (the temple) to Gokul (the main hall). The next day, under Swamiji's guidance, all the children performed *abhishekam* to *Kunja-Vihāri* Krishna and puja to their little Krishna. A sumptuous South Indian feast was served on *Gokulashtami*. The highlight of the camp was the night's outdoor *rāsa-līlā* before Lord Krishna.

CM San Jose 'India Camp'

by Nishant Pol (Grade 7)

India is an extremely diverse place. Just in terms of weather, you might witness water running down Mumbai's roads, converting them into grungy lakes and streams, or feel the scorching sand on the eastern beaches where the sun is like a cook, braising humans as they play traditional games like *Kho* or *Kabbaddi*. That is in the summer. In the winter, you can ski down the snowy slopes of the Himalayas.

Taking a trip to India would be a big hassle for some people, so Chinmaya Mission organized an 'India Camp' during the school summer break. The two volunteers who planned the camp did everything perfectly, so no one got bored. In the following

sections, I will explain my experience as a student in the India Camp.

History

Through reading and listening to lectures, we gleaned on the events and periods such as the "invasion" of the Aryans, the secular and cruel Moghul period, the devastating British invasion, Mahatma Gandhi's crucial role in the Independence movement. We were fortunate to watch the movie *Gandhi*. This movie was very angering. Some memorable scenes included the massacre at Jalianwalla Bagh and the famous Salt March. We also learned about modern India and all the symbols that describe it, such as the peacock, mango, and lion pillar.

Games and Activities



We enjoyed playing a few traditional games, such as *Kho*, *Saat Patthar*, and *Kabbaddi*. These all require

only a flat piece of land to play on and occasionally a line or a rope. They are all intense, so you still get exercise with the least amount of equipment.

We got hands-on culture: We rolled and cooked *aaloo paraathaas* and then ate them with *raita*. We also made spice bottles. I layered ten Indian spices in a jar and labeled them.

Other activities included playing *daandiya*, making *diyas* and flag magnets, and tie-dyeing t-shirts (the Indian art of *baandhini*).

Language

Since there is such a diverse population, we learned about some of the many languages. I know Marathi, which is similar to Hindi and Sanskrit. Even though the script is different for other Indian languages, I



noticed, especially in the numbers, that the sounds are similar.

Posters

At the end, we all created and presented a poster. I created a bank out of Indian spices, *daals*, and beans. I even made a *rangoli* design with *daals*. Others created posters with themes like architecture, places, and invasions (one camper said, “India has been invaded many times but it has always recovered.”)—they all looked great.

I thank the teachers of India Camp 2006 and Chinmaya Mission San Jose for sponsoring and conducting this wonderful camp. I hope my brother will enjoy it just as much next year.

CM Ottawa Family Camp

CM Ottawa’s summer family camp was held in Quebec over the July 21-23 weekend and presided over by Swami Ishwarananda (CM Tustin). Swamiji taught *Upadesha Sāra* to the adults.



The kids’ theme was the festival of *Ganesha Chaturthi*; they wrote and sang a rap to honor the occasion.

Ganapati Ganapati, he’s our man:
If he can’t do it, nobody can!
He rides on his mouse so small and strong,
And can choose with ease between right and wrong.
He cuts your attachments with his axe;
This is so you can love him to the max!
A reward for your efforts, it’s called a modak—
regular *sādhana* keeps you unstuck.
He has a trunk that’s strong and nimble.
Can you guess what is the symbol?
You and I should be so changeable
To make our personality re-arrangeable.
He takes your troubles and trades them for a blessing.
He is so magical, it keeps you guessing!
With large ears to remind us to listen
Truly with our mind, then our hearts will glisten.
Powerful and mighty is our dear Gajanana;
We cannot start a thing without doing *prārthanā*.
This can be done at any time of day;
First thing in the morning or right before you play.
Remember Vighneshvara any time you can
And you will be better than when you began!

CM Dallas-Fort Worth Dance Program

CM DFW’s School of Dance and Music presented ‘*Ālayam Karunālayam*’ (the supreme abode of compassion) on May 13. This memorable tribute to the majestic temple of Lord Ranganatha in Srirangam, India, was made possible by the compassion and blessings of Pujya Gurudev, Pujya Guruji, and the guidance and support of our *ācharyā*, Brahmachari Uddhavji.

Six dance and music teachers coordinated over 50 children of varying ages (5-16 years) to create this veritable feast for the eyes and ears. The researched and original script was accompanied by visiting artists’ instrumental music.

The program had ten scenes tracing the story of the ardent devotee, Shri Tirupan Alwar. The great poet and devotee of Vaishnavite tradition, Shri Tirupan touched the hearts of many on this day. The heartfelt narration, the devoted dancers, and the enthusiastic musicians transported the audience to Srirangam.

The uniqueness of this event was its style. Songs were rendered live for the dancers by children. The program lasted a little over two hours; it began with dances on the early life of Shri Tirupan Alwar and ended with his merging with Lord Ranganatha. The soul-stirring musicians and dancers were synchronized in perfect *rāga* and *tāla*. The narration



highlighted the history of the Srirangam Temple, describing the majesty and significance of its 7 unique *prakarams* (enclosures) and 21 towers. The program also highlighted the purpose of visiting a temple and on how to tune the body, mind, and intellect toward the Supreme.

The spellbound audience was elevated to higher realms of devotion and a few spectators, natives of Srirangam, said they were filled with an intense longing to visit their Lord Ranganatha.

It was superb teamwork, in a true *yajna* spirit, from everyone: the tireless efforts of the teachers, the dedication of the children, the many hours spent by the parent volunteers, and the stunning backdrop by Uddhavji and volunteers.



In the Land of the Lords

by Radha Bharania

Continued from CMW News, July 2006

The trek to each village used to be something that I dreaded, but now I am beginning to find it rather funny. One thing I have noticed is that in India, there is always a way. They improvise, invent, and are fearless. Each village is two or three bus rides away; the bus has no specific schedule and it stops for a total of five seconds. In this gap, you are required to jump up in huge steps onto a bus that is jam-packed to a point where the doors don't close and people are hanging out. The basic rule for all passengers is to hold on for your life and hope you make it to your destination.

To get to the most remote villages, they have special bus stops where you can catch a jeep to drive you into the village. The jeep is meant to seat eight people, but here in India, they naturally find a way to seat 13 people. No doubt, the driver has a child in his lap also.

The remainder of the trek to each house is on foot. The biggest problem for me here is that I cannot drink the water; and upon visiting each house, they are sure to offer much to drink and eat. Whether they can afford it or not, they are hospitable and most happy that someone has come! And that too, an American! I always carry filtered water in my bag, but have become rather stubborn in trying not to appear like a foreigner who is too good to drink their water. So, out of my own doing, I rarely drink my filtered water when others are watching.

After walking quite a distance to get to one house, I kindly declined the offer of water, despite my thirst. The lady of the house was not pleased. She wanted me to have something. Finally she pulled two oranges from the tree and offered them to me. I was ecstatic—the perfect way to quench my thirst! But as I took my first bite, I realized that they weren't oranges. In fact, it was some other type of fruit that tastes like a lemon—only more sour. I hope I disguised my surprise well as I continued eating slowly, but with much less enthusiasm. Then she brought out a plate of sugar for me to dip the lemon-type fruit in. In my mind, all I kept seeing was that green carton of Sealtest® lemonade that we have back home (it has a yellow rim, and is so

cool and refreshing in the summer). With renewed enthusiasm I dipped a piece in the sugar, only to realize that it was salt. Needless to say, the Sealtest® carton image disappeared quickly, but I actually got semi-used to the taste after a few pieces.

Although they may not have much, everyone here is so kind. They give, give, and give, in whatever capacity they can, and go out of their way to make you feel at home. India has amazingly managed to teach the art of gift-giving. No matter how small or insignificant in value the gift is, even if it is a piece of fruit, if given in the right way, it can make someone feel so special. I returned home that day to find that an additional three lemon-type fruits had been placed in my bag when I wasn't looking.

World Disability Day was observed on December 3. I got to take part in a Peace March on December 2. Disabled children, youth, and adults walked to raise awareness for the rights of the disabled. This year, the theme was 'Accessibility.' Disabled people who are on wheelchairs and have other difficulties don't have the correct tools and ramps here to enter buses, schools, and other buildings. Often their own village roads are not paved and wheelchair-accessible. The March began at Dharamasala College, continued past the Chief Medical Officer's Office, and ended at the District Councilor's Office, where many disabled marchers spoke of their personal struggles.

The following day, CORD held a cultural program to highlight disabled children and youth. Each group—from hearing impaired youth, to challenged children, to wheelchair-bound youth—performed dances, sang songs, read poems, or spoke in their own words to raise awareness in the community. Each group had joined the CORD program to strengthen their skills so that they could learn to generate income and live a successful life despite their hardships. One youth had been taught to play drums so he could earn money by playing at weddings. Another had been taught to sew; another wrote beautiful poems. It was an amazing event to witness and one that I will most likely never forget. One CORD phrase is: "They are not disabled; they are differently able."

My trip so far seems to be packed with little twists and turns—in the environment, the way of life, and my inner growth. I miss home some days, and all my Chinmaya Mission Ottawa friends, but I am also enjoying my time here.

to be continued

PUJYA SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA'S ITINERARY

November 6-December 4 / Mumbai / *Classes for Brahmacharis*
Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Saki Vihar Rd.
Powai, Mumbai 400 072, India mumbai@chinmayamission.org
Phone: (91-22) 2857-8647 Fax: (91-22) 2857-3065

December 5-19 / Coimbatore / *Classes for Brahmacharis*
Chinmaya Gardens, Siruvani Rd., Nallur Vayal Post
Coimbatore 641 114, India chinmayagardens@chinmayamission.org
Phone: (91-422) 261-3490/5446 Fax: (91-422) 261-5725

December 20-23 / Tampa / *Inauguration of 'Chinmaya Prasad'*
4803 Cheval Blvd., Lutz, FL 33558, USA
tampa@chinmayamission.org
Phone: (813) 909-4142 Fax: (813) 949-5071

December 24-30 / Houston / *Family Camp*
Moody Gardens Hotel, Seven Hope Blvd., Galveston, TX 77554 USA
gaurang@chinmayamission.org
Phone: (281) 250-1375

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Krishnālaya's entrance, we consecrated the new *Kunja-vihāri* Krishna *mūrti*. Honestly, I'm not even fond of *pūjās*, but these were exceedingly sweet. And as the grand finale, on the last day of the camp, we carried the old, broken Krishna *mūrti* in procession to the Eel River, and submerged it under the silky waters.

Our beloved Swami Tejomayananda has met with His Holiness Dalai Lama on several occasions. The Dalai Lama, we all know, has thousands upon thousands of followers worldwide, who would drop everything for two weeks, if during that time they could somehow be guaranteed the Dalai Lama's direct guidance and companionship. We in the Chinmaya Mission actually have that opportunity with Swamiji. If we choose, we may commune with a Master.

While the intellectualisms of Vedanta are the vehicles for his knowledge, he delivers the pith of his teachings to the cave of your heart. When he sings, he expresses the purest form of devotion available for the senses. When he pumps his harmonium, he is the boatman rowing you across the ocean of *samsāra*. Swamiji is the friend and supporter of all; he is a beacon to Truth and what he imparts is mankind's deepest treasure.

There was also a new black stone Lord Ganesha installed outside Gurudev's home. The previous idol had worn out over time and weather. Pujya Guruji performed the *puja* with chanting by Sharada Kumar.



Dancing for Lord Krishna at *Kunja-vana*: It was overwhelming bliss for both dancers and spectators (only a handful, including Guruji). We couldn't get over Brahmachari Prabodhji and Brahmacharini Bhamatiji joining in and the liveliness they brought with them! *Gopis* and *gopas* turned out in all their finery to dance *raas* and *garba* with beaming smiles, jingling bells, and a love that truly made the moonlit night divine.

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