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CHINMAYA MISSION® WEST BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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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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Om

Happy Dipavali to you all! As this festive celebration starts, know that the inner Light never departs. May this Light illumine all your hearts.

Long
Tijumay
22.10.08
S. Lemaire

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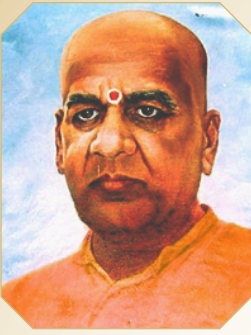
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His Holiness Swami Tapovanam

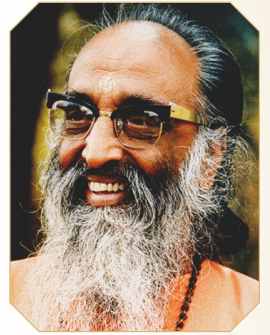
The advocates of *bhakti marga* prefer it to the other three ways of *karma*, *dhyana*, and *jnana*, as it is the easiest and the best. The practice of *bhakti* requires no material wealth like cow and gold, no stupendous effort to control the activity of the mind, no exceptional powers of discrimination. With a touch of devotion, all the other three methods become dry, dull, insipid, and vain. *Bhakti* alone is charming. Love of worldly pleasures is charming too, but it is fleeting like lightning and it is the root cause for sorrow. The man who takes refuge in God with faith and devotion is never cast out of the path of earthly joy or liberation. Intoxicated with divine Love, he loses consciousness of external and internal suffering, because in him there is no longer the identification of the Self with the body.

Source: *Ishvara Darshan*



His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda

When man awakens to his spiritual stature, the entire universe and the layers of matter that constitute his personality merge into one homogeneous mass of pure Consciousness. The merger is perfect and complete. Adi Shankaracharya describes it with three metaphors: as water mixing with water, light combining with light, and space merging with space. In these examples, the merger not only creates homogeneity, but leaves no trace of recognition of the pre-merger quality of duality or separateness. Similarly, the identity of the individuality is lost in the total and infinite experience. . . .



Expand to realize that all is the divine Self. Try to find accommodation for everyone in your compassion and in your love for the world around you.

Source: *Harmony and Beauty, Mananam Series*



His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda

We act in the world after fully understanding the benefits that may accrue from the actions we are undertaking. We always need to know the reason for doing something. Similarly, we need to know the reason for singing the Lord's glories. Why is it that for centuries together devotees have extolled His virtues? Singing His glory cleanses the heart, removing from it the accumulated dross and impurity. This is the greatest benefit that we get. Like a mantra, it protects the person taking the name. A mantra is that which protects. The Lord's name protects the devotee and purifies his or her mind and heart. In such a clean and sanctified heart, devotion takes birth. And through this, we are led to the Guru, who finally eliminates the darkness from us. Through understanding, we are finally liberated.

Source: *Tapovan Prasad*, March 2005

[Click here for Pujya Guruji's Itinerary](#)



We Can. We Must.

Talk by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

Transcribed by Neha Tanna

There are so many things in life that we can do, but just because we can do them, does not necessarily mean that we must do them or that it is right to do them.

So we begin our inquiry as to what we can do and what we must do. For example, we can live a noble life of sacrifice and service, or we can live a life of hoarding everything and a life of indulgence, or we can live a life of creating terror and destruction everywhere. These are broad classifications, no doubt, but they include all the possibilities.

People often love birds, animals, plants, trees, and flowers more than human beings because they can't argue back; they just love you and understand your love. But when it comes to human beings, there are two types: those who have difficulties and those who are difficult. It is difficult to live with both these types and both are unpredictable. They perpetrate crimes such as international wars and domestic violence. Man can be a terrible force.

But I personally love human beings more than any other species, because while it is true that man can become wicked, if he changes, he can become God. That he is unpredictable and can swing either way is the beauty of Nature, for this freedom has been given to man.

Everything in this world is changing, but only man has the ability to change consciously and make conscious changes in life. That he can undergo this transformation is the beauty. There is a saying in Hindi, "*Nara karni kare to nara kaa naaraayana ho.*" If man puts his heart and soul into *sadhana*, he can become God. This is the greatness of life and I think this is what we must do. We can and we must.

We can live a life of aggrandizement and indulgence, cruelty and destruction, or selflessness and service. There was a little boy, and whenever any gift was given to him, he would soon break it. So one day,

his father bought an unbreakable toy. But after two days, the boy said to his father, "Dad, that unbreakable toy you bought me . . ." The father worriedly asked, "You broke that also?" He said, "No. But with it, I broke other things."

Change is constant, but there are changes that delight us when they take place and there are changes that break our heart. When you sow a seed and see the plant grow and flower, these changes delight you. And then there are changes taking place that are highly destructive. Today there are situations so depressing that people have stopped reading the newspaper or listening to the news on the radio. But does stopping being informed help the world? It does not.

As I mentioned, there are three ways of living: a life of sacrifice and service, of indulgence and hoarding, or of terrorizing and destroying. For everything, we can, we can, we can. But which should be, "We must."?

There are some people who like destruction and say there is nothing in this world good and noble. But most of us would like to always have a life of peace, prosperity, tranquillity, and happiness. One man wrote on a wall, "Support peace or I will kill you." This doesn't make sense.

In a classroom, a teacher asked the children, "Do you support war or peace?" All of them said, "Peace," and the teacher was pleased. She asked, "Why?" They said, "Wars make history and we then have to read them. So if there's more peace, we have less to read." People may have different reasons for wanting peace.

One thing is clear: If we as human beings can solely bring about destruction, then we can also solely bring about peace and prosperity. So, too, we can also bring about an inner transformation of peace in ourselves and others. This is possible, and this we can, and we must.

The question is: How to do it? Everyone says we know all this; you're not telling us anything new. But we don't know how to begin. I remember a U.S. customs officer opened Pujya Gurudev's bag, took out everything this way and that, after finding nothing, kept everything back, and smilingly said, "Have a nice day!" And Swamiji asked him, "How? You have already spoiled the day with all these things, and now you say this!" The officer just stared, because no one had ever asked him how to have a nice day.

We know we can live a noble life, or a selfishly destructive life. We must choose and live life, because there is no use in complaining about world events all the time. It doesn't help to complain all the time, or withdraw from the world and not know what is happening everywhere; this doesn't help me or anyone else. We know which kind of life we must live, but we don't know how to do it. Why? Because we do not think deeply. Superficially we say, "It should be done," and "We can do it. But . . ." But is but, and you know what is next—nothing happens.

I am not going to speak more on "what we can," but on why we are not able to do, from where to begin, and how to do it. Everybody says, "Love thy neighbour. Love others. Serve others. Be good, do good." But our question is how and why. Why should I be good when everyone is so bad to me?

One woman went to a bookstall and she saw all the self-help and self-improvement books. She asked the salesman, "Don't you have anything on improving others?" All books only focus on how to improve oneself.

Even with questions like, "Why should I be good to me?" deep down, we still know what we can and what we must. But the question is: Why are we not able to?

The number one reason is that we are lazy people. We love laziness. And don't say no. Tell me, do you like Friday and Saturday nights more or Sunday nights more? Everybody likes Friday and Saturday night because we don't have to get up early. We can be lazy. Sunday means, "(sigh) Tomorrow I have to go to work." Every job is a load for us. We are typically lazy. Ask anyone and ask yourself: Whatever you have to do . . . is it a job for you or is it a joy for you? Most of the time, it is a job.

And the first, most difficult thing is to get up in the morning—this in itself is a job. Some people are very happy and optimistic, and they say, "Good Morning, God." The majority says, "Good God! Morning!" Laziness is so much the norm that even if they work hard, if you ask them why they are working, they will say, "If I have enough money, then I won't have to do anything later on." They look forward to that "when," when they can just be lazy. So, even though we know what we can and what we must, because of this lazy nature that we have developed, when it comes to actually doing, there is always a problem.

Two friends were talking to each other. One said, "There is no joy like getting up early in the morning, having a cold shower, and running for two miles." The other friend, just from listening to this description, felt exhausted. But he said, "Yes, there is no joy like getting up early in the morning, having a cold shower, and going for a run." His friend was surprised and asked, "Since when have you been doing this?" The other friend replied, "From tomorrow I'm thinking about doing it." And this he has been thinking for two years.

Do you know why change doesn't take place in our life? One reason is because of thoughtless action and the second is because of action-less thought. Thoughtless action we know—without thinking we just act, and we don't know what happens thereafter. Action-less thought—we know we have to do something, but we don't act; we just keep thinking about it: "Shall I get up? Why so early?"

Bhagavad Gita clearly instructs *ma te sangostu akarmani*, or "let there be no attachment to this kind of inaction," because laziness is not going to take you anywhere. There is no enemy of man greater than laziness, and because of this laziness, even though man has so much potential to do something for others and himself, he does nothing and remains the same.

There is laziness and then there is fear. One of the reasons why we cannot is because when we look at this world and its enormous problems, or even when we look at our own life and see the continuous challenges, we feel so overwhelmed that we say the world is too much for me. There is so much fear that we often don't know how to cope with it. It appears that we are so small, and the world, its problems, and our problems are so big. We get intimidated. Even if we are not lazy, we are often overwhelmed by our fear of problems. I have

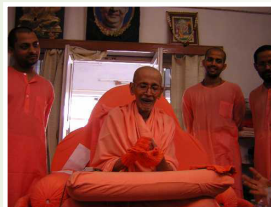
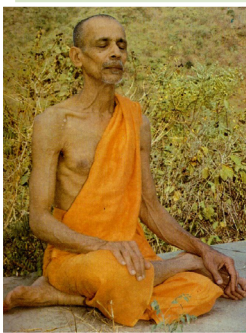
seen that even when people pray to God, “O Lord, please help me,” in their heart they say, “I don’t think even God can help me now,” or “O Lord, you don’t know what deep trouble I am in now. You don’t know my troubles.” A great mahatma said, “When you go to God, don’t tell God how big your problem is. Tell your problem how big your God is.” Like this, overcome your fear.

Getting rid of laziness means do what you have to do now. The best solution for fear is to know, “I am not alone. God is with me.” When you think like this, your power changes and multiplies exponentially. Even if you are an atheist, remember that you have your own potential and power, and that is all you have to invoke and manifest.

We all have physical, mental, and intellectual potentials, but often don’t even recognize them. It is said that man’s brain power can allow him to do anything and everything, but he uses only 3-4% of it. And geniuses use only 14-15%! So why don’t people use their potentials? I read an interesting answer: Man can live without air for a few seconds, without water for a few hours, without food for a few days or months, and without thinking forever. We don’t think, so we don’t use our potential.

For those who have faith in God or even faith in others, once they take even the smallest step, they find so much help coming to them from everywhere. It is said, "Find the purpose and the means will follow." If one has this level of conviction, then where is the question of fear or laziness. The latter keeps us stagnant, without progress.

to be continued



Shraddhanjali to Pujya Swami Chidananda of Divine Life Society

With the *mahasamadhi* of His Holiness Swami Chidananda-ji Maharaj, President of the Divine Life Society, a bright star in the spiritual firmament has set, and a great era has come to an end. Swamiji belonged to that category of mahatmas, seeing and being with whom will convince a person of the existence of God and the possibility of living a saintly life.

Being disciples of the most revered Swami Sivananda-ji Maharaj, Swami Chidananda-ji and our Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda-ji were spiritual brothers and held each other in great esteem. Whenever I met Swamiji, he called me his spiritual nephew.

The entire Chinmaya Mission, and myself as an individual, owe a lot to him. We all pay our deepest homage to him. A mahatma's *mahasamdhi*, like every moment in his life, is an occasion for us to derive inspiration. May his very name continue to guide spiritual seekers on their path.

Tejanyam

Dharma Sevak Course

June 13-27, 2009
Krishnalaya, CMW Retreat Center
Piercy, Northern California



Conducted by

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

Text

Panchadashi, Chapter 7

Registration

(includes lodging/boarding; excludes transportation)

- Full Course only: \$1,100 per person
- This camp is for adults only, and is not a family camp. Space is limited. Register early.
- Arrive at San Francisco Airport on Jun. 13. Our chartered bus will leave for Piercy at 2 p.m.
- Departure will be on Jun. 28 at 5:30 a.m., for arrival at San Francisco Airport at 11 a.m.

To get more information or to register (online registration is available), go to www.chinmayamission.org/krishnalaya.

For specific questions, e-mail info-krishnalaya@chinmayamission.org or call (707) 207-5011.

The One Key

by Brahmacharini Sumati Chaitanya



The ultimate spiritual goal is to recognize one's true Self, not gain some fleeting, pseudo-spiritual experiences. We know 'we are,' but do we know who we really are? Our shifting understanding of ourselves is always in association with the things and beings around us that are constantly changing. With body-association, we define ourselves as young, old, fat, thin, fair, and dark. With thought-association, we see ourselves as angry, sad, happy, intelligent, dull, peaceful, and agitated. Our identity is based on our identification with our nation, culture, religion, people, and circumstances, all of which are also constantly changing.

But in this ever-changing world, even though our relative identity keeps changing, there is one identity that never changes—and that is 'I.' I am the unchanging factor in all my experiences. So, what is the true nature of this I?

Vedantic scriptures indicate the true nature of the I. Note that the main purpose of scriptural study is not merely to know that 'I am'—because no one has ever had the experience of being non-existent. The main purpose is also not to merely appreciate that 'I am other than the body'—because simply and logically, the knower is always different from the known. Scriptural study must necessarily end in the recognition of one's self—the I— as the non-dual, existence-consciousness-bliss principle. Unless we rediscover our true identity as the non-dual Self, to be free from fears and sorrows will remain a mere dream.

The Self is *nitya* and *nitya-mukta*, ever-present and ever-liberated. Hence, the experience of the Self cannot be the result of any action. If That which always 'is' is not cognized, it is only because one is not aware of It. Therefore, re-cognition of the Self—the I and Its nature—is possible when it is pointed out by one who has knowledge, or experience, of the Self, as the Self. Such a one is known as the *shrottriya brahma-nishtha guru*.

The guru and scriptures indicate various types of *sadhana* for the disciple. But if spiritual practices cannot create the Self, modify the Self, refine the Self, or even cause one to attain the Self, then what is their purpose? All *sadhana* is to first prepare the

inner equipments (mind and intellect) to grasp the import of scriptural wisdom. Through this, once one is convinced of the true nature of one's I, the next stage is to practice giving up the notion of being an individual, separate from the world. When this practice matures, in the subtle heights of meditation, as the notion of individuality disappears, the nature of the I, one's true Self, reveals Itself, to Its own Self, as non-dual Consciousness.

The guru's task is to introduce the disciple's own Self to the disciple. The guru cannot do anything if the disciple refuses to follow the instructions. Insistence, proving one's own point, and arguing with the spiritual teacher is a complete waste of time and energy. If the spiritual path is not based on blind belief, it is also not a path of disbelief: *Samshaya-atma vinashyati. Shraddhavan labhate jnanam*.

A student who submits to the guru's discipline is a true disciple. When the intelligent student—'intelligent' because he discovers that his limited intellect cannot grasp the infinite Truth—with an attitude of surrender, follows his guru's instructions and maintains perfect faith in the guru's wisdom, he comes to realize fully his own Self. And this Self-realization frees him, at once, from all imaginary limitations of individuality.

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is one of the great revealers of the true nature of the Self. Shri Krishna advises Arjuna to renounce his physical-mental-intellectual estimates of the world and re-evaluate his life-situation through spiritual understanding. The non-apprehension of the true nature of the non-dual Self leads to the misapprehension of being an individual. From such misapprehension come fears, anxieties, sorrows, and the sense of being a doer and enjoyer. The individual thus goes through birth after birth to exhaust the impressions created from all these experiences. The *Gita* teaches, clearly and firmly, that the only way to end the cycle of birth and death, to rise above pain and suffering, is to recognize one's non-dual nature.

Whether under open skies, behind closed doors, in remote mountain caves, within bustling city crowds, atop financial success, at rock bottom depressions . . . Self-knowledge is the one key.



Travelogue

The Grounds for Fulfillment Life as a Brahmachari in the 13th Vedanta Course

by Acharya Vivek Gupta

Continued from CMW News, September 2008

The chanting of *Ganapati Atharvashirsha* began at 6 a.m. sharp and it would be recited one thousand times within the sacred Jagadishvara Temple on this holy day to celebrate *Ganesha Chaturthi* and the commencement of the 13th Vedanta Course. The atmosphere was set for the inauguration of the course. As the scene shifted to *Sarasvati Nilayam*, all were anxious. And then, They arrived. Welcomed with *rangoli*, mango leaves, garlands, Vedic chants, and *purnakumbhas*, Puja Gururji Swami Tejomayananda, Puja Swami Purushottamananda, and Puja Swami Brahmananda entered to bless all. As each *acharya* spoke, the primary message delivered was, “It’s time to address and forget the dress,” or, study and forget everything else.

And So It Began

Ring, ring, ring went the 4 a.m. bell—the same bell we were to wake up to for the next 750 mornings. For some, this discipline was a challenge for a couple of days, and to others, for the entire two years. Nonetheless, our first class was Vedic chanting at 5:30 a.m. in the temple. So, what to do until then? We would shower, clean, read, pray, meditate, sleep, or any combination thereof. Sometimes we were late for class and sometimes early. Eventually, we were able to perfectly time how long it took to leave our rooms, walk uphill to the temple, offer prostrations at the altar, and be seated on our *asanas* before Samvidji began class.

Brahmachari Samvid Chaitanya, born in Kerala, spent many years as a wandering monk in the Himalayas. Eventually, he too found himself at *Sandeepany Sadhanalaya*. Though starting the 12th Vedanta Course as the Sanskrit *acharya*, Samvidji ended up becoming a student under the tutelage of Swami Ishwarananda. After graduating from the course in 2003, he served society for sometime before Gururji called upon him to share his vast knowledge with the new students.

Fluctuating between lower and higher pitch intonations, chanting the Vedas for a half-hour was a natural prelude to the actual study of the Vedas. However, before our 7 a.m. Vedanta class, piping fresh tea and milk were ready in the *annakshetra* (dining hall). Morning after morning, the walk from the temple was a special one, for we were able to study the moon in its endless waxing and waning. Taking time to “smell the flowers” is possible! *Maunam* was maintained by all, and this made for a truly solitary chai experience. With some time still remaining, we would return to our rooms for rest or *sadhana*. The potency of this *muhurta* is indescribable.

Each Vedanta class would be preceded by the chanting of various Vedic *suktams*. At 7 a.m. sharp, Gururji would walk onto the stage and gracefully make himself comfortable on the *Vyasa-pitha*. He would lead the invocation and begin teaching.

Sanatana Dharma's foundation are the Vedas. Essentially, the Vedas are divided into two portions: rituals and knowledge. Ultimately, no matter how proficient we become in the theory and application of rituals, we can never experience absolute happiness, for any permutation of the finite is still finite. In contrast, Vedantic knowledge directs us beyond this relative plane of existence and onto the Infinite.

Guruji broke open the mystic language of the scriptures, and in turn, broke open our habits of limited thinking. Mentally and intellectually raised to new heights, we were prepared to listen all day, every day. Beginning with Adi Shankaracharya's *Tattva Bodha* and journeying through works like Shri Vidyaranya Swami's *Panchadashi*, Shri Ramana Maharshi's *Saddarshanam*, *Mandukya Upanishad* with Shri Gaudapada's *Karika*, and dozens more, the last text we studied brought us full circle with Adi Shankaracharya's *Jivanmuktananda Lahari*, which describes the joy of the man of realization. Through Guruji's devotion to these saints, we were able to catch a glimpse of their true greatness also.

After one hour of enlightenment, Guruji would punctually conclude the class with another peace invocation, knowing well that the day scholars (part-time students) had to attend to their careers and families. Only after Guruji left *Sarasvati Nilayam* for his *kutir* did anyone else leave. Slowly, the *brahmacharis* and *brahmacharinis* sitting in neat rows and columns on different sides would rise, gather their portable wooden desks and books, and leave reflecting in quietude.

Shortly thereafter, the breakfast bell would ring and we would enter the *annakshetra* barefoot. As in all other buildings, footwear is not allowed inside. Picking up our steel plates and utensils, we would line up for our meal. The meals were typically on a seven- or ten-day rotation. In the *annakshetra*, some chose to sit with others and some alone, all in the company of our teachers, whose tables were positioned perpendicular to allow everyone to have their *darshan*.

Post-breakfast, we returned to our rooms to prepare for Sanskrit class or went to spend time in Gurudev's *kutir*, which is now a shrine for devotees and disciples to visit, offering a peace rare and blessed. Gurudev's office, bedroom, and *satsanga* hall were maintained by the students and opened every morning and evening.



Sanskrtam

Sanskrit is one of the oldest languages known to man and is also known as *deva-vani* (language of the gods). This language, like all things ancient, has slowly disappeared. However, due to the foresight and services of various lineages, Sanskrit is slowly reappearing on the scene. At *Sandeepany*, students were divided into three classes and Samvidji always began the class with a Sanskrit proverb, through which we were encouraged to study both language and morality. From there he took us deep into conjugations, cases, *sandhis*, *samasas*, and on and on and on. We had presentations, plays, and even appeared for the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan exam in which most of the students excelled.

The study of Sanskrit was not for intellectualism, rather for the better understanding of our Sanskrit-based scriptures. Though challenging, the opportunity to study this divine language was equally rewarding.

Following a short break, we convened at noon for *bhagavat nama samkirtanam* and learned the *sahasranamas* of Lord Vishnu, Mother Lalita, Lord Shiva, and Lord Rama. *Bhaja Govindam* teaches that the mere chanting of *Vishnu Sahasranama* grants mental purity. At *Sandeepany*, we also studied the meaning of all these names and many came to memorize these glories.

The chanting did not end there, for as soon as the lunch bell rang, *Gita* Chapter 15 commenced. Lunch was a grand event, for not only did all the students eat, but so did all the resident and visiting *acharyas*, and the CCMT/TCT office staffs. Lunch consisted of *chapatti*, *rice*, *daal*, one *sabji*, and *chaas*. The assembly began eating only after Guruji (in his absence, the senior *acharya* at the table) began, and everyone left only after he left. *Sandeepany* is all about subtle messages and a disciple is all about being prepared for discipline, for the only purpose of discipline is to subdue the ever-wanton ego. Unlike typical secular schooling where individuality is encouraged, in this sacred schooling, we are encouraged to look beyond. Hence, the standard clothing, standard lodging, standard meals, standard schedule, standard everything. Nonetheless, opportunities did present themselves for us to exhibit our choice and creativity. From the time lunch finished to our next class at 4 p.m., it was our time. Not that this meant these three hours were a free-for-all, as we had to attend to our personal affairs of washing our clothes, cleaning our rooms, preparing for class, sleeping, bathing, and exercising.

While we did study *asanas* and *pranayama* for three weeks, physical fitness was not overly stressed in our curriculum. We were simply expected to remain fit, though this certainly was not the case for some. The issue was not a matter of lifestyle, but rather of purity. Living at *Sandeepany*, one is consciously and unconsciously subject to mental and physical purification. In a time when society's main preoccupation is the body, the Vedanta Course taught otherwise—that the body is merely a vehicle, a vehicle to serve others. To remove this vanity was why all the *brahmacharis* had their heads and faces clean-shaved every second full moon—*sans* a tuft, which indicated our one and only attachment to the guru, to *brahma-vidya*.

The afternoon break became tough to endure during the summer of our second year when Mumbai was consuming too much electricity and officials decided to shut off power from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., when the sun was at its meanest. Waking up in pools of sweat and then going for class was a situation we simply had to cope with. Guruji eventually decided enough was enough and arranged for a generator within the ashram. In how many ways does a Guru's grace manifest for gross needs let alone subtle ones?



Chinmaya International Camp 2008
December 26, 2008 - January 1, 2009
Chinmaya Vibhooti, India

Conducted by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda
Vibhuti Yoga: Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 10
New Year's Eve: *Puja* and Celebrations

Chinmaya Vibhooti is Chinmaya Mission Worldwide's new Vision and Resource Center. Situated in Maharashtra, India, it is a one-hour drive from Pune and a three-hour drive from Mumbai.

This camp is only for adults and youth (16 years and older).

It will commence on the afternoon of December 26
and conclude on the morning of January 1.

Camp Registration: \$150 (includes full camp lodging and boarding)



To register, e-mail chinmaya_vibhooti@yahoo.com or contact
Central Chinmaya Mission Trust at (91-22) 2857-2367.

Krishna Gets a Heart

by Anjali Singh

Continued from CMW News, September 2008

Swamiji and my Krishna (*murti*) always remained inseparable as my most important symbols in my life. I called them my “Gold Heart” and “The Great Witness,” respectively. Over the years, my attachment to them grew.

Nine years after giving the heart to Krishna, Swamiji was holding a *Gita Jnana Yajna* in Dehradun and he was to drive from Dehradun to BHEL (Bharat Electricals) in Haridwar to address the Chinmaya Degree College students. It was March 1991. The previous night, Swamiji had said, “I am going to drop *them* at Hari-ki-Pauri in Haridwar at 6 a.m. and proceed to BHEL.” I did not realize then that “drop” would have such a huge significance.

I was thrilled at this unexpected trip to Gangaji along with Swamiji, and that too, to the most sacred bathing *ghat* down the entire river. Five of us, including Jyoti Barucha—a devotee and trained nurse who had come from U.S.A. to look after Swamiji—and Divyajyoti, the daughter of our host, Maharaja Divya Deb Singh, were in the car that followed Swamiji’s. From Hari-ki-Pauri, Swamiji rode past Gangaji to the BHEL complex, which was an additional half-hour drive. We stayed behind.

We had an exhilarating one hour, playing in Mother Ganga’s holy waters while She affectionately washed off all our sins. Jyoti asked if she might also give Krishna his dip. I asked her to be careful about the heart (locket) around his neck. She took the heart off, wound it around a safety pin, pinned it on his clothes, and left it in my handbag. She bathed Krishna in the Gangaji while I took photographs of Him.

After we were ready, we got a priest to perform a *puja*, something I do not normally do. Half an hour later, on our drive to BHEL, while dressing up my Krishna in the car, I realized with shock that the heart was missing! I even ripped open the lining of the handbag, but it was nowhere to be found. I requested the two gentlemen from Dehradun who were with us in the car if we could go back and

search for it. Everyone said it would be impossible to find it in an overcrowded pilgrim center. I, too, knew the impossibility, but if I did not even try, I would always live with this regret. When I told Jyoti *whom* the heart represented (Gurudev), she was as worried as me. She also realized the symbolic significance of losing the heart to Gangaji’s waters.

We turned the car back and I prayed to Gangaji to please let me have Swamiji’s heart back and that I would not have asked if it was not a matter of life and death. I implored Her not to decline this special request under any circumstances.

At Hari-ki-Pauri, I ran down the numerous steps and asked the first pilgrim who was bathing there whether he had seen such a heart. And he replied, “The one that looks like a *paan* leaf?” I said in anxious excitement, “Yes!” He said that it had been lying on the wet steps, and he and his wife had thrown it higher toward the dry steps. He seemed to be an honest pilgrim who did not want to take something that had been offered to Gangaji, considering that the offerings were usually for the last rites.

We all started searching and a bystander who had overheard us found it almost immediately! I was overjoyed and thanked him and Gangaji profusely. The vibrant heart who was Swamiji in that form, must have felt excluded from the holy dip. Somehow he had managed to extricate himself from the safety pin to have a dip all by himself! It was a mistake on my part not to have given Swamiji a dip—after all, that was why he had dropped us off there. Jyoti was quite baffled as she was sure that she had secured the heart properly.

My Day

by Saakshi Sutarwala

My Day started at 10 p.m. after a long day of badminton. Upon arrival at our Nani and Nana’s place, my sister and Mum decided to wear crazy masks to greet Swami Dheerananda. He laughed like a little boy who was being tickled and said that he wanted the masks for his Bala Vihar in Washington. I guess he wanted to scare the children!

We had a bit to eat with him and then Swamiji told us to get ready for *japa*. While clearing off the table, I wondered what type of *japa* was to be done at 11 p.m. I did do my *Gayatri* 27 times every morning

He gave us each a *mala* with 27 *rudraksha* beads and proceeded to talk about the 3 Ms: “We should always have the three Ms perfectly synchronized,” he said, “the mind, mouth, and *mala*.” When the mouth chants “*Om ajaya namaha*,” the mind must first think the thought and be alert. Then the tongue should say the word. And lastly, the finger should move the first bead. This should continue until the *meru*, or goal, is met.

To ensure our three Ms are in perfect rhythm, we must be focused on what we are doing and make sure we are on the right name based on the number of beads. “This was cool,” I thought, “doing *japa*, and having a goal and the means of making sure I was doing it correctly.” Amazing. It was definitely more exciting than I thought it would be.

Swamiji then said, “Watch your thoughts before they become your words. Choose your words for they become your actions. Understand your actions for they become your habits. Study your habits for they become your character. And develop your character for it becomes your destiny.” So, I thought to myself that I should try and keep my thoughts proper. When he started the CD and we did *japa* of Gurudev’s names together, I was thrilled, and I think I smiled from inside out.

We then watched *August Rush* and went to bed. Man, was I ever tired! A 1:15 a.m. bedtime is not really normal.

Swamiji, let us sleep-in and then he woke us up to a brunch of pizza and scones. Then, all day long, all we did was play! Swamiji, Divya (my sister), and I were playing all the C-Games: Checkers, Carom, Cards, and Connect Four. Of course, Swamiji won all the games. He was so focused at Carom that we had no chance. I hope I can become so alert and focused one day.

Before I knew it, Mummy was feeding Divya, Swamiji, and me *pani puris*! We three ate until we could not move. We then rested our games for a total of ten minutes while eating corn on the cob and boiled peanuts. Just when I thought the lunch was as good as it could get, Swamiji asked me to cut the ice cream cake with him, and everyone

sang Guruji’s birthday song. Cutting the cake with Swamiji topped my day.

We went back to the Cs and played even harder than before. That evening was *Janmashtami*, so Swamiji said we would do *japa* minutes before midnight and then spend a bit of time in silence. We did just that at the exact time; Swamiji had set an alarm for 11:51 p.m. We had two minutes of silence and at midnight, Swamiji blew the conch three times, and we were quite for another minute or two.

Swamiji then had Nana, Nani, Mummy, and Daddy each do a special *arati* to Divya and me. He made the camphor sit on a leaf floating in water, colored with *baladi* and *kumkum*. He asked them all to think of all the blessings they wanted to shower upon us as we both are ready to start a new school year. My, what a special moment it felt like. The *baladi* created such a beautiful fragrance—I was surprised.

Swamiji then presented me my birthday gift, a Swatch. He said that it was not only to watch the time, but to be alert and watch everything that goes on in my mind.

As I fell off to sleep, I thanked the world and all the beings for everything I have. And I thanked Him for letting me have such a splendid birthday! Thank you, Swamiji . . . My Day was the best it could ever be!





CHINMAYA MISSION® WEST MARRIED COUPLES SEMINAR

Blessed Self,

Hari OM! Chinmaya Mission West is pleased to announce
“**Making Sense of Chaos,**” a two-day seminar exclusively for young
married couples between the ages of 25 and 38 years.

The seminar sessions will be in the form of discourses, group discussions,
Q&A, and interactive workshops. Topics addressed will include the following:

- Vision of Life with respect to Marriage
- Joys and Challenges of Married Life
- Parenting
- Dealing with Emotions and Relations

Dates: July 25-26, 2009

**Venue: Chinmaya Avantika,
Chinmaya Mission Ann Arbor, Michigan**

Faculty

- Pujya Gururji Swami Tejomayananda
- Acharya Smt. Vilasini Balakrishnan (CM Washington DC, Masters
in Counseling, Licensed Professional Counselor)
- Acharya Smt. Sharada Kumar (CM Ann Arbor)

Seminar Registration: \$200 per couple

To register or get more details, visit www.chinmayamission.org/annarbor or e-mail annarbor@chinmayamission.org. Nearby motel/hotel accommodations are available at an additional cost.

Details will be posted online.

CHINMAYA MISSION® WEST RESIDENTIAL VEDANTA COURSE 2010-2011

Blessed Self,

Hari OM! Chinmaya Mission West (CMW) is pleased to announce its One-Year Residential Vedanta Course at CMW's Headquarters, the ashram of Krishnalaya in Northern California, amidst the serene Redwoods.

The Course will commence August 7, 2010 and end in August 2011. This residential, full-time Course, without any holidays, will be conducted in English. The classes will be taught in intervals by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda and various Mission Acharyas: Swami Shantananda, Swami Ishwarananda, Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya, and Acharya Smt. Sharada Kumar.

This Course is open to sincere seekers between the ages of 20-70 years.

Texts and topics studied will include introductory Vedantic texts, select Upanishads, the entire Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, devotional texts such as Ramayana and Shrimad Bhagavatam, Vedic chants and hymns, Sanskrit, guided meditation, and puja vidhi.

The Course Application is available online—www.chinmayamission.org/krishnalaya—and may be submitted via e-mail. Applications received will be reviewed and eligible candidates will be asked to schedule a personal interview, the details of which will be provided at a later date. Additional details will be posted on the website.

Course Registration: \$12,000 (covers registration, room and board, and books; amount is payable in installments)

Send e-mail applications/inquiries to: prabodh@chinmayamission.org

Br. Girish Chaitanya Posted to CM Austin

Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya has been posted as the new and first resident *acharya* of CM Austin. Paying tribute to his four-year tenure at CM Los Angeles, and heralding Acharya Parameswaran Mahadev as the new *acharya* of CM Los Angeles, the devotees and CM Board members of both ashrams, *Chinmaya Kashi* and *Chinmaya Mithila*, offered loving words and sentimental farewells in a heartwarming program at *Chinmaya Mithila* on September 28, 2008. See the photos and a farewell poem for Girishji written in colloquial Hindi (presented in English transliteration).

Report submitted by CM Austin

What does it mean to have a resident *acharya* at our center? At CM Austin's *Chinmaya Vatika* ashram, it means fragrance has come to our flowers, for our *vatika* that has waited long and patiently for a constant, resident "gardener."

For almost 20 years, CM Austin (CMA) families worked to create a center for classes for our children and adults. We would celebrate our festivals and see the graduation of our seniors. But there has always been one key ingredient missing.

Pujya Guru Swami Tejomayananda sent us this missing ingredient in the form of Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya. Girishji entered our ashram during the auspicious days of *Navaratri* and it was the perfect time for him to set up the regular *pujas* at *Chinmaya Vatika*.

On his first day at our ashram, Monday, September 29, 2008, he performed *abhishekam* to the *utsava murtis*. On his first Sunday at the ashram, October 5, he was introduced to the CMA families, and it did not take him long to get their undivided attention. CMA looks forward to growing under Girishji's guidance, making the most of his presence, and learning to flourish as a loving family.

Farewell Poem for Girishji (in Hindi) by Madhu Sharma

*bholā bhālā cheherā, gol gol ānkhen
jaisi bolī mūṭhī, vaisi bāteñ sacchī
muskurā muskurā ke dil sab kā jītā
aisā hai prema sneha aur mitratā sacchī*

*jab pehlī bār khilāyā khānā girishjī ko
lagā khilā rahī hūñ mere apne bacchoñ ko
itnā apnāsā pyārā mūṭhā sambandha huā
lagā maine phir se pāyā apne bhāī ko*

*jab baiṭhī main apnī car "kāshīnāth" meñ
tab drive karte karte girishji ne kahā
"madhuji, seat belt bāndhiye, hṛdaya thām lījīye
havā meñ uḍakar jayengī, apne is havāijahāz meñ"*

*guru ki sevā hi dharma samjhā
guru ke shabdoñ kā marma samjhā
guru ke ādesha kā pālan kiyā
aur austin ki oḍa rukha moḍa liyā*

*chār sāl palak jhapakte nikala gaye
aisā lagā kal āye the aur āj chal diye
āte rehnā chinmaya kāshi jaldi jaldi
aisā na ho bhūla jāo jaldi jaldi*

*dete haiñ ham duāeñ shubha kāmāneñ mubārakeñ āp ko
āge baḍate rehenā chalte rehenā zindagī meñ
yād karenge ham āp ko chinmaya kāshi meñ
aur āp yād karenge chinmaya kashi ke shiva ko*

*pujya gurudev, pujya guruji, swamiji, acharyaji
aur hamāre sāre chinmaya parivāra ke
āshirvāda lete jāo
hamāre shāstron, paramparā, aur mission kā gaurava
baḍhāte jāo baḍhāte jāo*



Vedanta Unplugged

With Acharya Vivek on Lead Vocals . . .

Live from Austin, Texas! . . .

by Sharanya Rao and Raghu Akula



Is Vedanta just a collection of Hinduism’s ancient fundamentals that are irrelevant in modern society? Why can’t we just live our lives? Listen to music, watch movies, eat at Taco Bell®, just be? “Vedanta Unplugged” revealed Vedanta to be a living, breathing concept, not a relic. In this CHYK Retreat, we learned that any action performed can be a form of meditation to realize the Self.

Listen to your music, but be fully engrossed in the music—listen to its beat, understand its meaning, feel its message. When you watch a movie, pay close attention to its message; find the *dharmā* and *adharma* in it. When eating your favorite bean burrito, do nothing else but taste each ingredient, feel each texture, and be thankful for its nourishment. Vedanta is all around us, so we need to unplug our misconception that Vedanta can only be learned in a lecture setting. To truly understand Vedanta, one must practice it. And lessons are waiting for us everywhere in life. We just need to open our eyes.

Vedanta Unplugged was a perfect forum to open our eyes to the lessons around us. For four days, we observed the outdoors, listened to our music, and watched our movies. We practiced Vedanta.

🌀 The Lake: Day 1

We took a day-trip to Pace Bend Park, just outside of Austin. Fourteen *jivas* took a boat out on the waters of *samsara* with Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara Falls) as our spiritual captain. We docked our boat in the lake’s calm waters and commenced our morning prayers and meditation.

In still surroundings, Vivekji began his discourse on understanding *Bhaja Govindam* in a modern context. Lunch on the banks included delicious chutney-humus sandwiches, Q&A, and discussion on the discourse. It was perfect nourishment for body, mind, and spirit.

We not only talked, we practiced silence. Vivekji asked us to go into *maunam* to just observe and reflect. It was a refreshing session. Some of us walked to the banks and observed the waves, rocks, and people around. For the first time, our eyes were open and our mind was alert in a unique way. As we returned to the picnic area to discuss our thoughts and observations, we discussed how, like waves, our lives reach crests and eventually return to their Source, and how, we are One, yet we see ourselves different from each other.

🌀 Live Music: Day 2

At the music jam, Vivekji began by playing a heavy metal song and soon enough, you could see the discomfort and agitation on some of the CHYKs’ faces: What’s this yelling-and-screaming music about? Many were expecting some *sattvik* music like Beethoven or Ravi Shankar. The song finished and Vivekji distributed the lyrics. As we read and discussed the lyrics that talked about the temptations we fall prey to, we saw their depth and meaning. It was interesting to see how we sometimes disregard a song’s deeper meaning because we blindly hear instead of intently listen. Vivekji discussed a few more songs and then it was our turn to give our own discourse on the music we had brought to share—the songs varied from Bollywood to Pearl Jam. One CHYK even played his saxophone.

🌀 On Campus: Day 3

The third day featured a workshop on the University of Texas at Austin campus. It was attended by about 25 CHYKs and Vivekji challenged them to think about their purpose of life. Amid their hectic university schedules and life, these students made some quiet time to reflect and get their doubts answered.

🌀 At the Movies: Day 4 and Beyond

We held Movie Night at the *Chinmaya Vatika* ashram of CM Austin and watched “Peaceful Warrior” over popcorn and other snacks. The

movie, about a gymnast wanting to compete in the Olympics and willing to go to great lengths to achieve his goal, is based on the autobiographical account of Dan Millman. Dan's body was fit, but his mind was not—until he met his guru, a gas station attendant who showed him that his only obstacle is his own mind.

Vedanta Unplugged conjured up so much interest and such a spontaneous overflow of enthusiasm that Vivekji agreed to extend the event from four to five days. On the fifth day we went to the Bob Bullock Museum to watch "The Dark Knight" on IMAX and later discussed the Vedantic messages therein. The majority initially didn't find any Vedanta in the movie. But yet again, another stereotype was broken, and Vedanta revealed.

From End to Beginning

Unlikely as it seems, Vedanta Unplugged parallels the story of *Bhakta* Prahlada. When the arrogant Hiranyakashipu asks Prahlada in anger, "Can your Lord be found in this stone pillar?" Prahlada confidently answered, "Yes, my Lord is everywhere, in everything!" The supreme Self permeates every fiber of this universe, so we can find the Lord in the most surprising or seemingly unlikely places if only we pay close attention and have faith. So, too, Vedanta can be found everywhere, in everyday life. And it is through Vedanta that our ignorance is removed.

The five-day series was a groundbreaking event for CHYK West. As a fledgling center, CM Austin had previously hosted a camp and several workshops, but for CHYKs in Austin, few of them came close to the intensity of Vedanta Unplugged. The local event even inspired a CHYK from Ohio to attend. The idea behind the event was simple: Learn Vedanta in an informal way, through things you normally enjoy in life: Nature, music, movies. If you would like to host Vedanta Unplugged in your area, please contact Acharya Vivek Gupta.

Inauguration of 14th Vedanta Course

Chinmaya Mission's 14th Vedanta Course was inaugurated at *Sandeepany Sadhanalaya*, Mumbai, on *Ganesha Chaturthi*, September 3, 2008. In the hushed silence before dawn, preparations had begun in the Jagadishvara Temple, where a specially decorated altar was made for Lord Ganesha. Brahmachari Samvid Chaitanya performed an

elaborate *puja* that was a visual treat. Devotees thronged into the temple and its verandah, chanting *Ganapati Atharvashirsha* in unison for more than an hour.

At 11 a.m., everyone gathered in *Sarasvati Nilayam* for the formal inauguration, which was presided over by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, Pujya Swami Purushottamananda, Pujya Swami Brahmananda, and Swami Advaitananda (the course *acharya*).

Swami Advaitananda addressed the gathering of 51 students and 10 guest students who had joined the course. He pointed out to the students the four values essential for success in any endeavor: Determination, devotion, discipline, and dedication.

Pujya Swami Brahmananda offered wholesome advice and pointed out that Vedanta courses like these were opportunities for intensive study for students and *acharyas*, alike. Pujya Swami Purushottamananda emphasized the importance of grace in the process of learning: *Ishwara-krpa* (grace of God), *shastra-krpa* (grace of the scriptures), *guru-krpa* (grace of the guru), and *atma-krpa* (grace of the Self). He concluded by saying that the students should have a firm resolve to make the best of the present course.

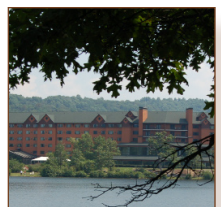
Pujya Guruji said that our life truly begins only when we start seeking God. Some keep waiting for the Lord's grace, while others see His grace in everything. He thanked the sponsors of the course, especially Asim Kumar Agarwal, who sponsored 11 students. He then released the new revised version of *Awakening Indians to India* and released an audio CD, *Hanuman Vandana*.

To bless the occasion, Swamini Vimalananda, Swami Chidatmananda, Swamini Nishthananda, Swamini Amitananda, and many other *acharyas* were also present.

"Hari Om! Hari Om!" Reverberated Everywhere

by Sri Gopalakrishna

The Chinmaya *Mahasamadhi* Family Camp 2008, hosted by the CM Washington D.C. Regional Center (CMWRC), was held at the picturesque,



award-winning Rocky Gap Resort in western Maryland, July 28-August 3.

The Camp was special in many ways. Headed by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, there were 18 CMW *acharyas* in attendance, along with Narain Bhatia (CEO of CCMT), almost the entire CMW Board of Directors, and almost 500 attendees from all over USA and Canada. The daily programs ran from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., for both, adults and children.

On Day One, the delegates began arriving into the beautifully decorated lobby around 3 p.m. The transformed lobby featured two life-size photos of Pujya Gurudev, complete with garlands, large lamps, and decorative items, filling the venue with a temple-like atmosphere. The *sevaks* at the Registration Desk were busy and efficient, verifying registrations, handing out camp materials, and guiding delegates to their respective rooms.

The inaugural ceremonies commenced with a welcome and an introduction of all the *acharyas*, culminating in a resounding applause as Pujya Guruji entered the Conference Center. Guruji was welcomed with a *purna-kumbha* and he inaugurated the camp by lighting the altar lamp at Pujya Gurudev's *padukas*. This was followed by a classical dance performance by Mrinalini Sadananda, a welcome message by Acharya Vilasini, and a discourse on the invocation verse of *Mundaka Upanishad* by Guruji, who set an uplifting tone for the entire camp. Each day's evening talk, during which separate classes were conducted simultaneously for children and youth, concluded with *Shri Chinmaya Arati*.

Acharya Gaurang Nanavaty led each day's morning meditation session. In that dimly lit and pin-drop-silent hall, the *acharya's* guiding voice offered many tips on how to control and silence the mind through japa, chanting, and relaxation.

Guruji expounded on *Mundaka Upanishad* in 14 talks, impressing upon the assembly that even in the present chaotic and seemingly corrupt world, truth



alone wins, or "*satyam eva jayate*" as the *Upanishad* says. The beauty and depth in the words of the *Upanishad* flowed effortlessly from Guruji as he drove home insightful teachings with wit, humor, and relatable examples.

During one session, Guruji reviewed the growth and activities of Chinmaya Mission worldwide and detailed several key ongoing projects, such as *Chinmaya Vibhooti*, the *brahmachari* and *purohit* residential courses, Chinmaya International Foundation and its e-Vedanta course, and the *Upanishad Ganga* made-for-television project.

Guruji also took time from his busy schedule to be with the camp *sevaks* and organizers. Citing Saint Tulasidasa, Guruji said that work should bring joy to the doer, and joy to those who will benefit from that work.

Within the corridors, lobby, ballrooms, dining halls, swimming pool, and parking lot, "*Hari Om!*" reverberated throughout the resort. Whether it was the boaters in the alpine lake, or the trekkers hiking on the five-mile trail around the lake, or the strollers around the golf course, everyone was calling out "*Hari Om!*" to each other.

The daily *acharya satsanga* was held 7-8 a.m. in the main hall. Swami Shantananda, Swami Ishwarananda, Swami Siddhananda, and Swami Dheerananda spoke on different topics during the week. One morning featured a special DVD satsang on Pujya Gurudev that was conducted by Acharyas Gaurang and Darshana Nanavaty.

Each afternoon's breakout sessions focused on a variety of topics, including Devi Groups, Bala Vihar presentations, Q&A on *Mundaka Upanishad*, and special topics such as love and devotion. *Bhajan* sessions heralded Guruji's evening discourses.

The *bhikshas* for Guruji and other *acharyas* were planned in great detail and specially prepared by *sevaks*. Camp delegates offered *bhikshas* and spent time with Guruji. Indeed, it was humbling to see Guruji up close as such a learned master and leader of a worldwide spiritual organization. He was down-to-earth, smiling, energetic, and compassionate.

The Rocky Gap Resort, along with the Indian chef, did culinary wonders. There were no complaints from adults or children about any meal. There was always plenty of tasty food, Indian and non-Indian.

The entire resort exuded warmth and comfort. The rooms were comfortable and clean. The resort management and staff were helpful and friendly, going out of their way to ensure that all the needs of the delegates and organizers were met. The

*Happy 60th Birthday,
Swami Siddhananadaji!*



dining areas always ready for the next meal, the premises bright and clean. There were sufficient facilities for all the adult and Bala Vihar programs. Throughout the week, the lobby saw the constant traffic of delegates as they came through for camp registration, hotel registration, outdoor activities, and the bookstall.

The bookstall featured hundreds of selections and was always busy with people browsing and buying books, CDs, DVDs, pictures of Gurudev, and other souvenirs. In his address to the delegates, Swami Siddhananda urged everyone to buy at least \$100 worth of publications, for themselves and to gift to family and friends. He also reviewed new releases from CCMT and the new Bala Vihar teaching guides for Chinmaya Mission worldwide. Guruji autographed a select book for all patrons with over \$100 in purchases.

The children and youth were kept fully occupied with morning yoga and meditation, *acharya's* classes, outdoor activities led by a park ranger, and recreations like swimming (pool and beach), mountain biking, boating, hiking, and kite flying.

The evening cultural programs included a "Get to Know One Another" session, *garba*, a dance drama on *Bhaja Govindam*, and a *bhajan sandhya* by Swami Siddhananda, Brahmacharini Arpita, Sheela Kripalani, and finally, Guruji.

The last night of camp was reserved for a banquet dinner. There were recollections of the *sankalpa*, wisdom, grace, and compassion of Pujya Gurudev by various devotees, brief remarks by Guruji, a wonderful dinner, CMWRC's donation offering to Guruji for *Chinmaya Vibhooti*, announcements of the auction-winners, and a vote of thanks.



The *Mahasamadhi Puja* was a sacred highlight of the camp and it began at 7:45 a.m., as planned. Each family performed *paduka puja* before its personal altar, which was comprised of all the materials in the *Puja Kit* given to each family. The ceremonies included the chanting of *Guru Stotram*, Pujya Gurudev's 108 names,

Guru Paduka Stotram, and *Krtajната*. Acharya Sharada Kumar sang one of Pujya Gurudev's favorite *bhajans*, "*Chilangakati odi odi vayo.*" Guruji spoke on Gurudev's grace and offered his original composition, a poem in Sanskrit.

Before we knew it, it was time to bid goodbye—another "*Hari Om!*" Everyone left on a spiritual high, partaking an early lunch before checkout. During the week, some strangers became friends and some friends became family. It was a great time of learning and quality time with Guruji, and everyone left recalling the week's wonderful experiences and reveling in Pujya Gurudev's grace. Many delegates were already planning for their next CM camp at the CM International Camp at *Chinmaya Vibhooti*, the Mahasamadhi Camp 2009 in Toronto, or the *Dharma Sevak* Course in Piercy. And so we shall all meet again, with our "*Hari Om!*"

Shri Radha-Krishna Murti Sthapana

by Rajul Bhalala



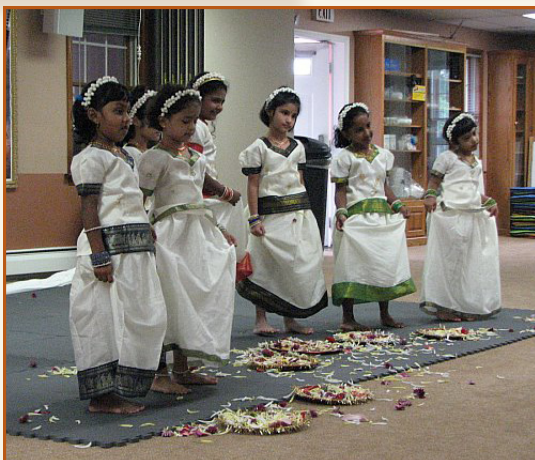
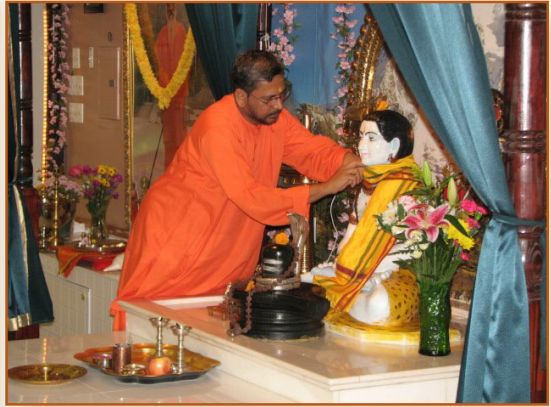
In the holy presence of Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, CM Chicago's new *Yamunotri* center consecrated its Shri Radha-Krishna *murtis* on August 30. When Pujya Guruji unveiled the *murtis*, the joy in the hearts of devotees overflowed, filling the shrine with love and blessings. The three-day installation ceremonies were enhanced by Guruji's *Gopika Geet* discourses.

The mornings were filled with Vedic chanting and *pujas* performed by the local priest and assisted by Brahmachari Bhasa Chaitanya (CM Houston). Hundreds of devotees, from the Mission as well as the local community, attended the functions. Many devotees flew into Chicago from all parts of the United States and Canada, and were hosted by local Mission families.

Befitting the auspicious occasion, the three days of Guruji's *Gopika Geet* transported the listeners to another dimension. The divine love of the *gopis* for their beloved Krishna moved the devotees to tears as they longed for Lord Krishna along with the *gopis*.

The entire program flowed flawlessly due to the teamwork of over 100 *sevaks* from CM Chicago's

Onam Celebrations at "Chinmaya Kedar"



Badri and *Yamunotri* ashrams, as they all worked cohesively and spiritedly for the vision and mission of Pujya Gurudev and Pujya Guruji.

The Bala Vihar children presented a cultural program on Saturday evening to honor Pujya Gurudev. The program included a play entitled, “Our Beloved Gurudev,” dances, and *bhajans*. After the program, Guruji had a special surprise screening of an *Upanishad Ganga* episode, *Mirabai*, which depicted the play of the three *gunas*.

Sevaks enjoyed *satsanga* with Guruji on the last day, wherein he emphasized the importance of conducting many programs and retreats to enhance the quality of life of the local community and to support the center. All the volunteers also saw a closer glimpse of the *Chinmaya Vibhooti* project. As only Guruji can articulate with precise timing, he concluded by saying, “The road to perfection is always under construction!” The entire event left everyone feeling highly motivated and inspired.

Chaturshloki Bhagavatam* at *Badri

by Rajul Bhalala

CM Chicago-*Badri* had the honor of Pujya Guruji’s visit and discourses, August 25-26. Guruji’s talks on *Chaturshloki Bhagavatam* brought to light the essence of four profound verses packed with deep Vedantic concepts. In simple and humorous style, Guruji explained the nature of the Lord’s presence in the world and the path by which to realize the Supreme. The shrine was filled to capacity, and the voices of hundreds of devotees singing with Guruji created a deeply spiritual and moving atmosphere.

The center’s *sevaks* and devotees had the opportunity to offer *bhiksha* to Guruji and have *satsanga* with him. This occasion also provided them a chance to meet other CM *acharyas* who had come to meet Guruji.



In his talks, Guruji reinforced the importance of attending Bala Vihar and Study Groups regularly and of deriving their infinite benefits. Everyone was touched by Guruji’s simplicity, love, and friendliness. *Badri* was charged with his divine presence and we were left with a yearning to listen to more of his inspiring discourses.

Guruji’s evening discourse on “Life is a Gift, Living an Art” to an inspired group of devotees at CM Northwest Indiana in Merrillville was a beautiful topic that was chosen to be the befitting theme of CM Chicago’s annual fundraising banquet on November 9. Guruji’s discourse will be transcribed and printed in the banquet souvenir booklet.



Bringing Vedanta to Life at CHYK Camp

by Kunal Mangal

Leaving their preoccupations behind, 40 CHYKs (university students and young professionals) from across the country came together to delve into the subtle science of Vedanta during the week of August 4-9. This year’s CHYK camp, hosted annually by CM Chicago and entirely organized by CHYKs, sought to bring to fruition Pujya Gurudev’s CHYK motto of harnessing the potential of youth through dynamic spirituality.

Indeed, “dynamic” is one of the best descriptions for this year’s camp experience. From 7 in the morning to 10 at night, the days were packed with yoga, meditation, discourses, group discussions, *bhajans*, recreation, and other activities. Permeating this full schedule was the emphasis on applying Vedanta in the modern lives of young adults. The combination of this emphasis on practicality and the company of one’s peers made this camp both, appealing and unique, for young adults.

Swami Ishwarananda (CM Los Angeles) and Acharya Gaurang Nanavaty (CM Houston), the camp *acharyas*, taught the theme of “Self-Discovery: A Path to Perfection” through over 60 select *Bhagavad Gita* verses. With humor, anecdotes, and clear examples, the two *acharyas* easily propounded this profound wisdom. In one particularly memorable discourse, Swami Ishwarananda explained how the dignity of man is in selfless work and how selfless work leads to inner purification. Acharya Gaurangji clarified religious practices such as *japa* and meditation, providing take-home, practical tools to purify the mind.

Complementing the discourses, group discussions were held twice a day. These offered the CHYKS a forum to discuss their doubts, share their understanding of the discourses, and determine how to apply the lessons in daily life. The daily Q&A sessions helped further clarify any doubts, whether they related to the day's topics or the trials of everyday life. In addition to benefitting from the acharyas' wisdom, the students were also able to simply enjoy *satsanga* with them, talking over meals or playing outdoor games.

CM Chicago's newly constructed *Yamunotri* ashram in northern Illinois hosted the event and its semi-rural setting made the camp truly feel like a retreat, even for campers from the Chicago area. Meditation and discourses were held in the shrine. Downstairs in the kitchen, dedicated *sevaks* cooked the meals while the campers helped serve and clean up. With the family atmosphere and homecooked food, *Yamunotri* felt like a home away from home.

Every evening, icebreakers, games, movies, or *raas garba* brought new friends together. An open mic night entitled, "Krishna Café," showcased campers' talents and included an *a cappella* Ganesha *bhajan*, skits based on the week's events, a jazz piano performance, and a haiku contest. On the last day, the campers were treated to Chicago deep-dish pizza, bowling, and late-night ice cream.

Enthused and inspired after the week's events, the campers are already looking forward to next year's camp, which will be conducted on July 4th weekend by Swami Ishwarananda and Brahmachari Uddhav Chaitanya (CM Dallas-Fort Worth).

CM Atlanta's New Bala Vihar in Gwinnett

by Rashmi Sinha

With Chinmaya Study Groups already being successfully conducted in the area, CM Atlanta inaugurated a new Bala Vihar in the Gwinnett County suburb on September 7. Acharyas G. V. and Geetha Raghu performed the *Guru Paduka Puja* and several longstanding youth, including members of CHYK Atlanta, spoke of the values they have learned from Chinmaya Bala Vihar and how it has helped them grow spiritually. New students and their parents met with the class teachers individually to get acquainted and discuss the year's curriculum.



The new students performed their first *Sarasvati Puja* as a Bala Vihar, guided by the two *acharyas*. Acharya Geethaji explained the significance of the *puja* and *Navaratri*, after which all the students performed their *puja* with great devotion.

With the blessings of our *guru parampara*, CM Atlanta hopes to grow and continue to serve and fulfill the Gwinnett community's spiritual needs for years to come.

Jai Mata Di in CM Ottawa

by Minal Patel



It was a memorable weekend for families in Ottawa as they set aside their daily challenges for four days (July 4-27) to retreat to the serene grounds of Québec's Camp Awacamenj Mino (or Camp Avocado Mango, as Swami Ishwarananda cleverly calls it) to be part of the enriching *guru-shishya* experience.

While the adults studied the text, *Forgive Me*, and learned about the role forgiveness plays in spiritual growth, the children and youth explored the mysticism of Devi. They discovered Her forms, how She is worshipped, and the spiritual significances associated with Her.

The befitting camp theme this year was Mother Durga. At the concluding *puja*, many offered prayers and flowers at the feet of a strikingly beautiful Durga-*murti* adorned in vibrant red and gold colors. As with every year, the camp was a balanced blend of summer fun and spiritual learning. After the morning classes, families

enjoyed the peaceful outdoors in true Canadian spirit by setting out on the calm waters in several canoes. Others were seen taking a dip in the lake, hiking the trails, rock climbing, or just quietly relaxing and enjoying their afternoon tea, eagerly awaiting the action-packed volleyball games with, and powerful spikes from, Swamiji. The evenings were lively and energetic with *garba* and *dandiya raas*, singing songs around a campfire, and being treated to delicious *ras malai* for dessert.

On the last day, the excitement was fervent as preparations were underway for the *visarjan* ceremony, when Ma's *murti* was offered into the on-site lake, symbolizing that all forms have a beginning and an end—that our physical bodies return to the elements from which they came. In the 16-step *puja*, some devotees, young and old, offered 108 *pranams*, one for each of the 108 names of Mother Durga.



After the *arati*, Ma was carefully lifted onto Her chariot and led to the lake in a procession with campers and *acharyas*, Swami Ishwarananda, Brahmacharini Aparna Chaitanya, and Bramachari Prabhat Chaitanya. Everyone reverberated with powerful energy as they devotedly chanted, "*Prem se bolo jai Mata di!*" to loud bells and drumbeats. Mata Durga was soon submerged into the lake to become one with the waters. Shortly after the ceremony, the clear sky transformed into pouring rains of divine blessings. The *visarjan* ceremony was a first for many devotees and a truly unique and special time for all the campers. Families and friends exchanged goodbyes and reflected upon the fun times shared at this year's camp, boarding the bus to return home with new knowledge and awareness.

In Memoriam: Narendra Makecha

by Divyakant Parikh and Radhika Nair

The news of the passing of CM Houston's (CMH's) Board Member, Narendra Makecha, was received with deep sorrow on September 8, 2008.



Born in 1947 in Porbandar, Gujarat, Narenbhai (as he was known to the CMH Family) inherited an unwavering spirit to serve the community. He heard Pujya Gurudev in the 1960s, and eventually joined the newly formed Chinmaya Mission in Houston in 1982. Narenbhai, his wife Rupa, and their three children have been actively serving the Mission for over 20 years. The 40-mile distance from his suburban residence to the Mission location was hardly a deterrent to him or his family, who punctually and regularly attended every Sunday.

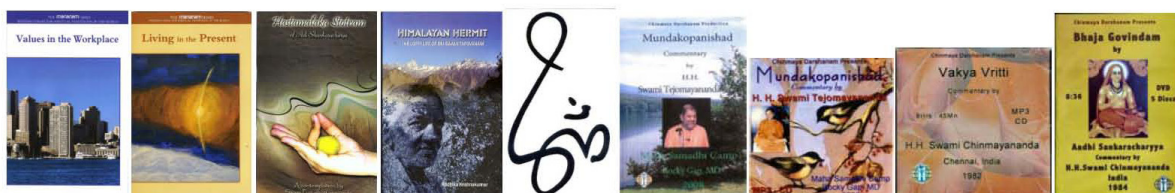
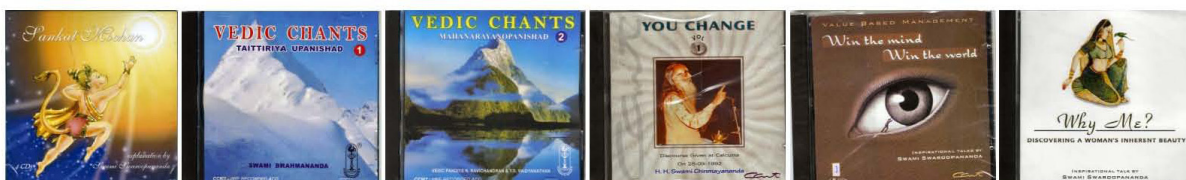
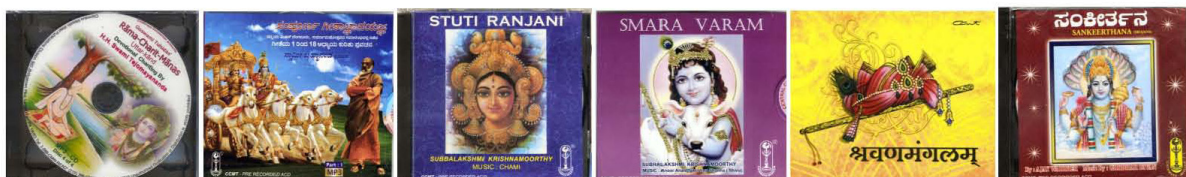
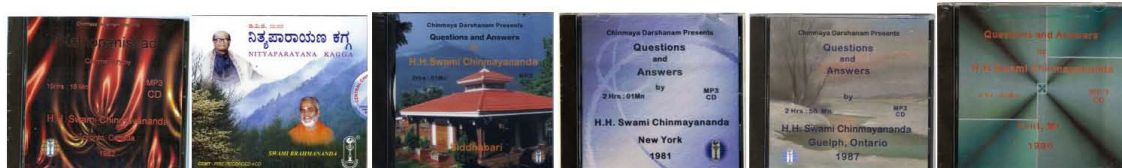
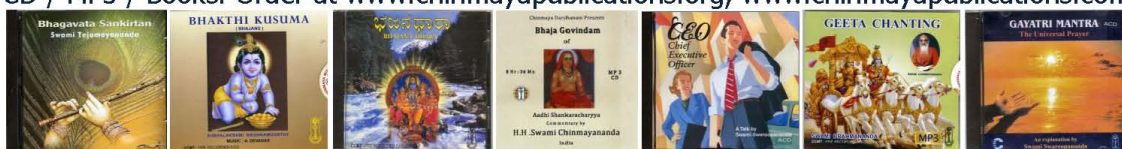
Narenbhai was ever ready to roll up his sleeves and undertake any *seva*. He stepped forward to administer various activities when the center needed significant help during its years of exponential growth, and soon became one of the right-hand men of Acharya Gaurang Nanavaty. He conceptualized and formed teams of volunteers, called "Karma Yoga Groups," and led them to organize various activities, such as festivals, camps, and temple *pujas*.

Narenbhai firmly believed in practicing *karma yoga*. His soft-spoken and pleasant ways, along with his energetic demeanor and readiness to learn, were extremely infectious, and inspired others to follow suit.

Narenbhai was admitted to the hospital on August 30 and he passed away over a week later. In a moving memorial that was attended by several hundreds of his friends, family, and colleagues, many eulogized on how he had touched their hearts. "If I can do ten percent of what he accomplished, then I will consider my life successful," said his brother-in-law. Not only was Narendra Makecha's life a successful one, it was evident as one scoped the memorial service how his life's actions had impacted countless people. Anil Sheth, a long time CMH member, summarized, "In the annals of CMH's history, his name will be engraved in gold."

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