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New Jersey

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New Mexico

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Pennsylvania

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Austin (512) 255-6786, austin@chinmayamission.org

Beaumont (409) 860-5987, beaumont@chinmayamission.org

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Houston (281) 568-9520, houston@chinmayamission.org

Washington

Seattle (509) 392-8325, seattle@chinmayamission.org

Canada

Calgary (403) 203-0751, calgary@chinmayamission.org

Halton (905) 570-1120, halton@chinmayamission.org

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Vancouver (604) 433-3441, vancouver@chinmayamission.org

Caribbean

Trinidad (868) 679-3652, trinidad@chinmayamission.org

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Editor-in-Chief: Brahmacharini Aparna Chaitanya

Layout: Seema Jani

Cover and Feature Layout: Natasha Chawla

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Submissions: cmwnews@chinmayamission.org

‘Kishnalaya’ CMW Headquarters/Retreat Center: (707) 207-5011 / fax (707) 247-3422;

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(215) 396-0390; fax (215) 396-9710

His Holiness Swami Tapovanam



One who lives in the present without joy or sorrow, without thinking of the past or the future, is regarded by the learned as a knower of *Brahman*. He is a knower of Truth who remains passive as a mere witness, leaving the senses to their activities. He alone sees truly who sees the eternal, unattached, pure, wise, and free Self in every creature and thing.

Source: *Ishvara Darshan*

His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda



Keep smiling. Accept adverse criticism. Don't ever get perturbed. Words are but disturbances in the air created by merely wagging the tongue. If there is nothing true in the criticism, ignore it all as meaningless blabbering. If there is truth, accept it with gratitude and bring about the necessary changes in you. Thus improve; come to shine more than ever before.

Source: *Practice of Vedanta*

His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda



Vedanta says that the joy each one is searching is not outside; it is within. It even goes a step further and says, “You are that joy!” Our struggles end as soon as we realize this. We will be free. . . . Dependence is sorrow; freedom is joy. When we depend on things outside for peace and joy, we get only bondage, not peace. There may be a fleeting glimpse of joy for a moment, but that is not true happiness; it is only an illusion of happiness. Real happiness puts an end to sorrow.

Source: *You Ask, He Answers*

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

Will You Choose Life or Death?

by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda

Compilation from his commentary on Ashtavakra Gita, the teachings of Maharshi Ashtavakra to King Janaka



When each member of the community is to scramble in society to fulfil his unbridled gush of desires, each will have to step on the toes of many, and the many unconsciously are compelled to dig at the ribs of each one in the community. Every individual is, in honest freedom, striving to discover his happiness. Unfortunately, in the world, desirable objects are less in number; and the desirers are many.

If 100 people desire the same object, it is evidently clear that 99 of them will have to end in disappointment. This daily struggle, artificially created by the total stupidity of the entire community, has been glorified in the modern, secular age by the glamorous term, “a healthy, competitive life.” Those who stand apart with their peaceful bosom watch the maddening cruelty of this meaningless struggle and are compelled to call this modern life of self-exhausting competition as a “rat race in a trap.” In whatever way we may glorify this way of life, in essence, it is but the glorification of a tragedy. The exhausting exertions of life make everyone unhappy and the paradox is that none understands this. . . .

[*Yoga Vasishtha* reminds that,] “In his ignorance of the supreme State, ever exhausting himself on activities, tired with his constant anxiety for results, alas, man never contemplates on Reality. There is no greater state of Existence than the Silence of the mind, wherein all *vasanas* have been renounced.”

Emptying the mind of all thought disturbances is the process to attain spiritual life. To quiet and still even the last traces of thought disturbances in the mind is the accomplishment of higher meditations. This is gained, in different stages, by sealing off the different sources from which these disturbances gurgled into our bosom. These processes of illumination are exhaustively indicated

Activities sprint forth mainly from three sources: Physical, oral, and mental. Initially seekers are advised to discipline their physical activities, their speech, and their thoughts in such a way that all of them are geared toward thoughts of the Divine. Thereby, the seeker is helped to turn his attention away from its usual preoccupations with the world of sense-gratifications. . . .

Religious activities like *yajna*, *puja*, etc., and dedicated secular activities such as social work, political work, etc., are the methods by which the physical activities are divinized. Similarly, singing the glories of the Lord, reading the scriptures aloud, repeating an inspiring mantra according to the technique of *japa*, are all accepted methods by which speech can be disciplined to turn toward the spiritual path. Again, when thoughts that are generally running out into the world of sense objects are turned to contemplate upon the Lord of the universe, this constitutes the thought-discipline for a strict spiritual life.

When a student—having disciplined his body, speech, and mind—practices meditation for long, he slowly climbs into the higher scales in meditation. Therein, he discovers that even these prayerful exercises of the body and the study of the scriptures at speech level, and all the conscious attempts at concentration in the practice of meditation at the intellectual level, are all distractions for him in his higher flights into subtler meditation.

In this spiritual autobiography of Janaka, the royal saint, he confesses that he could no longer stand the distractions caused by his dedicated physical activities, prayers, silent *japa*, and even contemplation. He gave them all up and said, “I . . . abide in my Self.” This is no blasphemy. The earlier *sadhanas*, such as service of mankind and rituals, *kirtana*

and *puja*, truthfulness and self-control, concentration and contemplation, etc. are all of immense significance to the seeker because they, in their totality, shall lead the student to the take-off pad for higher meditation. At this stage, in his subtle vision, he gains glimpses of the oneness of the divine Self everywhere.

Explaining the stages by which Janaka walked into the palace of Truth, he confesses that at this stage, he felt a growing dissatisfaction . . . in the study of the scriptures and discussions, in reflection, in *japa*, etc., and therefore, he dropped them. Again, he found that even contemplation is meaningless, because meditation is a process whereby the mind is trying to visualize, think, and experience the Self, which is invisible, unthinkable. Therefore, he has left even all conscious attempts at contemplation and meditation. Honest to himself, the disciple declares to his teacher, “Thus do I, therefore, abide in myself.” . . .

The four stages in Hindu life have each their own distinct duties and disciplines. Each stage in life has its encumbrances of duties and anxieties, which are, to Janaka, distractions in his experience of the infinite Self. These various stages have meaning only with reference to the individual’s ignorance [of the Self], and his consequent identification with his body and the world around.

Similarly, meditation to a Man of Perfection, whose mind is at rest, is a wasteful exertion. How can he control his mind from wandering into sense when, from his vision, there is nothing but the Self everywhere? . . .

[Ashtavakra Maharaj says,] “A person of pure intelligence realizes the Self even by instruction casually imparted. A man of impure intellect is confused in trying to realize the Self, after inquiring throughout his life.” The textbook remaining the same, even when the same teacher is explaining and expounding the Truth of Vedanta, we find that different students are benefited by the same instructions to different degrees. The Upanishadic books explain this phenomenon and attribute the success or failure of the student to his preparedness or unpreparedness within to receive the great Knowledge divine. A mind rich in *sattva* is calm and serene, and is receptive to the spiritual ideas discussed in the

Upanishads. But when the mind is disturbed by agitations (*rajas*) or when the intellect is clouded by dullness (*tamas*), the equipment is not tuned to receive the profound inner secrets of the scriptural declarations. When a mind is stilled and well protected from the onslaughts of passions and desires, it is considered as “pure intelligence,” which alone will have the required receptivity to apprehend the Truth. When thus the student is ready to receive the divine message, a casual instruction from the teacher is more than sufficient to set the student on the flight to the state of pure Consciousness.

However, if the student’s inner bosom is not disciplined enough, and his mind and intellect are extremely disturbed by the continuous waves of passions and desires, such an individual, even after deep inquiries, throughout his life remains bewildered and confused in himself, without having even a moment’s spiritual experience.

This is why *Yoga-Vasishtha* advises all teachers: “In the beginning, examine the student carefully for qualities of self-control and inner quietude. Thereafter advise him, ‘Thou art the pure *Brahman* that is the Essence of this entire universe.’”

[Ashtavakra Maharaj says,] “Distaste for sense objects is liberation. Passion for sense objects is bondage. Such, indeed, is knowledge. Now, do as you please.” Ashtavakra here defines exactly what constitutes bondage and what exactly is liberation as far as the seeker is concerned. . . . This distaste for sense objects is a sign of liberation. Having explained thus, the Vedantic seer in Ashtavakra gives the student full freedom to plan his own life and live his days . . . as he likes. Those who yet have *vasanas* to fulfill must continue living in the sense-world to exhaust them. There is no other way. Those in whom the vigor of *vasanas* has calmed down, in them is a natural sense of growing distaste toward sense objects. Force and compulsion can do nothing in this great path of Self-rediscovery. It is an evolution, not a revolution. . . .

To those of his students who have the taste to walk the spiritual path, Ashtavakra continues and says, “You are not the body, nor is the body yours. You are neither the doer nor the enjoyer. You are Consciousness

itself—the eternal, indifferent Witness. You go about happily.” . . .

So long as the mind functions, there is the ego, the perceiver perceiving the universe. For the universe, there must be a Creator (God); and for this God, there must be a supreme Consciousness (*Brahman*); and for the individual ego (*jiva*), there must be the Consciousness as Self (*Atman*) behind it. Thus, once we perceive the world of plurality (*jagat*), we must recognize the Lord (*Isvara*), the Self (*Atman*), the Supreme Reality (*Brahman*). All these distinctions are only to help the individual, step by step, stage by stage, in this unfoldment to realize and awake to the One, the Infinite.

[Ashtavakra Maharaj says,] “In Reality, You are the One; other than You there is neither an individual ego (*jiva*) nor a supreme Self (*Atman*).” Just as on awakening from a dream, there is no more a dreamer or a dream world—all have merged to become the waker’s own mind!

The sense of ego and its sorrow (*samsara*) are not because of your equipments, but because of extroversion. Even when the equipments are there, as in the case of great sages, when you develop the inward gaze to recognize and experience the presence of the divine seat of Consciousness in yourself, you are ever in Bliss. [*Ashtavakra Gita* clearly says,] “Because of your extroversion you are not able to recognize your own Self. Then, the equipments that constitute your own ‘form’ indeed become a painful calamity. When this veiling of ignorance is removed and you realize the Self, this very same ‘form’ of yours made up of your equipments becomes completely satisfactory.”

Through one’s direct experience of the Self, [when] one understands with certitude that everything is delusion and the Self alone is the Reality, [then] one must thereafter become completely desire-less. How can he desire anything when there is nothing other than himself? Spontaneously he must come to experience a supreme serenity of the mind, as if nothing exists to disturb his mind from the world of objects or from the inner world of passions. A Man of Perfection also lives in this world, the world familiar to us, the world of enchanting sense objects. Whenever the wise

man looks out into the world, through his physical-mental equipments, certainly he, too, recognizes the world of objects and emotions. He recognizes them, but they cannot affect him, as his realization that nothing else exists but the Self, is continuous, powerful, and constant.

[Ashtavakra Maharaj teaches,] “In the ocean of Existence, the one Self alone is and will be. There is neither bondage nor liberation for You. Live fulfilled and roam about happily. . . Completely give up even contemplation and hold nothing in your mind. You are indeed the Self, ever free. What will you do by meditation?”

To one who has slept, there can be no more any attempt to sleep. To the sleeper, there is no more any anxiety to sleep. Similarly, once you have realized that You are indeed the Self, ever free, thereafter, to think, to contemplate, or to meditate on the nature of the Self, would be to re-crystallize your ego and disturb your Experience divine with the fluttering of your mind.

In short, to give up meditation through meditation is the highest meditation! There is no greater meditation than meditationless-meditation. It is infinite Fulfillment. It is the end of the way, the last leap into the Goal. Here, yoga ends. The dream of the ego has rolled away. The Self, as the Self, revels in the Self. The meditator has become the meditated. Man has stepped onto the throne of God! This is no poetic exaggeration of Ashtavakra. *Yoga Vasishtha* roars the same naked truth. . . .

[Guru Ashtavakra says,] “Even if Shiva, Vishnu, or the lotus-born Creator Brahma be your instructor, yet, unless you forget all, you cannot achieve abidance in the Self.” There is no meaning in complaining about the quality and ability of spiritual teachers. Their capacity to convey experiences to the students are limited. And the grace lies not in the guru, but in the students themselves. The seekers themselves block their minds from the flood of spiritual grace that reaches them from their teachers. This blockage is built of the seekers’ own memories of past experiences in the world of plurality. . . . all memories together constitute the “ego.” Unless these are destroyed and discarded, the ego cannot be eliminated and the flight

to the infinite Self can never happen. In order to emphasize this idea, Ashtavakra exclaims that even if you get direct instructions and guidance from the Trinity themselves, yet, the student cannot awake to the higher plane of Godhood unless he, himself, cuts off his attachments to his past memories. *Yoga Vasishtha* also exclaims: “Even Lord Mahadeva cannot give wisdom to one who has not contemplated upon the Self, even though he may be one who has, for long, worshipped the Lord and is one who has supreme devotion for the Lord.” . . .

[*Ashtavakra Gita* states,] “The noble-minded one is not perturbed and remains self-poised at the sight of a woman full of passion as well as at approaching death. He is, indeed, liberated.” . . . Neither the beloved of the dream nor the tiger of the dream can ever bring any mental disturbance in one who has awakened from his dream.

When the great courtesan, beautifully dressed in muslin and pearls, carrying fruits in a plate, in the dead of night, approached the temple where Buddha was resting for the day, and knocked at the door, the Lord of Compassion woke up, opened the door, and met the lusty girl who had reached to tempt the young, brilliant man in Buddha. Unperturbed, the Man of Peace smilingly approached her, touched her feet, and with head bent in humble reverence, said: “Mother, how can your son serve you?” With tears falling from her eyes, she fell prostrate, apologized, and returned to her nearby residence. In time, she became one of the greatest workers in the master’s camp. . . . death has no ferocity, love has no enchantment, power has no satisfaction, wealth has no charm for the Man of Wisdom. . . .

The outer objects by themselves cannot disturb an individual, nor can the mind by itself create any restlessness. Only when the mind comes in contact with the world of objects and reacts, then alone storms are raised in the bosom. The mind reacts because of the *vasanas* in the mind. The Man of Perfection is one who has emptied his mind of all its memories of the past *vasanas*. The serene, tranquil mind of the Liberated can no longer react with the world; it has become a true instrument with which to act.

The wise one is never blind to the Source from which his thoughts arise; the ignorant one is never conscious of the Source. . . . We can watch a magician’s creations with no perplexity, and even wonderment, because we do not forget that it is magic.

He who is thus continuously well-established in the Source, the consciousness of the Self, even while he is playing in the world of plurality, he knows that all these are the play of the Consciousness supreme and nothing else.

In our social and communal living, since we are then recognizing plurality, the descriptive declarations of the saints and sages cannot, and should not, be practiced. If the soldier has the right to shoot and kill, it is only when he is acting as a soldier under the command of his officers. He will be committing a crime if he shoots down, out of personal grudge, his neighbor in his village. [Therefore,] do not quote [such teachings of “play of the Consciousness supreme”] as your excuse for your base, vulgar, and immoral life in the community. . . .

The Illumined one . . . in himself does not react at the levels of the body, mind, and intellect, as others would in their ignorance of the higher Reality. Living in the Self, the sage is never involved in his physical, psychological, intellectual contacts with the world. His body-mind equipment may function in the world in its unchaste impulses, but he, as Consciousness, is only an indifferent Witness of it all. The *Jivanmukta* is not personally involved in the activities of his body or mind; there is no “he” and “him.” The *Jivanmukta* is unique and is ever a law unto himself. He cannot be compared with anyone—not even the gods! . . . He meets life directly, head on, accepting nothing, avoiding nothing. His tranquility is never disturbed. . . .

On awakening to the higher plane, the Self, the Man of Perfection has transcended his ego-sense of “I,” and egoistic feeling of “my.” This is the very reason why he has neither desires—no “I” to entertain them—nor attachments, [for there is] no sense of possession (my) for which to feel attachments. . . . To a Man of Perfection, there is no choosing; he never plans or demands; he just lives.

He seems to work in any field that comes to him unasked; he lives on whatever comes to him by chance. Under all conditions and circumstances, in all company everywhere, at all times, he is supremely serene and blissful in his greater identification with the higher Reality. He acts as forced by *prarabdha*.

The body was initiated as a result of past deeds. It has arrived in this world to experience not only the rewards of his past noble life, but also to pay for the bad deeds of the past in terms of exhausting strife, sorrowful circumstances, miserable diseases, etc. The *jivanmukta*, with equal enthusiasm, plunges joyfully into all such actions that reach him and his body vigorously functions; [but] he is no doer—only an indifferent observer, a patient witness. Hence, the deeds of a sage are termed as “*yatha jivanam*.” . . . He is ever an observer of his own body functioning through its varied experiences of joys and sorrows. He is never involved in them. . . .

A sage of spiritual vision lives like any other ordinary man in the world and he pursues normal life. Yet, he is the reverse of the common man. . . . We, the common folk, consider the world of sense objects as real, and to us, spiritual Essence is a matter of doubt, a questionable hypothesis of the subtle philosophers. To the realized sage, the Self alone is the one Reality and he lives It constantly in his experience. To him, the world of objects is an illusion of the human mind.

A sage of inward, constant Experience divine recognizes nothing—neither absorption (*samadhi*) nor distraction (*vikshepa*), for he has transcended his mind, and *samadhi* and *vikshepa* are the conditions of the mind. [The sage] does not get involved (*lepam*) in the world of activity. This does not mean he will not act. He constantly serves the world, but he never gets involved, meaning, he never acts with ego and egocentric desires. No *vasanas* are created in him by his activities. Thus, he is the reverse of the common man. . . .

Since he is so fully established in the experience of the one Self everywhere, his equipments can never dance except to the melody of Life divine. No discordant note can ever come into the songful actions of such a perfect Master. To one who has realized the Infinite, he has

no more any vanity of his body. In fact, he has no more any use for it. It is something like a dry leaf that has fallen when its functions have ended for the tree. The body, mind, intellect equipments have already dried up, curled, and fallen away from the wise man; they are of no use to him.

Not only the leaf dances on the branches of the tree, but the fallen leaf [also] seems to be dynamic and active when it is blown hither and thither by the passing breeze. To the eyes of ignorant men, a sage also seems to be acting in the world outside. . . . Ashtavakra explains that like a dry leaf that is blown [about] by the whimsical breeze, so too, the equipments of a Man of Perfection move about in different directions, set by its *prarabdha*.

Past actions leave deep and powerful *vasanas*, which channel all thought flow into definite directions in each individual. These thought channels that determine one’s character are made by the cumulative effects of his entire past, called *samskaras*. One yogi may spend all his life in quietude, in a solitary cave plunged in *samadhi*. Another may move about in society like a mad man, miserably clad, careless of his food, sleeping perhaps on the footpath, exposed to sun and rain. Yet another may take great programs for the cultural revival of a country and moral rehabilitation of his community. One may found a religion and another may float a Mission! None of them is responsible for any of his actions because there is no doer or ego in any of them. Their actions are determined by their *prarabdha* and . . . they live in a realm where our praises and abuses cannot even reach them.



photo by betty denton



The Brilliance of the Self

Talks by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

Talk at CM Houston, June 2009; transcribed by Preeta Narain; continued from CMW News, July 2011

The face in a *prabhavali* structure is called Kirtimukha. *Kirti* means fame, glory. *Mukham* means face. Therefore, Kirtimukha remains in all *prabhavalis*. Like this, Bhagavan put His servant above Himself. In *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, He says, “*Aham bhakta paradinah*.” Bhagavan says everyone thinks that I am the supreme Lord, but my devotees are higher than me; I remain under their control—*bhakta paradinah*.

The face that looks like *asura* was born as Bhagavan’s *sankalpa*. When Bhagavan said now you dissolve yourself, he had no problem in dissolving and sacrificing himself, no complaint, no objection, no sorrow. So, this is beautiful story wherein we see that if by Bhagavan’s *sankalpa* we are asked to do something, and then Bhagavan says, now you withdraw or stop it, you should be also stop also. Why fight? Even if you are just to finish yourself in that, obey the Lord’s command, and whatever has to be done, you just do it. If someone is ready to do this, he becomes immortal. How Bhagavan loves that devotee, that *bhakta-vatsalyam* also you have seen.

Prashna Upanishad describes the *shodasha-kala purushah*. Here, *Paramatma* has 16 phases (*prana*, *shraddha*, *pancha-mahabhutas*, etc.) and the last is “name,”—the name of the Lord. From *Paramatma* all of creation comes, the 16 phases, and then everything goes back. But in *Mundaka Upanishad*, a very interesting thing is said: In the case of a man of realization, 15 *kalas* of that mahatma get absorbed, but one *kala* remains—his name remains in this world. And do you know, one *kala* is capable of doing so much! Only the name of the Lord, the name of his devotees, the name of a realized person does everything. In the case of Kirtimukha, everything was gone except his face. Bhagavan retained it because he didn’t want his *bhakta* to merge

completely. [Figuratively,] when I go into sleep state, what happens? I eat myself. I, myself, go on dissolving and dissolving. Some people are completely dissolved. Some remain in some form, and that’s why they get up and sleepwalk—opening the fridge eat ice cream and going back to sleep.

Bhagvata sankalpa shines. In Bhagavan’s glories, the *bhakta*’s glory also keeps shining. One may say this *prabhavali* is only a decoration, and another may say it represents the Lord, seated on the throne as Ruler of the Universe. The *prabhavali* also indicates the Lord’s *prabha*, or glory, shining. As people offer worship before the Lord, in the form of regular *pujas*, *aarti*, devotion, prayers, so it is that that *murti* as though keeps getting a new glow. Thus, a *prabha*, or aura, is created and seen. This is also what happens between Bhagavan and His devotee by *Bhagavat sankalpa*. And by that *sankalpa*, so many things keep happening. To the extent we remain tuned and devoted to God, we see that great glow called *teja*, or brilliance, in our life also. This is why we call these great men of realization “God-men,” because they have become one with the Lord.

About *bhakta* Prahlada, in *Bhagavatam* it is said that he was endowed with all those virtues with which Bhagavan is endowed—*sarva guna*. And who said this? Prahlada’s Guru, Narada Muni. Naradji was praising his disciple like this.

So, it is a question of how much we understand, how much we are attuned. See, cameras that are focused take the best photos. In music also, if everything is tuned properly, then alone there is beauty in the music. Everywhere you can see this.

Prabhavali is also sometimes called *prabha-mandalam* or *prabhavalaya*. When installing

a *prabhavali*, *pujas* are done and the Lord responds to our prayers depending on our faith, devotion, and understanding in prayer. Bhagavan clearly said to Arjuna that He reciprocates and responds to people's devotion in whichever way they worship Him, in whichever Form, for whatever purpose. He also says that in all ways, whether they know it or not, they are coming to Me only.

One atheist said, "But I don't believe in God. So where is the question that I am on the way to Him? Where does he get such wishful thinking?" The answer is simple: All *jivas*, without exception, whether atheist, nihilist, agnostic, or other, they are all in search of *ananda* and none can deny this. Who can deny it, when even a little creature, a mosquito, wants *ananda* only. When it lands on our bodies, it is able to suck that little bit of blood—very happy! I want to hit it and it flies in front me—I have seen the smile on its face! It feels so happy—one joy is that he got blood and the second is that he escaped.

Every creature wants *ananda*, which is why Bhagavan says all want Me, because Bhagavan alone is *ananda-svarupa*. That which is infinite alone is *ananda*. Na alpe sukham asti. In the finite, there is no *ananda* at all, which is why we are never satisfied with little, little things. All the time, we want something more, something bigger, something lasting.

Many times, people feel they keep praying and nothing happens. Suddenly they think God doesn't even see them or hear them. They think that maybe God has a hearing problem these days. Some say, "I am told that if you pray very sincerely, then Bhagavan will fulfill your desire. But my wish is never fulfilled, so I am losing my faith." So many people lose their faith very quickly. Why? Because the very nature of their faith is faulty. They see God as their wish-fulfiller and when a wish is not fulfilled, there is a problem.

Suppose a potter was making a pot and he wanted them to dry. So he said, "Bhagavan make sure there is sunshine and no rain." And there was gardener who said, "Bhagavan I want to water these plants, but alone how long will I go on spraying with the hose and sprinklers? Please give plenty of rain." One is praying for rain and one is praying for no rain.

What Bhagavan can do now? Everybody's wish is contradictory to another's. What can happen this way? It is meaningless.

We think of God as our wish-fulfiller, but please understand that He is first our well-wisher, not wish-fulfiller. His primary job is to do something that is good for you, not everything that you wish. Because sometimes, we ourselves do not know what is good for us. Wish *kaa kyaa bharosaa hai?* One moment we want one thing, and another moment we want something else—like children in your home. They may want anything and everything, but a parent's job is not to go on fulfilling children's wishes. A parent's primary job is to do what is good for their children.

When you travel by plane, the flight attendant announces, "Our primary job is your safety, but in the process, if we can make your flight more comfortable in any way, we will do our best to do so." They are clear that their main job is safety, that the plane must land safely. Once, I was traveling in the US on one airline, and there was a very humorous announcer. He said everything he had to, and then he said, "And if you need anything, do not ask." Everybody laughed and then he said, "What I mean is, do not hesitate to ask." So their primary duty is to ensure that you should reach safely.

Bhagavan's primary job is to do what is good for us. Because a temple is there, we will go there and pray there. Never feel or think that God doesn't answer your prayer; He always answers, but in which way is what is important. I heard from one mahatma a wonderful thing. He had said that sometimes God says yes or *tathastu*, and you get whatever you want. Sometimes He says no, after which we feel so sad. But then, God gives you something better than for what you had asked. And in due course of time, you come to realize that it was good you did not get what you asked for at that time. And sometimes, His answer is, "Wait." Then we think: Wait-yes or wait-no? When He says wait, just wait! He will give you the best. Bhagavan is not here to make us miserable. Our faith in Bhagavan should be as our *hiteshi*, or well-wisher, not wish-fulfiller. In *Bhagavad Gita*, Bhagavan says, "*Suhrtam sarvabhutanam nyatvamam shantimrcchati. Vaah!* I love this line, where Bhagavan

says that person attains peace, is always at peace, because he has understood Me as his well-wisher, or *subrt*, the literal meaning of which is "good hearted." Good hearted is one who is always ready to help you—even when everybody leaves you, he is there with you. He will not leave you. That is called *subrt*.

Shankaracharya Bhagavan explains that word as one who does good for you without expecting anything in return. Goswami Tulasidas writes, He doesn't even expect any *seva* from you; even before you have done any *seva*, He has already given to you." May we all have this kind of faith, this kind of *bhakti* and *shraddha*. With this we must worship.

Sometimes you hear these kind of blessings: "May God bless you. May God's blessings be always with you." This is very good, but I think there is one more important point: God's blessings are always there, but may you always remain aware that His blessings are always with you. This what we forget. Sometimes, suddenly, just because our silly wishes is not fulfilled, we say, "God is angry with me. *Bhagavan ko vaise to kaam hi nahin hai* (He doesn't have any other job) than to just get angry with you. This is not the case. So, may God's grace and blessings be ever with you, and may you always remain aware of this. He has never left you.

There is one particular adjective given to our Bhakta Prahlada that I like very much. It is about how he used to feel. Do you know that Prahladji used to feel that *aham Govinda pariratah*, which means, "I am always in the embrace of Bhagavan;" Bhagavan is always holding me to His heart. This was his feeling. Live like this and then see what happens.

So, in this temple, with its beautiful *prabhavali*, [see the difference] when we go with this kind of firm, unwavering faith, devotion, and understanding, and then pray. Sometimes we may have our own desire, and there is no harm

in telling it to Bhagavan: "Bhagavan, this is my wish. Fulfill it if you think it is proper. If you think it is no good, forget about it." *Ek bhakta ki hai arzi, aage tumhaari marzi. Bhaktas*, or devotees, have every democratic right to say this is what I want, but don't insist, because we don't know if it is good or bad, right or wrong, so let Him fulfill it if He thinks it is right.

One *bhakta* said to Bhagavan, "Do whatever you want with me, but make sure I never doubt you. Whatever you do, no doubts should come to my mind. Ever. About Your doing or not doing, there is no doubt at all." Guru Nanakji said in one *pada*, *jo prabhu keenho so bah manya, eka sumati saadbana te paayi*: "This is one thing I have learned from *satsanga*—whatever the Lord has done, that is good."

You have seen the significance of the *prabhavali*, from the basic, simple standpoint, to the *Pauranik*, to the *adhyatmik*. The latter is the final glow that comes only by our tuning our mind with the Lord. Then, His grace and blessings flow and you become a fit instrument to serve, as it is said in our Chinmaya Mission Pledge: May Thy grace and blessings flow through us to the world around us." Then you can see what miracles and wondrous things happen. The greatest wonder will be that we will be a changed person—total transformation is the biggest miracle. A crying *jiva* becomes the giver of happiness.

Everyone has to contemplate and reflect on all these things. We do not only have to know the stories of great devotees and masters all the time. We can just look at our own life, become more aware, and see the grace and blessings we never recognized before. And once you recognize this in your own life, thereafter, you will never have any doubt. The whole world may say something contrary to your belief, but you will be unshaken—this is guaranteed. So, let us remain in tune with the Lord, and the best way is to sing His glories.



|| Om Shri Ganeshaya Namaha ||
|| Om Shri Gurubhyo Namaha ||

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Seeing Beyond I

Excerpts from CM Princeton and CM Philadelphia Bala Vihar
students' winning essays on Selflessness

Selflessness

by Ramya Gurunathan (Grade 11, CM Philadelphia)

I always thought it curious that people often ask, “What do you live for?” It has always seemed strange to me that someone could live for something. It is as though we could control the course of our lives to fit some purposeful, directed course. I mean, you can go to the store for something, but how can you treat something as magnificent as life the same way? I have come to believe that life is not as black-and-white [and] clear-cut as some would suggest, but when one dedicates one's life to something larger than oneself—to a greater cause, a higher dogma—Divinity [manifests].

Selflessness and altruism have always been the badge of magnanimity and the mantra of a noble heart. The constant feature of all our greatest leaders has been selflessness. Indeed, those who adopt the principle in their lives, find a greater satisfaction and fulfillment in their lives. As Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube quickly gain popularity, it seems as though my generation has become obsessed with this grandstand display of self. We cannot too quickly forget, however, that the principles of altruism are timeless and ride over even the most monstrous waves of social change. In exploring the relevance of selflessness in today's society it is important to first evaluate the principles of *karma yoga* and observe the impact of altruism when applied properly.

Karma yoga is, in fact, shockingly simple. It is this simplicity that gives *karma yoga* power and potency. Essentially, [it] is the idea of selfless service. It is the sacredness of doing your duty, whether it be serving in the Oval Office or sweeping the streets. A *karma yogi* does not work with the sole purpose of reaping the benefits of his labor. Rather, he toils out of love and understanding of duty or dharma. The greatest *karma yogis* do not even require food, water, or sleep, but find sustenance

from performing their duty. This epitomizes selflessness; it is a form of altruism so pure and so revered as to seem completely inapplicable to the life of the common man. However, we can all adapt the principles of *karma yoga* simply by loosening our stronghold on our lives in a slow step-wise process, and recognizing the value of selfless service. Many will then find this to be a palliative process that can ease stress and calm the mind better than any antidepressant or anxiety medication on the market. Perhaps [Pujya Gurudev] Swami Chinmayananda surmises the essence of *karma yoga* best when he says, “Success or achievement is not the final goal. It is the ‘spirit’ in which you act that puts the seal of beauty upon your life.” . . .

Let us not forget that humans are not the only beings capable of practicing karma yoga. . . . Altruistic behavior is a key feature in many animal populations. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is with ground squirrels. When an individual squirrel senses a predator approaching, it will produce a whistling sound to alert the other members to flee. This alarm call exposes the squirrel and makes it more likely to be captured by the predator. The squirrel is likely following its dharma as a member of the tribe and therefore sacrifices its life to protect that of many. . . . It is a similar story for . . . the female worker bee [that] renounces her ability to reproduce offspring and instead raises the young of the queen bee. This is contradictory to the fundamentals of Darwinian evolution, which essentially labels reproduction as the goal of living. However, by remaining sterile, the female worker bee follows the magnanimous creed, “producing more than what we consume, giving more than what we take.” Through this selfless action, the worker bees are able to pollinate more flowers, produce more honey, and care for all of the offspring in the hive. The efficacy of the hive is heightened simply because dharma is followed. . . .

Critics have been continually labeling those born in the last 20-30 years as the “me generation,” citing a wave of narcissism that has flooded mankind. It is easy to speculate

and conjure up these giant claims. However, if we remove this veil of cynicism, we find selfless individuals all around us, toiling day after day to preserve that divine element they find in every living being.

One such example is Mr. Narayanan Krishnan, recently awarded the title of a “CNN Hero.” Krishnan was a young and upcoming chef working at a 5-star restaurant, when he witnessed a destitute old man consuming his own waste. Krishnan was appalled, but he turned this distress into action. Giving up his dreams to become the best chef in his field, giving up his dreams to travel the world, he set out to improve the well-being of absolute strangers. Soon after, Krishnan started the Akshaya Trust in Madurai, [India]. Every day he wakes up at 4 a.m., cooks fresh food, and distributes it all over this city. No holidays, no rain checks, no sick days. Krishnan even trained himself in grooming so that he could provide haircuts and hair washes whenever his people were attending job interviews. The compassion in Krishnan’s heart gave him a keen perception. This insight allowed him to see the worthiness and purity even in the most destitute being. Krishnan is one of many shining examples of selflessness in today’s society. Today, just as in the past, many of us suffer from this plague of focusing only on differences between us and other living beings. Once we remember that the same vital force unites us and every other life form, we can begin to feel true compassion.

The history of our people is marked by great figures who have committed themselves to others and sacrificed their own pleasures. . . . For individuals to grow infatuated with self is to pillage the temples of altruism built by these great figures. . . . In evaluating the principles of *karma yoga* and examples of selflessness in past and present, in humans and creatures, it grows evident that the best way to empower self is to expand beyond that of self.

☞ *The World as a Pendulum*
by Ashwin Narayan (Grade 11, CM Princeton)

Globally, humanity experienced fundamental changes throughout the twentieth century. The worldwide influence and infusion of Western culture infiltrated all corners of the

world, preaching the “esteemed” qualities of secularism and individualism. Capitalism began its dominance over the rest of the world, and not without good reason. The philosophy, which claims that the combined selfish action of all individuals leads to societal advancement, seemed to be working brilliantly. Those who practiced it . . . had become the most powerful countries in the world, their economies exploding, their armies unstoppable, and their people seemingly ecstatic with their lives. Obviously, other nations, eager to share the incredible power that capitalism seemed to have conveyed upon Western nations quickly adopted the system, as can be seen by the rapid industrial growth in countries like India, China, and Brazil today. Gross domestic product, productivity, life expectancy, standard of living, infant mortality rates, and almost every other index of material health and wealth increased in these “developing” nations. It seemed as though the eons of spiritual advice, teaching selflessness and fraternity, were completely outdone by the wonder drug that was capitalism. Had Western culture happened upon the ultimate solution to mankind’s problems?

Alas, the workings of nature are rarely so simple. Capitalism was less a wonder drug than a normal, over-the-counter medicine, with more side effects than the original disease it was intended to cure. While the world experienced tremendous material growth, the twentieth century on a whole was hardly a time of great happiness. It was, in fact, the bloodiest century in human history, with the two largest wars ever fought, both caused by industrialized, capitalist nations. While the rich became richer, the poor became dismally poorer, even in the affluent United States. Exploiting the lax laws in foreign nations, mega corporations continue to benefit from cheap and inhuman labor. Students have become extremely competitive, caring only for their own success. The delicate ecological balance of ecosystem after ecosystem is being thrown into chaos: Rainforests are falling, the globe is warming, bees are dying, rivers are drying.

In their quest for bigger and better, through their selfish actions, people have forgotten the concepts of brotherhood and altruism. The world may be richer today. But is it a happier place?

Perhaps. But it is my firm belief that reverting to some classical thought that was so abruptly shunned aside by the modern world could exponentially increase the true happiness of all people of the world, even if it means some material sacrifice. Religion, which is now akin to a curse word and a mire of political correctness, once guided billions of the world’s people; now it has been shunned by humanity in favor of young and robust science. Maybe it is time to allow religion to re-enter our lives. I am not advocating religious fundamentalism, but rather a union of religion and individualism. To counter the deluge of selfish action that has come to define society, I advocate the *Bhagavad Gita*, which contains a brilliant thesis explaining the mechanism and importance of selfless action [known as] *karma yoga*. Selfless action is the antidote to the overdose of selfishness, a plague that grieves society.

In the *Gita*, amid Arjuna’s confusion, [Lord] Krishna explains to him the proper way to act in order to release oneself from grief. One beautiful verse summarizes the theory of selfless action: *karmanyevadbhikaraste, ma phaleshu kadachana, ma karmaphala hetur-bhuh, ma te sangostva akarmani*. Essentially, one must act without becoming attached to the fruits of [one’s] actions. He should not claim reward from his actions and must always act according to his duty. Such is the concept of selfless action. Do your work without your own gain in mind for a change, and dedicate your action to something higher. To act selflessly is to act with sacrifice: Surrender the attachment to the rewards or punishments and act only for the sake of your day. In order to fully harness the productive potential that yields the fruit of an action, one must offer sacrifice while doing the action. Often criticized as condoning laziness and determinism or fatalism, the above *shloka* is commonly misunderstood to promote action without forethought and action without accountability. In actuality, the true deeper meaning is that when performing an action, one should focus on the action alone and not on the goal of the action. And the action should be performed as if it were being done for God. The concept may seem high-handed or impractical, but in reality, the philosophy is indeed practical and, with some difficulty, even practicable. If the world’s people were to

apply the concepts of *karma yoga* in their lives, I have no doubt in my mind that happiness (true, spiritual, everlasting happiness) would follow.

Consider the example of the cutthroat and overly competitive student who goes through his school day doing anything and everything to bring home the A-grade. Sadly, this generalization actually applies to many students today. They care nothing for the actual subject material and only want to outdo their peers, get into a good college, and become rich and famous in their lives. Their life is not a healthy, wholesome, spiritually happy life, and many will be unsatisfied and crave more and more. Rather than [being] forever focused on the outcome (the grade) of their actions (studying, cheating, and ruthlessly competing), if a student were to simply learn for the sake of learning, without being fixated upon the next test grade, the learning experience would be much more wholesome.

I myself have experienced this: In Bala Vihar, when we were taught this new way of acting, I attempted to learn without worrying about my test grades, to run without worrying about my time, and the results were extraordinary. I enjoyed the subject more and learned more than if I had merely focused on the upcoming test. This practice creates students who are not merely out to earn as much money as they can, but to enjoy themselves and do what they love. The typical middle-class worker is today presented as a person who is overworked and underpaid, stuck at a job [he does] not enjoy. Maybe if students, from a young age, practiced working for the sake of working, they will learn to enjoy the work they do.

On a larger scale, selfless action will holistically benefit the world. As I said above, one must sacrifice in order to harness the full potential of an action. In the same way, a nation must be prepared to sacrifice [to give] what is best for its citizens. Politicians need to realize that when they are put into office, they are expected to act without regard to personal gratification and instead work selflessly for the greater goal of the nation. In fact, to any citizen, the nation itself should be an extension of the self; even the world as a whole should be considered an extended self. . . . If politicians stopped considering their own limited selves in their actions, and



SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA

27 July, 2011

Dear All,

Hari Om! Greetings from Krishnalaya, USA!

Here I would like to share with you all a very important and interesting development taking place in our organization.

In today's modern world and life, most activities require the support of technology. With the modern life's requirements, Mission centres, Acharyas and devotees today expect very quick turnaround times. Currently, there are a lot of good initiatives going at various locations around the world in Chinmaya Mission.

To address these requirements a Chinmaya Mission Global Information Technology (IT) initiative, Chinmaya Vishwa Sutra, has been launched. A new Global IT team has been formed. It has a wide geographical representation from all over the world. Chinmaya Vishwa Sutra will manage our internet presence, information technology policies, digital rights and redistribution rights.

Let us work together to bring together the wonderful talents, abilities and dedication of our devotees, and sevaks to bring this to fruition. Using modern technology, we can continue to grow the glorious work that our Gurudev started and bring Maximum Happiness to the Maximum number of people around the world.

With Prem & Om,

31 August, 2011

Hari OM. This is to inform you that our Swami Sarvananda, residing at Sandeepany, Powai, Mumbai, attained mahasamadhi on 29 August, 2011 at 4 p.m. Swamiji was from the first batch of acharyas, the same batch as our Swami Purushottamananda-ji.

*With Prem and Om,
Tejomayananda*



instead focused on doing their dharma and acting for the benefit of the nation's people, they would be practicing true karma yoga, and the nation would benefit as a result.

The environmental scourge of the modern world, the so-called "tragedy of the commons," can be eliminated with selfless action. "Tragedy of the commons" refers to a situation in which a publicly held resource is exploited by each individual using it; the goal is that each individual receives [his] maximum share. Fish in the ocean or trees in a forest provide the stereotypical example; although a fisherman or woodcutter knows that in the long-run, unsustainable fishing or woodcutting would harm the forest, he continues to overexploit because he wants to make sure he gets as much as his neighbor, who is also thinking the same thing. Such behavior is . . . destroying the world's common resources.

Selfless action may be the solution. If the users of the resource stopped trying to get as much of the resource as they possibly could, and instead considered the benefit of the environment, the resource could be sustainably used. As ludicrous as it sounds, imagine if woodcutters only took as much as they needed and thus sustainably managed the world's forests. It is not impossible: Such management actually saved medieval Japan from ecological collapse. The early shoguns recognized the importance of sustainable forest management and forced the stop of overexploitation. Such is the true spirit of *yajna*, of sacrifice, and of selfless action. . . . People need to stop considering only their own short-term material happiness and think about the implications of their actions for the whole world, the global [self].

Selfless action is actually a bit of a misnomer: The self does indeed get gratification through performance of selfless action. However, this gratification is in the form of happiness, not ephemeral material gain. In today's world, where happiness is sometimes a scarce commodity, this type of gratification would be greatly welcomed. After I gave blood for the first time, I felt that gratification firsthand, and honestly, it was worth just as much as any material reward could have been. The spirit of community is strongest when selfless action occurs. When you help your neighbors and ask

for nothing in return, they are more likely to help you as well, and a profound relationship develops. . . . If the different nations of the world can act for the benefit of each other and in turn, the whole world, they will forge a relation far too strong to be dented by any material conflict.

While capitalism has done extraordinary things for the world—promoted individualism, given incentive for extraordinary accomplishments, and created an interconnected globe—the world is suffering from an overdose. The world is like a pendulum: For the first few millennia, there was too much focus on community and little gratification for individual efforts; today, we are at the other extreme, with too much selfish action and a need for a reversion to classical values. It is of utmost importance that we . . . learn and practice the theory of selfless action in order to nothing short of save the world. By reinforcing the idea that individual material gratification is not everything, we will see a great many positive changes in the world. . . . The timeless philosophy of right action presented in the *Bhagavad Gita* millennia ago, is as pertinent today as it was then. . . .

☞ Relevance of Selfless Actions by Sunaina Gohil (Grade 11, CM Philadelphia)

As the world has made a cornucopia of advancements in the fields of technology and communication, society has experienced numerous setbacks in areas such as culture and spirituality. Nowadays, the word "yoga" is the buzz around numerous social circles, even outside of Hindu culture. It is a shame that many Indians are beginning to associate yoga with the Tree and Warrior poses. The world has become so focused on *hatha yoga* that values linked to karma yoga have been forgotten. This yoga of action is imperative, and serves as the key to living a life of selflessness. Evidently, the virtue of altruism is needed today, as it engenders humility in today's self-centered culture and solves the many societal conflicts in today's time.

. . . In the ancient civilizations of the world, society worked toward a higher cause, in constant remembrance of God. The Greeks offered sacrifices to the Olympians, the Aztecs used witchcraft to invoke a higher being,

and Hindus meditated . . . on *Brahman*. These forms of selfless acts have diminished in today's society. Now, cities and towns are bustling with individuals focused on their job requirements, their Bluetooth conversations, and strictly their own problems and achievements. Every mental thought of the mind now focuses solely on the individual. Unfortunately, I have also been subject to the mentality of concentrating on myself, my schoolwork, and my own social life. This strong focus of the self hinders society's ability to cease major problems in the world. . . .

One must always remember that one is a tool of the supreme Being, and [one's] actions are done through the guidance of a higher Force. When one thinks in such a manner, the process of acting selflessly becomes embedded in the mind of an individual. Actions then become pure, bright, and lead to everlasting happiness, which has the power . . . to make great change in the world.

The Ways of Dharma

Excerpts from CM Princeton and CM Philadelphia Bala Vihar students' winning essays on Success through Dharma

Following good values and dharma might seem like a path we all are obligated to take, yet no one ever said it was easy to do so. . . . Dharma does not have one definition; it all depends on the context it is given. It varies from person to person, and depends on the person's role in society. Some people perceive dharma as religion; some say it is one's duty; some say it is how you conduct yourself. . . . Lying, cheating, hurting, torturing, and wrong [conduct] are all examples of *adharma*, which means, "that which is not in accord with the law" or immorality. . . .

My father goes to work from Monday to Friday because it is his dharma to earn a living [to] support his family. Rain or shine, whether he is tired or not, he knows that he cannot skip work because it is his duty. It is never easy to follow dharma all the time.

I was once going to go out of the house to meet my friends when my mom asked if I was finished with my homework. I lied and told her I [had] completed my homework. Lying is a form of *adharma*, and as a child, I should never lie to my parents. My plan eventually

backfired when I came back home and [my mom caught me] staying up late to finish my homework. Of course I received a lecture about lying and being responsible, but my mother's words didn't upset me. I upset myself the most, because I disappointed my mother. I knew it was my duty to be a good daughter and student, and I wasn't following any of those when I went out of the house without finishing my homework. This experience taught me that our conscience tries to keep us on the path of dharma. Constantly doing the right thing can be extremely difficult during certain situations, but we must always have faith in ourselves. The moment we are born, we are given the choice of taking two paths—one is good, while the other is pleasant; and it is in our hands to decide which path to take. Hopefully, we will all take the good path because in the end that will be the most useful for Self-realization.

- Pavani Avva (Grade 8, CM Princeton)

[Puja Guruji] Swami Tejomayananda explains *dharma* as "righteous duty." Yet, what is our duty as an individual? [Physically], our . . . dharma is to nourish and support the health of the body. However, our [ultimate] dharma is to attain enlightenment and knowledge. This can be achieved by the values of the "six-fold wealth" [of] values: *shama*, *dama*, *uparama*, *titiksha*, *shraddha* and *samadhana*.

Shama is . . . control over the mind. Our minds are constantly thinking. Countless thoughts crowd the mind, making one easily vulnerable to distractions. In order to remain focused, one must be extremely alert and vigilant to refuse the entertainment of such distracting thoughts. . . . One who has complete mastery over his mind can accomplish anything. For example, Person A is required to study for an exam later that week.

However, when he sees something he desires outside, he quickly abandons his task and runs after the object. His senses prompt him to run after the object, so the mind follows. Person B has full control of his mind and [gets] the same task as Person A. When B sees a desirable object, he is able to refuse the thought, allowing him to focus, leading to success on his exam, unlike A. Control of the mind is crucial in achieving success.

Dama is control of the senses. . . . Distraction first occurs with the senses. One will interpret a desirable object through the senses and prompt the mind to follow. If one has control over the senses, the distraction will not interfere with the mind. For example, Person A teases Person B, but later, A falls down in the hallway. B restrains himself from teasing A; B controls his senses and [perhaps] gains . . . a new friend.

Uparama . . . is the strict observance of one's dharma. . . . [It] is achieved when *sama* and *dama* become natural. The mind and senses are restrained from objects with alertness or strictness, but in *uparama*, they are automatically withdrawn. A perfect example is given in the *Bhagavad Gita*—the tortoise. The tortoise can withdraw his head and his limbs effortlessly into his shell. When one strictly observes duties, one should do them with enthusiasm and dedication "because the mind becomes steady, single-pointed, free of likes, and withdrawn" (*Tattva Bodha*).

Titiksha is endurance. Our environment is always affecting us. When the situation is non-conducive, we tend to blame others. "The ability to bear non-conducive situations without reacting, complaining, or blaming, but [with] a cheerful acceptance, is *titiksha*" (*Tattva Bodha*). When we complain, our mind is preoccupied with sorrow and cannot think about more important matters. For example, Person A complains about how hard it is to write an essay. [His] mind is wasting energy and . . . cluttered with superfluous thoughts. . . .

- Uma Sarwadnya (Grade 8, CM Princeton)

The path to being a noteworthy individual is dotted with pitfalls, failures, distractions, and forks in the road. Only people who have a clear goal in mind, supported by unwavering morals, will achieve the pinnacle of their success. For many, this is nothing but following their dharma. Many prominent individuals, such as Albert Einstein, Louis Armstrong, Louis Pasteur, and Abdul Kalam, followed [the six-fold wealth and] . . . were able to attain their goals.

. . . Louis Armstrong grew up as a poor beggar boy in . . . New Orleans. Armstrong had the talent of playing the trumpet [and wanted] to

rise to fame However, his friends . . . not as talented as Louis, played games, caused mischief, [and] tried to persuade Louis to join them. Although Louis enjoyed wild parties and tomfoolery, he wanted to pursue his dream of becoming a famous trumpeter. . . . By forcing himself to abstain from disorderly conduct, and by concentrating on his goal, Louis was able to become one of the most outstanding musicians of all time.

When Albert Einstein was a young boy growing up in Germany, many Nazi soldiers used to come and play with the younger kids and encourage them to join the army. However, Albert Einstein didn't want to be a soldier. His dream career was to be a scientist. He [practiced *uparati* and] withdrew from what he knew wasn't . . . helpful toward his goal.

Native Parisian Louis Pasteur was trying to develop a vaccine [to] cure cholera. He began his experiments when he was around 65 [years old]. During one of his experiments, he collapsed, suffering a severe stroke. The doctor . . . prescribed bed rest for a few weeks, [but] . . . he was up and about after a few days, in spite of his poor health. He was able to handle difficulties while still being committed to his goal, [thus] demonstrating the values of *titiksha* and *shraddha*.

- Abhiram Karuppur (Grade 8, CM Princeton)

Jaya Shri Rama

Excerpts from CM Princeton and CM Philadelphia Bala Vihar students' winning essays on Lord Hanuman

All . . . traits of Hanumanji are not just traits; they are a way of life. Our goal should be to achieve all these traits one by one. Although they may be difficult, [they] will help [us] grow [in] character. Having courage allows us to face anything, and being fearless strengthens us. Loyalty gains us respect, and keeping cool prevents too much pride.

In my own life, I deal with bullies in my school, I have intense fear for piano concerts, and I have to face peer pressure. I can solve all of these problems by using Hanumanji's traits. Courage to face peer pressure and bullies helps me every day in school. . . . Although I cannot prevent piano concerts, I

can prevent all the butterflies in my stomach. If Hanumanji was fearless, why shouldn't I be fearless? I learned that one way to deal with fear is to do what you are afraid to do. If I am afraid of a piano concert, I could practice for it. That way, I could play the concert with the thought that I practiced hard for this, not the other way around.

If you have never lied in your life, when you say something to someone, he or she would trust you, believing that you are telling the truth. My mother has taught me never to lie. . . . I have not lied for years. . . . Being loyal to someone allows him to believe in what you say.

Devotion . . . shows that you respect someone. [Many may be] devoted to God, but the most important person that everyone should be devoted to is [one's] teacher. My teachers in school are some people I am devoted to, but the most important person is my mother. She has helped me with my schoolwork and she cared for me no matter how much I whined. My dad also helped me stay fit by riding his bike with me around the block and [encouraging] me to study better. . . . My brother can be a little annoying, but I embrace the fact that he is who he is. He plays with me when I am bored, and in return, I help him study.

All these traits come together in the end. They help [mold] my character. I can face any obstacle by following the teachings of Lord Hanuman. People . . . noticed a change in me since around the fourth grade. They say that I have been getting happier and happier. . . . Lord Hanuman has taught me many skills in life, and they all come in handy. These traits have helped me achieve so many successes [that] I lost count a long time ago. I just need to improve on them even more.

- Nihal Sivakumar (Grade 6, CM Princeton)

One of Hanumanji's well-known traits is being courageous. For example, when suggested to cross the huge ocean to find Mother Sita, Hanumanji agreed to do it even though he was not sure if he could cross the mighty and perilous ocean. This action done by Lord Hanuman has helped me to show courage during tough situations. When I was in the Science Fair and did not have the courage to face the judges, I remembered the courage

that was shown by Hanuman and because of that, I was able to face the judges without any fear and ended up winning First Prize.

Hanumanji never showed off and always was humble. . . . Even though Hanumanji has achieved many things, he always sits at Lord Rama's feet, bowing his head. . . . When I won the Science Fair, I was very proud of myself and was showing off my medal to my sister, and was boasting about the great job that I had done last night. Then, I reminded myself about Hanuman's humility and I realized that what I was doing was wrong, and stopped.

- Rhea Rao (Grade 6, CM Princeton)

Hanumanji was brave, bold, and never gave up. When he set Ravan's kingdom on fire, he did not hesitate or hold back. He jumped right in and gave it all he had. By doing this he had confidence in himself and did not have any fear. . . . This was important because fear can affect the way you act in many ways. . . . Fear can overtake your mind and disable you to think clearly. This [can] harm you and weaken your abilities. This is why courage is such an important quality as to achieve what you desire. Hanumanji was bold when he acted, [unafraid] of anything. He was strong both mentally and physically. His mental strength helped focus his mind on his physical strength. By following Hanuman's actions of courage and bravery, I can be brave and never frightened to do anything. . . . The world without fear would be a major achievement for everyone.

- Nikhil Akenapalli (Grade 6, CM Princeton)



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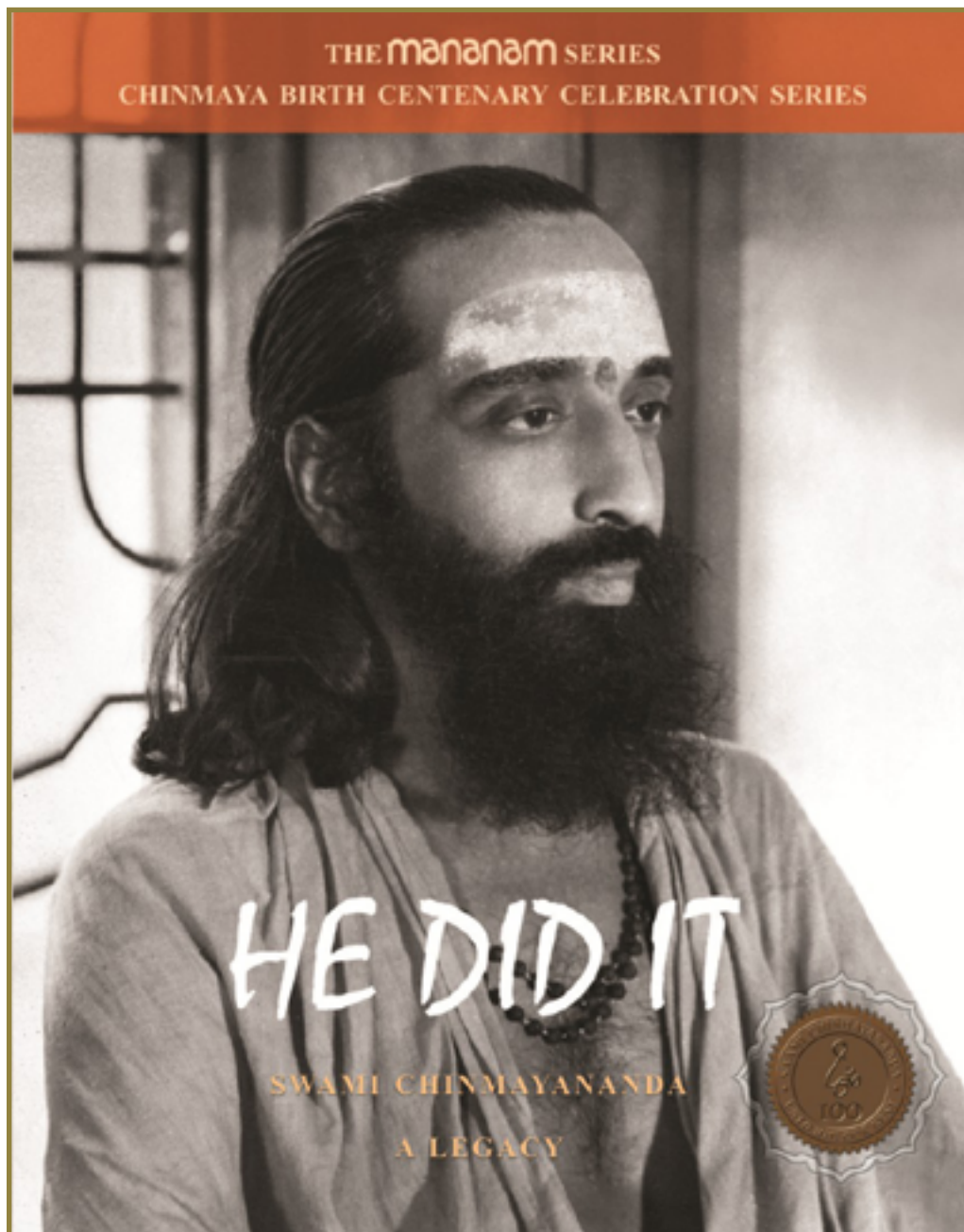
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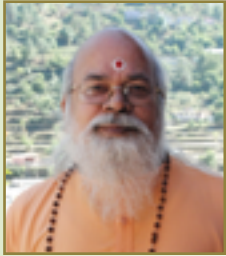
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From the Desk of Swami Tejomayananda



Hari Om! With a heavy heart, I have to inform all of you that our dear Swami Dhyanananda, who spent his life in the service of *Tapovan Kutir*, the abode of Swami Tapovan Maharaj, attained *mahasamadhi* today afternoon (August 25, 2011) quietly and peacefully in his room in Uttarkashi ashram.

Swamiji spent over 25 years in Uttarkashi, taking care of *Tapovan Kutir*, braving extreme weather conditions, serving continuously in his very own immaculate way. However, he never took any credit for the work, firmly believing in the presence and grace of Swami Tapovan Maharaj. He said, "I must say that Maharaj is still there and he looks after us and guides us." His devotion to Swami Tapovan Maharaj, Pujya Gurudev and Swamini Saradapriyananda was deep and exemplary.

Due to the road blockages, our Mission Acharyas and members could not reach Uttarkashi in time, but the noble Sadhu Samaj of Uttarkashi conducted the whole ceremony of giving *jala samadhi* to Swamiji on August 26, in a most befitting manner. We are most grateful to them. The *shodashi* (16th day) ceremony will be performed at *Tapovan Kuti* in Uttarkashi on September 9. Those who want to attend should e-mail tapovankuti@chinmayamission.com. Those who want to make an offering for the *shodashi* may send their contributions to Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, with a note specifying the purpose of the contribution.

With Prem & Om,

Tejomayananda

"Chinmaya Omkara" Bhumi Puja

by Suresh Kumar

Chinmaya Mission Northwest Indiana was blessed with the august presence of Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda at its sacred and historic *Bhumi Puja* for its new ashram of *Chinmaya Omkara*. The *puja* was conducted on August 3, 2011 at 8705 Merrillville Road, in Merrillville, Indiana.



The new property currently has a house and open land, for which construction designs will soon be drafted.

This *bhumi puja* is performed to pray for goodwill and blessings from Mother Earth for the upcoming construction and to seek forgiveness for inadvertently harming any living beings already there.

The center was indeed blessed to have many Mission *acharyas* graced the occasion: Swami Shantananda (CM Princeton),



Swami Sharanananda (CM Chicago), Swami Sarveshananda (CM Dallas), Swamini Amritananda (CM New Zealand), Brahmacharini Arpita (CM St. Augustine), Brahmacharini Aparna Chaitanya (CM Miami), Acharya Shanker Pillai (CM Chicago), and Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara). Amid chanting and prayers, Pujya Guruji and the *acharyas* laid the

first foundation bricks and poured fresh dirt as *puja* offerings for the *Chinmaya Omkara* ashram to be built. Community members, young and old, offered the same, after which the *puja* was concluded.

Pujya Guruji, *acharyas*, and devotees then proceeded to the nearby cultural center, where they were received and seated with honor. CM NW Indiana's Bala Vihar students performed skits depicting values they had learnt during the past year and devotees sang beautiful *bhajans* between acts to allow children to prepare. The day's celebrations were full and complete with Pujya Guruji's enlightening discourse on "The Pursuit of Happiness."



Local families feel they have been blessed to be associated with Chinmaya Mission activities and classes for the past 15 years, and now, they look forward to their new Mission home, which will bring many more memorable events and milestones for years to come.

CM Austin Bhumi Puja

by Sharanya Rao

Chinmaya Mission Austin held its ground-blessing ceremony (*bhumi puja*) for its new ashram of *Chinmaya Sundaram* on June 26, 2011. The bright future of the center's new property at 12901 North Mo-Pac in Austin, Texas, brought in more than 300 devotees and well-wishers. The event was presided over by His Holiness Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, who, in his address, acknowledged the hopes and challenges in the task ahead, appreciating the notable relevance and service of Chinmaya Mission Austin to the local community.

CM Austin's Bala Vihar students undertook a heartwarming initiative called the "*Chinmaya Sundaram* Memory Brick

Project" to raise funds for the new building. Each child raised \$100 by doing chores, and engraved each of their sponsored bricks a personal, unique spiritual or cultural message. It was indeed moving to witness the children's enthusiastic participation, as *Chinmaya Sundaram* is a gift the children of generations to come.

Event planning was led by Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya (CM Austin Acharya) and Subhash Vohra (CM Austin President). CHYK Austin also volunteered and served before, during, and after the event, along with over 40 volunteers who worked diligently for over two months to put the event together.

In April 1988, a group of families in Austin began CM Austin with the help and guidance of Acharyas Gaurang and Darshana Nanavaty (CM Houston). CM Austin has since grown in leaps and bounds, and the core group of 15 families that met in the homes of two dedicated members has blossomed to a CM family with over 150 families.

To accommodate the growth and needs of the congregation, CM Austin purchased eight acres of undeveloped property in metropolitan Austin. With its current ashram of *Chinmaya Vatika* in the southern suburb of Round Rock, it is hoped the new central location will serve and attract more families.

CMW's Vedanta Course Completed

by Maureen McIver

In the serene and beautiful ashram of *Krishnalaya*, nestled among the Northern California coastal mountains, by the bank of the Eel River, Chinmaya Mission West hosted "Vedanta 2010," a one-year intensive Vedanta Course, during which various Upanishads, *Bhagavad Gita*, and introductory Vedantic texts were taught by various CMW *Acharyas*, namely, Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, Swami Shantananda (CM Princeton), Swami Ishwarananda (CM Los Angeles), Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya (CM San Jose), and Acharya Sharada Kumar. Acharya Sharadaji was the full-term resident *acharya* of the course, without whose love, strength, discipline, caring, and wealth of

Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Camp 2011

Chinmaya Mission Chicago's "Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Aradhana Family Camp 2011" was conducted by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, July 29-August 3, at the picturesque and serene Hilton Chicago Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale, Illinois. The camp highlighted first and foremost, Vedantic teachings, the essence of Chinmaya Mission, for all age groups. Above all, this camp was a tribute to the life and work of our beloved Pujya Gurudev, His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda.

It was indeed a blessed honor to welcome Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda to inaugurate and conduct the camp. The inauguration began with an outdoor procession led by Pujya Guruji on the eve of July 29, wherein Swami Sharanananda carried *The Holy Gita* on his head, and Acharya Shanker Pillai carried Pujya Gurudev's *padukas* on his head. There were touching and tearful moments in Swami Sharanananda's loving welcome to invite Pujya Guruji to begin his discourses on *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 9. Each day, Pujya Guruji masterfully, as always, took the delegates to "Mind and Beyond: The *Gita* Way." Whether through intense, penetrating silence, or through loud, uproarious laughter, Pujya Guruji's teachings always hit home for all the adults and CHYKs who assembled eagerly for each class with sincerity and reverence.

The camp's six days and five nights were indeed memorable for one and all. Throughout Pujya Guruji's spiritual discourses, *satsangs* with Mission *acharyas*, melodious *bhajans* by the Chinmaya Swaranjali group, enchanting cultural programs by children and CHYKs, and formal banquet for recognition and thanks, love and joy pervaded the air.

This 18th *mahasamadhi* camp was the largest to date in North America, with 870 full-time delegates: 536 adults, 74 CHYKs, and 260 children. In addition, 162 day-participants registered to attend for one or more days. Over the weekend of July 30-31, there were over 1,000 delegates in attendance. The camp volunteer *sevaks* came from the ashrams of *Badri*, *Yamunotri*, and *Chinmaya Omkara* (Chinmaya Mission Northwest Indiana), to work tirelessly under the able leadership of camp coordinator, Rajul Bhalala, and the loving guidance of CM Chicago *acharyas*, Swami Sharanananda and Acharya Shanker Pillai.

Each day's various activities were well spaced in order to provide sufficient time for meals, rest, recreation, and family fun. Yoga began early morning at 5:30 a.m. with Swami Sharanananda, followed by guided meditation at 6 a.m. by Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya (CM San Jose). These physically and mentally healing exercises prepared the practitioners for the 7 a.m. discourses on *Jnana Sara* by Swami Shantananda (CM Princeton). Swamiji's easy speaking style and delightful sense of humor peppered his talks with many lighthearted moments.

Every afternoon featured an hour-long *satsanga* conducted by an *acharya*; it was a treat to listen to such a variety of talented speakers, which included Swami Siddhananda (CM Philadelphia), Swami Sarveshananda (CM Dallas), Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya, Acharya G.V. Raghu (CM Atlanta), and Acharya K. Sadananda (CM

Washington D.C.). Entertainment in the afternoons included a stunning magic show by Dr. Raj Madhok (CM Minneapolis) and talent shows by Bala Vihar children. Some adults chose to practice Vedic chanting in the afternoons to prepare for the upcoming *paduka puja*.

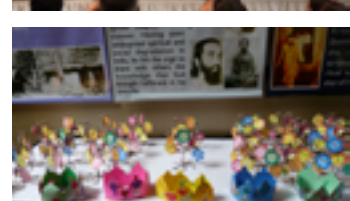
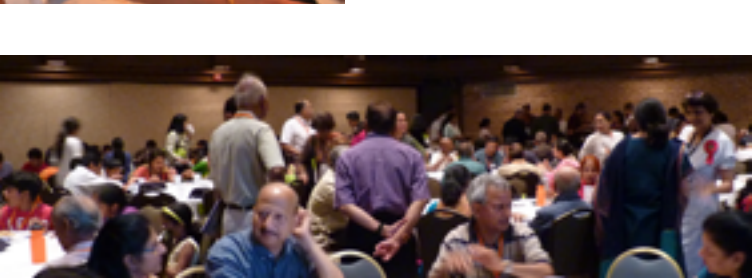
Chinmaya Swaranjali presented a 30-minute *bhajan* program twice a day, before each of Guruji's classes. These soulful offerings of children and adults created a divine setting before each discourse. Pujya Guruji delivered the *Gita* with an inimitable eloquence that was inspiring, sweet, loving, and humorous. His charming, childlike expressions captivated everyone's hearts as much as his lofty Vedantic teachings pierced their minds. The listeners, from all walks of life, could easily follow his teachings of practical spirituality for inner peace and joy. Guruji's melodious *bhajans*, accompanied by the voices of hundreds of devotees, were deeply moving. *Satsanga* in his holy presence left everyone divinely charged and inspired to approach life with a renewed understanding of the highest goal in life.

Children infused the camp with joy and energy, beginning their day at 7 a.m. with yoga, followed by a *bhajan* session with Brahmacharini Arpita (CM St. Augustine) and Lakshmi Sukumar (CM San Diego). While children in grade KG had classes with various Bala Vihar teachers; children in grades 1-8 studied select verses of *Gita*, Chapter 9 with Swami Sharanananda, Brahmachari Eric (CM Piercy), Acharya Geetha Raghu (CM Atlanta), Lakshmi Sukumar (CM San Diego); and children in grades 9-12 studied various topics with Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara). The resort was enjoyed most by the children, who swam in the indoor and outdoor pools, played mini golf, and spread themselves across the vast atrium and lawns.

The CHYK group attended Pujya Guruji's *Gita* discourses and studied "Mind: Our Greatest Gift" with Swami Sarveshananda. Suraj Patnaik, a new CHYK, said, "We had discussion groups where we would reflect on the day's teachings, and every night we participated in team building activities where we could open up." The warmth and camaraderie among the CHYKs was such that "this was my first year, but I felt like I had known the CHYKs at camp my whole life."

The final day of the camp, August 3, marked the solemn occasion of Shri Chinmaya Mahasamadhi and the offering of a sacred *Paduka Puja* by all the *acharyas* and delegates, including Acharya Sharada Kumar (CM Ann Arbor), who sang a *bhajan* extolling the glory of Pujya Gurudev. This *Mahasamadhi Puja* was the culmination of a camp in which Pujya Gurudev's life and teachings were remembered and celebrated every day. His presence and blessings were acutely felt at the camp, in the smooth flowing of the activities and the happy tears of devotees. As the *puja* brought the camp to a divine conclusion, Swami Sharanananda aptly observed, with deep emotion, that Pujya Gurudev is still with us in the form of our beloved Pujya Guruji.

- Suresh Kumar



knowledge that proved a great blessing for all the students.

The students of the course came from all across North America. Applicants for the program numbered around 25, while accepted and graduated tallied at 16. The students ranged in age from teens to the seventies, but all of them had left behind their commitments and careers for a year, to live in an ashram and study Vedanta with sincerity and passion. Two doctors had left their practices; a young couple had sold their home and left their jobs; a wife had taken her school-age children to India for a year so her husband could study knowing they are safe and secure.

The commitment of Mission *acharyas* was no less notable. Each *acharya* who came to teach at the course dedicated his time and attention fully, leaving for that time the hundreds of seekers he taught on a weekly basis, juggling incalculable programs and administrative responsibilities, making themselves wholly available for discourses and informal *satsangs*. Pujya Guruji inaugurated the course on August 7, 2010 and commenced the course syllabus with the study of *Tattva Bodha* by Adi Shankaracharya. He shed extraordinary clarity and simplicity on the foundation of Vedantic terms needed for advanced studies, and the students were clear that these terms and their definitions were to be remembered and imbibed by one and all. Time and again, throughout the year, students were taught the importance of using language concisely to help study and understand subtle concepts.

On the commencement of the course, Pujya Guruji met with all the students and asked them why they had chosen to join the course. After hearing the varied answers, he shared two pieces of advice: Remember why you came and stay focused on your studies. “Don’t think about what is next. Just study.” These succinct and priceless words of wisdom sent each student forth, and remembering these words during the course invoked serenity, steadiness, strength, and inspiration.

Prabodhji taught along the framework that all Upanishads followed, beginning with the qualified student to study the text; the subject, purpose, and benefit of the text; the theme, significance, and main concept of each

verse; the unraveling of word-meanings; the critical importance of studying the verse in itself and as part of a larger theme and flow; the discerning of seemingly contradictory scriptural statements. Like an ice-cold splash of realization on how much there was to learn, it later became clear as to how much more difficult it is to try to communicate the Inexpressible.

The typical day flowed like this:

4:00-5:00 a.m.: Rise
5:00-5:45: Personal Prayers/Meditation
5:45-6:45: Vedic Chanting
6:45-7:00: Tea/Coffee
7:00-8:15: Upanishad Class
8:30: Breakfast
9:00-10:30: Studies/*Seva*
10:30-11:30: Sanskrit
12:00 p.m.: *Vishnusahasranama* Chanting
12:30: Lunch
1:00-3:30: Rest/Studies/Personal Cleaning and Chores
3:30: Tea
3:30-4:30/5:00: Vedanta Class
5:00-6:00: Break/Walk
6:00-7:00 p.m.: Bhajans/Chanting/Other
7:30: Dinner
Dinner was followed by studies, and finally, sleep. Staying up late nights was not too easy after the early start.

The ashram is incredibly beautiful. *Krishnalaya* is eight acres of land with a smattering of buildings. The property is surrounded by natural forestation and is in an area that is sparsely populated. The effect is a seeming 360-degree mountain view from a mile-long ashram in a valley. A seldom-used road in front of the ashram and along the river is an ideal walking path, using which we toned either our physical fitness or Vedantic fitness from reflection on Prabodhji’s thought-provoking topics. The nearest town of Garberville is nine miles north and the canopy of awe-inspiring Redwoods is in Richardson Grove, a five-minute drive away.

An impressive, giant Redwood stands majestically just outside the kitchen and a two-minute walk from there puts one at the L-bend of the river from where the mountain rises straight up, 150 feet. This is a beautiful place for meditation most times of the day, not to mention a swim on a hot summer

afternoon. The days, however, were not spent lounging or sightseeing. Most of the students never or seldom left the valley. The days were full with study, *seva*, class, or getting ready for one of these. The amount of course material was impressive and massive, and included two entire chanting books—*Chinmaya Book of Vedic Chants* and *Chinmaya Book of Hymns*—and 65 bhajans, making students wish for the sharpness of younger minds.

The year’s special celebrations included *Rakshabandhan*, *Dipavali*, Thanksgiving, and *Holi*. Special *pujas* were performed for *Shivaratri*, *Navaratri*, and *Guru Purnima*. Though away from their families, the students felt the joy of occasions such as Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, which were celebrated with love-filled cooking feasts.

The CHYK retreat conducted by Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara) brought in 40 youth for joyful *satsanga*. On another occasion, 30 CM San Jose marathon runners for the Avenue of the Giants Race came for a night, full of perseverance and inspiration.



All the students who completed the course left with an expanded vision, a new outlook, and a heart full of immense gratitude. There were mixed feelings as the course concluded. During the last three weeks of the course, Pujya Guruji treated the students to the most brilliant expositions on *Mandukya Upanishad* with *Karika* (Chapter 1), the “Essence of *Ramayana*” and the “Essence of *Bhagavatam*.” All the course *acharyas* convened for the Vedanta 2010 commencement ceremonies, addressing the students and offering their well wishes. In the last three weeks, over a few sessions, Pujya Guruji asked all the students to speak on their thoughts, experiences,



and plans upon returning home. All the speakers gave unique insights into their personal perspectives, moving their listeners to laughter, tears, appreciation, and fond memories. The common thread in each and every speaker’s voice was the heartfelt gratitude to the *Guru-parampara* and all the course *acharyas*, for their blessings, love, and profound teachings.

Successful 2010 for CORD USA

by Subha Varma Pathial

CORD USA, the U.S. wing of the Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development, was formed in 2009. After two years of activities, CORD USA’s year of 2010 saw private donations as well as contributions from CMW centers’ walkathon fundraisers: CM Princeton/Philadelphia \$51,000; CM Los Angeles \$23,000; CM Portland \$20,500; CM Ann Arbor \$15,000; CM Boston \$10,200; CM Minneapolis \$7,500; CM Columbus \$7,200; CM Chicago \$5,000; CM Buffalo \$1,900; CM New York \$1,500. Administratively, CORD USA has kept costs under strict control with 0% overhead. The CORD USA Board is greatly appreciative of CMW centers that continue to raise awareness and funds.

Through everyone’s support, CORD USA was able to help build CORD Lathikata’s much needed volunteer and community rooms in 2010. CORD USA also undertook the task of empowering the many war widows of Sri Lanka cast off from three decades of communal war.

Since its inception, CORD USA has organized two successful and transformative service

visits of high school students to CORD projects in India. Having witnessed CORD's work first-hand, they returned with fond, etched memories, inspired to become the next generation of CORD ambassadors. The children who went to *Chinmaya Vijaya* in December 2010 came back and setup weekly Skype lessons to continue their tutoring in India. Those children or parent-chaperones who wish to participate in the next program can e-mail CORDusa@chinmayamission.org.

The Village Doctor

by Akila Kannadasan

Originally published in *The Hindu*; edited for print herein



Dr. Meera Krishna, CORD Siruvani Project Coordinator, fulfills many roles: medicine woman, counselor, and mentor. Her presence makes all the difference to the people in the tiny village of Thennamanallur in Tamil Nadu, India.

The bus drops me off on a dusty road in Thennamanallur. The village seems empty, except for two elderly women standing by a shop near the bus stand. I approach them for directions. "Could you tell me where I can find Dr. Meera of the Chinmaya organization?" They appear clueless. "The doctor's clinic?" I repeat. "Oh, yes! Doctor! You can find her at the next turn," says one of them.

Not everyone in Thennamanallur knows her name or from where she comes. But they are sure of one thing: "Doctor" is someone they can turn to, no matter what. There is only one clinic in the village and no crowded waiting rooms. A Ganesha statue stands at the center. There is a blackboard in one corner

with benches facing it. Kids play carom in an open courtyard.

Dr. Meera Krishna sits at a table overlooking the courtyard of a village where, a few years ago, illiteracy, poverty, and alcoholism prevented development of any kind. Most houses did not have toilets and women rarely stepped out of their homes. But things changed once Meera set up a CORD office in the village.

"I have always wanted to serve in a rural setup," says Dr. Meera. "After 16 years of practice in Chennai, we moved to Coimbatore for my daughter's education at the Chinmaya International Residential School in Siruvani." Dr. Meera passed by Thennamanallur whenever she visited her daughter. She thought it was a perfect place for her clinic. "I volunteered here for a year," she says, until CORD identified her in 2006.

Dr. Meera has been on her toes ever since. "At CORD, we empower the rural population by integrated and sustainable development," she explains. "It's all about bringing people together. While we work with other *panchayats*, Thennamanallur is our focus. So far, we have 19 self-help groups and three farmers clubs in Thennamanallur, all of which come under its *panchayat*."

The farmers clubs have been particularly successful, she says. "It's a platform for farmers from around the area to meet regularly, share their experiences, and learn about government programs."

Magalir mandrams meet every week to discuss issues pertaining to their village. For the women, most of whom are uneducated, being able to save money and maintain accounts is an immense confidence booster. Dr. Meera invites resource persons from various fields to address the women.

I watch one such meeting unfold on a Sunday afternoon in Puthur. Members of the Thiruvalluvar and Roja *magalir mandrams* are gathered under a *neem* tree. Advocate Janaki, and Ravi, who is a coordinator of Vazhikattum Thittam, are the guests. Ravi talks of various government programs available for the differently abled. The ladies

also discuss the location of a TASMAL outlet close by. "The shop is nuisance," says Jyothi. "Girls are afraid to walk by the road in the evenings. Our husbands head straight there after a day's work. Is there any way to shift it elsewhere?"

Dr. Meera and Adv. Janaki suggest they prevent their husbands from drinking instead. "There is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting next week in Coimbatore. Why don't you attend with your husbands?" asks Dr. Meera. Dr. Meera takes down the names of students who need tuition. Volunteers at the clinic offer tuition in math, science, and computers.

Through CORD, Dr. Meera has also facilitated additional income generation activities for the women. In Puthur, for example, Angathal makes winnows and Devi makes paper covers. Aged Kannamal and Palanichamy mix phenyl. A shop in Thennamanallur is dedicated to products made by the women. They sell homemade pain balms, handmade sanitary napkins, paper bags, paper packets, wire baskets, and fresh, farm-grown vegetables.

Villagers have also been taught to segregate biodegradable and non-biodegradable wastes at home, which are collected by the Residents' Awareness Association of Coimbatore (RAAC). Dr. Meera received the ECO Award from RAAC and the Association of British Scholars for encouraging eco-friendly activities in Thennamanallur.

With loans from local banks, over 170 families built toilets at home after Dr. Meera educated them on the importance of hygiene. She speaks to adolescent girls about menstrual hygiene, and has pictorial guides on breast cancer and self-examination at her clinic. There are charts and cards about the human body, symptoms of diseases, treatment options, etc. Says Dr. Meera, "I try to show as many cards as possible to my patients when they come for consultation."

When she is not chairing a *magalir mandram* meeting, she is filling out a pension form for a patient. And when she is not organizing a trip for the village women to Gandhi Ashram, she is clipping the fingernails of a fragile, elderly

woman in the village. Needless to say, Dr. Meera always keeps busy.

Ashtavakra Gita in Houston

by Uma Aggarwal and Padmashree Rao

The *Chinmaya Prabha* ashram of CM Houston glowed with joy, love, and learning during a unique *jnana yajna* conducted by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, June 27-July 4, 2011. Pujya Guruji's discourses on the thought-provoking *Ashtavakra Gita* was a first-ever Chinmaya Mission event in the world.



Guruji taught the first six chapters in his inimitable style that was at once enchanting, profound, and fulfilling, taking every student on a soaring flight of Vedantic inquiry in a series of 17 hour-long *pravachans* during the week. Even as his skillful explanations challenged the minds of the listeners, his examples were drawn from daily life and connected philosophy with practical application, making the dialogue between the royal Janaka and the young sage Ashtavakra a discussion close to home.

Guruji had said that this text would fly high to transcendental heights from the start, and not come down in philosophical depth or subtlety. He added, "If you don't understand all of it, don't worry. Enjoy it anyway." Indeed, the house-full of listeners took in, each to his own capacity, thoroughly enjoying and appreciating every moment the enlightening rays of wisdom that pervaded *Chinmaya Prabha*.

During his short visit, Guruji made the time to meet with the Chinmaya Bala Vihar students of CM Houston, the CHYKs, the many volunteers in the various *seva* teams of CM Houston (which included everyone, from Bala Vihar teachers to kitchen staff to audio-visual



technicians), not to mention devotees at large, particularly during his personal signing and distribution of the new *He Did It* Chinmaya Birth Centenary Series books recently released by *Mananam*.

As the *yajna* concluded on July 4, Guruji reminded one and all that true independence comes only from reaching the Goal as pointed out in the scriptures. He encouraged all to continue their reflections on this grand path, and appreciated the guidance of Acharyas Gaurang and Darshana Nanavaty to the Houston community. By the end, everyone was asking only one question: When will Pujya Guruji be returning?

CM Houston devotees had the honor of celebrating Pujya Guruji's 61st birthday in his presence this year, on June 30. Devotees had called from around the world to offer Guruji birthday greetings and ask what Texas-size celebrations CM Houston had planned. The answer was a spectacular surprise of music, song, dance, and art in the ashram's colorfully decorated courtyard, where over 200 devotees gathered to see Guruji, adorned with garland and turban, walk amid orchestral music, dance performers, and a shower of flowers. After Guruji was escorted atop the *Shivalaya* temple stairs for an aerial view, a giant caterpillar with the words, "Guruji, We Welcome You," entered, dancing to the tune of the Sanskrit birthday song of "*Janma dinam-idam*." Devotees were amazed by the glowing, human birthday cake that was formed by CHYKs, and Bala Vihar teachers and children. Complete

with Pujya Gurudev's *Om* signature in its center, the round cake was illuminated with over 400 lights.

Acharya Gaurangji wished Pujya Guruji and addressed the devotees, "What can we give Pujya Guruji on his birthday? He has filled the hearts of thousands of devotees with love. We pray to Lord Shiva for his good health and long life." He thereafter led all the devotees in chanting thrice the *Mrtyunjaya Mantra* with prayerful hearts.

Pujya Guruji expressed his love and gratitude for this creative birthday bash, and congratulated Acharya Darshanaji for orchestrating the beautiful event. Poetic birthday tributes, in Hindi and English, were written and offered to Guruji before his morning and evening discourses, respectively, by Uma Aggarwal, on behalf of the entire CM Houston family.

The Gita Way in Vancouver

by Jaya Muzumdar

By the Lord's grace and Pujya Gurudev's blessings, CM Vancouver was honored to have the presence and teachings of Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, June 14-19, 2011. Every evening, for six days, Guruji's discourses on *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 17 resonated in the hearts and minds of all the attendees. Each *Gita* student, caught up in his own daily life of limited vision and delusory insistence, first



has to rise to become an Arjuna, who can surrender to the Guru and thereafter have the subtlety to pierce and imbibe every profound teaching on Truth.

Guruji conveyed so simply the essence of the *Gita*'s profound teachings that many who were hearing Guruji for the first time were wonderstruck at his ability to make complex concepts reachable goals in anyone's and everyone's life.



In a special and joyful meeting with CM Vancouver's Bala Vihar children, Guruji was welcomed with the Sanskrit chanting of prayers, and entertained by two small plays—one on the life of Pujya Gurudev and the formation of Chinmaya Bala Vihar, and the

other on the story of Maharishi Vishvamitra and Raja Trishanku.

A Gourmet Summer Camp

by Adithi Ramakrishnan (age 11)



CM Washington DC's delicious summer camp, based on a gourmet recipe, was held in Reston, Virginia, June 27-July 22, 2011, for 129 eager campers, ages 6-12 years. The ingredients included servings of Vedic chanting, spoons of an inspirational theme, doses of insightful Vedic math, scoops of serene yoga, sprinkles of expressive arts and crafts, pounds of energizing sports, and swirls of toe-tapping dance. This astounding mix of learning, fun, and cultural education at the camp was designed not only to enhance knowledge and understanding of our heritage, but also to promote character development and personal growth.

The camp was conducted under the guidance of Swami Dheerananda (CM Washington DC), with camp director Acharya Anant



Sarma (CM Washington DC), and with youth volunteers and teachers that included Brahmacharini Vibhooti Chaitanya (CCMT, India), Lakshmi Sukumar (CM San Diego), and Rukmani Ramani (CCMT Education Cell).



The mornings began with Vedic chanting, wherein Swamiji's two divine flavors were *Gita*, Chapter 2 and *Ganga Stotram*. This year's camp theme, "Gratitude is my Attitude" focused on gratitude to nature, family, teachers, friends, and the community. This theme was accepted as a vital condiment for achieving greater quality in life and becoming better individuals. The camp would have been incomplete without the important ingredient *seva*, a time during which the campers participated in a sandwich drive, made get-well-soon cards, and prepared care packages for a local shelter.



The afternoon ingredients for the camp were also scrumptious, adding more essence and zest. These included scoops of homemade chemistry, teaspoons of the action-packed hopping game, swishes of entertaining board games, swirls of thrilling movies, pints of Water Day fun with giant slides and sprinklers, cups of an astounding magic show, and fluid ounces of Sea Animal Encounters. The icing on the camp cake was the Annual Day celebration, which showcased the hard work of the teachers and campers through with a cultural show on what had been learned during the four weeks of camp. This marvelous camp tingled the taste buds of all the campers, who can't wait to see what delicacies are in store for next summer.

Swami Ishwarananda at CM Alpharetta

by Sudha Malhotra

Chinmaya Mission Alpharetta (CMA) was honored to host the *jnana yajna* of Swami Ishwarananda, July 9-15, 2011, an event that commenced on the one-year anniversary of CMA's ashram inauguration and concluded on *Guru Purnima*.

The evening discourses on "The Message of the Upanishads" began with bhajans by CMA devotees. Swamiji taught using his multipurpose iPad2 to reference texts and play tabla for his opening bhajan!

Through select verses from *Ishavasya Upanishad*, *Kenopanishad*, *Kathopanishad*, and *Kaivalya Upanishad*, Swamiji presented an enlightening series of lectures with applications for day-to-day living. The lectures enthralled and mesmerized jam-packed audiences for all the seven days. Swamiji's unique style and humor made the lectures not only interesting, but also thought provoking. He began explaining the fundamentals and background of the Vedas, and spoke on India as a beacon of learning and culture.

Delivering the messages of the Upanishads is no easy task, that too, within a span of seven short talks. Swamiji's patient breakdown and prose formation of Sanskrit words and their meanings made understanding the verses and teachings much easier.

Swamiji's guided meditation sessions and morning talks on *Upadesha Sara* were also very well received. In addition, Swamiji enchanted the Atlanta audience with a half-day workshop on "GOLF: Goal of Life Fulfilled," wherein he related the 18 holes in the game of golf to teachings in the 18 chapters of *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*.

Swamiji concluded his *yajna* on *Guru Purnima* day with a *Guru Paduka Puja*, which was a perfect offering of gratitude on behalf of all devotees for the week of bliss. The CMA family and other community members felt blessed to have had this opportunity, and left inspired to read more and make the study of the scriptures a part of their daily routine.

Being True to Your Nature

Report Submitted by CHYK West

By Pujya Gurudev's grace and blessings, CHYK West's camp at CMW's *Krishnalaya* ashram in Piercy, California was a successfully inspiring and healing experience for all, thanks to the *acharyas*—Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya (CM San Jose) and Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara Falls)—the CHYK attendees, the California CHYK organizers, and the CM Piercy team. The personal notes of the following CHYK attendees are tell-all experiences in themselves.

This was my first CHYK camp, and I can say with the utmost certainty that it will not be my last. I am eternally grateful to have had the opportunity to seek serenity and wholeness during a frenetic period of tests, papers, and the impending doom of finals week.



However, the camp itself was not only about seeking refuge from the mundane chores of school and work. Over the course of the weekend, I began to do a complete appraisal and overhaul of my priorities. Call it mental maintenance, spring-cleaning of the soul, or even simply, a much-needed period of peace. Those two days were a gentle reminder of what really mattered.

Acharya Vivekji and Brahmachari Prabodhji sowed the seeds of inspiration in our minds during that weekend in Piercy, California, and sent us back to the turmoil of "real life" with instructions on how to nurture those seeds until they blossom forth. The four of us who made the journey from Berkeley to *Krishnalaya* could perceive these changes on the trip back. We trudged back toward the burden of responsibility, but this time, we were prepared to assume that burden with a fierce determination and fresh vigor instilled

by our experiences that weekend. Profoundly tired and drained of energy by the full schedule of immersive activities and awesome events, we were nevertheless alert and ready to hit the ground running.


The theme of the retreat was "Being True to Your Nature," and the weekend of April 22-25, 2011 became a true embodiment of that ideal. It was through the serenity of solitary reflection, as well as solidarity with our fellow CHYKs, that we caught a glimpse of our true nature, and now we can't get enough of it.

- Dhruva Chandrasekhar (Los Altos, CA)


The Los Angeles chapter of CHYK West has been gaining momentum since the 2010 *Mahasamadhi* Camp held in Burbank, California. With the weekly study group discussions growing in popularity, we all decided that a CHYK camp would be a great idea to take our involvement one step further. Spearheading as organizers, Asha Sukumar and Shiva Sharma planned this retreat, from our caravan-ing to Piercy on a Friday afternoon, to the farewells of Monday morning. The group bonded immediately, though we came from places as far as Florida, Chicago, and Canada. Acharya Vivekji and Brahmachari Prabodhji gave discourses on *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 15, after which, the discussion groups focused on how to apply the learned concepts to the daily life of college students and working professionals.


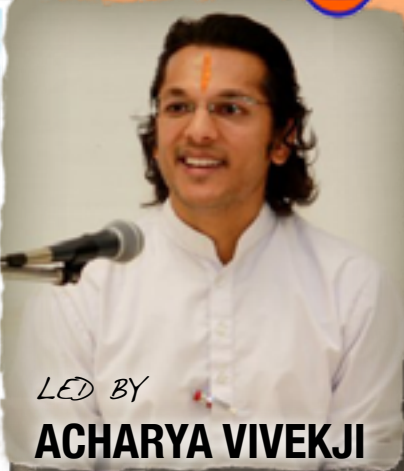
The camp included elements that allowed us to take in the beauty of *Krishnalaya*, such as observing *maunam* (silence) in Pujya Gurudev's *kutir* and by the river. We were also able to take an early morning walk in






A CHYK WEST RETREAT ORGANIZED BY CHYK HOUSTON



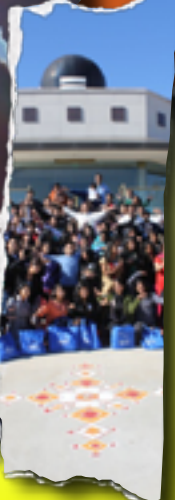
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the crisp, refreshing air of Piercy before our guided meditation session, which provided us with a peaceful start to our day.

In college, many people get caught up in the material world and a constant flow of meeting new people. It was meaningful to connect with like-minded young adults who also were interested in learning Vedanta and its applicability in our modern world. Oftentimes, at universities or in the workplace, it is difficult for us to find those with whom to conduct *satsang*. I definitely found myself feeling more peaceful and serene after the camp in *Krishmalaya*. The remote location of the ashram lent itself to our purpose, as there was no cell phone service and nobody had brought laptops. Being away from the constant stream of information and data that bombards us really made us realize how little it matters.

Living in the moment is something we all long to implement; this camp made clear how being in the present moment reflects a clear mind that can contribute to a happier, more peaceful outlook on the stresses of life.

- Kermeka Desai (Chino Hills, CA)



A weekend away at my first CHYK camp in the breathtakingly beautiful *Krishmalaya* ashram was definitely a well-spent break that I needed from the hectic ongoing school routine. During the weekend of April 22-25, I traveled north to an aerated retreat, where I was surrounded by complete greenery. I didn't know anyone other than my cousin,

but of course, before leaving on the final day, it was a different story. I had never attended any Chinmaya Bala Vihar classes and it seemed that most of the campers knew each other quite well, and had possibly grown up together for years in the Mission. Yet, it was remarkable to see how friendly and welcoming everyone was, and how this set an atmosphere of comfort and ease that lasted throughout the camp, and beyond.



Although the days' entire schedule tended to be packed with activities and lectures, it was all so evenly laid out that we weren't worn out by evening. The morning meditation sessions opened my eyes to my lack of patience and stillness in body and mind. After a *Gita* class with Prabodhji, I went to discuss and clarify points on which I thought differently, greatly appreciating and respecting his replies, as well as his understanding of my perspective. I personally gained most from the teachings, learning the value of bettering my lifestyle and developing a positive personality, whether in work ethics or filtering mental negativity.

- Shruti Desai (San Jose, CA)

"Just a few more weeks to get through . . . I can do this and then I get a break—a truly disconnected vacation from the world." This is what I had been focusing on since January, when I registered for the 2011 CHYK camp in Piercy, a few hours away from the Bay area. After an incredibly energetic CHYK camp in Houston last November, I had high hopes for another energy boost and dose of reality at *Krishnlaya*.

Day 1: "Hello, my name is . . ." The weekend started with caravan from the Bay area to Piercy. I shared a ride with a couple of genuine, good-hearted people and . . . Acharya Vivekji. We soaked up the



“Where Eagles Dare,” the Fourth Annual Global CHYK Camp,
conducted by Swami Swaroopananda in Coimbatore, India, December 24, 2011-January 1, 2012.

Text: *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Chapter 2

Topics: How and why did creation take place, Understanding the creative power of our own thought, Discovering the Self by utilizing the body, mind, and intellect to its full potential, while experiencing worldly success and fulfillment in the process

To register or get details, visit www.globalchycamp.com or www.chinmayamission.org.

As is tradition every year, interested CHYKs are welcome to register for a yet another weeklong spiritual journey, guided by Swami Swaroopananda. The post-camp journey in 2012 will begin with a flight to the Himalayan ranges and culminate at the holy abode of Pujya Gurudev in Sidhbari, India.

Jan. 1: Coimbatore to Delhi, visit Chinmaya Chetna, stay at Delhi
Jan. 2: Travel to Amritsar by bus, visit Wagah border and Jallianwala Bagh, stay at Amritsar
Jan. 3: Visit Golden Temple, bus to Sidhbari
Jan. 4: Sidhbari
Jan. 5: Visit Dharamshala and McLeod Ganj
Jan. 6: Sidhbari
Jan. 7: Depart Sidhbari for Delhi by bus

Cost: US\$450/person (includes all air/bus travel Jan. 1-7, includes all lodging/boarding)
Registration Deadline: June 30, after which costs are subject to change
To register, e-mail your name, age, and country of residence to: jitinkapoor@gmail.com

brehtaking rolling hills and enjoyed the good company, good music, and, of course, car games. A road trip isn't complete without a road scavenger hunt. There were 24 more people between their late teens and late twenties to get to know once we got to camp.

Day 2: Expect the unexpected.

A boost of energy is what I had experienced at my previous CHYK camp and I was craving for a repeat of the same. With the planned and impromptu activities, coupled with the energy of fellow campers, an action-packed time was imminent. There was barefoot basketball, frisbee golf, and a blast from the past: tag. Everyone participated in the activities.

To my surprise, the second day was one of reflection and quietude. There was much to ponder after the rare opportunity to read in Pujya Gurudev's *kutir*, and after the discourses by Prabodhji and Vivekji. The group discussions were brutally honest in questions and opinions, making this one of my favorite classes because participation was rampant and it made you think. “Awareness is primary. Nothing is required for illumination. We are already illumined.”

Day 3: I found what I've been looking for. With more thought provoking lectures, comes a deluge of knowledge. How do I remember and maintain this, I wondered. After the structure of college, our paths can take us anywhere; life becomes even busier.

What I learned was to start small: “Purity of mind, clarity of message. This begins with discipline of one's body.” Prabodhji led us through these simple thoughts. Collectively, we decided that for one month after returning home, we would work toward the discipline of getting out of bed in the morning as soon as the alarm rings, without hitting the snooze button. At the picturesque setting of a riverbank, more questions were posed and answered by Prabodhji and Vivekji.

We shared our talents on an evening that culminated with *raas-garba*, where those who “don't dance,” did. Seeing Prabodhji's enthusiasm and dance skills made participating irresistible. My camp experiences were more than I could have imagined. *Krishnalaya* is imbued with delicate tranquility and restful silence. The atmosphere and fellow CHYKs were open, full of life, thought provoking, and accepting. I could just be.

- Ami Tyagi (Houston, TX)

CM Orlando Family Camp on Meditation

by Ashish Yamdagni (CHYK)

Pujya Guruji conducted a spiritual family camp on meditation (*Gita*, Chapter 6) that was hosted by Chinmaya Mission Orlando

MAHASAMADHI MESSAGE 2011



The life of an enlightened Master is the irrefutable proof of:

- Existence of the invisible and indivisible Truth.
- Authenticity of the holy scriptures.
- The possibility of each one of us realizing this Truth by faithfully following the Master's teachings.

Let us pray and pay our reverential homage in thought, word, and deed to Pujya Gurudev on *Mahasamadhi Day*, invoking His grace and blessings.

In the Service of the Lord,

Tejanyam



at the Wyndham Resort, June 21-26, 2011. Over 350 adults, CHYKs, and children from all over the country attended the camp, where Vedantic teachings filled the air through lectures, study groups, and informal discussions. Various CMW *acharyas* were invited to conduct the specially tailored sessions for different age groups. Here is a personal glance at some camp experiences, through the eyes of a CHYK.

I make my way steadily through the luxurious hallways of Wyndham to the small tea stall just outside of the lecture rooms. I grab a *masala chai* and stroll around the complex with my fellow CHYKs, discussing topics such as last night's dreams and the menu for today's breakfast, fading quickly into silence on nearing the meditation hall. Having gulped the *chai* and placed the empty cup, we walk into the hall and start trying to meditate. Trying. In 30 minutes, a million thoughts boggle my mind, all of which I try wholeheartedly to suppress. After a few days, I actually begin to understand how to clear my mind more efficiently, even if only for a few short moments.


Every morning begins with the same routine. After meditation, a few lectures are held on various topics, all related to *Gita*, Chapter 6. We CHYKs are young, all hoping to find the answer to one of life's biggest questions: How do we find happiness? Swamiji's have wise words to enlighten us, but we are given an opportunity to discuss, rather than only passively listen. We engage in the discussions, ask our questions, and figure out options among ourselves. Topics such as awareness, dharma, and change take up many of our hours as we contemplate how to transcend the mind.

Lunch and dinner conversations often gravitate toward important or interesting points that had arisen in the lectures. Once we have exhausted our mental capacities to think spiritually, we move on to recreational activities and social interactions. Meeting like-minded people is one of the greatest fruits the camp offers, including through indoor games such as Psychiatrist and The Marble Game, and semi-competitive Frisbee.

Unfolding spiritually and meeting talented, knowledgeable people has changed my views on the world, life, and myself—for the better.

Leaving many worries and egocentric thoughts behind, treading forward into discussions on self-betterment has been the highlight of my summer. If given another opportunity, I'd live it over in a heartbeat. For the week of knowledge, bonding, and fulfillment, I am indebted and grateful to Pujya Guruji, all *acharyas*, and my peers.

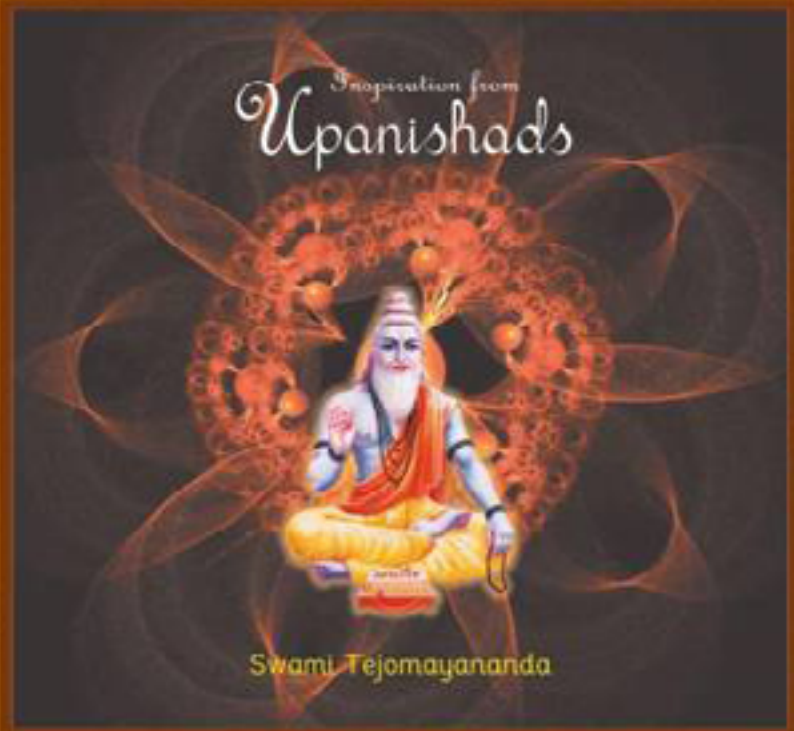




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TODAY**

Inspired by the beauty and magnitude of the Upanishads,
Swamiji gives us a glimpse of the heights to which they
rise and the depths they touch.



Every Upanishad presents the same Truth
from a different angle. Each Upanishad is unique and
special in its own way.
Swamiji focuses on the beauty of these aspects
and strings them together, in his own inimitable manner.

Shraddhanjali: Swami Dhyanananda

Swami Dhyanananda was the resident acharya at the Chinmaya Mission ashram in Uttarkashi, India, the abode of Param Pujya Swami Tapovan Maharaj, where Pujya Gurudev studied for many years.

What follows is a candid interview with Swamiji in 2007.

☞ Glory of Guru

People often ask, “What was Gurudev like?”

One cannot say Gurudev was “like.” He is the Lord Himself, *Parabrahman*, an incarnation. There is no one like Him, no mahatma in recent times of His stature.

We hear of Shri Rama as the embodiment of dharma (*Ramo vighrahan dharma*), and of Lord Krishna as *Isvara*, the Lord. Pujya Gurudev was like Krishna, a *purna purushah*.

Gurudev did not disassociate with so-called worldly activities; he even presided over marriages, but remained *asangah* (unattached).

Gurudev never sent people to the Himalayas. Like Lord Krishna advised Arjuna in the *Gita*, to be where one is and to act, surrendering all actions to the Lord, is what Gurudev told us also. Surrender is not an action; it is an attitude arising out of right knowledge. Even with knowledge, we should know that all is His grace.

Surrender is to obey the Guru as the altar of worship, without any questions. Surrender is egoless-ness. A true *shishya* has no questions. He has total receptivity to both joys and sorrows. To be able to do this, one needs to know one’s own thoughts. There needs to be an understanding that Self-knowledge does not require any effort; all our *sadhana* is only to get rid of *svabhava dosha* (the habit of error from many births).

Please share some memorable experiences with Pujya Gurudev that changed Swamiji’s life.

Gurudev’s logical interpretations and explanations influenced me. The more rational a person is, the more rational interpretations are readily accepted.

Gurudev’s love and care touched me. I remember one incident when I was sitting at Gurudev’s feet, and he roared, “If I kick you from the Himalayas, you’ll land in Cape Comorin (the southern-most part of the Indian subcontinent)!” I fled! But within less than five minutes, he was all-loving. He was always in the present.

His confidence in me is difficult to explain. One day, all of a sudden, he asked me if I would go to Uttarkashi, that too, when I was a wandering mendicant. Without his blessings, and Swami



Tapovanji’s grace, I could not have spent so many years at Uttarkashi. Gurudev made me Swami Tapovanji’s son one year before his own *mahasamadhi*: “You go on serving Shri Gurudev as his most beloved son,” were Gurudev’s instructions to me.

What are some important lessons to be learned from Pujya Gurudev?

Gurudev has shown us the way. We must follow and we will reach the goal. Wherever one is in the Mission, we must do whatever work we can possibly do, as a service to Pujya Gurudev, knowing that the Mission is his.

His goal was to revive Hindu culture through individual perfection. All of the Mission’s activities are geared towards this. We are his children and it is our duty to work dedicatedly, with total commitment. In his final letter to me, Pujya Gurudev instructed, “As a *sannyasi*, don’t keep anything for yourself. You’ll have everything.”

From Pujya Guruji?

I see Gurudev in Guruji. Gurudev is working through him. It is our duty to follow, work, and support Guruji, in all possible ways, with *shraddha*. Guruji is a symbol of love. Today, I can say with complete faith that without Guruji, none can shoulder the Chinmaya Mission’s responsibility.

☞ Inspiration

By what philosophy does Swamiji live?

A Vedantin can have no personal philosophy as such. My philosophy is to do whatever work comes, with sincerity and faith in the Guru. Do it as *upasana*. Just follow instructions. Obey! All through the years I have remembered that Gurudev has sent me to Uttarkashi to serve. This is my commandment.

The attempt is that *Shri Tapovan Kuti* has due status as the Chinmaya Mission grows worldwide. One does not need to do anything, does not need to ask—just sit, with faith, in front of the Lord. He knows what I want and He has the capacity to give.

What important reminders would Swamiji share with others?

Don’t lose faith in the Guru. Difficulties may come, but he will take care.

Remain dedicated to the Mission. Never think, “I am doing this for someone else.” At this moment, I should do my work as my duty to the Lord. With this attitude, we not only cleanse our inner equipment, but also provide some benefit to others.

Please share some spiritual experiences that changed Swamiji’s life.

Silence. Vedanta says to go beyond experiences. An experience has no meaning, for all experiences are the individual mind’s illusions. People say they see light, hear sounds, etc., but a true spiritual experience is the state of experienceless-ness. *Svanubhavat etam Brahma*, or, “The experience of Truth (*Brahman*) is beyond all experiences.”

In my earlier days as a seeker, pilgrimages on foot were great learning experiences. If we hold on to the Lord and leave everything, with complete faith in Him, He takes care of us. He provides all that we need. I got both food and money when I needed them during those trips. During those *yatras*, I could have the *darshan* of various types of mahatmas, always in total bliss, like a child playing with the world.

Does Swamiji have any favorite text(s)?

I am very much interested in the Vedanta *stotrams* of Adi Shankara Bhagavan. These *stotrams* are the essence culled out of the *Brahma Sutras* and *Upanishads*.

Commentaries of the *Dasha-Shloki*, *Advaita Panchratnam*, *Manisha Panchakam*, and *Advaitanubhuti* have been on my list of recent interests, as they show the direct means of *nirguna upasana*.

Among the *bhakti granthas* (devotional texts), *Shivananda Lahiri* and *Mukunda Mala* are what I am fond of.

🌀 Insights

Can the traditional four *ashramas* of *Sanatana Dharma* be lived today? Is it practical?

Traditionally, these ashrams of *brahmacharya*, *grhastha*, *vanaprastha*, and *sannyasa* were followed until the time of Adi Shankara. It is he who permitted one to take *sannyasa* directly after *brahmacharya* ashram—perhaps because he had the foresight to see the growing increase of unrighteousness, whereby, *sadhakas* would not be able to get a conducive environment.

This ashram system is the natural lifestyle that can take a person to the final realization of the Truth. A *brahmachari* in the *gurukula* typically learned not only spiritual, but also material, matters. In Hinduism, the aim of material life is to reach the culmination of the evolutionary process.

A *grhastha* is expected to fulfill desires according to scriptural injunctions so that additional *samskaras* are not accrued. The *Dharma Shastras* provide guidance to progress spiritually. Even physical relations were for progeny and not just for pleasure. Having lived righteously and fulfilled desires, one would become serene and purified. In Pujya Gurudev’s words, “There is not mere denial, but a growing out (of desires).”

To live according to the traditional ashram system today also is possible, only if the whole society is righteous. But this is not so, and thus it is impractical. It is difficult, but not impossible. An individual must have the ability and inner strength to take stress and strain, criticism and praise; this ability is not there in an average person. The goal must be *Isvara-prapti* (attainment of God) for such a person; such people are there but rare. To find someone who can perfectly follow these ashrams is very rare.

The most important thing is that the present educational system is totally inefficient in instilling the values by which one can lead the life of these *ashramas* properly.

In spirituality also, people have goals that they don’t achieve. Why does this happen? Is there a remedy?

The only reason people do not achieve their goals is because they lack clarity about their goal.

Vastu nirnaya is not there, and in practice they lack consistency and sincerity. The only way one can overcome this is through study under a Guru, with complete faith in Him.

Adi Shankaracharya, in his commentary on *Mundakopanishad*, has said, “*Shastrajnano-api svatantrina brahma, anveshanam na kuryat*,” or “Even a wise man should not study the scriptures on his own; one must go to a Guru.”

What is the most frequently asked question Swamiji has been asked about Vedanta and the life of renunciation?

I find that the most frequently asked question by devotees is not on Vedanta. They ask, “Even though there are so many mahatmas serving people, why are people in religious life so few?” This query arises because people do not understand that through all our day-to-day activities, every being, without exception, is seeking eternal happiness alone. Unfortunately, the priorities in life remain with objects of the external world, due to ignorance of the supreme Reality.

This small prayer from *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* that we chant frequently, “*Asato ma sad-gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir-gamayah, mrtyor-ma amritam gamaya*,” must be reflected upon. This prayer to “lead us from untruth to Truth, darkness to Light, and death to Immortality,” indicates the goal of human life. We all don’t want to die, but we never question why. There is an intrinsic urge in all of us to be eternal and thus there is the fear of death. Even a 300-year old man wants to live “just one more day.” This prayer also indicates that we all want to be *jnana-prakasha* (shedding the light of knowledge, knowledgeable). We want to know about our own environment. A simple demonstration of this is the early morning ritual of reading the newspaper. Man is inquisitive by nature; his urge to know is responsible for all scientific discoveries. A man may open a window to overhear a conversation, or peep, out of curiosity, when crowds have collected. It is a common urge in all; no one wants to be ignorant. This inquisitiveness will end only when man realizes his true Self. Thereafter, there remains nothing more to know. The prayer also indicates man’s desire for eternal happiness. No one wants to be happy at night and unhappy during the day. Everyone wants unbroken, continuous happiness. As such, every man is actually searching for God, but not everyone has a Guru to show him the way. The power of *karmas* and *vasanas* takes one to the material world. The final goal must be ascertained first. Thereafter, immediate goals to reach the final goal must be set. This will help to conserve energy and stop dissipation of energies. This is why Pujya Gurudev always pointed to the *Om* on the top of the BMI chart (the Absolute goal), and then pointed to the other chart elements—thus teaching how to get to the final goal.

🌀 The Life of a Renunciate

Does renunciation mean one has to give up hobbies and interests? What are Swamiji’s interests?

Renunciation, or *sannyasa*, is the giving up of desire-prompted actions. It does not mean running away from the world. To remain disinterested in the result of one’s actions, to remain unaffected and undisturbed at all times, is renunciation. It is the attempt to knowingly exhaust *prarabdha*. It is to remain ever-fulfilled, *nitya-shudha-buddha-mukta-svarupa*, which we already are. Solitude helps one attain fullness. Solitude is not the goal, only a means. Often, in spirituality, people mistake the means for the goal. Thus, as a renunciate, one does not really need to give up interests and hobbies, but one should not maintain interests to get joy out of them. A *sannyasi* is one who has grown out of these things. As for me, I don’t have interest in a particular thing, but I do not go away from anything.

What is the typical life of a renunciate in Chinmaya Mission?

The life of a renunciate in Chinmaya Mission is to do *sadhana* to clear obstacles and *vasanas* that

keep one away from one's true Self. Realize the Self and remain poised in the world knowing all as the Self alone—this is how Pujya Gurudev expected a Chinmaya Mission swami to be. With the BMI chart, Gurudev explained that we should exhaust *vasanas* by surrendering all actions to the Divine, so that the Self may shine through.

As for myself, I have studied under a few *acharyas* at different times, but my clarity in Vedanta is only because of Swami Tapovanji's grace. I have no doubts; I do not go here and there for *satsangs*, etc. In 1987-88, when the workload was tremendous, I once wrote to Pujya Gurudev that I had no time to read books, and conducting *satsanga* was unthinkable. Gurudev replied, "You go on serving Shri Gurudev. Don't worry, you will have everything." And Gurudev's words cannot go in vain. One can do anything with *shraddha* in Swami Tapovanji; His *prabhava* (influence) has not reduced an iota!

Another time, when I wrote to Pujya Gurudev about the numerous demands of visiting devotees, he replied, "A Mahatma (referring to Swami Tapovanji Maharaj) is only one in an organization, and all others are *sadhakas*. You must have infinite patience."

Another lesson on performing my role was: "An ashram should provide the necessary convenience to do *sadhana*, but there should be no demands on the ashram." Now, I feel I am the most blessed in the Mission [to be serving in Uttarkashi].



Swami Dhyanananda-ji was one of Pujya Swamini Saradapriyananda's earliest disciples, and I knew him well for the past 18 years. Swamiji's exemplary faith in Guru Maharaj Swami Tapovanam, Pujya Gurudev, and Pujya Swamini Saradapriyananda, is well known.

Swamiji's stay in Uttarkashi was extensive and solitary, similar to the stay of Swami Tapovanam Maharaj. Swamiji never came out of this sacred *sanctum* of Shri Guru Maharaj. If at all he would, he would visit Mukambika Temple in coastal Karnataka, as Mukambika Devi was his *Ishta*-deva, as She was Shri Guru Maharaj's. Though he was a tough disciplinarian, I found him to be one of the softest and gentlest persons to be with and learn from; he was a humble organizer, administrator, planner, and executor. Often, when we conducted camps in Uttarkashi, we observed that Swamiji would do everything possible to make us all comfortable, as he regarded all of us as Shri Guru Maharaj's children. At these camps, Swamiji would be the first one to awake and the last one to sleep; such was his care and concern.

Swamiji was a true *karma yogi* and *Guru-bhakta*. His steadfastness to Shri Guru Maharaj had also earned him a special place in every ashram and in the heart of every *sadhu* in Uttarkashi. It would not be an exaggeration to say that people knew him all across the Tehri Gadwal region. I, personally, had often looked up to him as a young *sadhaka*, and he had always been there to guide and nurture me over the years. I will miss his physical presence dearly.

- Swami Sarveshananda (CM Dallas)

I am truly sorry to hear the departure of Swami Dhyanananda. I knew him personally as one who was dynamic, dedicated, and fully devoted to Pujya Swami Tapovanam. I had the privilege of staying with him for a few days and found his devotion to Shri Swami Tapovanam to be amazing. He always believed that Shri Swamiji was with him and guiding him in and through everything. I lost a good friend in Swami Dhyanananda.

- Swami Shantananda (CM Princeton)

Darshana and I first met Swami Dhyanananda-ji in 1993, when we visited Uttarkashi after Pujya Gurudev's *mahasamadhi*. Since then, several groups of 20-30 CM Houston devotees have visited Uttarkashi on a *yatra*. Swamiji always took time to talk to each group, explain the significance of a *yatra*, and the importance of Uttarkashi and Mother Ganga. Swamiji always inspired one and all while speaking about Pujya Swami Tapovan Maharaj and Pujya Gurudev.

I feel blessed having met Swamiji. He will be missed in his meditation seat every evening at the feet of *Tapovan Kuti*.

- Acharya Gaurang Nanavaty (CM Houston)

The only time Geetha and I met Swami Dhyanananda-ji was during our Uttarakashi pilgrimage in 2006, as Vedanta Course students. Swamiji left an unforgettable impression on us. We felt truly blessed to see Swamiji's serenity, devotion, and disciplined but pleasant demeanor.

Swamiji took care of the Uttarakashi ashram meticulously, and worked day and night for its expansion and maintenance. He was always available and always had a pleasant smile to share. I remember him saying that Pujya Gurudev told him, "Swami Tapovan Maharaj is here. Your *sadhana* is taking care of the ashram."

Learning from the way someone leads his life is more valuable than what he teaches in words. This was so very true of, and what I respected most in, Swamiji's life.

- Acharya G.V. Raghu (CM Atlanta)

The first time I met Swami Dhyanananda-ji, I immediately felt very comfortable with him. Swamiji took me under his wings and deeply cared for me.

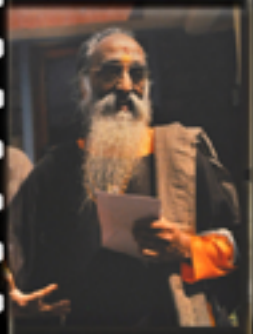
I had only read about Swami Tapovanji Maharaj and Uttarkashi prior to meeting Swamiji, but I had not really understood them. It was Swamiji who gave me a proper introduction. Each time I went back to Uttarkashi, Swamiji would tell me different stories about Pujya Tapovanji Maharaj and introduce different places around Uttarkashi to me. I still remember, a few years back, I had gone to Uttarkashi with students as part of our *Bharat Darshan Yatra*, and Swamiji told me about a place where Pujya Tapovanji Maharaj would meditate. He immediately called for someone after breakfast and asked him to take me to Vimalleshvara Mahadeva, seated atop the mountain right across from the Varunavata peak. Swamiji told me he would have accompanied me himself had his feet been able to manage the climb.

That evening, he gave me the keys to *Tapovan Kuti*, where Param Pujya Gurudev Swami Tapovanji Maharaj resides, and asked me to seek His blessings. Swamiji would say, "*Tapovan Kuti* in Uttarkashi is the sanctum sanctorum of Chinmaya Mission." To Swamiji, *Tapovan Kuti* was everything. People had difficulty understanding Swami Dhyanananda-ji's stern discipline around *Tapovan Kuti* because people did not understand Swamiji's love and reverence for Pujya Tapovanji Maharaj. *Tapovan Kuti* is a place of great pilgrimage and Swamiji always considered it an immense blessing to be able to serve at *Tapovan Kuti*, a post that Pujya Gurudev had bestowed upon him.

I consider myself most fortunate to have known Swamiji. I had spoken to him just a few days back and he had asked me to come to *Tapovan Kuti* to do *sadhana*. He said that every Chinmaya Mission member should come to *Tapovan Kuti* at least once a year. The next time I return to *Tapovan Kuti*, it will not be the same without Swami Dhyanananda-ji. I will surely remember and miss him. I am indebted and grateful to Swamiji for instilling in me such deep love and reverence for Param Pujya Gurudev Swami Tapovanji Maharaj and the divine *tirtha sthala* of Uttarkashi.

- Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya (CM Austin)

Dharma Sevak Course 2011



Upanishad Song of Death

Oh, when my body is burnt to a crisp
And my breath is like a will-o'- the-wisp

Oh, death is a pickle for one who knows
You ain't goin' nowhere when the bucket goes

There's only a breath between here and there,
So welcome home, darlin', You're everywhere!

I'll be all around like the sky so blue,
Remember, my friends, there's no end to You!

- Brahmacharini Arpita

Fill yourself with showers of satsanga.
The clouds are the saints.

Follow them as they move about,
For they shower only
His grace upon you.
Receive it with faith.

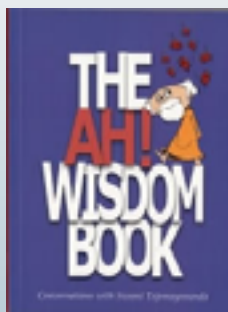
Dive within in deep contemplation.

Like the scorching heat of the sun,
ignore not life's situations
that bring sorrows and setbacks.
Face them squarely
as they attempt to dry up your knowledge.

Fill yourself again, again, and again.
Dive deeper and deeper
Until you reach the depth of Peace
that passeth all understanding.

- Swami Ishwarananda

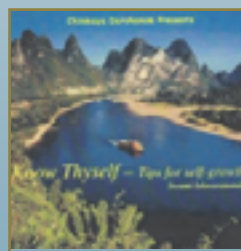
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