

Hari OM
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Only a person whose mind and intellect have become purified by selfless action, *upāsana*, etc., can have the true quest of Self-knowledge. When a true seeker of the Self, who is already endowed with the four-fold spiritual wealth, practices *Brahma-vidyā* (knowledge of Brahman) and spiritual disciplines as instructed by the acharya (teacher), he will realize that his inherent and ever-abiding nature is Brahman alone. But this is impossible for the deluded one [who is] devoid completely of this spiritual culture.
Swami Tapovanam Maharaj

In *Vivekachudamani*, Adi Shankaracharya outlines four qualifications of the fit student of Vedanta: 1) discrimination (*viveka*), 2) detachment (*vairāgya*), 3) the six mental qualities [calmness, self-control, self-withdrawal, forbearance, faith, and tranquility], and 4) a burning desire for liberation (*mumukshutvam*). . . . When we first learn of these requirements of a spiritual student, we may find them very delicate, difficult, and distressing feats, but in fact, the more we practice them, the more we understand that these qualities describe the state of mind of anyone who is trying to execute any great work . . . a person who wants success in his activities.
Swami Chinmayananda

One of the main factors that makes it difficult for students to accept the scriptures' revelation about the nature of the Self is their own strong identification with their body and mind. Taking ourselves to be the body, we can never realize our own eternal, infinite nature. *Shruti*, when it says I or Atman, refers to pure Consciousness, not the body and mind. Misunderstanding the inner Self (*pratyagātman*) to be this body or mind, we ask, "How can I be imperishable or infinite?" Thus, understanding that the scriptures mean pure Consciousness for the term Atman, and shifting our attention to a state beyond our body and mind are essential steps to conquer the basic error of taking direct perception (*pratyaksha*) to be more reliable than scriptural declarations.
Swami Tejomayananda

SPIRITUAL TRAILS

The Consolation of the *Bhagavad Gita* by Pujya Gurudev Svami Chinmayananda

An old woman once approached Lord Buddha with the dead body of her only son and pathetically implored him to give the child back his life. The Lord of Compassion was much moved by her sorrow. He consoled her by saying that if she would obtain a handful of mustard seeds from any house where no death had ever occurred, he would bring her child back to life. Without realizing the import of his great words the poor woman went from house to house begging for the mustard seeds in vain. She finally came to realize that there is no living thing that is not subject to death. She learned the truth that irrespective of power, position, and wealth, death deals impartial blows on one and all, that death is the leveler of all.

Death and birth are two phases of the same phenomenon called “change.” Only from the death of the old can the new emerge. Old order changes, yielding place to the new. But in Nature, this process proceeds so smoothly and harmoniously that we, as casual observers, fail to notice the subtle motion of this mighty wheel of change. Morning matures to become noon, and noon steadily grows to be evening. Evening silently modifies itself to play as night, and the night has to end necessarily yielding its place to the dawn. Autumn precedes winter that moves on to meet spring and spring itself slowly merges into summer. Thus, the circle of seasons is formed, each following the other in perfect rhythm and order, with precision and harmony. Youth emerges when childhood passes away, and youth in its turn hands us over to middle age. As time passes, we grow into old age and finally reach the inevitable end called death. Buds mature into flowers, flowers fulfill themselves in fruits, and fruits must die and decay if the seeds are to sprout.

This flow of change is noticed not only in the physical realm but also in the mental and intellectual realms. Immature thoughts and ideals end through education and other experiences in life. From thoughtless childhood we grow up into the reckless age of vigorous youth, and soon arrive at a more mature age when our thoughts are wiser and actions more purposeful.

If not for birth and death following each other with such irresistible regularity, all glamor would have been lost from life; nor would there be any beauty left in Nature. Without change, life would end in absolute stagnancy. In spite of our appreciation of all these ideas, when death actually comes to extinguish the flame of life in a loved one, we suddenly realize that something is lost forever. In the ensuing sorrow and gloom we are not able to understand that death is also nothing but a continuation of that nonstop whirl of the irresistible wheel of change. In the general ignorance of the benevolent play of birth and death, we try to cling to one particular spoke of the wheel, usually with obstinate tenacity. Under this veil of illusion, we also come to suffer an unending measure of sorrow, for the wheel of change never stops.

The great archer and noble prince Arjuna, the hero of the *Bhagavad Gita*, found himself

perplexed and scared at the prospect of killing his near and dear ones on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. In that one sweep of overwhelming anxiety, all his former values dropped from him and he imagined himself to be the doer of his actions. Thus burdened, Arjuna found himself incapacitated to face the destruction of his elders, friends, and teachers. It is to this confused and anxious individual that the *Gita* addresses itself as follows:

“You have grieved for those that should not be grieved for; yet, you speak words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. Never was a time when I was not, nor you, nor these rulers of men. Nor, verily, shall we ever cease to be hereafter.” (2.11-12)

The Theory of Reincarnation

Lord Krishna declares here, in unequivocal terms, that the embodied self is set on a great pilgrimage in life. This is where it comes to identify itself temporarily with a physical body to gain various experiences. Shri Krishna says that we do not suddenly come from nowhere, nor do we, at the moment of death, become mere nonexistent nothings. Correct philosophical thinking guides our intellect to the apprehension of a continuity from the past, through the present, to the future. The Spirit remaining the same, It identifies with different body-mind-intellect equipment, and thus comes to live in a particular environment ordered by Itself. This conclusion of the Hindu philosophers leads to the most satisfactory theory of reincarnation. All honest thinkers of the past and the present have accepted, expressly or tacitly, these logical conclusions.

Lord Buddha constantly referred to his previous births. Virgil and Ovid regarded the doctrine as perfectly self-evident. Josephus observed that the belief in reincarnation was widely accepted among the Jews of his age. Solomon’s *Book of Wisdom* says: “To be born in a sound body with sound limbs is a reward of the virtues of past lives!” Who does not remember the famous saying of the learned son of Islam: “I died out of stone and I became a plant; I died out of the plant and became an animal; I died out of the animal and became a man. Why then should I fear to die? When did I grow less by dying? I shall die out of man and shall become an angel!”

In later times, this most logical belief has been accepted as a doctrine by the German philosophers Goethe, Fichte, Schelling, and Lessing. Among the recent philosophers who have recognized this doctrine as incontrovertible are Hume, Spencer, and Mueller. Among the poets of the West, Browning, Rossetti, Tennyson, and Wordsworth come to mind, whose burnished intellects soared into the cloudless sky of imagination. Within their poetic flights they, too, intuitively felt the sanction for the continuity of life.

The reincarnation theory is not a mere dream of philosophers and the day is not far off when, with the fast-developing science of psychology, the West will come to rewrite its scripture under the sheer weight of observed phenomena. To be logical, we must accept the idea of the continuity of the embodied souls. An uncompromising intellectual quest for understanding life cannot satisfy itself if it is thwarted at every corner by “observed irregularities.” We cannot, for long, ignore them all as mere chances.

The prodigy Mozart, for instance, is a spectacular example that cannot be explained in any other way. This genius wrote sonatas at the age of four, played in public at the age of

five, and composed his first opera at the age of seven. Without the reincarnation theory, we must label this wondrous incident as an accident of nature and throw it into the heap of chance and bury it there. Examples are often quoted, but rarely recorded as evidence. The world today has yet to discover this great and self-evident Law of Life.

To the uninitiated student, however, this theory may seem to be too much. When Krishna declared that none of them, including Himself, Arjuna, and the great kings, even after their deaths on the battlefield “shall cease to exist in the future,” Arjuna, a typical man of the world, could not grasp it as a self-evident fact. His questioning eyes made the Lord explain again the idea through an example in the following stanza:

Just as in this body the embodied (soul) passes into childhood, youth and old age, so also he passes into another body; the firm man does not grieve at it.” (2.13)

According to the law of memory, the experiencer and the memorizer need to be the same entities. Only then can memory-power function. I cannot remember any of your experiences; neither can you remember any of mine. Yet I can remember my experiences as readily and easily as you can remember your own.

This stanza is again asserting, in unequivocal terms, the truth behind the reincarnation theory. We do not bemoan the death of childhood when we come to experience youth. We know that even though youth is reached and childhood has ended, there is a continuity of existence of the same person. Thus, youthfulness may be considered as a birth, after childhood has met with its death, and old age is born when youth dies. Yet, we are not the least disturbed by these changes. We feel happier due to the wealth of experiences we have gained, as the status of the individual rose from innocent childhood to mature old age. By using the subjective experience of everyone in the world as a standard of comparison, Krishna is here trying to point out to Arjuna that wise men do not worry when they leave one body to take another.

Similarly, at the moment of death there is also no extinction of the individuality. The embodied ego of the dead body leaves its previous form, and, according to the *vāsanās* (mental impressions) that it gathered during its embodiment, becomes identified with another physical equipment so that it can express itself completely and seek its fulfillment.

The Self Is Eternal

Therefore, our endeavor should be to rediscover the one vital Power on which this panorama of life is recorded. To find It is to realize the supreme Truth and this should be the main purpose of our lives. What we now understand as real (*sat*) is really unreal (*asat*) and as such, has no being [existence]:

“The unreal has no being; there is no nonbeing of the Real; the truth about both these has been seen by the knowers of the Truth (or the seers of the Essence).” (2.16)

Only a few people have fathomed the depth of this truth and to them the vagaries of life and the varieties of experiences hold no value at all. The truly wise person is one who has intellectually grasped this truth about life. Yet, there is the one vital Power, pervading

everything, which is the very substance of all the worlds of perceptions, which is indestructible:

Know That to be indestructible by which all this is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of That, the Imperishable” (2.17).

These bodies of the embodied self are perishable, indeed, and the only factor that is indestructible in this multiplicity is the pure, indestructible Atman:

“They have an end, it is said, these bodies of the embodied Self. The Self is eternal, indestructible, incomprehensible. Therefore fight, O Bhārata.” (2.18)

And that Indweller in this physical equipment is not born, nor does He ever die:

“He is not born, nor does He ever die; after having been, He again ceases not to be; unborn, eternal, changeless, and ancient, He is not killed when the body is killed.” (2.20)

Having thus made it clear that the Self is neither an agent, nor an object of the action of slaying, and having established the immutability of the Self, Krishna sums up the argument by saying:

“Whosoever knows Him to be indestructible, eternal, unborn, and inexhaustible, how can that man slay, O Pārtha, or cause others to be slain?

Weapons cleave It not and fire burns It not; water wets It not and wind dries It not. This Self cannot be cut, or burnt, or moistened, or dried up. It is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable, and ancient. This Self is said to be unmanifest, unthinkable, and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing this to be such, you should not grieve.” (2.21, 23-25)

Caught as it were in the whirlpool of change, this eternal Self goes on changing one embodiment after another:

“Just as a man casts off his worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied self casts off its worn-out bodies and enters others that are new.” (2.22)

Old bodies may die, and new bodies may be taken up, but there is no occasion to moan over this inevitable change. But if you think of Him as constantly born and constantly dying, even then, o mighty-armed, you should not grieve:

“Indeed, certain is death for the born, and certain is birth for the dead; therefore, you should not grieve over the inevitable.” (2.27)

Birth and death have to follow each other systematically to keep up the balance in Nature. To weep over death is stupidity indeed. Like the woman in the Buddhist fable, we are also deluded that death and sorrow are misfortunes affecting our individual selves. Calm reasoning is needed to pull us out of this muddle of vain sorrows, and to surrender wholeheartedly to this universal law in a spirit of reverence and gratitude.

Is Life a Joy or a Test?

*Transcription of Q&A session in a workshop with
Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, CM Ottawa, June 2013*



Before commencing the session, Pujya Guruji said, “I will try my best to answer your questions—to my satisfaction, because the question is yours, and the answer is mine. So, I hereby give a disclaimer: Satisfaction not guaranteed. But if you are satisfied, that is very good.”

Needless to say, Guruji’s impromptu answers, packed with wisdom and practicality, and spiced with humor, brought the audience not only more than 100% satisfaction, but also complete admiration for the master.

Is life [meant to be] a joy or a test?

Life is how you look at it and how you label it. If life is viewed as a problem, you have to keep solving it. If life is taken as a challenge, then meet it. If you see life as a dream, then realize it. If you take life as a sport, then play it. If you see life as a joy, then enjoy it. And If you think life is a test, the prepare yourself and pass the test. It is all in your hands. Whichever way you look at life, you will have to face it accordingly.

Happiness in a household is possible only if the members have a common vision. If the family members have conflicting views, how can we have happiness and peace at home?

Ideally speaking, it is true that if all have the same vision, it will be easier. But how can we expect everyone to be of the same nature and views? That is not the nature of things. Please remember, even your own views and visions do not remain the same. Haven’t you noticed that your views do change over time? So, how is it possible that everybody will have the same vision? It is rather difficult. Thus, do not even expect that.

But see, vision, attitude, and spiritual practice are such that there is nothing physical about them. Suppose you want to do a puja in your house, but the other person does not want it and perhaps even creates some obstacle. When no one is there, you can do the sadhana part; no one even needs to know your attitude and vision. Others may differ in their views, but you have to face life as it is. If you read the lives of saints and devotees, such as Mirabai, not everyone’s family life was smooth. It is said that Socrates’s wife one day scolded him and then poured water on him. His student asked him what was going on

and Socrates calmly said, “After thunder, there is shower.” You can’t change others. And don’t wait for others to change.

How do we build our patience to deal with adult children who have grown up in the West?

Adult children! Firstly, children grown in the East are not mahatmas. Children are children. Different combinations, different temperaments—there are all types of children, whether East or West.

People tend to have patience with other people’s children, but become impatient when it comes to their own. The reasons can be many, but the main thing is that children do not conform to your expectations and what you want. The child wants to be who he is—what to do?

The most important thing is to build a good rapport between yourself and your child. If the tuning is there, it is wonderful. Understand their nature and tune your mind. It will be wonderful. It will be fun. We forget that we were also a child or youth once, causing annoyance and problems. Don’t start with, “In our time, we never used to question our parents.” Then they will ask, “Why did you not question?” You change with the times. Where there is love and tuning, there will be patience. So, develop that love and tuning.

How do you develop love for God?

Just think of how you develop love for anything or being. There are two aspects: What relationship you have with that thing or being, and how much time you spend with it. If you spend time gardening, you will have love for flowers. A child develops love for the maid more than the mother if the maid is his main caretaker. Having a relationship is important to develop love. You must establish some relationship with God, too: “God, you are my father and I am your child.” Or, “You are my master and I am your servant.” Spend some time with God. Read the *Ramayana* and the lives of saints.

How to achieve your dreams without the fear of somebody trying to stop you?

Really speaking, nobody can stop you. If you see a problem, you have stopped seeing the goal. If your mind remains glued to a goal, then come what may, who can pull you down? Actually, if someone is there to pull you down, there will be ten people there to lift you also. Why only see one side? See, what we lack is our own conviction, our own determination. We also expect the whole world to come and help us. It is not necessary.

I remember an incident in Gautama Buddha’s life. He taught his disciple and then he wanted to check if the disciple was ready to teach Dharma to others. The dialogue went like this:

Buddha: When you go out to teach Dharma, and nobody pays attention to you, how do you take it?

Disciple: I will think: Even though they are not listening to me, they are not opposing me.

Buddha: Suppose they oppose you?

Disciple: They are only opposing me. At least they are not fighting with me.

Buddha: What if they beat you?

Disciple: They are only beating me, not killing me.

Buddha: What if somebody kills you?

Disciple: Anyway we are born to die. Death will come to all of one day.

Buddha: You are ready to teach Dharma.

So, some people will applaud and some will criticize. Cheers and jeers will always be there. If there are opponents, there will be many supporters also. You be determined and convinced. You march toward your goal.

What was Pujya Gurudev's guiding principle in life?

That is very difficult for me to tell, because that is something only he can tell. But from whatever I have understood, being a spiritual master, Gurudev's guiding principle was only love and compassion for all. Because such masters realize their Oneness with all, what remains is only love and compassion. The realization of Oneness with all only evokes love and compassion.

I remember that when Swamiji inaugurated the Chinmaya International Foundation, the interviewer asked him why he was doing all this—establishing CIF, etc. Swamiji said that he felt for others' well-being and he felt that all should be happy.

He gave Chinmaya Mission's motto as, "To give maximum happiness to maximum people for maximum time." And we should add, "In maximum ways." How to give this joy and make all happy? He used to say that total perfection is possible only through individual perfection. He used to tell us you are not here to change the world; you change. So his guiding principle was all-inclusive love and the motivating thought, "May all be happy."

Can you please talk about your own guiding principle.

You have put me on the spot. There are two points I keep in mind. In meditation, I say, "*Soham*." In the field of action, I say "*Dāsoham*." I am pure Consciousness; that is my truth. In the field of activities, the one thing that guides me is that I am a servant of the Lord and my Guru. I have to serve. When we keep the attitude of being a servant, there is no worry.

From spiritual standpoint, remember your own true nature. In the field, remain the servant. That is all. The whole world is according to God's will; it moves according to His will. What role you have to play, you just play.

REFLECTIONS

After the End

by Chetana Neerchal

When
the pickle
has been eaten
I still
taste it
on my fingers.

When
the juice
has been squeezed
I smell the fragrance
in the rind.

When
your words
have been spoken
I hear
the music
of bell tones.

When
all the color
has fled from
the sky
I want to still
see the silver lining
in the clouds.

When
the experience
has ended
its lesson
is etched
in my being.

The Great Gifting of the Great Witness

by Anjali Singh

Continued from *CMW News*, May 2013

Swamiji [Pujya Gurudev] had given his heart in Switzerland in 1982 in the form of a gold heart-shaped locket to be kept in safekeeping around the neck of my Bāla Krishna idol, which I called the “Great Witness.” Nine years later, Swamiji’s heart was offered to the River Ganga at Haridwar in 1991. Even the Great Witness was quite taken aback by Swamiji’s action. By making me give his heart to Gangaji, Swamiji had announced his intention to withdraw from this realm of form. That evening in Dehradun, Krishna donned Swamiji’s handkerchief and took *sannyāsa*!



When Swamiji saw the Great Witness sulking in that renunciate garb, he remarked, “What will happen to His 16,000?”

“16,000 what?” I asked.

“Wives,” replied Swamiji, and got into the car to be driven to the *yajñashālā*.

I followed in another car, feeling perplexed at not having understood the point Swamiji had made. Swamiji continued the conversation from the first sentence onward right from the *yajñashālā* platform. He said that the 16,008 wives of Krishna were all the kinds of thoughts (*vṛttis*) of the human mind, and Krishna was the Consciousness around which they revolved.

“The liberated man, or Krishna, is the Spirit upon which alone is the play of matter sustained, as the dream is sustained upon the waker. If this God-principle, though inactive in itself, did not consistently serve the pluralistic phenomenal world as its permanent Substratum, the world as it is now could not exist, and cultural life would stagnate. When the Lord incarnates or prophets come, they encourage the good and eliminate the poisonous from the garden of life. Great masters come into this world to revise the standard of life and its moral values.”

Swamiji wanted to say that it was impossible for Krishna to retire; the world would end. Swamiji tried hard to convince the Great Witness against His resolve, but Krishna did not relent. He remained in *sannyāsa*, wearing Swamiji’s handkerchief for five months, and put forth a silent condition for renouncing it—a condition that Swamiji fulfilled during the Frostburg camp in USA in 1991.

During the June 1991 marathon camp at the *Krishṇālaya* ashram in Piercy, California, where the entire *Bhagavad-Gītā* was video-recorded, Swamiji began a new technique. Where he once used to say, “Don’t leave Krishna. Always keep Him in your handbag,” (as He advised in Kuala Lumpur in 1989), he now said, “You are hanging on to Krishna too much!” Every now and then, he would chide, “You have too much *dvaita-bhāva* (dualism)!” “*Dvaita*, *dvaita*!” was his chant. This went on for a full month in Piercy. I even tried to explain to him that I thought of Krishna

as the all-pervading presence of God without form and was not hanging on to the idol, but he said it was all still *dvaita*, that I was thinking of God as other than my Self.

In his *Gītā* talks, Swamiji stated Lord Krishna's words: "Bring your mind to Me through a personal God. It is unavoidable. Thereby, through contemplation at My altar, bring the mind and intellect to quietude. Pierce the idol with the intellect to see what the idol represents and come to experience My real nature, which is beyond the intellect."

We next went to Frostburg College near Washington, DC for Chinmaya Mission's Fourth International Spiritual Camp. On the last day of the camp (July 12) was my breakfast *bhikshā*, as it marked 30 years since I had met Swamiji and the Great Witness. Two days before, in his discourse on *Māṇḍūkya Karikā*, Swamiji had taken us all to the sublime heights of Advaita and declared from its pinnacle, "The Unborn is realized by the Unborn!" This statement, and the discourse that led to it, induced a sense of detachment to all things. In this euphoria of bliss and understanding, I decided to give the Great Witness to Swamiji as an anniversary present! I thought he wanted me to rise above being attached to Him. I had already given up the heart (locket) in Haridwar; now, it was Krishna's turn. I had no idea where Swamiji was leading me. Wherever it was, I was letting him lead the way. I had suffered too much during his sickness in Sidhbari in May and was willing to go through whatever it took to never face that kind of pain again.



Fourth Chinmaya International Camp



First Day of *Paduka Puja*



Anjali Singh and Mimi Robins, the unofficial and official photographers at the camp

The next day, when I came down from my euphoria of detachment, I found myself having second thoughts about my gift to Swamiji. He did not really need the Great Witness, I thought, whereas I did. What would I do without Him, the one who had been with me for 30 years? I began to feel very sad and told two friends, Gitanjali Lodhia and Rashmi Singh, of my decision. They warned me that Swamiji would most likely give Krishna away and asked if I was prepared for that. I thought about it and realized that I would not really be giving a present if I did not also give Swamiji the right to do what he liked with it. My friends both empathized with me and I even found Gitanjali crying in the bathroom!

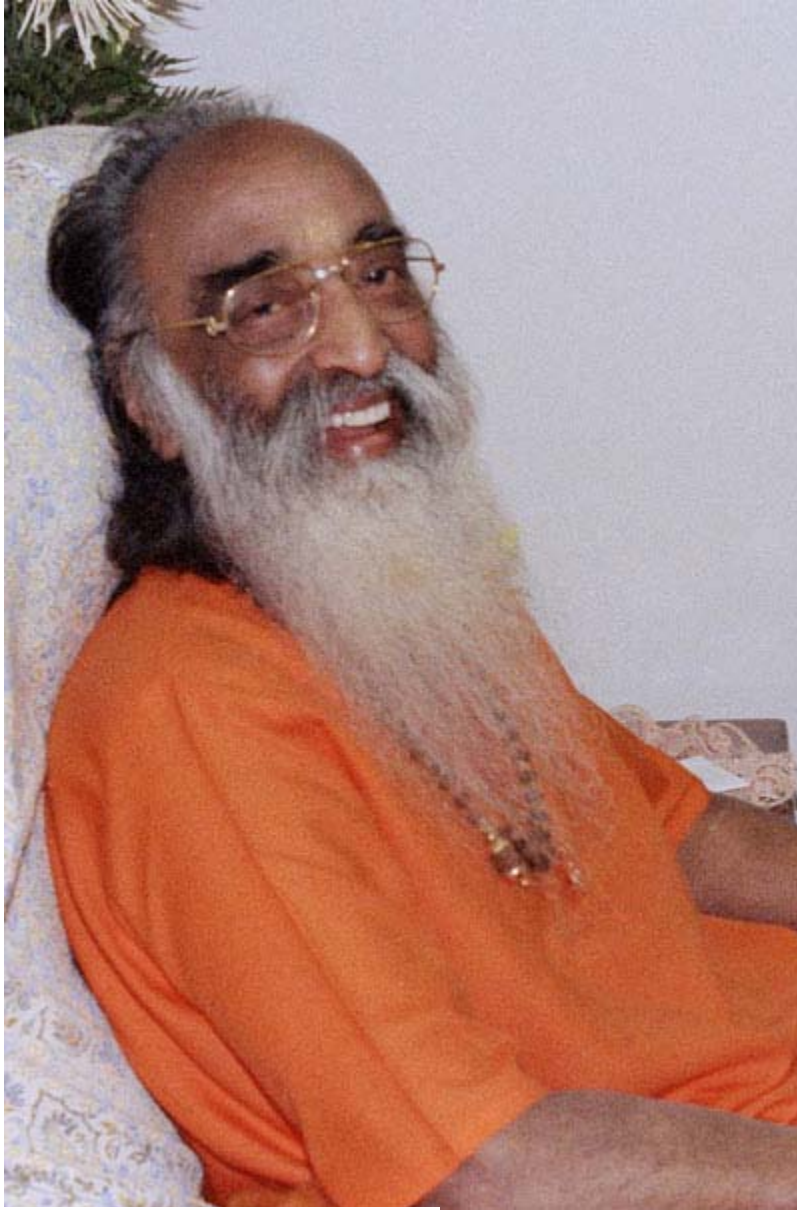


Rashmi Singh, Anjali Singh, Pujya Guruji, Gitanjali Gurbaxani at the Frostburg camp



Banquet evening

On the morning of my *bhikshā*, Swamiji conceded to the condition the Great Witness had made in Dehradun in March—the condition because of which He had taken to ochre robes. This elevated my mood and I found myself back in the world of *Māṇḍūkya*. Perhaps this was Swamiji's anniversary gift to me.



Pujya Gurudev, joyous and generous



Receiving blessings to mark the 30th

At the breakfast *bhikshā*, Swami Tejomayananda, Swamini Sharadapriyananda, Swamini Gangananda, Brahmachari Sudhir (now Swami Dheerananada), Brahmacharini Sadhana (now Swamini Shivapriyananda), and David Taylor were also present. When the time comes for the Lord to come or go, many mahatmas gather, for the event is far from ordinary.



Breakfast *Bhiksha*

I had placed only a *Shivalinga* amidst flowers on the breakfast table. Swamiji got another opportunity to hit at my *dvaita-bhāva*: “So you have replaced Krishna with Shiva,” he remarked while pouring water on the *lingam*.



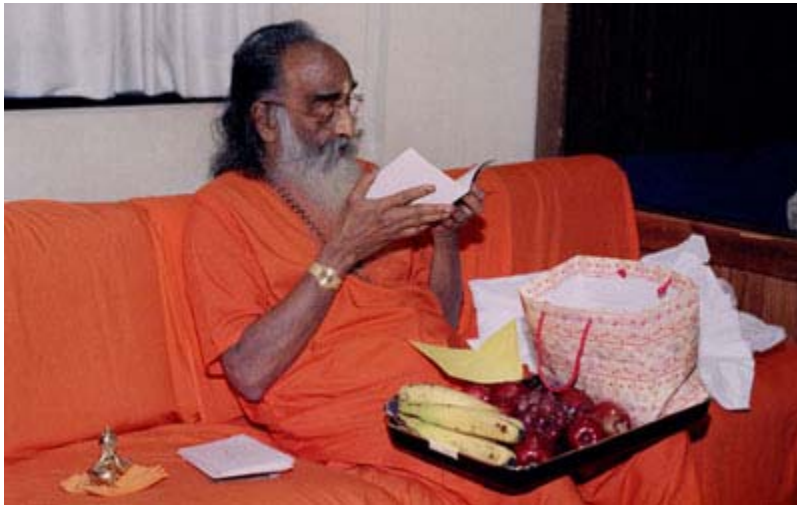
Pujya Gurudev doing abhishek to the *Shivalingam*

Swami Tejomayananda, too, poured the water with one of the two cups made of natural semiprecious stones, which I had bought from a nearby fair.

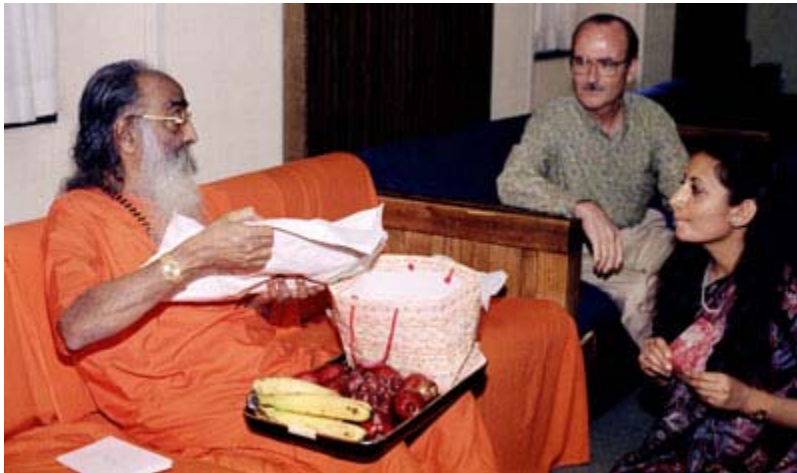
I replied, “No, Swamiji, I have replaced Krishna with . . .” and was suddenly at a loss for words. Swamiji kindly completed the sentence: “With that supreme Reality whose expressions these are.”

It was a candlelit breakfast. He read all the different cards that I had placed on his table. He signed a boon card, making it a total of seven boons that I had collected from him during our travels together. He said, “The amount of time you spend on these cards . . . If you had spent it on Brahman, you would have reached by now!”

After breakfast, Swamiji sat on the sofa and I handed him my tray of *vāsanās* (in the form of a fruit tray), which included my attachment to Krishna’s idol and form. At this point, Gitanjali came behind me and started rubbing my back in consolation. But I had gotten over my earlier indecision and felt like I was floating in a dream-world of music created by the *Māṇḍūkya* discourses. The *bhikshā* had gone very well and my mind was soaring high after cutting some bonds. With confusion resolved, I bathed in bliss to the ascending musical score of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* that was playing in the back of my mind. Swamiji began to unwrap my five layers of gift-wrapping tissue.

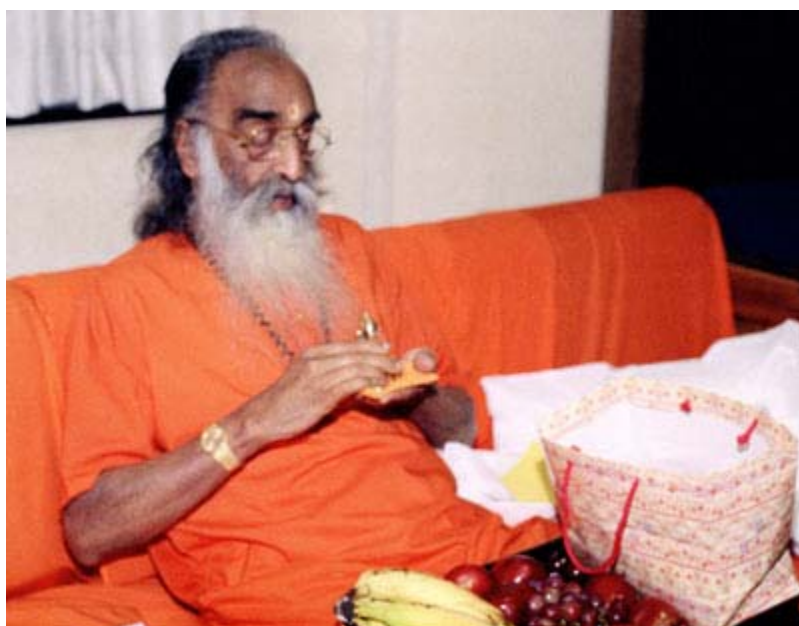
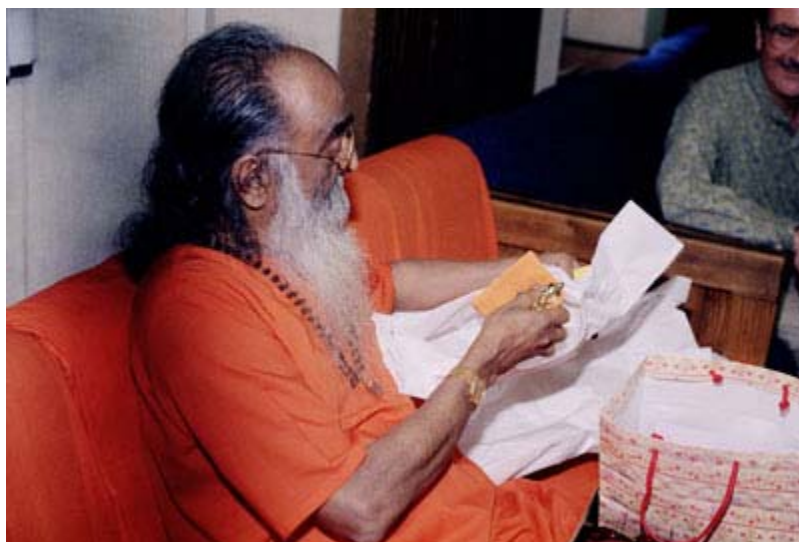


Gurudev opening the gift



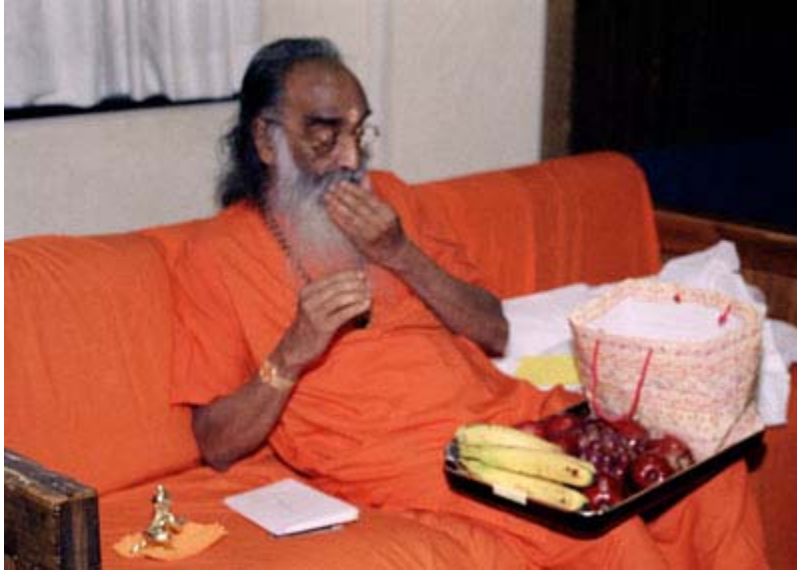
Commenting on the five layers of tissues

Swamiji still had no idea what he would be receiving as an anniversary present. The final strokes of the symphony were about to be played. This moment was most important to me, for there were 30 years of meetings and partings among the three of us. At that time, I did not think about any after-effects, such as my Bāla Krishna being sent away. All I wanted to see was a pleased expression on Swamiji's face. After a cheeky joking comment on having to unfold five *koshas* (inner sheaths of man), his face showed excitement. At last, he opened the final tissue and held Krishna in his hands. The music rippled in slow suspense before the deafening crescendo in my head. Krishna shone like molten gold in the sunlight beaming through the window behind Swamiji.



The Great Witness in His hands

I was looking at Swamiji at this poignant moment, but could see no expression or reaction on his face. A little disappointment crept into my mind as I reminded myself repeatedly to not expect anything from this offering, including a half-inch smile from Swamiji. Swamiji, in the meantime, looked like he was trying to gauge whether this was a gift to him or a show-and-tell of how Krishna had given up His ochre robes. It was the only time in my life that I saw Swamiji looking, as if, confused.



Pujya Gurudev wondering

After a minute of silence, in a most dramatic gesture, Swamiji put his right hand on top of Krishna, whom he was holding in his left hand. He then shut his eyes tight in great concentration—it seemed like a re-consecration ceremony of sorts—and then simply handed Him back to me! I was taken aback and involuntarily extended my hands forward to receive Him back while saying, “Oh! But He was meant for you!”

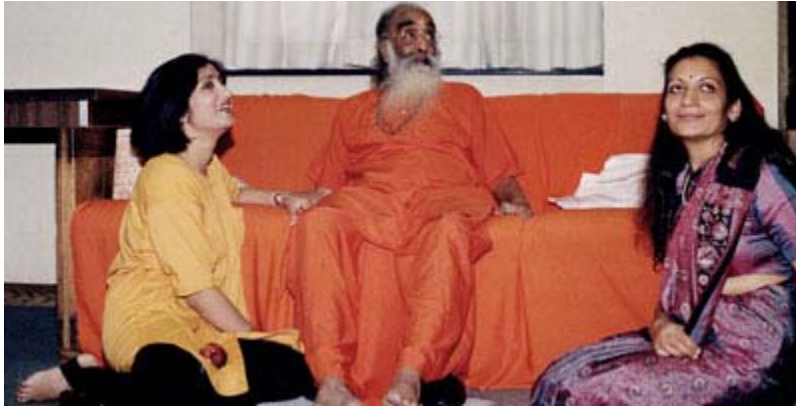


Giving Krishna back

Swamiji pulled back instantly before I could touch Krishna and said, “Good! I will put Him in a temple!” He seemed to be pleased and there was great approval on His face.

The music had just settled into a sublime harmony when three broken notes interjected. Laju Barucha walked up to Swamiji and made a request on Rashmi’s behalf, asking if Rashmi could

have the Great Witness. Both, Rashmi and Gitanjali, had warned me that Swamiji might give Him away and both had hoped that they would get Him. I had also said that if He was to be given away to anyone, then I hoped He would go to either one of them. Rashmi had had to return to Los Angeles the previous day due to an emergency, so she had sent Laju with the request.



Gitanjali, Pujya Gurudev, and Anjali look at Laju

“Who?” asked Swamiji.

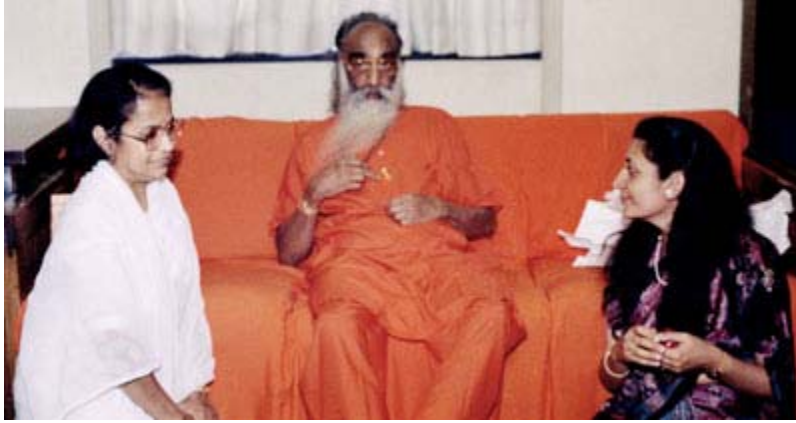
“Nobody,” I replied, hoping that Laju would not repeat the request. But she faithfully did.

For the second time, Swamiji asked, “Who?” in a daunting way.

For a second time, I interrupted and answered, “Nobody!”

Though I had said I would rather Rashmi or Gitanjali have Krishna, I had not expected that they would ask for Him the very moment I gave Him to Swamiji. I had hoped Swamiji would at least keep Him for a while.

Laju persisted with the same request for the third time. This unmusical interchange could have gone on, but I thought Swamiji would not refuse such an ardent request from someone who had served as his doctor throughout the Piercy camp and who was a devotee asking for the Lord, not worldly things. I took a deep breath and told myself to be prepared to see Krishna go out of Swamiji’s hands.



Laju comes and sits near Pujya Gurudev

Then, Swamiji surprised me—he astounded me! He said to Laju very gently, “She will not be able to look after Him. He needs a lot of care and attention. She is a busy doctor and this Krishna is a very pampered one. He has to be fed three times a day, clothes changed, etc. One individual won’t be able to see to all His demands. No, it will not be possible. I will put Him in a temple. There, He will get nice fruits and supper!”

Laju later gave Swamiji a heart-shaped silver box with *kumkum* to give to me. But he did not now want me to be attached to this new heart since it would be coming from him, so he said, “It is a broken heart, broken into five ventricular places.” Perhaps Swamiji was referring to the five *koshas* and the heart was the spiritual heart. He continued, “But I have a solid, full, complete one (referring to Krishna) instead of a broken one.” He looked at me and added, “The real heart was given to you when Krishna was taken.”

After that, Krishna traveled for one year with Swamiji in his suitcase, as I learned from others. I also saw Him once, after a year in his suitcase. Asha Kamdar asked me, “Is this your Krishna?” as she packed Swamiji’s suitcase in which Krishna lay naked with His *sannyāsa* hanky next to Him. I never questioned Swamiji about Him, otherwise he would have accused me of not letting go. Maybe he had kept Him for a year in case I missed Him too much and needed Him back.

Per doctors’ recommendations, Swamiji was to go to Orlando for eight days of rest in mid-August. Swamiji suggested that I continue traveling with him, for it would be a complete holiday in Orlando. But I had to return to India on some urgent matter, so I said I would return to the US in time for Orlando. I thought if Swamiji was asking me to be there, it must be important.

From Delhi I wrote him a letter saying that it felt both wrong and right not to think of Krishna. Wrong, because we had grown up with the idea that God was to be worshipped. And right, because I was following my Guru’s instructions.

To be continued

A Streetcar Named Desire

by Chetana Neerchal

I am in a
streetcar named Desire
on this fantastically beautiful
autumn day.

The yellow flutters,
the red glitters;
my hands reach out
to touch
what I see.

The glass of the sealed windows,
an unseen wall,
prevents contact.

I am in a
streetcar named Desire;
desires unraveled
by this autumn breeze;
desires that burst
like the pomegranate seeds,
that want to hop, skip, and dance
with the steps
of the wind and the leaves.

Crimson berries quiver,
the wind is almost real inside.
The streetcar stops.
I get off and come to work.

Stilled, inside the sealed windows
of that streetcar,
are today's
desires.

Pujya Gurudev with M.S. Subbalakshmi

by Pramodini Rao

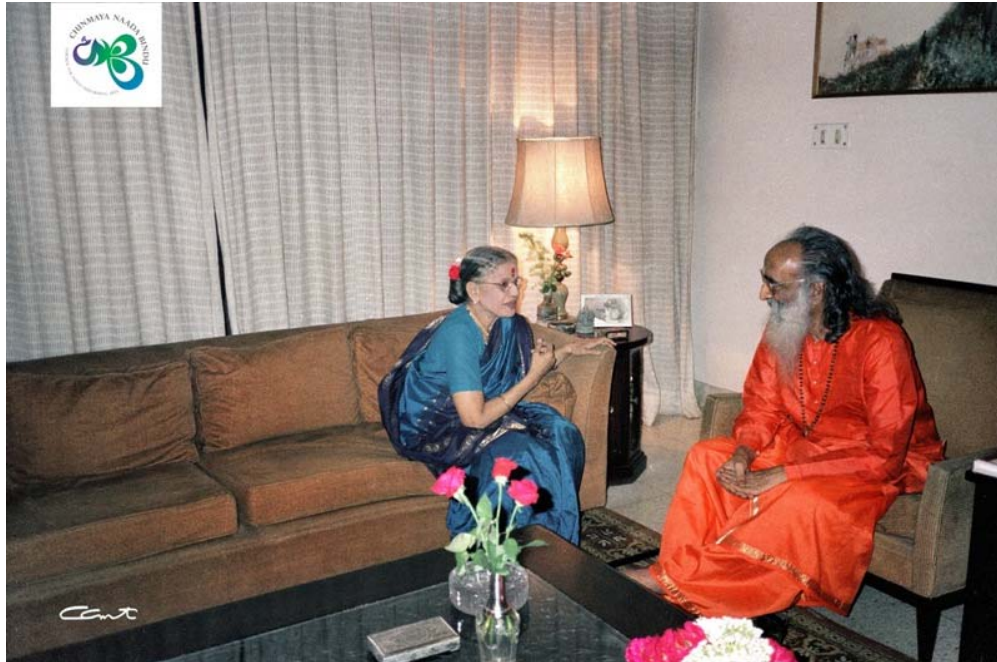
The first musician to be awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award is world-renowned music legend, M.S. Subbulakshmi, who celebrated her 97th birthday on September 16, 2013. She has dedicated her life to music and service. Her devotion to the Lord and reverence for her Guru has made her music divine, touching the hearts of millions.

Back in the early 1980s, it was a houseful program. An audience packed into the 3,000 capacity auditorium of Shanmukhananda Hall, assembling to listen to M.S. Subbalakshmi, the queen of devotional music, as she sang in the august presence of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda.

Who would have imagined that this beautiful flow of devotion would be interrupted by a cut in electrical supply, and that, too, in a metropolis like Mumbai? But it did, perhaps just to prove the power of devotion.

The full auditorium went completely dark, except for the big lamp onstage at the altar that bathed the devotee-artist and the diamonds on her nose in light. The microphones went mute, but Pujya Gurudev urged her to sing on. From here, devotion took over. Her mellifluous singing broke through the barriers of distance and reached every corner of the auditorium and pierced

into every heart. Prodded by the spiritual master, the instrument of the Lord shone as the Lord sang through her.



NEWS

New Acharyas from 15th Vedanta Course



SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA



Acharyas
Chinmaya Mission Centres Worldwide

Dear All,

Hari Om!

On the auspicious occasion of Shri Ganesha Chaturthi, 9 September 2013, I am pleased to inform that the Deeksha ceremony of the 15th Vedanta course was held in Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai. The course was conducted under the guidance of Swami Advayananda and Brahmachari Samvid Chaitanya.

Of the 61 students who completed the course, 36 have decided to serve Chinmaya Mission full time. 17 of these 36 have been initiated into Brahmacharya. The following are the old and new names of the Brahmacharis and the centres they have been posted to:

No	Old Name	New Name	Centre
1	Anusha	Usha Chaitanya	Siddipet, AP
2	Ketaki	Maitreyi Chaitanya	Pune, MH
3	Sukanya	Shraddha Chaitanya	Salem, TN
4	Nirali	Anupama Chaitanya	Jamnagar, GJ
5	Geetha	Devaki Chaitanya	CIF, Kerala
6	Binish	Anish Chaitanya	To be decided
7	Ganesh	Vighnesh Chaitanya	Coimbatore, TN
8	Manoj	Prajwal Chaitanya	Ahmedabad, GJ
9	Ramakrishna	Narayana Chaitanya	Vikarabad, AP
10	Sunil	Mukunda Chaitanya	Kozhikode, Kerala
11	Srinivasa	Shrivatsa Chaitanya	Hindupur, AP
12	Sushant	Veda Chaitanya	Navi Mumbai
13	Yogesh	Yukta Chaitanya	Mahim, Mumbai
14	Nadessan	Ishan Chaitanya	Reunion Island
15	Omkaar	Abhijit Chaitanya	Durban, SA
16	Sai Ishan	Shivendra Chaitanya	Sri Lanka
17	Suresh	Kartik Chaitanya	Sri Lanka

CENTRAL CHINMAYA MISSION TRUST, SANDEEPANY SADHANALAYA, SAKI VIHAR ROAD, MUMBAI – 400072, INDIA.
Tel: 91-22-2857 2367 ● Fax: 91-22-2857 3065 ● Email: ccmt@chinmayamission.com ● Website: www.chinmayamission.com



SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA

The following brahmacharis will serve Chinmaya Mission in white:

No	Name	Centre
1	Brahmacharini Gomathi	Madurai, TN
2	Brahmacharini Thivyawadini	Sri Lanka
3	Brahmachari Mayell	Gangtok, Sikkim
4	Brahmachari Satyapriya	Bhubaneswar, Odisha
5	Brahmachari Niles	Mulund, Mumbai
6	Brahmachari Arun Gosai	New York, USA
7	Brahmachari Dhiren	Chicago, USA
8	Brahmachari Rahul Pathak	To be decided

Others who will be serving Chinmaya Mission full-time:

No	Name	Centre
1	Arunachalam and Priya	Tamaraipakkam, TN
2	Satyarama Kalluri and Kameshwari	Secunderabad, AP
3	JK Nayyar and Swapna Nayyar	To be decided
4	Rammohan and Shanti Rammohan	Alpharetta, USA
5	Rahul and Priya Maini	CIRS, TN
6	Narasimhan	To be decided

The following will be employed by Chinmaya Mission full-time:

1	Siddharth	CIF, Kerala
2	Avinash	CCMT
3	Anand Loganathan	CCMT
4	S. Subramanian	Chinmaya Vibhooti, MH
5	Saroj Sukhtankar	Chinmaya Vibhooti, MH
6	Dhirendra Joshi	South Mumbai
7	Shailaja Sankar	CIF, Kerala

I invoke the Lord's Grace and Puja Gurudev's Blessings on them for their spiritual progress.

With Prem & Om,

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SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA



Seated on chairs- Left to right: Br Samvidji, Sw Advayanandaji, Guruji, Sw Brahmanandaji

Sitting in white (Group 1)- Left to right: Dhiren Khatri, Satyapriya Parida, Mayell

Standing in white: Rahul Maini, Satyarama Kalluri, Arun Gosain, Rahul Pathak, Arunachalam, Nilesch

Sitting in white (Group 2)- Left to right: Priya, Thivyawadini, Gomathi, Priya Maini

Standing in white : Kameshwari, Swapna Nayyar, J K Nayyar, Rammohan, Shanti Rammohan

Sitting left to right

Srinivasa **now** Shrivatsa Chaitanya, Hindupur
Ramakrishna **now** Narayana Chaitanya, Vikarabad
Binish **now** Anish Chaitanya, to be decided
Geetha **now** Devaki Chaitanya, CIF
Anusha **now** Usha Chaitanya, Siddipet
Nirali **now** Anupama Chaitanya, Jamnagar
Sukanya **now** Shraddha Chaitanya, Salem
Ketaki **now** Maitreyi Chaitanya, Pune

Standing left to right

Sai Ishan **now** Shivendra Chaitanya, Sri Lanka
Omkaar **now** Abhijit Chaitanya, Durban
Sunil **now** Mukunda Chaitanya, Kozhikode
Ganesh **now** Vighnesh Chaitanya, Coimbatore
Nadessan **now** Ishan Chaitanya, Reunion Island
Suresh **now** Kartik Chaitanya, Sri Lanka
Yogesh **now** Yukta Chaitanya, Mahim, Mumbai
Manoj **now** Prajjwal Chaitanya, Ahmedabad
Sushant **now** Veda Chaitanya, Navi Mumbai

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CM Northwest Indiana's Charity Golf Tournament

by Padmini Makam

Chinmaya Mission Northwest Indiana (CM NWI) held its seventh annual charity golf tournament with the theme of “Alert-Aware-Act: Spirituality in Action,” on September 4, 2013. By the Lord’s grace and Guru’s blessings, it was a beautiful day for a round of 18 holes of golf. The players arrived to register and enjoy a light lunch before taking off to the practice range. At 1 p.m. Tournament Director Prakash Makam extended a warm welcome to all, thanked all the sponsors, advertisers, and players for their continuing support, and invited Swami Ishwarananda (CM Los Angeles) to address everyone. After Swamiji’s address, the tournament began with a T-shot, per tradition, followed by “Best Ball Scramble” played by 60 golfers in 30 carts. With the support of all well-wishers, CM NWI raised nearly \$21,000.



Kids' Summer Camp 2013 at *Chinmaya Gokul*

by Shweta Agarwal

On a summer morning, CM Bakersfield’s *Chinmaya Gokul* ashram filled with children and adults ready to enroll in the most eagerly awaited summertime activity at *Chinmaya Gokul*—the ninth annual summer kids’ camp. This year’s camp was held July 15-20, and organized by Sudha Bhatt and a team of dedicated CM volunteers under the guidance of the camp *pāchārya*, Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya (CM Austin). The camp theme was Hindu festivals for the younger kids, and the 16 samskaras for the older kids. As in previous years, this year’s camp also featured growing enthusiasm. There were 75 attendees, ranging from pre-k to high school.

Each day began in the shrine with opening prayers led by Girishji. The two groups thereafter went to their respective classes with their teachers, and the volunteers went about their tasks with smile and excitement. During the day, campers got an opportunity to learn about various rituals and customs, including the use of a *pūrṇa-kumbha*.

Each day was designed for campers to imbibe Vedantic knowledge in fun and festive atmosphere. The campers were particularly amazed when Girishji blended Harry Potter into the curriculum to help them learn and compare cultures.

Arts and crafts, *bhajans*, folk dances, skits, yoga, and *Gītā* chanting were all part of this short but inspiring camp. On “Fun Day,” the children soaked and splashed in water slides to cool down in the hot summer afternoon.

Every afternoon, during rest and recreation, the children tirelessly practiced for their final day performance for all parents. It was an amazing sight every afternoon. The children amazed and

humbled the audience everyone during a Jeopardy-style presentation, showing how much these sponges can soak in, in such short span of time. The parents also enjoyed the display of art projects and posters prepared by children depicting various Hindu festivals. The camp concluded with a delicious lunch for all attendees.

Throughout each day, help was provided by tireless volunteers, along with dedicated parents, to serve lunch and snacks to the children, maintain discipline and cleanliness in the ashram, and keep to the time schedule. Heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers, teachers, and sponsors. Everyone is already excitedly looking forward to and preparing for the theme of next year's camp.



CM Houston's Bala Vihar Reopens with Shri Ganesha Puja

by Padmashree Rao; photos by Jayesh Mistry

Auspiciousness and joy marked the start of another Bala Vihar year at CM Houston's *Chinmaya Prabha* ashram when over 800 children, from toddlers to teenagers, performed a Ganesha puja with signature Chinmaya spirit on September 8, 2013. The celebrations of *Shrī Ganesha Chaturthi* continued through the week and culminated with a joyous *Ganeshavisarjan* on September 15, again, with delightful Bala Vihar flair.

It was a festive Sunday morning as happy parents brought their children into the ashram, where a colorful puja environment greeted them. Enthusiastic Bala Vihar teachers and affectionate parent-volunteers escorted the children to their places in grade-wise rows. The children felt special as they sat eagerly in front of their own puja plate which had a beautiful glass cube inscribed with the image of Lord Ganesha, and a small cup of *akshata* (yellow rice).

BV teacher Shobha Ravishankar welcomed all the children back to another wonderful year of Chinmaya Bala Vihar learning. As the entire hall reverberated with the voices of children chanting "Om" and singing an invocation to Pujya Gurudev, the sacred vibrations set the stage for a joyous and inspiring Ganesha puja.

Every child performed the traditional 16-step Vedic puja with caring involvement, guided by a child-friendly audio-visual presentation. As the children's attention was drawn with the sacred ringing of the bell, their faces were sincere as they made their *sañkalpa*, or resolve, to place their mind on the Lord. It was an exciting moment when children heard a doorbell ring, announcing the arrival of Lord Ganesha! From that first step of inviting God into their hearts, the children were absorbed in offering Him a beautiful seat, washing His feet and hands, and offering Him water to drink and bathe. Reciting the verses Sanskrit and offering the *akshata* symbolically at each step, the children could understand the progression in worship.

When the children performed the next steps, such as giving God beautiful clothes, the sacred thread, auspicious *kumkum*, and fragrant sandalwood, the puja became not just a ritual, but a wondrous welcome and get-together with Lord Ganesha. The children chanted the eleven primary names of Lord Ganesha and hearing their meanings added more clarity to their prayer. When they symbolically offered the incense, they understood the beauty of giving their best to God. Their offerings of sweet raisins as *naivedyam*, and a coin as *dakshinā*, signaled their gratitude and sharing. Finally, after praying with the *dīpam* for divine light to shine in their hearts, the Vedic *ārṭi* was sung in unison. It was profound to see how all the children, teachers, and parents were immersed in the worship of Lord Ganesha that morning.

After the meaningful puja, all the children carried their own glass idol of Ganesha with loving care to the *Saumyakashi Shivālaya* temple, following a beautiful, large idol of Lord Ganesha. The temple priest sanctified the idols for the whole week with special prayers until the children came the next Sunday to Bala Vihar. When the children returned on September 15, it was amazing to see how they looked forward to taking their adored Ganesha idol home!

With a special connection established after a personal puja, it was time for all children to come together again in the sunbathed courtyard of the ashram—this time, for a happy and noisy Ganapati *visarjan* celebration. Amid loud chants of “*Gaṇapati bāpā moriyā, puḍuchā varshi laukariyā,*” parents and children watched the beautiful, large Ganesha idol being submerged into at the foot of the temple, and prayed that He return next year and reside in all their hearts.

The auspicious coinciding of the start of Chinmaya Bala Vihar with *Shrī Gaṇesha Chaturthi* celebrations energized the entire CM Houston family. The dedicated efforts of many teams of volunteers, under the guidance of Acharyas Gaurang and Darshana Nanavaty, truly brought the festive spirit home. And, when the clouds opened up in showers just after the Ganesha *visarjan* that morning, it was taken as a sign of Lord Ganesha's grace and blessings after the sincere prayers of all the devotees.



CM Flint's *Shrī Gaṇeśha Chaturthi*

by Uma Bhatta

CM Flint held its *Shrī Gaṇeśha Chaturthi* celebrations on September 8, 2013 at 10:30 a.m. with *bhajans* by C.K. Lakshmi and a puja led by Bhargavi Raiji. Eight families sponsored the successful event, which was attended by approximately 120 devotees. The sponsors performed special *Gaṇeśha ārti* in Marathi that day. Aashima and Samarth Sarin presented the significance of the festival, the purpose of the puja, and a story about Lord Ganesha. The celebrations concluded with lunch *prasād* for all.



CM Calgary Summer Yajna and Retreat

by Sonu Kaushik

CM Calgary was fortunate to have Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya (CM San Jose) visit this summer and conduct a yajna and spiritual retreat. The successful yajna was attended by many Calgarians. The annual retreat was held in the picturesque town of Canmore, nestled in the Canadian Rockies.

As is the case each year, this year's summer retreat was also full and was attended by many families that included parents, children, and grandparents. There was something for each attendee and Prabodhji held the attention of all ages alike. Each attendee went back with a memorable, soulful experience, and practical tips on incorporating sadhana into daily life.

The theme of the yajna and retreat was to understand our true, eternal nature. The three texts studied were Adi Shankracharya's *Brahma-jnānāvali*, *Dhanyāshṭakam*, and *Rāma-Gītā* from *Tulasī Rāmāyaṇa*.

The morning guided satsang meditations were on *Brahma-jnānāvali*, which elucidates our true nature in 19 verses, reminding us that we are indeed unattached, eternal, flawless, pure bliss, and beyond the three gunas. These verses also indicate that there is only one truth—Brahman.

The evening satsang on *Rāma Gītā* described the Guru-disciple dialogue between Shri Rama and Lakshmaṇa. The text illustrates the importance of having a Guru and approaching him correctly to gain spiritual knowledge. The definitions of knowledge, dispassion, maya, devotion, the individual, and the supreme Lord are beautifully explained in this text.

The retreat featured the study of *Dhanyāshṭakam*, a collection of eight verses by Adi

Shankaracharya, which describes the blessedness and gratitude a devotee experiences on attaining oneness with the supreme Self.

CM Calgary is grateful for Prabodhji's systematic and logical teachings that not only give us a deeper knowledge of the Self, but also fill us with devotion.



Swami Ishwaranda in Vancouver

by Krishnan Iyer

The recent jnana yajna by Swami Ishwarananda on *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Chapter 16 and his original composition, *Pathways to Peace*, was wonderfully sweet *prasād* for CM Vancouver members and spiritual seekers of the local community September 23-27, 2013. As always, Swamiji's lectures were powerful, insightful, and thought-provoking.

People repeat the same acts every day, even many times the same day, because they want to derive the same results of enjoyment and pleasure. They go through life working toward a goal of ever elusive financial security only because they do not know when to stop. They get angry when they do not achieve what they want and greedy when they do. Swamiji, in his unique and compelling style brought home the truths as told by Lord Krishna to Arjuna—that excessive desire, reactive anger and undue greed are the three gateways to hell. Even good actions performed bind one to the cycle of life and death if one is attached to their results. Swamiji gave us logical arguments as to why one should try to break away from this cycle in this life, here and now. He said holding on to even one virtue would lead us to Liberation because it would lead to all the other virtues. He cited the example of Mahatma Gandhi, who held onto truth and nonviolence throughout his life and whose birthday is now commemorated as the International Day of Nonviolence.

Little Miracles in Little Rock

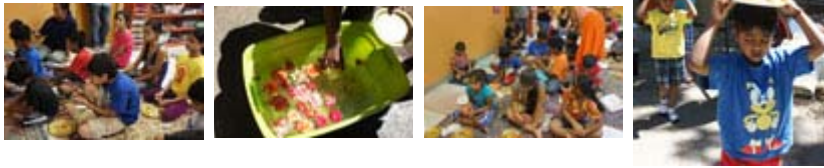
by Reshma Dadlani

Chinmaya Bala Vihar students in Little Rock, Arkansas celebrated *Shrī Gaṇesha Chaturthi* in September 2013. About 30 children got together and created their own unique, personal Ganesha out of wheat flour and haldi. As they created, they heard about the glories and symbolism of Lord Ganesha. Most kids loved the fact that Ganesha had big ears to listen to them.

After the idols of Lord Ganesha were created, the children performed a 16-step Vedic puja for their Lord Ganesha, singing for Him and remembering Him with love. It was a bit heartbreaking to do *visarjan* for the idols created. Some kids cried as they bid goodbye to their friend. Their

friendship had been brief, but beautiful, but they learned that Lord Ganesha would always remain with them in their hearts and come running every time they called.

This puja marked the start of another Chinmaya Bala Vihar year during which Shri Rama and Shri Krishna will be welcomed in the children's hearts and homes. They will celebrate both these avatars of Shri Hari and make friends with them as we go through the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavatam*. The two classes have a total of 30-35 children. Chinmaya Shishu Vihar for toddlers is planned to commence next month.



Boston CHYK Retreat: Vedanta Goes Pop!

by Reena Patel

On a crisp, autumn September day in Boston, 31 CHYKs arrived at CM Boston's *ChinmayaMāruti* ashram to invoke in the retreat titled, "Vedanta Goes Pop!" The theme of this weekend CHYK retreat was to find Vedanta in daily life. The opening ceremony was particularly special with the loving welcome of Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara) for the first time, in the presence of CM Boston's new resident acharya, Swami Chaitanyananda.

The first evening included dinner, Vivekji's discourse on the "Significance of Samsaras," and a New England ice cream social, with scoop over scoop (or two).

Saturday was an early start with a yoga and meditation class, followed by an introduction to the text, *Bhaja Govindam*, the CHYKs' handpicked choice for this retreat. Swami Chaitanyananda beautifully introduced *Bhagavatpāda* Acharya Shankara as not only being one of the paramount thinkers of all time, but also as the noblest of Advaitic philosophers. Swamiji described a collection of melodies found within *Bhaja Govindam*, illustrated human unhappiness, and expounded on the real objective and path of life.

The assortment of group discussions, personal reflection, and intimate workshops brought new awareness and revelation of applying Vedanta in daily life. Activities included writing one's own eulogy; watching popular television commercials and mainstream movies; and reading quotes from renowned authors and literary works. The students discussed in what ways society exposes value-based messages and whether they have the correct alignment to tune into them.

After an impromptu game of Ultimate Frisbee, and cupcakes and chai, campers spent the afternoon in *maunam*, or silence. *Maunam* gave the time to reflect on the compounding messages throughout the day and was an opportunity to witness what happens when one is asked to do nothing at all.

The night was capped with Vivekji's continuing discourse on samskaras, a blindfold activity, and a debriefing of the day. On the last day of the retreat, the CHYKs helped out at CM Boston's 3.6-mile CORD walk.

All in all, it was a weekend full of revisiting ancient knowledge through practical workshops in like-minded company. "Vedanta Goes Pop!" left a lasting imprint on all the attendees through their newfound friendships and continuing journey of self-discovery.



CHYK DC Unwraps the Present

by Chinmayee Bala and Lakshmi Kirkire

CHYKs from all over the US are constantly trying to improve themselves so that they can contribute to the future of the world. The future, however, is not the main focus. How often do we focus on the present moment? The CHYKs of the Washington DC area decided to redirect their attention to the here-and-now during their 2013 three-day summer retreat. The retreat was titled, "Unwrapping the Present: Our Greatest Gift," and was attended by more than 50 CHYKs from across the US.

The highlight of the weekend was receiving three incredible discourses by the respected and beloved camp *āchārya*, Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara), as well as an introductory discourse by the renowned Acharya Vilasini Balakrishnan. The attendees were blessed to hear from such knowledgeable teachers and discuss the nuances of living in the present with fellow CHYKs.

On Friday afternoon, the participants filed in, shy and hesitant at first, but everyone was able to make friends by simply being sincere, honest, and open with one other. As Vivekji said in his discourse, every experience is one that we can learn from, and the experiences at this retreat were no different. Some of the most insightful teachings of the weekend were imparted through an improvisation game, a scavenger hunt in downtown DC, and an extensive obstacle course that revealed how difficult it truly is to live in the moment without fear of judgment or expectations about results.

By the retreat's end, many were holding back tears as the weekend concluded much too soon. The invaluable lessons learned at the retreat may have been about living in the present, but they will also be ones that are held dear to the heart as we move into the future.



Chinmaya Naada Bindu on the Rise

by Pramodini Rao

With the Lord's grace and Guru's blessings, Chinmaya Naada Bindu (CNB) has been blessed to walk with head held high in its four years of existence. Though only four years old, CNB has an audience base of more than 23,000 in its music and dance festivals; workshops at schools, colleges, and CM centers; and its music and dance intensives, programs, and performances. CNB has seen the performances of about 70-80 maestros and budding artists, and has taken up social service in two nearby schools in Kolwan.

Most importantly, CNB has found a place in the hearts of a wide range of well-wishers, from artists to audiences to sponsors, and looks forward to their continued support.

Jalsa 2013: Kushal Gopalka, a music lover, and archivist organized a three-day annual music retreat, "*Jalsa*," for the third consecutive year at CNB, August 15-18, 2013. The event included performances, listening sessions, video screenings, and discussions on Indian classical music. With performances by eminent musicians such as Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas, Pandit Brij Narayan, Vidushi Padma Talwalkar, Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan, Mohammad Bundu Khan, and Nancy Kulkarni, it was a truly enriching musical experience for all attendees and the CNB team.

First Hindustani Flute Workshop in Gujarat: In association with Adharvenu, CNB organized a three-day *bānsuri* (Hindustani flute) workshop at Rajkot, August 23-25, 2013, conducted by Himanshu Nanda, CNB Music Director. Students from different parts of Gujarat took part in this workshop with full dedication and enthusiasm. This first-of-its-kind workshop was organized for the entire state of Gujarat. Nanda also gave a flute concert on August 24 accompanied by Devendra Dave on tabla and CNB student Kshitij Saxena on flute.

Monsoon Masti: Themed "Enjoy the Rains with Music," *Monsoon Masti* was a residential weekend workshop conducted by CNB at *Sandeepany Sadhanālaya* in Powai, Mumbai, July 6-7, 2013. Attended by a group of 40 adults and 15 children, the participants were exposed to Hindustani classical and semi-classical forms, as well as *bhajans*. Special sessions on *sargam*-meditation, traversing the *thaats*, rhythm *masti*, a cappella singing, and *garza*-Maharashtra-*mājhā* also introduced them to different aspects of music. Tripti Vyas, a first-time participant said, "The workshop was a thorough joy! There was joy of music, fun of *masti*, and peace of spirituality. I am eagerly waiting to attend the next and the next!"

Monsoon Intensives 2013: Monsoon intensives are residential programmes in Hindustani vocal, flute, tabla and Bharatanatyam, where students spend three weeks at CNB and train in line with the traditional *guru-shishya-paramparā*. Designed and conducted by CNB Directors Ramaa Bharadvaj, Pramodini Rao, and Himanshu Nanda, these intensives also included special sessions conducted by expert guest faculty. This year, 22 students from India, France, Russia, UK, USA, and UAE participated in these intensives July 12-August 1, 2013. Students had a comprehensive daily schedule that enabled an all-round development in their respective art. Each day was filled with five hours of classroom training, dedicated practice, video screenings, lecture demonstrations, field trips, daily prayers, yoga, and spiritual talks that provided an ideal ground for the students to contemplate and develop their art.

Guru Pūrṇimā Meet: Students of Padma Vibhushan Pandit Shivkumar Sharma had organized

a *Guru Pūrṇimā* meet, August 2-5, 2013 at CNB. Conducted annually, this meet gives a wonderful opportunity for the students to express their gratitude toward their Guru and spend quality time with him. Performances, interactions, and casual conversations enabled the students, who are settled in different parts of the country, to reconnect with each other.



The Chinmaya Social Responsibility (CSR) program has spread farther and wider with new classes in vocal music for 22 select students from the Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Vidyalaya in Paud, Pune. CSR gives free music training at CNB to select students from the neighboring villages of Kolwan. Walking many miles to attend class, being never late, wanting lessons even on holidays—teaching the CSR students has been a most wonderful and rewarding experience. CNB is proud to be training such dedicated and passionate seekers of music, and currently has 33 CSR students in vocal and 11 in tabla.

CSR students presented a beautiful Punjabi *shabad* for *Guru Pūrṇima* on July 22, 2013. They CSR children received a gift of an umbrella, books, and other useful school items from a senior CM devotee and *sevak*, R. Krishnamoorthy, fondly called Tātā (grandfather) by everyone. He brought a smile on the faces of all the children with his unconditional love.

Flight to Ecstasy: CNB Music Director Himanshu Nanda gave a fundraising program for CORD Sri Lanka in Colombo. The main objective of the program was to create awareness about CORD Sri Lanka and raise funds for its ongoing projects, which support and empower women and children affected and marginalized by the civil war in the country.

CNB Productions' *Sampradāya Bhajans*: The live recording of *Dakshina Sampradāya Bhajans*, sung by Satish and Santosh Sundaram at “*Nrtya-Sura-Bharati*,” CNB’s eight-day music festival held in December 2010 is now available on CD and DVD. This brilliant two-hour performance is a must-have for all music lovers. To order or get more information, contact CNB.

Busy as Bees in CORD USA

by Subha Pathial, Paulomi Campbell, Shabana Dipchand

Hiren Gihwala, a high school student, who went on this year’s high school students’ service visit to CORD Sidhbari wrote: “This past summer, 24 students and I had the opportunity of a lifetime. We all came from different parts of the United States and made our way to Sidhbari, Himachal Pradesh, India. Some students came from California, some from Chicago, some from New Jersey, and one from North Carolina. As we made our journey to India, we all knew that this trip would be a chance for us to have an impact on this world. But little did we know that this trip would do, and be, much more than that. Over the three weeks, we formed lasting relationships and experienced the impact of CORD on a daily basis. We had the wonderful opportunity to learn from Dr. Kshama Metre, CORD’s National Director, and see the message

and hope that she and her team have been spreading among the villagers for the last 28 years.” Read more . . .

Vinod Sharma, one of the chaperones on this year’s service visit to *Chinmaya Vijaya* orphanage for girls in Kaza, Andhra Pradesh, India, wrote: “From the moment we entered the *Chinmaya Vijaya* campus and were greeted affectionately by the girls, to our tearful goodbyes 13 days later, this trip was a heartwarming and inspirational journey in which we got to experience firsthand the power of faith, love and service. We were immersed in love, kindness, acceptance, cheer, and selfless giving. Our high school students lived alongside the *Chinmaya Vijaya* girls. Waking at 4 a.m., they joined them in their morning chores that ranged from washing and hanging clothes, to dry and sweeping the courtyard, to helping the younger children get ready for school. On returning home from school, after playing with the girls, they tutored them in various subjects and read them bedtime stories.” Read about their experience.

During the summer, children spend endless hours on the net, cell phones, and television; often facing the possibility of endless boredom. Last summer however, some lucky boys and girls got a chance to make a difference in their lives and in the lives of others at the CORD Siruvani center. Swamini Vimalananda organized a Hari Seva Camp, with 80 participants, ages 7 and above. During this five-day camp, the first of its kind, the kids learned gardening and how to make toilets, vermin-compost units, coir rope, silk-cotton pillows, brooms, thatched palm leaves, and handmade paper. They learned all these processes from start to finish and also got to interact and work with beneficiaries in the villages and farms. Read more . . .

Over the last year, CORD Siruvani had been raising funds for trying to establish a permanent CORD center. The *bhūmi pūjā* was done in the august presence of Pujya Guruji. Read more in their quarterly report.

Keeping hands clean through improved hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Hand wash solution production training was held in June 2013 at CORD Sri Lanka in Jaffna. This was a full-day training program to empower women affected by the war to be self-sustaining and manufacturing cleansing hand wash solution as an income generating activity. The training was conducted by Mr. Pakeerathan and attended by 20 women. Read more . . .

CORD Deuladiha continues to strengthen the rights and responsibilities of women through regular awareness on local self-governance in the Mahilā Mandals and Self-Help Groups. Women have gradually increased their attendance in the Palli Sabhā and Grām Sabhā meetings. These women have demonstrated their interest and concerns by asking important questions, which has led to increased knowledge about their rights and the rights of others. For example, some of these women have become advocates for pensions for the elderly and widowed at the Palli Sabhā meetings. Read more . . .

The Chinmaya Rameshwari Mahilā Mandal, along with the active guidance and supervision of CORD Lathikata, organized a rally against drug abuse on April 22, 2013. Over 250 women and school children from various villages of the Rāmjodi Grām Panchāyat assembled together to bring awareness to the detrimental effects of alcohol and drug abuse. This rally was inaugurated by Swami Kevalananda and spread throughout the villages, inspiring people with powerful anti-alcohol and drug slogans. Read more . . .

CORD Tamaraipakkam continues to create awareness on the importance of Grām Sabhās by organizing ward-wide Upgrām Sabhās and strengthen local self-governance in villages. During these Upgrām Sabhās, the villagers discuss topics such as sanitation, drinking water, power supply, seniors' pensions, and plastic wastage. These forums give the villagers an opportunity to record all their concerns and demand solutions, and it encourages them to participate in the Grām Sabhās. Read more . . .

In other news, CORD Director Vijaya Cherukuri gave a CORD USA presentation to an audience of 800 CM members at the July 2013 Shri Chinmaya *Mahāsamādhī Ārādhana* Camp. Coming up on the horizon, CM Minneapolis, Washington DC, and New York will be doing their annual Walk for CORD.

Features

Karma Yoga of the Three-in-One:

Pujya Swami Tapovanam, Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Tejomayananda

by Anjali Singh

Param Pujya Swami Tapovanji Maharaj, the Guru of our Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, lived his entire life as an unrelenting ascetic, simple to the core, graceful in bearing, and ever established in the citadel of the Self. Unmoved by the world's changing phenomena, aware of its tumultuous nature, he was the walking embodiment of utter detachment. He roamed the Himalayas, not to find peace, but to exaltedly revel in Nature's beauty. And in his so doing, his holy feet blessed every particle of earth on which he stepped. His communion with the lofty Himalaya mountains was itself a sublime example of the art of contemplation and his love of the sacred river Ganga was an outpouring of bhakti. His settlement in Uttarkashi brought to life the final culmination--his divine role as a Guru.

Whatever karma flows from a man of Realization comes bearing the approval stamp of the Almighty. Devoid of any trace of egocentricity, Tapovanji Maharaj was a teacher to all who came to him seeking solace. But he was Guru only to the rarest of seekers who sought only the ultimate goal of life, Self-realization. One such seeker was named Swami Chinmayananda. One of the greatest and renowned of Tapovanji Maharaj's selfless services to the world was accepting and teaching this unique disciple who, in turn, shared the most precious and treasured gift of his Guru with millions around the world.

Pujya Swami Tapovanji Maharaj was the Source and Grace from which our Pujya Gurudev emerged. This Source, beginningless and endless, infinite and true, lies just beyond the misty clouds of temporal matter. Swami Tapovanji Maharaj is the divine Source of the Chinmaya Mission, the grandsire of the Chinmaya Family, the mighty Sustainer and nourisher of our roots. The strength of the Chinmaya Mission lies deep in Him. We pray to him, seeking his blessings to keep us on the road of rishis, to lead us to reverie in the Self, as the Self.

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Pujya Gurudev was a daring and dynamic visionary who, having gained Knowledge

of the Self from his Guru, took inspiration from the roaring Mother Ganga and came down to the plains to share the Truth with the masses. This was his Karma Yoga. He said: "To a man of Realization, there is nothing to gain or to lose--either by the practice of meditation or by working in the world in a spirit of selfless dedication and divine love. Certain periods of history reflect the general tempo of man and his interest in the social environment and activities, while other periods are characterized by man's aspirations for a quick and studious life of contemplation and meditation. A man of Realization acts in the world of his historical period, not prompted by personal vasanas, but as service to mankind due to the pressure of the total vasanas of the community, the total destiny of the world (samasthi prarabdha). The total vasanas form the equipment through which the Spirit functions. Thus comes about the expression of the God Principle. God works through the God-man."

Can a frog in the well ever conceive the vastness of the ocean? Gurudev said, "Unless you have a comprehensive view of the universe, how can you know the cause of it? If the teacher waits until your mind is big enough, 20 generations of teachers must die and still there will be no hope of you giving up your little ego. You are still in the well. So, the only way of doing it is to bring the whole universe to you. . . ." To do just this, Pujya Gurudev established Chinmaya Mission. And in this revival and revitalization of Hinduism, especially Vedanta, humanity was reintroduced to the strength and glory of Self-realization.

The most difficult task is to be an innovator, to start something that goes against the current flow. The force of the opposing current drowns most innovators. Only a hero, a man of grit and determination, can work against all odds and come out a winner. The world began to honour the man who, at first, had been vehemently criticized by the orthodoxy of his time. Gurudev's contribution to the world was to bring awareness to the people at large of the liberating knowledge of Vedanta that is the birthright of every individual. Millions of people in the world continue to be benefited directly and indirectly by Pujya Gurudev's unending service and teachings through Mission centres, acharyas, publications, classes, yajnas, institutions, and projects.

The effectiveness of this spread of knowledge definitely tied in to the fact that Gurudev taught in English. His literary paintings and inimitable wit that peppered his talks and written commentaries became renowned as a unique, memorable, and welcome approach to spirituality. Pujya Gurudev belongs to the rank of pioneers, whose genius changed the world forever.

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And in the footsteps that followed came Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, a modern traditionalist whose quiet manner and simple devotion has manifested wonders. Keeping the eternal values intact, his greatest Karma Yoga has been taking forward and expanding the vision of his Guru. Rare are such perfect disciples who come to reveal themselves as perfect masters. Under his tutelage, guidance, and administration, Chinmaya Mission has blossomed as a haven for the sadhana and perfection of karma, bhakti, and jnana.

His innovative and creative projects of Chinmaya Vibhooti, Upanishad Ganga, Chinmaya Naada Bindu, and original musical compositions have impressed and blessed devotees worldwide. Under his supervision came the establishment of the Chinmaya International Residential School, the expansion of the Chinmaya International Foundation, and the renovation of Tapovan Kuti have been marvelous

accomplishments in themselves.

Gurudev always said that if religion is not presented in the language of the day, or if it is too rigid in its application, that religion or culture will soon die. Many civilizations that refused to change with the times found their place among the dead fossils of history. Understanding this clearly, Guruji has taken Chinmaya Mission into the technological age with a dignified balance and right purpose that never swerves from Truth.

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In God-realized masters, the Lord alone functions, for in them there is no ego or doership. The blessed grace, teachings, and refuge of such a rare combination of three God-realized masters, who are One, is like the flow of one Mother Ganga who flows under many names. The sacred flow of these masters that is known as Chinmaya Mission is a mighty movement that brooks no delay in serving all and helping spiritual seekers reach the ultimate Goal.

We are, one and all, eternally grateful, indebted, humbled, purified. May we be blessed to live in constant remembrance of this undeserved grace of our Guru Parampara.

Traveling with Pujya Gurudev to Uttarkashi by Anjali Singh

It was the beginning of February 1981 and the weather was cold. Pujya Gurudev was going on a retreat to Uttarkashi for three days, and I was to travel with him. This was a long cherished dream about to come true for me. Until then, the only other time that I had traveled with him was in 1966—to Ahmedabad, Jabalpur, and Surat.

It rained all the way from Delhi to Haridwar, and on the way to the Meerut cantonment, our car (which was behind Swamiji's) lost its way. A bit later, the car battery stopped working. Instead of sleeping huddled around a fire in a deserted jaggery factory, we decided to somehow make it to Haridwar using whatever was left of the battery. In my car were S. Kohli (CM Kuwait president), Pushpa Jaisinghani, and Brahmachari Radhakrishnan (later Swami Jyotirmayananda). They took charge of rationing the use of the headlights. After a few more small-scale mishaps, we finally reached Haridwar late at night.

The next morning, in the pitch dark that was enhanced by a drizzle and electricity failure, we began the exciting journey to Uttarkashi via Rishikesh. This time we stayed close behind Swamiji's car. We wound our way up through a beautiful wooded road that raised us high above Rishikesh, allowing us to view the sacred site in pre-dawn light, hugging and nestling the majestic Ganga.

This beginning of the hilly journey was momentous for me. Twenty years earlier (in 1961), I had gone this way right up to Gangotri, and Swamiji had come into my life three months later—a gift of Mother Ganga, I believe—a result of my first pilgrimage to Her.

As we neared Chamba at 7,000 ft., we were met with billows of mist and the cars halted for a short while. All of us joined Swamiji as he shared his *channas* with us. He told us that ever since his days to Uttarkashi on foot, he had always eaten

hotchannas and *halvā* in Chamba. We made a few such short stops on the way and got to talk to Swamiji during each stop.

As we neared Uttarkashi, the scenery changed dramatically. At times we could see the ravines far below; only Mr. Kohli kept his eyes tightly shut during those sights. At other times, picturesque, green stretches of wheat fields terraced the hillsides towards the Ganga. And here and there, we met herds of shaggy mountain goats. In Swamiji's car, he pointed out to the accompanying devotees (Leela Nambiar, Kamal Bhavnani, and Raju Rohira) the spots where he had halted during his two journeys on foot.



Mountain goats en route



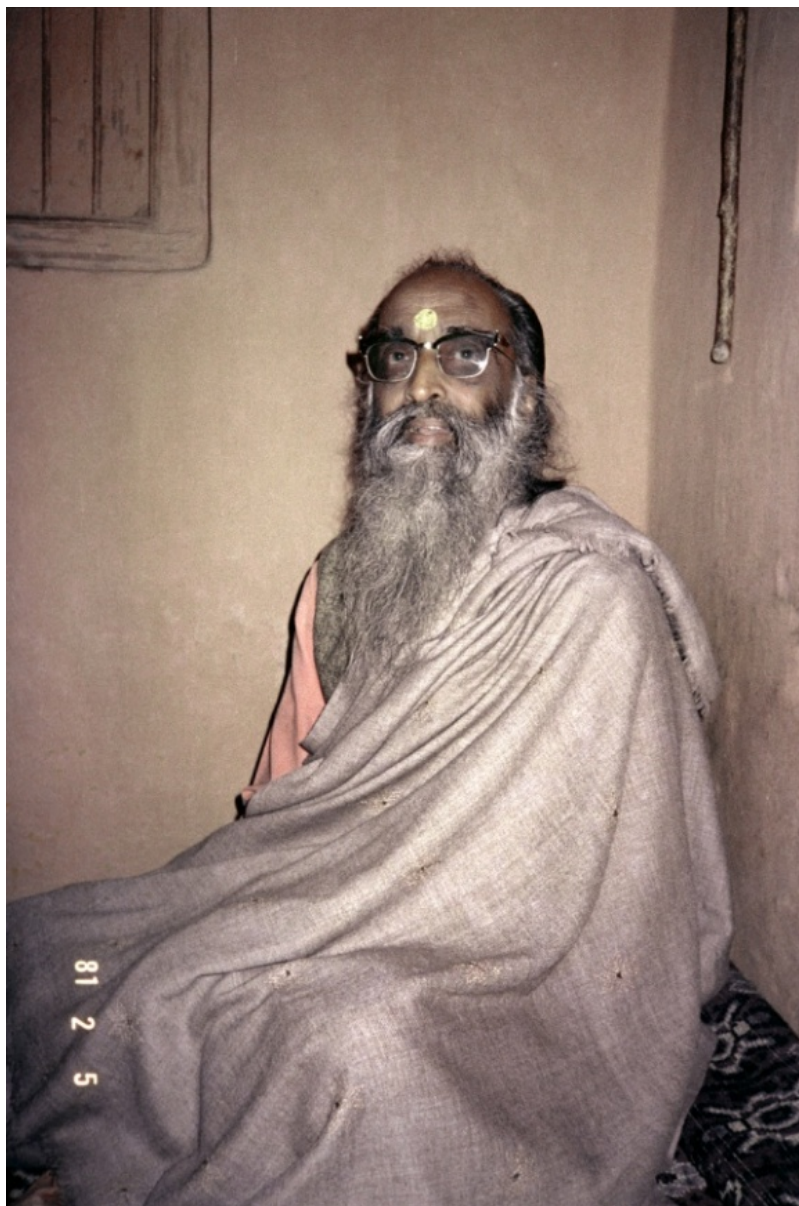
Swamiji in the first car



Swamiji talking to Kamal Bhavnani in the car

The road to Uttarkashi was bad, especially the last few kilometers, which were untarred, slushy, and rocky. It was drizzling when we reached. Swamiji sprang out and started climbing to *Tapovan Kuti*; everyone else got busy collecting their hand luggage. I left my luggage (and the camera) in a hurry in the car, so that I could catch up with Swamiji and take his briefcase from him. In doing so, I unwittingly entered Swamiji's temporal home by his side on my very first visit to *Tapovan Kuti*. I was ecstatic, too overjoyed for words.

The rainwater collected at the steps washed Swamiji's feet in greeting. As I opened the latch, the door creaked and a bell tinkled to mark our entrance. Swamiji prostrated at the shrine in *Tapovan Kuti* and sat down in the place where we see him seated in the famous photograph of him with his Guru. He looked out toward the Ganga reflectively. Gradually, the others joined us and we all sat around him.



Swamiji sitting in Tapovan Kuti



Swamiji with Mr. Kohli in Tapovan Kuti

Tapovan Kuti had been kept just as it used to be, now a sacred shrine with an ashram built around it. The small veranda outside the mud-plastered room is where Swami Tapovanam spent the major part of his life. It was a moment of deep devotion, gratitude, and significance for all of us to be sitting beside our beloved Guru in the very sacred place where he had sat with his. Perhaps subconsciously we were pledging ourselves to him and seeking blessings; perhaps this was the purpose of our visit.

Tapovan Kuti represents years of *tapas* (austerity) of an enlightened master. This is not the *tapas* of sadhana by which a spiritual seeker evolves, but the *tapas* of Self-realization, by which a master blesses all of creation. The profundity of a master's *tapas* charges the atmosphere. And a sincere seeker's mind, filled with faith and surrender, can bask in, and draw from, its spiritual content.

Tapovan Kuti also represents the *Guru-shishya paramparā*. In handing down the knowledge of the Self to Pujya Gurudev, Param Pujya Swami Tapovanji made our Gurudev his ultimate *Tapovan Prasad*, his holy gift to humanity. Today, we are blessed to be benefiting from the *tapo-bala* (strength of austerity) of our *Guru-paramparā*.

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda describes the *Guru-shishya-paramparā* as a specialty of Indian culture. He has said, "Where there is a tradition of *Guru-shishya-paramparā*, there is growth and unfoldment. If every individual feels that only he or she is special, then knowledge will remain only with him or her; there will be no flow. A flow is necessary, like the flow of Gangaji. There are certain rivers that exist only in the rainy season, and when the rainy season is over, the river is also over; it is not a perennial flow. Moreover, the Self cannot be known by sense perception, inference, or mere reasoning. For Self-knowledge, the teacher must be enlightened himself and capable of enlightening others. Even if all who come in contact with the teacher are not enlightened immediately, they are inspired, and this inspiration is what is required in life. Once a person is inspired, he or she will be a different person."

Swamiji, too, never took any credit. Sitting there in *Tapovan Kuti*, Swamiji told us that although Swami Tapovanam himself never left the *kuti* to go out and work in the world; his greatness was that he molded Chinmaya and did his work through

him. “They were good, great, grand days,” said Swamiji.

During the first eight of ten years that Swamiji was in association with Swami Tapovanam (the first few continuous years of study in Uttarkashi and Gangotri, and his later intermittent visits between jnana yajnas), when in Uttarkashi, Swamiji ate only the *bhikshā* (usually watery *dāl* and *roṭi*) served at the Kali Kambliwallah Annakshetra. “Never, not once, did I even get a headache!” Swamiji told us. “It was only when I went down and started taking ‘better’ food and a more ‘balanced’ diet that little, little troubles started!”

Swami Tapovanam had eaten only *bhikshā* food over his last 50 years. And if any sweets came from devotees, he would neither eat them himself nor give them to his disciples. “The box would lie there till it rotted!” said Swamiji. “Tapovanji Maharaj was very strict. Most students wanted to run away.”

Swamiji recalled that Swami Tapovanam would predict that a new student might perhaps stay for a maximum of ten days. “I thought of running away many times!” he said with laughter. “But it is the mind that keeps the body healthy,” he said. “If the mind is tuned only toward That, and thinking only of That, and if the mind is cheerful, the skin starts a photosynthesis by itself. It is only for volume that one eats! After all, the plants and vegetables get all the energy directly from the sun, so why not us? If we swamis in Uttarkashi are suffering, then it is because we are not doing sadhana.”

After lunch, Swamiji went into his study and did not come out until bhajans began before dinner. While he was working, a few of us silently ventured into his study. I daringly decided to take some pictures, and did a *parikrama* (circumambulation) around his desk, clicking from every angle.



Swamiji at his writing desk in Tapovan Kuti



The Allah Baksh Krishna, Lord Shiva, and Ivory Krishna

Doing this, I saw pictures of my two Krishnas on a shelf on the wall above his desk. Many years earlier, I had given these two Krishnas to Swamiji with a love that was genuine, though perhaps not completely unselfish, and I was touched to see Swamiji's compassionate acceptance of the same.

Swamiji let me take one round of pictures, but when I got greedy and started taking a second round, the expected happened—he threw us all out, except for Asha Lohra, who was helping him with his mail. Kamal was upset that I got everyone thrown out of the room, but at least we have some photos.

In the evening, two *brahmachārīs* sang beautiful bhajans in the satsang hall before Tapovan-Krishna, who is at His most charming here, poised on a wooden altar. After bhajans, Swamiji spoke about his plans for the Sidhbari ashram to Swami Akhandanandaji (president of Sadhu Samaj in Uttarkashi). Swamiji spoke about his idea to bring out a batch of *pahāḍī* (hill-folk) *brahmachārīs* who would be taught the *Ramayana* in Hindi and given some knowledge of cooperative farming and medicine. When their course ended, the *brahmachārīs* would go into the interiors of Himachal Pradesh and teach the *Ramayana* in the local dialect to the hill-folk. They would also treat common diseases and show the people how to develop their own cooperative farming and cottage industry. In this way, Swamiji said, he hoped that *pahāḍī* children would grow up in a healthy atmosphere of social values, preserving their spiritual heritage. Swamiji added that the completion of this plan would discharge his debt to the Himalayas, in whose shelter he had received spiritual knowledge, and to whose folk he would be giving it back.

We had our dinner with Swamiji in the kitchen, where it was warmer. Swamiji then retired to his room. I was told he was up at his desk at 2:30 a.m. and he worked the next ten hours, not even coming out for breakfast. We saw him only at noon after our return from the famous Vishvanath Mandir, where 20-25 sadhus (one from each ashram in Uttarkashi) were expected for *bhikshā*. After lunch, Swamiji again went back to his desk to work, granting us permission to go visit some mahatmas.

We first went to see Swami Govindagiri who lived in the *kutiā* right next to Swami Tapovanji's. He was Swamiji's contemporary and recalled some interesting stories. He told us that when Swamiji's first commentary on *Māndūkya Kārikā* was

printed, he had dedicated it to his Guru. And when Swami Tapovanam had received it, he had been very pleased, saying, “Chinmaya *bahut buddhimān hai*” (Chinmaya is very intelligent).



Swamiji with Swami Govindagiriji in Tapovan Kuti

We also visited Dharmavati Mata, whom Swamiji revered greatly. By the time we got back to *Tapovan Kuti* it was raining, and Mrs. Nambiar, who had a knack of getting her socks wet, managed to dip them into a puddle for a second time.

Swamiji came out a little before dinner and we sat around him in the verandah. This was our last opportunity with him in Uttarkashi. Gracefully swinging his body to and fro, from front to back, to the accompanying rhythmic sounds of the Ganga, he said, “When you move your body so, you hear Om, Om, Om.”

The sun began to set. The lighting in Tapovan Kuti was very dim. Brahmachari Ramesh sang bhajans and Raju shifted further into her silent self. It was very cold; Pushpa added yet another shawl over her already two sweaters, overcoat, and shawl. Mrs. Nambiar, who was accustomed to Chennai weather, was feeling uncomfortable. But Brahmacharis Radhakrishnan and Prabhakaran seemed quite immune; other than a vest, never did we see an extra piece of clothing on them. Mr. Kohli also wanted to claim the distinction of not being heavily clad, but Pushpa always reminded him of the tie over his shirt!

Swamiji insisted that we leave at 5 a.m. the next morning, despite Mr. Kohli, who, “speaking on behalf of the drivers,” said it was risky to try the first five kilometers of bad road in the dark. He was horrified that we would be driving through the ravine area in that sort of visibility. At 5 a.m., Mother Nature sent hail to bid Swamiji goodbye. For forty-five minutes it continued, and when the offerings were spent, we used a torch light to make our way down the steep and uneven path to the main road.

This time, Swamiji changed places with Brahmachari Radhakrishnan and sat in our car. We ploughed and bumped along the slushy road in silence. The visibility was poor because of the mist, and when we met a stream crossing the road, Mr. Kohli insisted on getting out of the car so he could see the road for himself. Was it left, right, or straight? He wasn't sure! On one side was definitely the river, but everything else looked ambiguous. His shoes got wet and I had to check myself

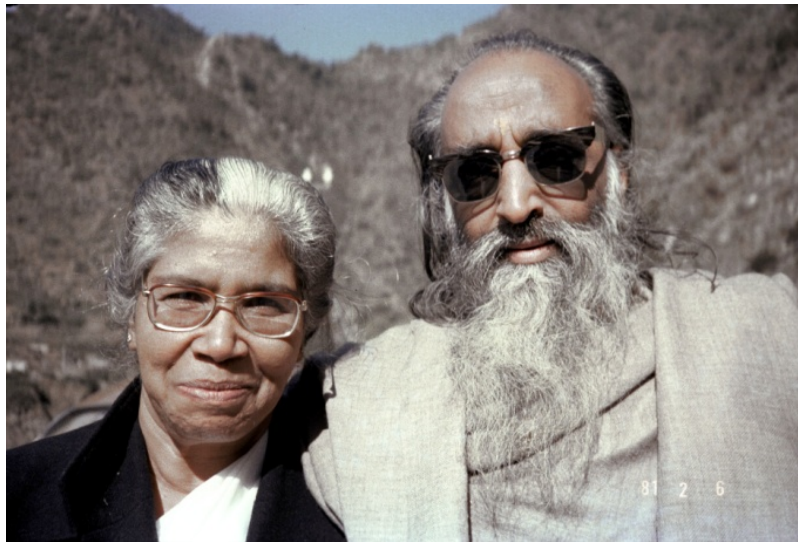
from laughing. Mrs. Bindra (a long-time devotee of Swamiji's from Delhi; she knew Swamiji's habits well) had warned me that if, by chance, I happened to find myself in Swamiji's car in the early hours of the morning, I was not to chatter away or laugh, as he would be doing *japa*. Luckily, the road got better and we gained speed; the rain finally stopped as well. It was the most wonderful experience to drive in the pre-dawn hours in silence with Swamiji.

If astronomical configurations have any say in the scheme of things, they were definitely benign for me at that moment. I looked up at the few stars twinkling in the dark early morning sky and said silently to them, "Swamiji will be back soon, along with me, I hope."

Within the next one hour, the indigo sky was indigone, steadily transforming into lighter hues, outlining the dark mountains in sharp contrast. It was a beautiful painting of five mountain ranges, one behind the other, in layers of shades, from gray to blue to purple, the sun about to rise in the next two minutes. Despite my most persuasive "pleeease" to stop for a photograph of such a fantastic and perfect setting, Swamiji just would not relent. So I kept the sole copy with me, in my memory slab.

We soon climbed higher to reach an aerial view of the Ganga forking into and around the mountains, embracing their every curve. Swamiji remarked then, "When the Ganga takes a turn toward the north, that place is considered very holy. Temples are generally built in that area. It is rare that man turns his attention from the world of objects, emotions, and thoughts [north] toward his Source, towards the Self. This effort to turn against the downward flow, back toward the spring of Consciousness, is symbolically marked by such places as Benares and Uttarkashi, where the Ganga turns northward."

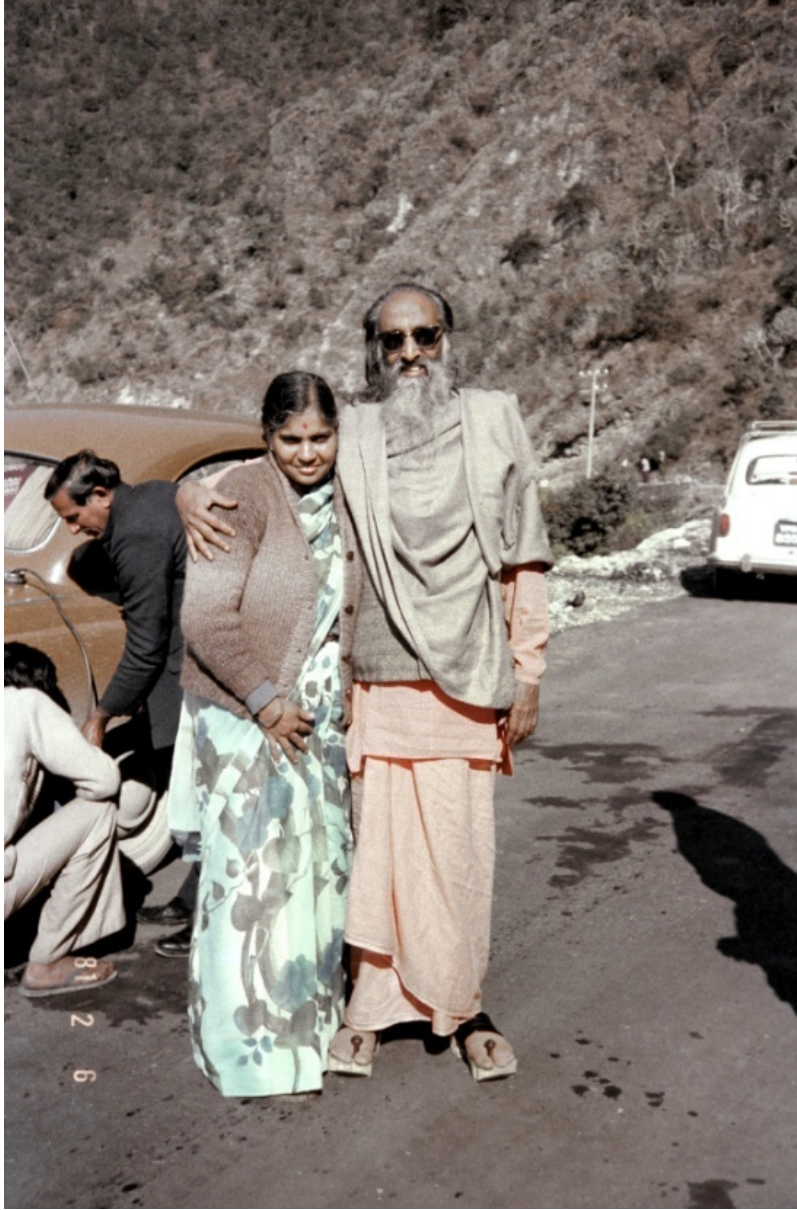
Further along (and quite fortunately, I might add), the other car ran out of petrol! This meant we had to stop to give them some from our car and I could take individual photographs of Swamiji with everybody, although the scenery was not as beautiful here.



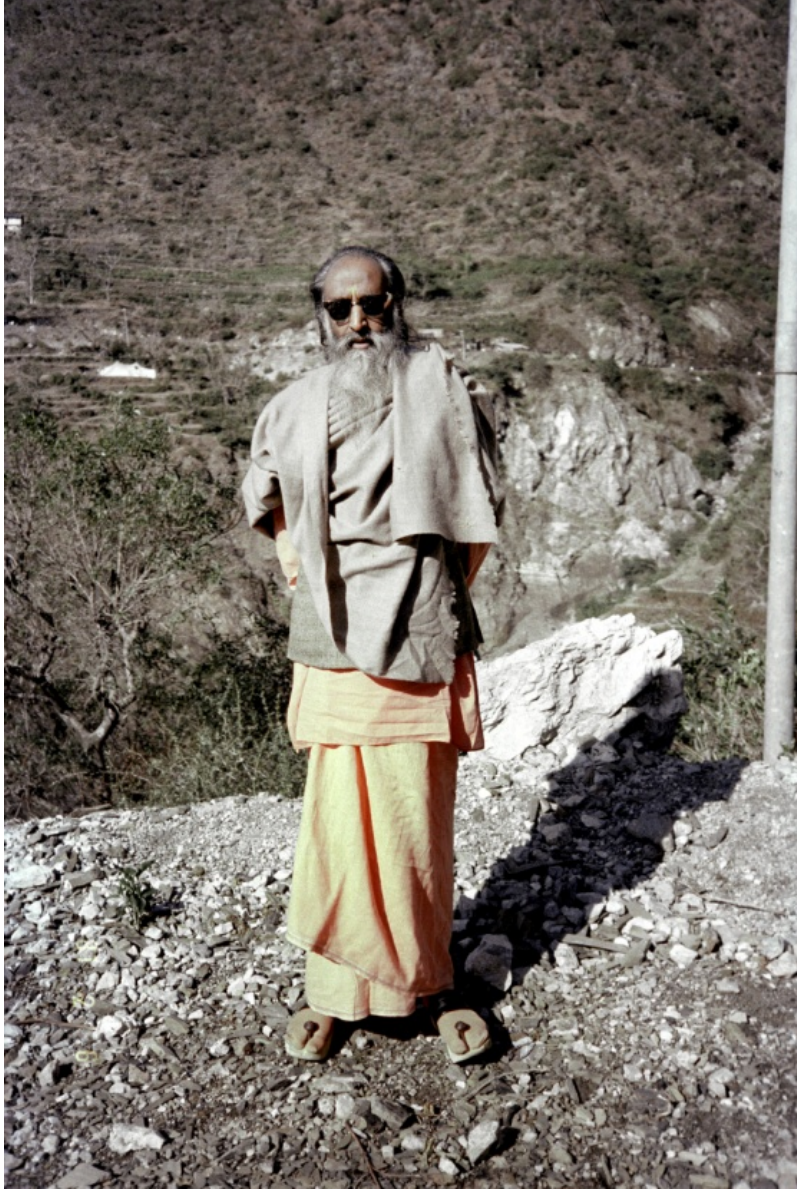
Swamiji with Leela Nambiar



Swamiji with Brahmachari Radhakrishnan



Swamiji with Pushpa Jaisinghani during the petrol stop



Swamiji en route to Rishikesh



Swamiji with Raju Rohira

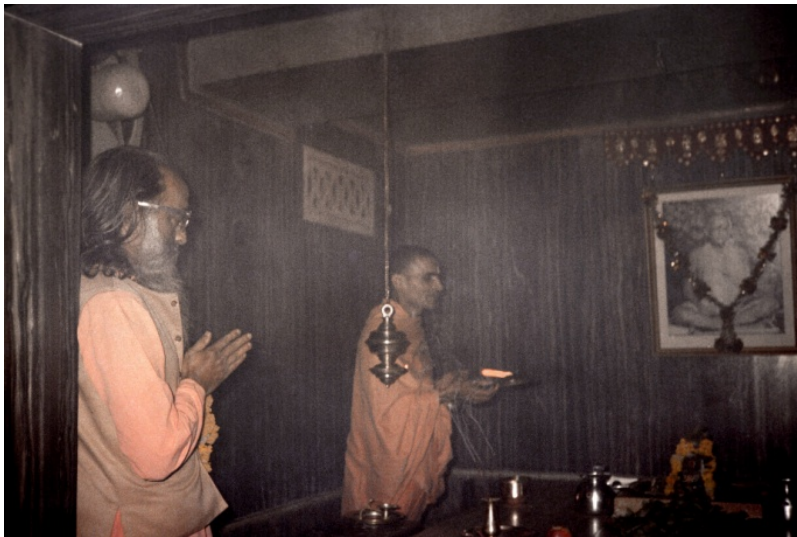


Swamiji drinking Ganga jal

When we reached the foothills of Rishikesh, Swamiji wanted to stop at Sivananda Ashram to pray at the samadhi of his *sannyasi diksha* Guru, Pujya Swami Sivananda Maharaj. I was very curious to see what happens when two mahatmas meet. How do they greet each other? What memorable words are spoken? I had thought that maybe Swami Krishnanandaji would be there. So when Swamiji got out of the car at the ashram, I rushed out of the car as well to hear his first words. Alas, it was not Swami Krishnanandaji who met him, but some other swamis. The first words that Swamiji said to them were, "Where can I find a clean bathroom here?"



Swamiji being escorted in the ashram



Swamiji at Swami Sivananda Maharaj's samadhi-sthala

Swami Krishnanandaji was conducting a satsang with 15-20 people, most of them foreigners, when we went with Swamiji to see him. Swami Krishnanandaji asked Swamiji to answer a question put by an American, “Why did God create this universe and land us all into trouble?”

Swamiji answered, “Motive hunting is a logical absurdity! It is possible to answer questions like ‘how,’ ‘when,’ and ‘where’ of a thing through a scientific approach You can say ‘how creation came into being’ by postulating theories of creation. You can even question ‘when’ and be given a rational answer—before time came into existence. But as to the ‘why’ of actions, no one can give an answer except the person who perpetrated the action. The actor alone knows his motive. Even in the ordinary actions of human beings, only that person and God know why he acts in a particular way, although others may try to impute and refer certain motives from those actions. And in the case of the creation of the world—God alone being the Actor—God alone can answer the question. So, my advice to you is: Go and meet God, and personally ask him this question. That is the only way of finding out what was his motive in creating this universe. And when you

meet Him, you will realize that you yourself are that God, and there never was any creation. Actually, by then, there will be no question left to ask!”



Satsang with Swami Krishnanandaji and other swamis and devotees



Swamiji with Swami Krishnanandaji

From Rishikesh, we went straight to the BHEL guest house in Haridwar. In the afternoon, some of us went for a dip in Gangaji, which had not been possible with the rain in Uttarkashi. That evening, Swamiji's host had arranged a talk for BHEL managers and their spouses, entitled, "Smile and Work." The wives were appreciative of Swamiji's elaboration on their routine—the monotonous housework they do day after day, year after year, without bearing any grudge or feeling bored. "In fact," said Swamiji, "ladies work much harder than men—getting up before them and going to bed only after the entire household is asleep."

And what inspiration geared them forward so cheerfully through their work? Swamiji answered, "Because they harbor a vision that one day their child will grow up, and all the sacrifices made on the child's behalf will find fulfillment. Men have no such vision in their work. They labor on without a sense of achievement, not knowing toward what end they are working, apart from their little microscopic

selves.”

Swamiji also said that in India people did not take national pride in their work, and it is a sorry fact that an imperfect thing or quality of work is accepted and passed. He gave the example of a Japanese man he had met in Tokyo who made hundreds of bicycle bell springs every day. “Every day he would test them out, rejecting the ones he considered unfit, even though all the rejected ones were at a personal loss to him. When I questioned him about it, he explained that when the cycle bells went into the export market on the other side of the world, if someone were to find the spring defective, Japan would get a bad name. It is well known that the entire world shudders before Japan in the international market. This kind of macrocosmic vision is lacking in India.”

Swamiji put forward an idea for them to consider: “If management were to project a vision to the workers and involve the workers . . . not only would the quality of work improve tremendously, but great possibilities that were earlier tied down by a microcosmic sense of achievement would now flow out in dynamic expression . . . drawn by a macrocosmic vision.”

We were coming to the end of our short trip to Uttarkashi—the beautiful pilgrim center of the *tapas* of countless sages over centuries, the region of a myriad hued mountain ranges and twinkling stars that talk to you, the land of the holy Ganga that offers perennial solace to mankind. That night, when we went to sleep, the weather was normal again, but at 5 a.m., a heavy fog enclosed us until Meerut. We started with rain from Delhi, and were accompanied by drizzle in Haridwar and escorted by mist through the hills. The continuous clouds and drizzle in Uttarkashi ended in hail bidding us goodbye. At the close of the journey, fog embraced us and led the way safely back to Delhi.

It is said that Lord Indra honors all auspicious happenings. His messengers had stood in salute of Swamiji all the way up and down on this most hallowed trip, for a Great Disciple had gone back to the sacred abode of learning of his Great Teacher, where the Greatest Secret had once been revealed and passed to him in sacred tradition.

Features

All about Kids: This issue's features include an introduction to the importance of Chinmaya Bala Vihar and articles written by Chinmaya Bala Vihar students. The articles on “Gain through Giving” are edited excerpts from the First, Second, and Third Place winning essays of BV students who participated in CM Princeton's Bala Vihar Essay Competition 2013.

A Bright Beginning with Chinmaya Bala Vihar

by Padmashree Rao

As important as it is to equip our children with the right books and supplies, with the coolest backpack and lunchbox, and the trendiest clothes, we need to pause and ponder, “How do we really prepare our kids for life's increasing demands? How do we teach them to grow strong in spirit?” Additionally, as immigrant parents raising children in dual cultures, we ask ourselves, “How do we prepare them to cherish their ancestral roots as they flower into mainstream citizens?”

The demands of academics, sports, or fine arts are easily met with study plans,

coaches, and tutors; but what about the other aspects of a child's personality? How do we teach our children to embrace their parental culture, and then adapt and balance it with popular culture?

Chinmaya Bala Vihars hold the key to such a cultural balancing act for many Indian parents and children. *Bāla Vihār*, a worldwide movement inspired by the foresight of Pujya Gurudev provides resources to parents and children who seek Vedantic teachings in their life. The fact that Chinmaya Bala Vihar has transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of young and old across the globe since the 1950s speaks only for part of its glory. Over 300 centers of Chinmaya Mission cherish Chinmaya Bala Vihar as a core project, one that gives wings for future generations to soar high.

What is so praiseworthy about Bala Vihar? How does it cater to the demands of children growing up in a culturally diffuse world?

As its name suggests, Bala Vihar is a garden where children discover valuable recreation—a place where fun finds value and dreams blend with ideals. Its motto, “Keep Smiling,” envisioned by Pujya Gurudev, indicates an atmosphere of unconditional love. To his children of Bala Vihar, Pujya Gurudev wrote, “Since love is the heart of Hinduism, we, as children of this mighty culture, must also know what love is, and learn to love all others in this wide world.” So, the foundation of Chinmaya Bala Vihar is universal love, and the Hinduism taught there is valuable in any land, at any time.

Chinmaya Bala Vihar children learn the timeless spiritual values of Vedantic scriptures and Hindu culture. The message of creative goodness is imbibed through stories, arts and crafts, drama, dance, games, quizzes, discussions, chanting and many more innovative interactions. Caring adults give their time as trained teachers, sharing their love and the cultural flavor of a “home away from home.” The teaching philosophy of Chinmaya Bala Vihar is based on the mission statement given by Pujya Guruji: “To help children learn values with fun, to delight like the moon and shine like the sun.” In love, learning, and laughter, the environment collectively nurtures children to love all, think about their higher purpose, and face challenges with a smile.

At the 90-minute classes every Sunday, children learn age-appropriate concepts and topics drawn from the epics and Puranas of India, Hindu symbolism and culture, and excerpts from Vedic scriptures and devotional texts. In their formative years, the young children learn to love God through playful association with God's glories. In this age of wonder they get nourished through such joyful stories. When parents introduce their preschool children to Bala Vihar, they too get inspired seeing the joy of a different kind of learning, particularly the joy of all when they sing a *bhajan* or dance the *garba*!

Elementary school children learn how values strengthen their personality. The shy child learns to find confidence in himself; the single child finds many friends of a similar background. This is the age where Chinmaya Bala Vihar can make them feel

accepted and assured. When Bala Vihar children feel singled out or bullied, the shared strength of Bala Vihar beliefs enables them to feel comfortable about their identity. Their Indian names make them feel special, not strange. The festivals and Gods become a privilege, not a source of embarrassment. Children inherit from Bala Vihar, a global, extended Chinmaya family. When parents and children engage themselves in Bala Vihar activities, Indian culture becomes a connecting ground rather than a past memory.

In teenage years, Bala Vihar children find the sense of community, though many may not admit it. Their Facebook friends are a comfortable, eclectic mix, and soon pictures of prom and *Navarātri garba* have equal coverage. Understanding spirituality on their own terms is possible within the study framework as they learn texts like *Self-Unfoldment*. Many teenagers tend to identify with the rebellious beginnings of Balakrishna Menon who later transformed into Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda. They also begin to realize that Hinduism is a live, logical way of inspired living. They secretly admire the vibrant *swamins*, enthusiastic *brahmachārins*, and dedicated *āchāryas*. They feel comfortable bringing their life questions to Bala Vihar class discussions. It is thus important that parents gently and lovingly persist in keeping teenagers connected to Chinmaya Bala Vihar and Chinmaya Yuva Kendra (CHYK) even as they respect their struggles.

The Chinmaya Bala Vihar rationale drawn from Pujya Gurudev's vision is:

- To inculcate in our children and youth a reverence for our ancient culture, and inspire them to live up to it with correct understanding
- To create self-confidence so that they are able to serve and act cheerfully
- To generate personal discipline, dynamic leadership, and true affection in all their contacts
- To mold their capacity to brilliantly express their individuality
- To bring out their dormant faculties and detect defects so that they can cultivate and improve their creative abilities
- To help them develop a healthy resistance against temptations in the atmosphere in which they grow
- To provide an atmosphere of growth that is filled with noble ideals, healthy emotions, and physical discipline

As surely as healthy buds blossom into beautiful flowers in their own unhurried time, Chinmaya Bala Vihar children are taught to grow in all aspects of their personality—physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual. Their social and secular identities are empowered by a quiet, alert spirituality especially when they have to tread through the demands of different cultures. Indeed, the wholesome way in which parents can prepare their children is with the growing gift of Chinmaya Bala Vihar.

Then, when our children of all ages stand together with parents, teachers, and a global Chinmaya network, to pledge and serve as one family, they become, as Pujya Gurudev said, “architects of a future world and builders . . . of brotherhood, universal love, peace, bliss, beauty, and perfection.”

The Story of *Chinmaya Haridwar*

by Kapil Varma (grade 8)

For many years, Chinmaya Mission Portland (CMP) had been looking for a place to call their own. We had met for the weekly program at a community center for eight years, and they were wonderful hosts. All CMP members and supporters really wanted a place our own—a home where we could place a sign Chinmaya Mission, and which belonged to all of us. And so, the great search began.

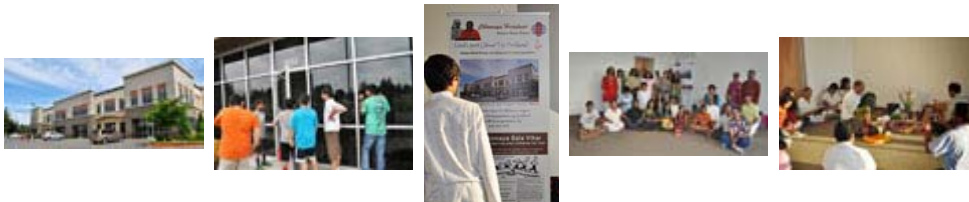
The first building we saw as a possible fit was a small red building just off our main highway. But, after looking at it again, we decided it wasn't right for us. It wouldn't fit all 100 families in there, anyway. So, we continued our search.

We looked at 5 more buildings as possible spaces, but none of them was suitable for us. Some were too small, some were too short, and others were bought by big companies. And then, just when all hope seemed lost, we found it!

It was perfectly located, just outside Beaverton, where most of the Indian community lives. A brand new building comprised of multiple units side by side. One unit by itself would be too small, but buying the whole row gave 14,300 sq. ft. The place was set. Now, we needed to come up with the finances. And this was no easy task.

A dedicated group of *sevaks* raised a quarter of a million dollars in donation, and members of the congregation provided further loans and got us the needed \$1.2 million. We had sought Pujya Guruji's blessings and advice. When he saw the photos and details of the plan, he said, "The building must be ours," and named the new center, "*Chinmaya Haridwar*."

In a short span of 52 days after signing the initial agreement, Chinmaya Haridwar became our new home. The transaction was concluded on August 10, 2013. The ashram has been remodeled, with walls broken to expand the common meeting space, and has more than 12 classrooms. Come and visit us when you're in the neighborhood!



Amānitvam

by Aparna Pateria (grade 7)

*amānitvam adambhitvam ahimsākshantirārjavam
ācharyopāsanam shaucham sthairyam ātmavinigrah*

Amānitvam, or humility, is one of many values Shri Krishna told Arjuna in *Shrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā*. These values are essential. Any *bhakta*, or devotee, of the Lord must instill these values in himself. But what makes *amānitvam* stand out?

All the values layer upon themselves until you reach the final goal of Enlightenment. Humility is the first and foremost value, making it one of the most important, as it starts you off to your path to Realization.

The most basic definition of humility is absence of pride. Humble can also describe something of poor quality. However, when Shri Krishna speaks of humility, there is no such negative connotation associated with it. When someone is humble, they are not in need of other people's praise or approval of them or their actions. They have enough confidence in God and themselves; they accept the praise gracefully and move on. They are not refuting the praise due to low self-esteem, nor are they being weak and submissive. They are at peace with themselves.

This confidence of humble people is acquired through one way only—by accepting that one is God's instrument and being grateful for it. Many times we experience an inkling of this when we are surrounded by Nature and are awed by the vast, intricately interconnected tapestry of this world that the Lord has flawlessly created. We are humbled, for all of our petty *vāsanās* are blown away, and we see the bare truth that we are merely Shri Krishna's flute. And we bow our heads in surrender and gratitude.

A fervent American admirer of Mahatma Gandhi once went to visit him in his ashram. When he arrived in the morning, he was told that Bāpu was in the dining hall. The visitor was worried, thinking he may be disturbing Gandhiji during his breakfast. Nevertheless, he approached the hall and tentatively opened the door. He was pleasantly surprised to see Bāpu peeling vegetables for lunch. In an instant, the visitor was sitting next to Bāpu, peeling vegetables with him.

Humble people do not demand respect or take offense if someone speaks to them in a disrespectful manner. This is what humility brings you—inner peace and the knowledge that God is working through you. Thus, they have no need of hollow, unstable praise from the outside world. If God is working through me, should I take the credit? No. His work will be done, whether I am here or not.

In the grand scheme of things, where are we? We are one thread in the tapestry of this universe, one drop of water in this unfathomably vast ocean of the world. We are Lord Rama's bow, Mother Sarasvati's veena, Shri Krishna's flute. When we

realize this, we drop all pride in doership, fold our palms and kneel before the Supreme, humbled.

You Give and You Get

by Srishti Ramesh (grade 6)

Our parents tell us to give, give, and give. We have all heard about kids in third-world countries who don't have proper food and clothing. We have all heard of giving to the community by doing community service. We know that giving is the right thing to do. But still, we children deny, deny, and deny. We think we are losing whatever we have. But there is a gain in everything, and there is a gain in giving. The joy and happiness that comes with giving is unmatched. There is usually no real physical reward but there is a reward on the inside.

Giving can take you so high that it changes you forever. When you give, something whirls and turns in you. It alters everything that you know. I remember I gave an old dollhouse to some friends. I grew out of it, but I didn't want to part with it. But when I saw they were so happy playing with it, I couldn't say no. I was proud of myself of letting go of the dollhouse and making someone happier with it than I would be. Recently, I found out that so many more of their friends were going over to play with it, and it made me happier.

I believe giving is gaining. When I grow out of clothes, I donate them . . . I also donate all my old toys and other things that I won't use anymore. There was one big thing my family did together that changed me. My family and I donated to Smile Train, an organization that devotes itself to performing surgeries for kids with a cleft lip and a cleft palate. After donating, we received a letter from the boy for whom we had donated. I was happy that I helped save someone from potentially dying. I gave and I gained happiness.

Modern research has proved that giving is actually good for your health. It lowers blood pressure, decreases depression, reduces stress levels, and helps you live a longer life. . . . So, if you want to live to 100, all you have to do is give!

"Giving away" doesn't always have to mean giving physical things. Giving up bad behavior is also a type of giving. Being greedy and selfish are things you can give up and need to give up. Greed means to want what you don't need and wanting more of what you have. In *Mahabharata*, Duryodhana refused to give back even an inch of land to the Pandavas and wanted to keep it all to himself, even if he had enough. And the land wasn't even his! Selfishness can be "given away" by giving things; by helping other people instead of always worrying about yourself.

Bad habits, such as stealing, lying, or cheating, can and should be given up—to become a better person. Stealing can get you in trouble with the law, which could lead to dire consequences. Lying will make people distrust you. Cheating on exams can get you in trouble with the school and the law. The bad habits you have will bring you down and stunt your success. Giving them up can take you far. Getting

rid of these habits won't come easy. You will have to work, [but] everyone should try to be the best he can be.

National Junior CHYK Camp 2013

by Prachiti Dhamankar (grade 12)

When I heard there was going to be a second National Junior CHYK camp August 15-18, 2013, I was all set to go because I had enjoyed last year's camp so much. But when I heard it was going to be held at the *Krishṇālaya* ashram—the very first ashram in the western hemisphere in Piercy, California—with four inspiring and dedicated *āchāryas* and 31 YEPsters, I started packing right away. My sister was one of the YEPsters and I hadn't seen her in nearly two months, so it was settled that I would attend the camp, and I officially began the countdown to what I knew would be a life-changing experience.

Being raised in Texas for most of my life, I've always grown up hearing that “everything is big in Texas.” As we started the drive to Piercy, I also realized how flat everything is in Texas. After we passed the deep blue waters of the Bay Area and the hilly streets of downtown San Francisco, the beauty of northern California expanded in full glory. We were surrounded by breathtaking landscapes and mountains with thousands of evergreen trees that had probably been standing for centuries. I wondered how I could be having so much fun when the camp hadn't even started yet.

After three hours of stunning natural art, the bus pulled into the ashram. The camp formally began with a welcome address from Swami Sarveshananda (CM Dallas), Director of CHYK West. His brief yet effective introduction to the camp brought smiles to everyone's faces and started the camp off on the right foot. We then broke into smaller groups, each led by YEPsters who gave us a tour of the ashram and explained to us our schedule and the numerous activities and workshops planned.

As high schoolers, we stood at a critical stage in life, and so, the first few workshops were centered on the concept of *svadharma* and finding our *svadharma*, or true purpose in life. We learned the importance of becoming more conscious of what we are really passionate about and enjoy doing.

The camp theme was “Drop,” and the workshops focused on how to drop anything that is holding us back in our life. Two workshops, on inhibitions and pride, were conducted solely by the YEPsters. In the inhibitions workshop, we made it a point to often step out of our comfort zone in order to learn not to limit ourselves from our full potential with respect to day-to-day situations. In the pride workshop, we recollected how many people and factors had contributed to all our life achievements, and thus were filled with greater humility and gratitude.

Swami Sarveshananda's leadership throughout the entire camp could not be duplicated, and his guidance and presence made the camp all the more enjoyable

and significant. Swami Ramakrishnananda (CIF), also known as SRKji, gave us a crash course on the importance of Sanskrit and we all loved his enlivening teaching methods, and his dedication and respect for Sanskrit. Swami Paratmananda (CM Beaumont) taught Vedic chanting and kept us entertained and laughing throughout. Last, but not least, Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara) gave invaluable talks and shared inspiring experiences that made us all want to try and apply everything we had learned throughout the camp as much as possible.

We had an hour of sports each day, delicious meals cooked by the lovely volunteers, dynamic and arousing *bhajan* and *ārti* sessions, uplifting satsangs, a night dedicated to stargazing, the blessed opportunity to visit the serene abode where Pujya Gurudev had resided, a most interesting debrief on Nature, an extraordinary talent show, and an unforgettable trip to a redwoods grove that us how to surrender.

The list of memories all the campers made together is never-ending, considering it was in just three days. We all developed wonderful friendships that words cannot express and are still trying to stay in touch with each other. We are blessed to had such a memorable and transformative camp experience.

Why Give?

by Sruthi Sathya (grade 7)

Why should we give? Many people argue that when they give, they do not receive anything in return, so why should they give? The first and typical question most people ask before they have to execute an action is, “What’s in it for me?” especially when it comes to giving.

A popular saying that indirectly answers this is, “What goes around, comes around.” This is also known as karma, which means whatever you do will come back to you in the end. If you do something bad, whether in the immediate or distant future, something bad will happen to you. Likewise, if you perform an honorable act, good fortune will be bestowed upon you later on. “Giving” is healthy . . . and one can gain many things through it. It is only a six-letter word, yet it has a massive impact on human beings.

True giving should be performed without expecting anything in return. In Chapter 17 of *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, “Charity given out of duty, without expectation of return, at the proper time and place, and to a worthy person is considered to be *sāttvik*. But charity performed with the expectation of some return, with a desire for some results, or in a grudging mood is said to be *rājasik*. And charity performed at a wrong place and time, to unworthy persons, or without proper attention and respect is said to be *tāmasik*.”

A recent study conducted by Corporation for National and Community Service showed how charity can makes the heart organ grow bigger, decreasing the risk of heart disease related incidents. Those with coronary artery disease said they saw

had less depression when they participated in volunteer work after experiencing a heart attack.

“And the boy loved the tree . . . very much. And the tree was happy.” This famous quote from *The Giving Tree*, a book for preschoolers by Shel Silverstein, gives a valuable lesson about giving, which is a virtue that all should possess to lead a good and meaningful life. In this poem, a tree gives everything to a boy as he grows and it makes both of them happy. There is a deeper meaning to this story: If you give with love, you get happiness even if you don’t get any material things in return. The tree gave everything she had to the boy—her branches, her leaves, her wood. But the boy did not give anything back to her. Yet the very act of giving left the tree very ecstatic and content regardless.

Pujya Gurudev has said, “Happiness depends on what you can give, not on what you get.” It means that when you give, you become happier and you acquire a special kind of happiness that lasts longer. Also, when you give, you gain love, which broadens your ability to love, and makes less violent and more peaceful.

Giving can come in the smallest forms—from a simple smile to just being friendly; it does not need to involve money. For example, you can give out good thoughts, give a kind word, give a cheerful disposition, give appreciation, give honor, give encouragement, give hope, give your time, and give prayer. These things do not require any money, but are the best forms of giving.

Ultimately, giving has a positive impact on our lives. The more you give the better of a person you become. When you make a positive difference in the lives of other people, you make a positive difference in your own life. Therefore, giving is really a win-win proposition. Pujya Gurudev said, “We may often give without love, but we can never love without giving.”

Also, when one gives, it gives them a sense of accomplishment and worth. It makes one feel that they are needed in this world. When you give, it sets a good example for other people. When other people see the joy and bliss one gets through service and charity, they can be inspired to start giving and will spread the same message, making this world a better place. By giving up wrong things, we gain virtuous and moral values that can change our entire personality for the better. We can build a better reputation for ourselves and be a role model to others.

CM Dallas Labor Day Weekend Camp by Latha Maram (grade 5)

CM Dallas-Fort Worth held its annual Labor Day weekend kids’ camp at Summit Argyle in Argyle, Texas in the presence of Swami Sarveshananda (CM Dallas) and Swami Paratmananda (CM Beaumont). This spiritual camp for kids (grades 5-12) has been growing in popularity since its inception in 2002, and this year’s camp was planned and conducted by Yuva Veers (youth who completed the two-month

Youth Empowerment Program in California). The camp theme, “The Incredibles,” focused on the lessons to be learned from the incredible characters of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The daily schedule began with yoga, followed by breakfast, classes on *Rāmāyaṇa*, and fun-filled afternoons of arts and crafts. The blazing Texas temperatures didn’t stop any of the campers or volunteers from engaging in action-packed sports. After snacks, the evening *bhajan* session was filled with the mellifluous voices of Yuva Veers.

Special events included a campfire with a *Rāvaṇa-dahan*. Campers had made their versions of *Rāvaṇa* drawings signifying their insecurities and fears, and burned them in the fire. This was followed by piñata-breaking and ghost stories told by Swami Sarveshananda around the campfire.

Swamiji’s announcement of the prize for best sattvic pranks was like music to the campers’ ears. A group of four boys had messed up their room and their Yuva Veer cabin-in-charge decided to tie the monkeys with a rope. It was a hilarious sight to see this foursome come up with the most innovative ways of seeking forgiveness from Swamiji: “O compassionate one, please release us from this bondage!” However, the biggest pranksters were the *āchāryas* and Yuva Veers, who led the campers after dinner on a Nature walk and asked them to close their eyes and enjoy the moment. When the campers sincerely closed their eyes and tried to breathe in the night air, they were drenched with water balloons and hoses, soaked with water and soaked with love, with a most precious memory to carry home.

The talent show held on the last night displayed the campers’ talents in acting, singing, dancing, music, martial arts, and drama. It was a blessing to have a strong, selfless volunteer team, onsite and offsite, who dedicated their efforts lovingly and patiently. The kitchen staff satiated voracious appetites with a wide variety of cuisines, including Italian, Mexican, American, and Indian. The kids enjoyed the meals, snacks, fruits, and surprise treats like snow cones and freshly made peach cobbler. The pediatrician on site tended to every kid who came with little injuries, allergies, or any sort of health issues. There were several other volunteers who stepped forward to help with registration, groceries, supplies, cabin arrangements, and other miscellaneous errands.

Everything about the camp was truly incredible. The Yuva Veers’ leadership was seen in their planning, organization, and execution of the curriculum and other activities within a fun, learning environment. The camaraderie between the Yuva Veers and children created invaluable friendships of a lifetime. On the bus ride home, all the kids were singing the *bhajans* they had learned and excitedly planning for the next camp.

Make Your Life

by Siddarth Tumu (grade 7)

“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” This quote by Winston Churchill is my favorite saying on giving. Every society, culture, and religion talks about giving and encourages people to do philanthropic acts. Many people say that giving is important, but few people actually give.

Giving is helping those in need; giving is making people happy; and giving is making a difference in someone’s life. The law of giving is universal. Most people agree that giving is a good deed, but not all agree that one gains by giving. Research shows that simple acts of generosity boost our immune systems, relieve pain, and even make our hearts stronger.

Helping those in need has a lasting effect on both the giver and receiver. . . . There are many forms of giving. These forms play a part in determining what one gains from giving. . . . I once volunteered at a homeless shelter every week for a year, wherein I babysat children while their parents were in workshops learning how to better their life. . . .

Dāna [charity] is a powerful word that helps a Hindu understand the meaning behind giving—whether in religious, ethical, moral, theological, political, economic, or sociological contexts. The story of Raja Manu tells how he gave to a small fish by protecting and caring for it, without expecting anything in return. [When a need arose,] the fish helped save humanity and returned order to a chaotic world. The gain may vary in each situation, [but the value of giving remains the same.]

Karṇa in *Mahabharata* is one of the greatest examples of selfless giving. Throughout his life, Karṇa generously gave to those who asked, going out of his way to help people. When Indra, disguised as a brahmin, asked Karṇa to give his *kavacha* and *kuṇḍala* that gave him protection and great power, Karṇa gave them immediately, without caring about the danger of being unprotected.

In the modern day, . . . [I am inspired by] Oprah Winfrey. She has invested money and time to help those who are at a disadvantage. By 2012, she had given away about \$400 million for educational causes. She also set up the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa in 2007. . . . We see other high profile givers, such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, who have donated a majority of their wealth for the sake of uplifting the lives of millions.

But one does not have to be rich and famous to make a difference in other peoples’ lives. Krishnan Narayan, one of CNN’s top heroes in 2010, quit his job and gave up his bright future to start a foundation that makes meals and distributes them to the homeless. Krishnan also serves the homeless by giving them haircuts and shaves. Without expecting anything in return, he does this only for personal joy.

This topic of giving made me ask what kids my age and younger can do without their parents help. Kids my age can give up bad habits and bad behavior. I know

that getting distracted while doing homework is a bad habit. Some kids are tempted chat with their friends instead of doing homework. But while chatting will only give an immediate gratification, the long-term effect of a habit of not doing homework can be disastrous. Getting work done quicker allows one to have more time to do good things and help others. So, what one gains by giving up a bad habit can, in turn, be used to give more to others. . . . Giving is the essence of life's fulfillment and greases the wheels of human emotions.

2013 Scripps Champion Visits Chinmaya Bala Vihar in Long Island

by Nikhil Jhaveri (grade 8)

CM New York's Bala Vihar students in Long Island, NY were happy and grateful to meet Arvind Mahankali, Winner of the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee on September 23, 2013. The competition was broadcast on ESPN. Arvind beat 280 finalists from all over the US, as well as the winners from all participating New York City schools. He won on the word "knaidel," a Yiddish derived German word for matzah (Jewish bread).

Arvind and his family have been part of Chinmaya Mission Atlanta and New York, so it was a proud moment for everyone. Arvind and his parents discussed his journey with the Spelling Bee, including his South Asian Spelling Bee championship, and his two Third Place finishes in the National Spelling Bee. His father recounted the time that he and his wife tried to talk Arvind out of competing following his second Third Place performance. However, Arvind refused to give up and continued to study for the next Bee, which he eventually won. Arvind had an interactive session with us on how he prepared for the competition. He said on school days, he would study for four hours a day, and on weekends up to six hours a day. He amazed all of us with his focus and work ethic. He also discussed the sacrifices he had to make with his social life and schoolwork, and discussed his plans for a future in the sciences.

His younger brother Srinath, who is following Arvind's footsteps, is currently preparing to enter the Spelling Bee. Srinath spelled correctly the longest word in the English Dictionary at everyone's request. Before they left, Arvind and his family photographed with everyone, performed *ārti*, and chanted the Chinmaya Mission Pledge. Arvind seemed to have inspired many of the students present to achieve great feats as he did through sincere and consistent hard work.



CHYKs Camping in Awenda

by Priya Akileswaran

CHYKs set out from CM Toronto's *Chinmaya Shivālaya* ashram on September 13, 2013 for a camping retreat titled, "As the Sages Did . . ." Swamini Shivapriyananda (CM Toronto), led us in chanting *Hanumān Chālīsā* to bless our journey. Filled with excitement and a little anxiety about the unknown, we set off on our journey to Awenda Provincial Park near Barrie, Ontario.

After a two-hour bus ride, we arrived at the park and began setting up our tents to finish before dark. The organizers assigned the group five challenges: 1) Do not complain, especially about cold or sleep. 2) Walk barefoot for at least one hour during the camp. 3) Go in the water at the beach at least knee deep. 4) Spend an hour in silence at any point during the camp. 5) Unplug from technology. Everyone settled in for a cold night in the tents, though most hardly slept that first night due to the cold and the lack of our usual comforts.

Everyone arose for 6:30 a.m. yoga, which was a wonderful experience to do *āsanas* in the outdoors, breathing in fresh air with the blue sky as our ceiling and tree canopies as our shade. Our first trek was to Kettle Lake. Before departing, we contemplated on various spiritual quotes, such as this one by Param Pujya Swami Tapovanji Maharaj: "Nature is a great mirror reflecting the power and beauty of Brahman."

We walked through thick forests, fallen leaves, and winding trails. During our walk we spent two hours in silence and contemplation on the quotes. When we arrived at Kettle Lake with its beautiful boardwalks, canoes, and trees surrounding the lake, we sat in a large circle and expressed our thoughts of the morning journey.

After a simple lunch of pita bread, humus, and carrot sticks we headed to the beach. About ten in the group decided to walk barefoot to experience a semblance of how sages had walked through the Himalayas in all types of conditions. We arrived at the beach and took the opportunity to soak up the sun, swim in the water, or play some beach soccer.

After our stay at the beach, we headed back, tired from the day's trek through Awenda's trails. The temperature was much warmer that night, so many of us slept very well.

We all awoke on the last morning at Awenda with new realizations from trekking and experiencing various challenges. We shared our reflections and each received a leaf to serve as a reminder of how "simplifying one's life makes one turn inward." All of us returned from our trip renewed with the experience of knowing more about ourselves, and appreciating both our great sages and Mother Nature.



Announcements

New Acharyas Initiated from 15th Vedanta Course



SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA



Acharyas
Chinmaya Mission Centres Worldwide

Dear All,

Hari Om!

On the auspicious occasion of Shri Ganesha Chaturthi, 9 September 2013, I am pleased to inform that the Deeksha ceremony of the 15th Vedanta course was held in Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai. The course was conducted under the guidance of Swami Advayananda and Brahmachari Samvid Chaitanya.

Of the 61 students who completed the course, 36 have decided to serve Chinmaya Mission full time. 17 of these 36 have been initiated into Brahmacharya. The following are the old and new names of the Brahmacharis and the centres they have been posted to:

No	Old Name	New Name	Centre
1	Anusha	Usha Chaitanya	Siddipet, AP
2	Ketaki	Maitreyi Chaitanya	Pune, MH
3	Sukanya	Shraddha Chaitanya	Salem, TN
4	Nirali	Anupama Chaitanya	Jamnagar, GJ
5	Geetha	Devaki Chaitanya	CIF, Kerala
6	Binish	Anish Chaitanya	To be decided
7	Ganesh	Vighnesh Chaitanya	Coimbatore, TN
8	Manoj	Prajwal Chaitanya	Ahmedabad, GJ
9	Ramakrishna	Narayana Chaitanya	Vikarabad, AP
10	Sunil	Mukunda Chaitanya	Kozhikode, Kerala
11	Srinivasa	Shrivatsa Chaitanya	Hindupur, AP
12	Sushant	Veda Chaitanya	Navi Mumbai
13	Yogesh	Yukta Chaitanya	Mahim, Mumbai
14	Nadessan	Ishan Chaitanya	Reunion Island
15	Omkaar	Abhijit Chaitanya	Durban, SA
16	Sai Ishan	Shivendra Chaitanya	Sri Lanka
17	Suresh	Kartik Chaitanya	Sri Lanka

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The following brahmacharis will serve Chinmaya Mission in white:

No	Name	Centre
1	Brahmacharini Gomathi	Madurai, TN
2	Brahmacharini Thivyawadini	Sri Lanka
3	Brahmachari Mayell	Gangtok, Sikkim
4	Brahmachari Satyapriya	Bhubaneswar, Odisha
5	Brahmachari Niles	Mulund, Mumbai
6	Brahmachari Arun Gosai	New York, USA
7	Brahmachari Dhiren	Chicago, USA
8	Brahmachari Rahul Pathak	To be decided

Others who will be serving Chinmaya Mission full-time:

No	Name	Centre
1	Arunachalam and Priya	Tamaraipakkam, TN
2	Satyarama Kalluri and Kameshwari	Secunderabad, AP
3	JK Nayyar and Swapna Nayyar	To be decided
4	Rammohan and Shanti Rammohan	Alpharetta, USA
5	Rahul and Priya Maini	CIRS, TN
6	Narasimhan	To be decided

The following will be employed by Chinmaya Mission full-time:

1	Siddharth	CIF, Kerala
2	Avinash	CCMT
3	Anand Loganathan	CCMT
4	S. Subramanian	Chinmaya Vibhooti, MH
5	Saroj Sukhtankar	Chinmaya Vibhooti, MH
6	Dhirendra Joshi	South Mumbai
7	Shailaja Sankar	CIF, Kerala

I invoke the Lord's Grace and Puja Gurudev's Blessings on them for their spiritual progress.

With Prem & Om,

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SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA



Seated on chairs- Left to right: Br Samvidji, Sw Advayanandaji, Guruji, Sw Brahmanandaji

Sitting in white (Group 1)- Left to right: Dhiren Khatri, Satyapriya Parida, Mayell

Standing in white: Rahul Maini, Satyarama Kalluri, Arun Gosain, Rahul Pathak, Arunachalam, Nilesch

Sitting in white (Group 2)- Left to right: Priya, Thiviyawadini, Gomathi, Priya Maini

Standing in white : Kameshwari, Swapna Nayyar, J K Nayyar, Rammohan, Shanti Rammohan

Sitting left to right

Srinivasa **now** Shrivatsa Chaitanya, Hindupur
Ramakrishna **now** Narayana Chaitanya, Vikarabad
Binish **now** Anish Chaitanya, to be decided
Geetha **now** Devaki Chaitanya, CIF
Anusha **now** Usha Chaitanya, Siddipet
Nirali **now** Anupama Chaitanya, Jamnagar
Sukanya **now** Shraddha Chaitanya, Salem
Ketaki **now** Maitreyi Chaitanya, Pune


Standing left to right

Sai Ishan **now** Shivendra Chaitanya, Sri Lanka
Omkaar **now** Abhijit Chaitanya, Durban
Sunil **now** Mukunda Chaitanya, Kozhikode
Ganesh **now** Vighnesh Chaitanya, Coimbatore
Nadessan **now** Ishan Chaitanya, Reunion Island
Suresh **now** Kartik Chaitanya, Sri Lanka
Yogesh **now** Yukta Chaitanya, Mahim, Mumbai
Manoj **now** Prajjwal Chaitanya, Ahmedabad
Sushant **now** Veda Chaitanya, Navi Mumbai

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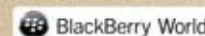
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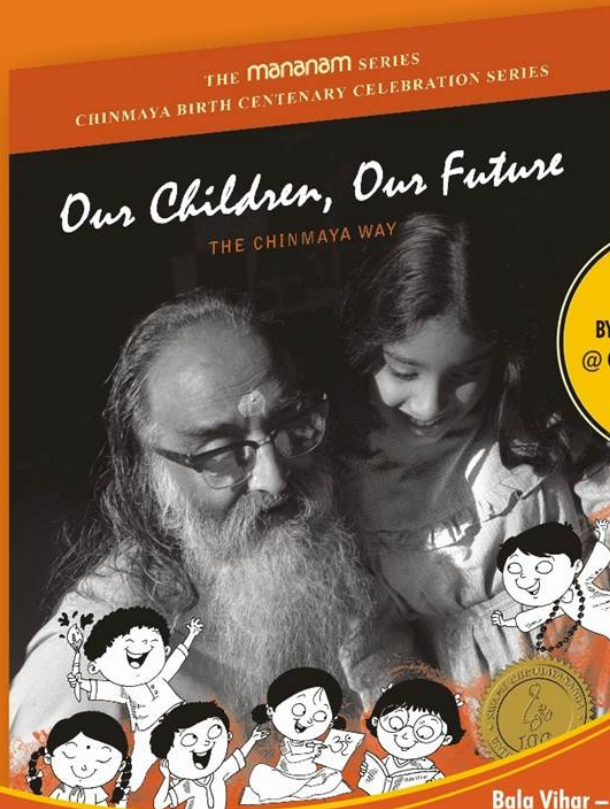
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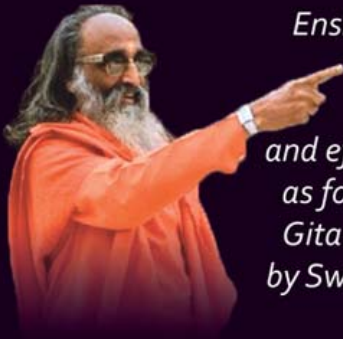
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Administrator, CIF Home Study Courses
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- E-Vedanta Course

CIF'S CORRESPONDENCE VEDANTA COURSE

THE CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION (CIF) IS PLEASED TO INVITE ALL SPIRITUAL STUDENTS TO ENROLL IN ITS PROGRESSIVE HOME-STUDY PROGRAM FOR VEDANTIC STUDIES.

OBJECTIVE

The primary aim of these courses is to provide clarity and depth in a seeker's Vedantic studies. Each course covers, in a series of 24 detailed lessons, various central Vedantic concepts as taught in introductory texts such as Vivekachudamani, Atma Bodha, Tattva Bodha, Vakya Vritti, and Panchadashi.

LEVELS

CIF's one-year correspondence Vedanta Course is offered on two levels, Basic/Foundation and Advanced. While students must have general Vedantic knowledge before opting for the advanced course, CIF's specific basic course is not a pre-requisite to sign up for the advanced course, which provides an in-depth understanding of principal Vedantic concepts.

ABOUT CIF


Established in 1989, CIF is a research center for Sanskrit and Indology, recognized by the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, India. Swami Chinmayananda visualized CIF as a bridge between East and West, past and present, science and spirituality, pundit and public. CIF is located in Kerala, India, at the maternal ancestral home and birthplace of the Advaita Vedantin, Adi Shankara.

REGISTRATION

Students may choose to enroll at any time during the year in either a postal correspondence course or an online correspondence course [lessons are sent via e-mail].

E-COURSE: US\$100; POSTAL COURSE: US\$175
VISIT WWW.CHINFO.ORG TO REGISTER
OR GET MORE DETAILS.

- Easy Sanskrit Course



The poster is a vertical rectangular card with a light beige background. It features decorative golden motifs in the corners: a stylized 'Om' symbol at the top left and top right, and a stylized human figure at the bottom left and bottom right. The background also has faint, large, golden Sanskrit characters. The text is centered and uses a mix of red and black fonts.

Easy Sanskrit Online Study Course

Blessed Self,
Hari Om! Salutations!

Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF), a center for Sanskrit Research and Indology, is pleased to introduce its new "Easy Sanskrit Online Study Course" for beginners interested in starting their journey into Sanskrit. This course covers the salient aspects of Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary, and simplifies intricate details for easy learning. Students do not even need to know the Devanagari (Sanskrit) script, or the script for any other Indian language for that matter.
So it is truly Sanskrit made easy!

The course covers 13 topics that presented in modules, which students have up to 30 months to complete. A student who completes the full course will be awarded a Certificate of Completion from CIF. CIF is the academic front of Chinmaya Mission worldwide, and is affiliated to Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan (New Delhi) and recognized by Mahatma Gandhi University (Kottayam).

Registration is US\$150. Hurry to register online and become one of the first students to begin this Easy Sanskrit Course!

You can also get your own Easy Sanskrit Self-Study Kit, which includes a textbook, workbook, and interactive CD for only \$75!

Visit www.easysanskrit.chinfo.org

Questions? E-mail easysanskrit@chinfo.org