



Hari OM
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O, Lord of Badri, my adorations unto Thee. I salute the very dust of Thy divine lotus feet. In the stream of my love for Thee, may my mind swim constantly, as fish do in the rivers.

The individuality, sustained by one's identifications with the body, mind, and intellect, can be sacrificed in a wave of irresistible adoration by a heart of intense love. And thereby, the Truth can be realized. . . . Devotion unto Truth is the actual melting away of the individuality and its flowing out to merge with the Infinite. In the path of devotion, love alone is the means for all seekers until they reach the state of perfect awakening. Love is the mighty path to strive forward. Bereft of love, monstrous reason, though it has the power to blast through all impediments and difficulties en route, can never discover the wings required to fly to the subtler worlds of the Soul. A happy blending of the head and the heart is the "Tapovana vehicle," wherein disciplined Reason woos and marries devoted Love.

Many words describe the Lord as omnipresent, omniscient, all pervading, and so on. Nevertheless, the Lord may be known only when the Lord reveals Himself. He reveals Himself only when He finds someone who has the breadth and depth of love. . . . This total love for God, or bhakti, arises not only from emotion, but also from correct understanding True knowledge of the Lord gives depth to our devotion, and true love sweetens our knowledge of the Lord. This is the beauty of the relationship between knowledge and devotion: Knowledge deepens devotion, and devotion purifies knowledge.

Sadhana of the Highest Order
by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda
An address to sevaks of CM Madras

Doing sevā, or service, to the country or community in the cultural field is a subtle art, and everyone is not fit for it. By paying wages you can get any number of coolies and workers, but the number of people available for supervisory cadre is much less. Architects are still lesser in number, while creative thinkers are always very few in the world. Fewer than the creative thinkers are the cultural workers, and this is so because the cultural worker must have true sympathy for all living beings.

You can be a religious man, a spiritual man, but to impart religion and spirituality to others and watch their progress in cultural edification is too subtle a job, and to work therein, one must have special qualifications. Cultural work is creative work, and the true sevak should not expect recognition of his work from anyone, including from his own organization. He should never expect any patronage from the public because it is the nature of his work that no one should patronize him. Once the public starts patronizing the cultural worker, it gives enough recognition even to the extent of destroying him. Either way, cultural workers stand the chance of getting destroyed.

You must be capable of surviving both, neglect and appreciation. This in itself is a great tapashcarya, and this capacity you can discover in yourself only when you fall in love with the work rather than the institution or persons. This is called fanaticism, but without its bad odor. You do your work because you are convinced that it is the thing to be done. You do it not necessarily for your sake, not necessarily for the sake of your community or country, but out of a strong conviction that it should be done, and to not do it would be agony. If this feeling has not come in you, you may have the label of sevak, but you cannot work effectively in the field of culture.

This is why we find that while there are so many mahatmas and great leaders of noble thought, very few have been able to achieve anything or leave their stamp in the cultural life of the country. Mighty men they may be. They could start schools and hospitals, but to leave the country at the end of their lives at least an inch above in its cultural and moral life, one should be made of sterner material. Ordinary mortals with their sentimental emotions, with all their weaknesses and passions, cannot achieve it. The cultural leader may not look like a hero, but he can be self-sufficient in himself. He can be self-sufficient and have enough dynamism only when he is convinced of the goal and the program.

With reference to the two-year plan to be drawn out, only when you discuss the plan and write it down will you be convinced of it. Without this conviction, no real work is possible. Conviction cannot be thrust from above. It must come from you. The individual himself must fall in love with the ideal, the very purpose of the mission. Mission work can be effective only when the worker himself has the vision. This vision is our two-year program, and without this vision, we will not be able to work effectively. Remember, the work is not for Swami Chinmayananda or for the Chinmaya Mission, much less for its secretary and office bearer—this must be the attitude and not that it is for profit, for gain, for name. If you plan for the sake of recognition, recognition will disappear. But if you do the work, recognition, etc. will come.

By conviction I do not mean an intellectual conviction, but an incapacity to be otherwise. The work of the Mission must compel you to act. It must be as intimate as your breathing.

Even when you are drowning deep under water, when you know air is not there, still you breathe in the water. Why? Without breathing you cannot remain. The muscles in your thorax, the muscles in your face and throat, will demand it. Just as with the compulsion to breathe under water, if an individual feels the compulsion to do work, wherein to not work is agony, such an individual is a true sevak of this Mission.

Do you think sticks or stones will make me stop working? Once you are convinced about your intimacy with your work, all sticks and stones will be considered as income; these, too, will become a compliment. Thus, you will have to bear world's criticisms and opinions. A spiritual worker has no excuse to stop working if he is fired up with this ideal.

To be a Mission worker is in itself the greatest tapas (austerity) known to us. It is a great sadhana because you cannot take away your mind from it; there is no other greater tapas possible. The mere repetition of "Narayana" is nothing when compared to this.

It is not always by money that you become useful. It may be through a spiritual thought. So, have things and ideas ready at your fingertips, ready on the tip of the tongue. Pass onto others only the ideas that you have thought out and understood. A man, having once come near you, should always hunger to come back. This is the quality of a sevak.

Sevaks who are spiritual workers should not mind, or be afraid of, persecutions. There are examples of Christian missionaries who suffered intense persecutions in several parts of the world before they could make their religion the most widely practiced one in the world.

In the discharging of tasks, sevaks should develop tapobala, to attain which, one need not go to jungle. If sitting in a jungle and spending time there is tapas, all the forest officers and hunters would be tapasvins.

In the discharge of work, sevaks are likely to come across jealousy, passions, and competitions, even in the Mission itself. You cannot avoid it. To expect it to be otherwise is foolish. The Mission, too, is not outside the world. It is in the nature of the jagat. You must expect it everywhere. Don't unnecessarily get excited over these things. In trying to do good in the world, you are likely to get only kicks. Don't wait for the consolation of getting appreciation from others. Discover goodness in yourself. Seek others and do as much good as you can. You will then find that every moment is rewarding. You will find happiness in the feeling that I am doing what I wanted to do in the world. This must be the attitude of Mission sevaks and members.

Try to seek peace in the midst of turmoil. Gandhi-ji once said to a swami from Uttarkashi, "In peace, there is peace, so why should I seek it? I am seeking peace in the midst of restlessness." In the two-year plan, there will be a lot of work. You are heading into restlessness. You have to carry your mental peace. It is sadhana of the highest order.

Code of Conduct for Chinmaya Mission Members

By thought, word and deed, every member of the Chinmaya Mission should try to live up to and fulfill the motto, as well as the pledge, of the Mission.

He should spare time daily to do meditation and scripture study.

Once a week, on any convenient day, he must offer worship at a nearby temple with the members of his family.

He should discover a life of harmony first at home. It is expected of him that he does not on any account, create any domestic unhappiness.

If there are children at home, he will have, at least once a week, a satsang at home, consisting mainly of members of the family, wherein reading of itihāsas, such as Rāmāyaṇa

and Mahābhārata, or Puranas, such as Bhāgavata, in a language the children know, would form an important part.

When he meets another Mission member, he greets him with “Hari Om.”

Daily offering of praṇāms to the elders in the house by the younger ones should be followed and inculcated by the Mission Members.

The Practice of True Karma Yoga by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

Realizing the impermanent sorrow-giving and progress-obstructing nature of the results, can man give up action? No, this is not possible, for man cannot live even for a second without action. It is indeed a strange situation. He can neither give up actions nor find everlasting happiness from the results of actions. In fact, actions seem to push him further into bondage. This being the case, what should he do?

The answer is given in the third verse of Upadesha Sāra of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi: “Actions done with an attitude of dedication to the Lord, without attachment to the result, purify the mind and are a means to attain liberation.” Actions are not binding by nature and hence, it is not the performance of action that we fear. Fear, joy, or sorrow arise from the results of actions. So we need not give up actions. And we cannot give up actions, for action is the very insignia of life. Only a dead body does not act.

Since actions need not and cannot be given up, can we then renounce the result of actions? This, too, is not possible since results are inevitable. Then how can we get out of their bondage? In answering this question, Ramana Maharshi says that actions performed without desire for the results free us from bondage. This seems an impossible and impractical philosophy to follow since man cannot perform any action without a desire. Here, it becomes necessary to understand the meaning of the word “desire.”

The Cause of Sorrow

Upon inquiry, we understand that the result or the desire for the result of an action is not the real cause of sorrow. We become sorrowful because we always want to attain a particular and specific desired result alone. For example, the natural result expected from appearing in an examination is a passing grade. This is a common desire that prompts a student’s action. However, if a student insists on ranking first in the class and ends up being second, this can be a cause of sorrow even though he passed the class. Another student who was not expecting to pass does pass and is elated. This shows that the cause of sorrow is not in the result of the examination or in the desire to pass, but in the insistence (durāgraha) on a specific result. This insistence is called attachment, which is the main cause of bondage.

We should always remember that the proper performance of action alone is in our hands. The results are gained according to various God-created laws. Therefore, the insistence that I should get desired results alone is futile. Only one candidate can win in an election. Not everyone can get his desired result. Hence, act we must, to the best of our ability, but we must be free from the shackles of false expectations and insistence. The phrase “done without desire” in the aforementioned verse indicates this truth. To renounce false insistence is the lesson taught here.

We get attached to the result because we feel we are independent, self-sufficient doers of action. This notion is called the ahaṁkāra, or ego. The doer becomes the enjoyer and so he

naturally becomes attached to the results. The first verse of Upadesha Sāra itself proves that the very notion of doership is false.

The Attitude of Surrender

In order to renounce the sense of doership, the attitude of dedication to the Lord is advised. How one can surrender all actions to the Lord is now to be understood. The Lord is the wielder of the threefold powers of knowledge, desire, and action (jñāna shakti, icchā shakti, and kriyā shakti). The individual cannot have any right or might apart from the totality, for the part cannot exist apart from the whole. Hence, from the Lord alone do we get the capacity to desire, to know, and to act. If we keep this in mind before we act, then how can we have any doership that is apart from Him? He alone acts through us. Renunciation of this false ego is known as the attitude of surrender to the Lord.

In the same way, since all results are in accordance with the laws of the Lord, they are the Lord's gift (prasād) to us. The sweets offered to the Lord in the temple are received after the worship as prasād. We should receive the result of all actions with the same attitude. We do not insist on a particular prasād, and we do not haggle over the quantity. Whatever is received is shared with others ungrudgingly and then alone partaken. The attitude is one of cheerful acceptance. Such an attitude frees us from our likes and dislikes, and purifies the mind. A pure mind alone is capable of gaining Self-knowledge and hence, it becomes an aid to attain Liberation.

We thus see that actions performed with ego and egocentric desires bind man. When actions are performed with the understanding that Lord is the Governor of all actions (karmādhyaaksha), and the Giver of all results (karma-phala-dātā), the mind becomes pure. Through such performance of action, vāsanās get exhausted and the pure mind becomes an aid to liberate man. This attitude of surrender to the Lord while performing actions (Īshvarārpaṇa-buddhi), and the cheerful acceptance of results gained (prasād-buddhi), is called karma yoga.

REFLECTIONS

Darkness

by Chetana Neerchal

The last light was turned off and my eyes closed into darkness. If all light were extinguished from the luster of celestial bodies, the flashes of lightning, the glow of burning lava, the blaze of forest fires, the spark in striking stones, the lit candles and electric bulbs, would the darkness in space be different from the darkness of oceans, caves, forests, and the core of the earth? If all traces of light are gone and only darkness remains, has it changed from eternity to eternity? Krishna's dusky skin, Gaṅgā's silent streams, Kālī's flowing locks, and Shiva's closed third eye—has their Darkness ever changed?

A Journey of Learning with Pujya Guruji

Anonymous

The following anecdotes are from a devotee's journal during travel with Pujya Guruji in 2013.

Many devotees had come to the airport on the day of Pujya Guruji's departure from Singapore to bid him bon voyage. He prefers an early check-in, but many hoped he would spend some time with them at the airport. Guruji completed his check-in and began walking toward the gate. People started saying, "Guruji, it is still early . . . Guruji, you have more than two hours . . . Guruji can sit for a while before going in, as there is so much time."

Guruji said firmly, "You have not understood the spiritual significance of time. You think there is lots of time and you don't realize. I am saying we are late. This illusion of time keeps us in samsara. We keep thinking we have time, but we don't. We think there is time and the next moment we are gone. We are already late."

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A family had come to visit Guruji at the ashram. Some of them left early, but soon called to say that they had left behind a cell phone. Some devotees looked for it, but said they could not find it. One member of that family who had stayed behind said to Guruji in amazement, "Look at technology! The son is sitting in the office and insisting the phone is in the ashram because he is tracking it and the system is giving the ashram address." A few people commented that everyone has also lost privacy because of technology. Pujya Guruji said, "In all this technology, we don't realize that we have lost ourselves."

The phone was later found on a shelf in a closed cupboard in the ashram. When Guruji was told, he laughed lightly. He didn't say it, but I thought, "But we are not yet found."

*

Guruji and I were being hosted by a most lively and carefree lady. She was her easygoing self and would say things that made Guruji chuckle. One evening, Guruji was ready for the jñāna yajña early, as usual, and pacing in the living room. The lady of the house walked down the stairs, ready in full style. When she reached the bottom of the stairs, she posed for Guruji. He smiled and chuckled, and said, "Very nice." Two days later, she again walked down the stairs ready in her new outfit. This time, however, Guruji did not say

anything. When we got into the elevator, she looked at me playfully and loudly exclaimed, “Some people don’t like to compliment when people look nice.” Guruji burst out laughing and said, “Ham ko to ye sab kucchha dikhatā hi nahīn hai! Dikhegā to bolenge na!” Meaning, “I don’t see any of this at all! If I saw, I could say something, isn’t it?”

The host’s face fell. She did not realize that a Guru sees only the Self. The next day, as we left for the jñāna yajña, Guruji stood in the elevator with a big smile, looked at the host, and playfully said, “Bolīye, sundarī” (tell me, beautiful one). The lady was over the moon! A satisfied smile stayed on her face the whole evening, for Guruji had so charmingly given her the compliment she had so badly wanted. I thought, for he who sees the Self, the Self alone is beautiful.

*

Guruji was seated casually in the living room. He needed a cushion and someone slipped one behind him. He looked toward the newspaper on the table and someone brought it to him. He reached for his glasses, and someone opened the case and gave it to him. Guruji looked up at us and said, “Bhagavān did not carry His weapons. When He needed, the chakra would appear. He would just make the gesture of holding the chakra and then give a surprised look that it appeared.” We all smiled. He, too, smiled, and said, “I also don’t carry anything. I sit, and when I need, it all appears.” Giving a huge, sweet smile, his face was soon hidden behind the newspaper.

A Gypsy in the Sands of Time

by Chetana Neerchal

a gypsy

in the

hourglass

of sunrise

and sunset

seeking

a rainbow

from

colors

wandering

in the
sands of time

Wholeness

by Lynne Matous

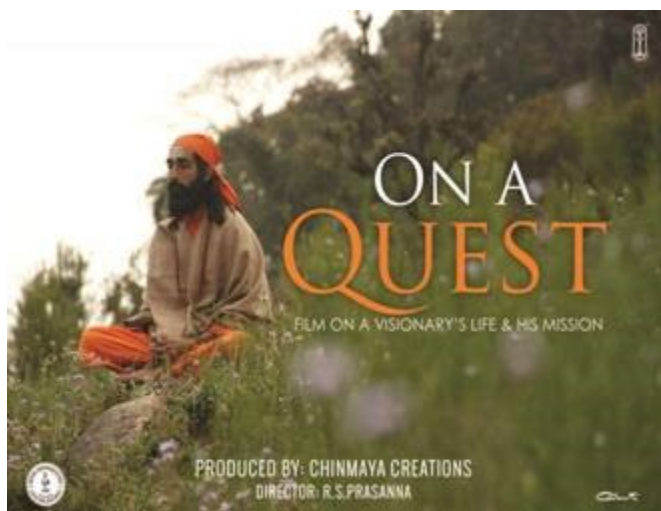
If I dwell not with Love,
I dwell alone.

For Love is the Self
I share with all.

Love is the glue
that mends the
fall into division.

CM Movie Release on Pujya Gurudev: On a Quest

On a Quest, the new Chinmaya Creations movie on the life of Pujya Gurudev, premiered in the august presence of Pujya Guruji, and other senior Mission acharyas and members, on December 15, 2014 in Chennai, India. All overseas Mission centers will be screening the movie in local theaters with full facilities, not in community halls or ashrams/centers, planning the event as they would were Pujya Gurudev himself visiting the center. View the movie trailer.



Chinmaya Maṅgalam: A New CMW Retreat Center by Ashok Dandekar

In the summer of 2014, CMW purchased a 135-acre wooded property in Barry, Texas, 80 miles south of Dallas. CM Dallas helped facilitate the acquisition process and is currently assisting with its day-to-day operations. Pujya Guruji has blessed and named the ashram, “Chinmaya Maṅgalam.”

Built as a campsite, the property has more than 135 acres of land, lakes, trees, and buildings. It has a spacious two-bedroom lakefront house with a beautiful view; boys’ and girls’ dorms with accommodation for a total of 140 people; a sports dome that has a stage, 400-seating capacity, and an audio system; outdoor baseball and soccer fields; and a large outdoor swimming pool alongside an open-air amphitheater. The kitchen is large and well-equipped with commercial appliances. The dining hall has seating for 80+ persons. There is a 14-acre lake with boating facilities. Once called the Thousand Oaks Ranch, the wooded property has fully grown oak trees that extend beyond the eye’s reach. Both flora and fauna are in abundance at Chinmaya Maṅgalam. A variety of colorful flowers grows around the property, especially in the vicinity of the lake. One can spot herd of deer wandering on campus and different kinds of birds can be heard in the trees.

The vision for this property is to develop it into a national vision and resource center, as Chinmaya Vibhooti is in India. The initial plan is to create accommodations for 300+ people to stay during CM camps and yajnas. Centers in North America will be able to rent the facility to conduct camps and retreats throughout the year. The long-term vision is for this national CMW center to be the site for the annual Shri Chinmaya Mahāsamādhi Ārādhana Family Camps. Pujya Guruji has appointed a committee to manage the operations of the ashram and propose a vision for its expansion into a multipurpose facility.

In the past few months since its acquisition, the focus has been on cleaning and renovation, as the property was unused for over two years. During this past Thanksgiving weekend, a CHYK camp was held there with over 70 CHYKs in attendance. For this purpose, the house, dorms, kitchen, dining hall, sports dome, and other areas were cleaned, renovated, and painted. Based on feedback, additional improvements will continue to be made.

Feedback about the ashram from CHYKs has included the following:

The grounds of Chinmaya Maṅgalam are expansive and beautiful. There is ample outdoor space allowing for a myriad of activities. There is a designated lawn for sports, which

includes a soccer field and batting cage. This will be great for launching youth activities. There are also many benches for one to sit and reflect, and just enjoy nature. The dome is massive and sound carries far in the building. It is a great lecture hall and has nice theater space.

Chinmaya Maṅgalam evokes the desire to be one with the Self.



NJCC 2015: Summer Camp for High School Students

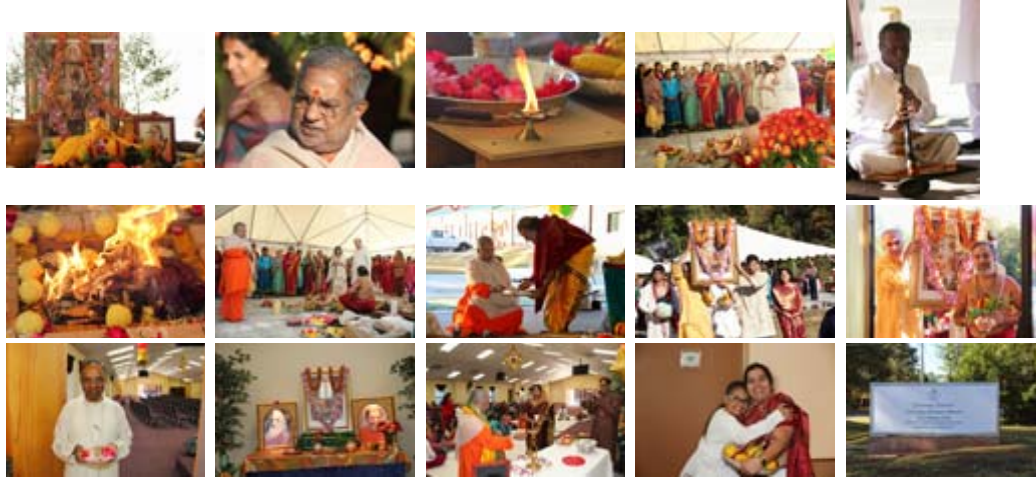
CHYK West is pleased to announce the 2015 National Junior CHYK Camp (NJCC), which will be conducted June 30-July 5, 2015 at the Chinmaya Maṅgalam ashram in Corsicana, Texas. The camp is open to all high school students, including students graduating from grade 8 and grade 12 in the summer of 2015. Chinmaya Maṅgalam, CMW's upcoming national retreat center, features dorm-style accommodation, a large lakefront home, a swimming pool, a sports dome with a stage, and various sports fields. Visit chykwest.com for additional camp details.

Chinmaya Niketan Ashram Gṛha Pravesham by Meenal Vashishat

CM Atlanta devotees convened for the joyous and auspicious gṛha pravesha ceremony at their new ashram of Chinmaya Niketan on the morning of October 25, 2014. The event was coordinated by Acharyas G.V. and Geetha Raghu, along with a team of volunteers. The careful and detailed attention in planning reflected loving warmth in the flowers, garlands, cows, and other symbols of purity that had been prepared for the beautiful procession. Swami Shantananda (CM Princeton) was invited to preside over the ceremonies, which included an Agnihotra Pūjā, Navagraha Pūjā, and Kalasha Pūjā, interspersed with Carnatic music and devotional chanting.

The highlight of the ceremonies was the eagerly awaited moment of the welcoming of Pujya Gurudev to his new home (niketan) and the mounting of his image in the main hall. He was welcomed with great love and enthusiasm by all devotees. After the procession, Swami Shantananda gave his address and Shri Vishṇu Sahasranāma was chanted in resonance. Lunch prasāda was served to all after the āraṭi.

Pujya Guruji had blessed the ashram with its name, Chinmaya Niketan, which means “the abode of Chinmaya” or “the abode of Knowledge.” The CM Atlanta family thus prayed for the blessings of the Guru Paramparā to grow in wisdom, devotion, and service, to keep the spiritual banner at Chinmaya Niketan flying high.



Birth of Chinmaya Triveni by Archana Param

CM Sacramento has been serving the greater Sacramento community for many years. It currently has 230 students in Chinmaya Bala Vihar, an active Chinmaya Swaranjali group, seven weekly Chinmaya Study Groups serving more than 80 adult students, and around four jñāna yajñas annually by visiting CM acharyas. Members also participate in the camps at Krishnalaya in Piercy, CA. The center has continued to grow over the years into a CM family that shares learning and love.

In commemoration of the joyous and blessed occasion of Pujya Gurudev's birth centenary 2015-16, CM Sacramento is working enthusiastically to fulfill the vision inspired by Pujya Guruji of "Love Thyself, Love Thy Neighbor, Love Thy Mother," with the goal of acquiring property to expand its scope of community service and spread the joy of Vedanta. Plans are underway for the CM Sacramento family to move into their new center by August 2015.

CM Sacramento, currently a satellite of CM San Jose, has had the privilege to receive much guidance, and many satsangs and jñāna yajñas, over the years from CM San Jose acharya, Swamiji Bodhatmananda. In February 2014, Swamiji initiated the building fund project during his farewell visit to Sacramento, before leaving to teach the 2014-2016 Vedanta Course at Sāndeepany Sāadhanālaya in Mumbai, India. Later that June, the core committee members of CM Sacramento took the opportunity to meet Pujya Guruji at Krishnalaya to seek his blessings for the building project. Pujya Guruji gave his approval and blessings to officially incorporate CM Sacramento and gave the name for the new ashram of "Chinmaya Triveni." Sacramento is situated at the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers in the northern portion of California's Central Valley. When devotees asked what the third river was, Pujya Guruji smiled and replied, "The river of Knowledge."

True to Pujya Guruji's vision of "Love Thy Neighbor" for the Chinmaya Family worldwide, CM Sacramento is blessed to have received an outpouring of help and guidance for its new ashram project from CMW, CM San Jose, CM Phoenix, and CM Portland. By the Lord's grace and Pujya Gurudev's blessings, CM Sacramento members are striving to establish soon Pujya Gurudev's new ashram of Chinmaya Triveni.



A Growing CM Pittsburgh by Satish Muluk

CM Pittsburgh's Chinmaya Bala Vihar program has seen tremendous growth over the last few years. It began in 2008 with one location and 25 children, and now is being conducted at three locations, serving 577 children (364 families). The program began with 8 Bala Vihar teachers in the first year and in its sixth year has 53. This team includes nearly 24 additional sevaks, who conduct SAT classes, satsangs for parents, and multiple Indian regional language classes (including Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Gujarati, and Marathi). In addition, more than 20 sevaks help prepare and serve lunch after the Bala Vihar classes. CM Pittsburgh also initiated Chinmaya Bala Vihar in Cleveland, Ohio last year; currently over 50 students are enrolled.

The exponential growth of its local programs has inspired the CMP family to explore the possibility of building a new facility that will serve as a spiritual retreat center. The current proposal includes an auditorium that accommodates seating for 500, classrooms for 300, and retreat boarding and lodging facilities for the CM family at large. With a successful round of initial fundraising, the center plans to bid on a beautiful 71-acre property located less than 15 miles from downtown Pittsburgh.



CORD USA 2014 Top-Rated Nonprofits by Subha Pathial

GreatNonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews on nonprofit organizations, announced that CORD USA, for the third consecutive year, has been honored with a prestigious 2014 Top-Rated Nonprofit Award. The award, a form of recognition from the community, is based on the large number of positive reviews and personal experiences written by volunteers, donors, and clients regarding CORD USA. Being on the Top-Rated list gives donors and volunteers more confidence in the credibility of the organization.

One person wrote, "I have been a volunteer with CORD for two years. CORD is an organization that works directly in the remote villages in India without any overhead costs to maintain an organization. What I like about CORD is the personal touch it provides the volunteers by putting them in contact with the people who are benefitting from CORD. I also like the youth service-visits that CORD organizes, and I have seen many high school students being inspired to help others and look at life with a different perspective. The mission and vision of CORD is truly inspiring."

GreatNonprofits is the leading site for donors and volunteers to find reviews and ratings of nonprofits. Reviews on the site influence 30 million donation decisions a year.



Annakshetra Opens, Annam Explained, Annakūṭa Enjoyed
by Nimmi Raghunathan

CM Los Angeles (CMLA) members opened the newly renovated and expanded anna-kshetra, or kitchen and dining hall, of the Chinmaya Rāmeshwaram ashram on October 25, 2014. The various pujas and prayers were aptly interspersed by Swami Ishwarananda's talk on annam (food) and the festival of Annakūṭa, and followed by a celebratory meal for all devotees.

The annakshetra inauguration was part of CBCC (Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebrations), and began in the morning with pujas on the main level, in the 3,000 sq. ft. dining hall that can now accommodate 700 people. A priest from a local temple led CMLA volunteers in performing the various pujas. The gathering then moved outside to witness a short ritual at the split-level dining hall entrance that is flanked by ornate pillars. Viji Mahadev, Rekha Acharya, and Sharada Iyer were honored with the cutting of the inaugural ribbon, and Swamiji's mother was given the honor of opening the stairwell to the second level.

Once upstairs, devotees witnessed a Krishna puja, and participated in the chanting of Ganesha Atharvashīrsha, Purusha Sūktam, and Nārāyaṇa Sūktam led by the Chinmaya Swarāṇjali group. Ranjani Iyer, accompanied by Shekhar Ekbote on tabla and Raj Mantha on harmonium, offered heartrending bhajans.

Swamiji's address on the significance of annam and Annakūṭa included the story from Taittirīya Upanishad of a young Bṛghu Rishi approaching his father to ask about the nature of Brahman. To this, his wise father, Varuṇi, replied, "Annam, prāṇa, chakshu, shrotram, manaḥ, vāk." Swamiji said that meditation on the significance of annam brings forth the understanding that life breath (prāṇa) is food. All beings on earth, he said, are born of food, sustained by food, and end as food for another being; so, for the physical body, prāṇa is annam, and for air, the body is annam. In a similar vein, Swamiji touched upon all the five subtle elements, explained their coexistence, and pointed out that everything in the world is nothing but food for something's or someone's sustenance. The one who understands this coexistence, he said, has understood Brahman, and this is why the rishis of yore ascribed divinity to food and why Annalakshmi is worshipped. With this understanding, he said, it is imperative to follow the injunctions of the Upanishad: Never

turn away from serving food; serve with courtesy and joy. The scriptures, Swamiji said, clearly state that how one offers food in the early stages of life is how one will consume food in one's last stages of life. Annakūṭa is the practice of sharing food, and to not waste food is to also respect it, which is an important dictum for youth, Swamiji said.

CMLA Director Srinivasa Iyer was then honored with a token of gratitude and appreciation by Swamiji. Srinivasaji thanked everyone who had extended support to complete the annakshetra project in a record three months. He spoke briefly on the work that was done and the challenges faced in acquiring city permits for construction. He pointed out that the facility is open to the community for use based on CM guidelines. Also recognized was the foreman on the project, Francisco, who labored with his other family members to bring it to completion.

In conclusion, Acharya Mahadev Parameswaran (CM Los Angeles) lauded all the volunteers for their dedication, and said the CMLA family takes great pride in them for their service. The event ended with Pujya Gurudev's āratī and prasāda for all.



Harmony in Action at CM Chicago by Shubi Mansukhani

True to its theme of "Living in Harmony," CM Chicago's annual fundraising banquet, harmoniously blended inspirational thoughts, spirited fundraising, sumptuous food, and artistic performances into a memorable evening at the Waterford Banquet and Conference Center held on November 9, 2014. The event was attended by over 700 members, and raised over \$200,000 to support and enhance the programs being offered by the two ashrams of CM Chicago, namely, Badri and Yamunotri.

The evening began with the welcoming of Swami Sharanananda (CM Chicago), Swami Prakashananda (CM Trinidad), Acharyas Jitendra and Swapna Nayar (CM Chicago), Acharya Shanker Pillai (President, CM Chicago), and Dhiren Khatri (recent graduate from the two-year Vedanta Course in Mumbai). The oil lamp at Pujya Gurudev's portrait was lit to invoke His blessings to commence the program. Invited dignitaries and supporters included Bharat and Panna Barai, Sudarshan and Nitu Sharma, Gopal and Nitu Lalimalani, Ravi and Veena Bhagavat, and Prakash and Padmini Makkam.

The highlight of the evening was the inspiration kindled by the acharyas. Swami Sharanananda gave the inaugural welcome with his usual humor and charm. He is CM Chicago's beloved acharya, one who continues to work relentlessly in serving the Chicago

and surrounding centers with unending zeal and loving compassion. He underscored in his message that the highest form of charity, which is far above providing food or donating money, is the gift of knowledge. He said that parents, in the interest of helping their children succeed and be happy, often tell them what to do. Chinmaya Mission, however, does not attempt to tell people what to do. Instead, it opens the doors for individuals to understand their true nature and make their own informed choices.

Swami Prakashananda spoke on the importance of harmony in this world by emphasizing that even if evil cannot be eradicated from the world, humanity can neutralize its effect by teaching people values to counter it. He said that just as an atom has both positive and negative particles in it, and yet is stable, so, too, harmony can be established in the universe by balancing negative forces with positive ones. He added, it is the nature of the world that when anything is left in disuse, it becomes worse and not better, so if humanity were left to itself, then it is to be expected that it would only get worse. Pointing out that organizations like Chinmaya Mission enable humanity to reverse its decline by imparting right values, Swamiji urged all attendees to support such organizations, either by volunteering or through financial contributions.

Acharya Shanker Pillai outlined the goals, activities, expansion plans, and need for funds to continue meeting the growing needs of the community. He elaborated on the proposed idea of building well-planned retirement homes adjacent to the Badri ashram to support the spiritual needs of senior citizens. Ashok Bhatia (Director, CM Chicago) elaborated on the current financial obligations of Chinmaya Mission and the various ways in which members could help.

The entertainment for the evening was an enchanting mix of dances and music presented by talented Chinmaya Bala Vihar students and adult volunteers. Junior CHYKs (high schoolers) provided babysitting services for the evening and helped collect donation envelopes. CHYKs (ages 18-28) captured the audience with their energetic presentation on the various avenues to serve and grow spiritually. Chinmaya Bala Vihar alumni shared their passion as they spoke on serving through CORD (Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development), volunteering to teach weekly Chinmaya Bala Vihar classes, and investing in their own spiritual growth through YEP (the two-month Youth Empowerment Program).

The successful and joyous event concluded with the chanting prelude of Bhagavad Gītā, Chapter 15, which was followed by the service of a delicious meal catered by a local Indian restaurant. The event was attended by over 700 members, and raised over \$200,000 to support and enhance the programs being offered by the two ashrams of CM Chicago—Badri and Yamunotri.



**Celebratory Events at Chinmaya Gaṇapati
by Manu Madhok**

The CM Minneapolis family celebrated Navarātri at the Chinmaya Gaṇapati ashram with a Devi Pūjā and the chanting of Shri Lalita Sahasranāma. Women and young girls invoked the presence of Divine Mother and offered her a 16-step Vedic puja. Divine Mother's blessings showered a radiant glow of peace on devotees' faces.

The Divāli Melā at the ashram united all CM organizers in yajna spirit to set up various game stalls for children, such as Stack Up Your Good Karma, Balance Your Mind, and Aim High. The food stalls offered delicacies from North and South India. Everyone reveled in delight, taking home with them the sacred and joyous message of Diwali.

The Chinmaya Naada Bindu (CNB) concerts and workshops warmed the hearts of CM families in Minneapolis and St. Paul. In the concert, "Anuranjani," a musical ode to the divine Beloved, the performances of CNB directors, Pramodini Rao and Himanshu Nanda, accompanied by Anutosh Degharia, brought tears of joy to everyone's eyes. The directors conducted a vocal workshop for Chinmaya Swaranjali students at the Chinmaya Gaṇapati ashram, and workshops on the flute and Indian classical music at a local school. Their signature workshops, "MQ2HQ" and "Music & Me" were well-received by all, and left a deeper understanding of music and a longing for more. Many devotees were inspired to donate to CNB's Chinmaya Social Responsibility Program in India and some plan to attend the summer intensive workshops.

Chinmaya Gaṇapati hosted a jñāna yajña by Brahmchari Girish Chaitanya, (CM Austin) on Chapter 3 of Shrimad Bhagavad Gītā. Members felt recharged in their aspirations to work and serve in all fields with a smile and the right attitude. Girishji also offered morning classes on Shri Lalita Sahasranāma.

Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara) conducted a day camp for Chinmaya Bala Vihar kids on "GITA: Gratitude Is The Attitude" in Chaska and St. Paul. Vivekji also met with CHYKs at the University of Minnesota and motivated them to start CM activities on campus. He addressed the adults with a satsang on "Daily Discipline," giving ten practical pointers to better one's personal daily sadhana.



Bhakti Beats in Sevānjali
by Sonal Ladva

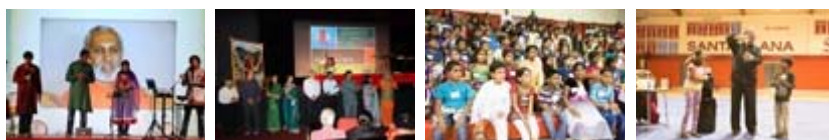
It was an endearing and joyous sight to see a distinguished holy man in ochre robes, none other than Swami Ishwarananda (CM Los Angeles), welcoming CM family members and guests at the Santa Ana High School for CM Los Angeles's annual Sevānjali fundraising banquet on November 8, 2014. At an entrance decked with floral flair, Swamiji ushered attendees into a courtyard abuzz with social activity and sumptuous catered refreshments.

Magician Cameron South entertained children ages 5-12 years while their parents attended the special musical evening of Sevānjali. Over the years, CM Los Angeles's annual programs have featured famous artists in the fields of music, dance, and magic, including vocal maestros Shubha Mudgal and Anup Jalota, magicians Jeff Parmer and Cameron South, and ventriloquist Kevin Johnson. This year, the joy of Sevānjali was enhanced by CHYKs who demonstrated the wealth and beauty of Chinmaya Mission teachings, and the impact of its enriching programs.

The featured program of Sevānjali 2014, "Yuva Tunes: Bhakti Beats," was a vocal and instrumental music extravaganza performed by four accomplished CHYK artists, namely, Ashwin Subramaniam, Laxmi Chandrashekhar, Sanchit Malhotra, and Devesh Vashishtha. The program commenced with prayers, followed by a welcome from two emcees, Raju Chellappa and Ramya Radhakrishnan, who explained the evening's theme as the fusion of bhajans and hymns of the East with melodies from the West. In his address, Swamiji spoke about the conception of this music program, and narrated the first time he heard Ashwin's original music composition for the Sanskrit hymn of Mukunda Mālā. The evening's musical renditions presented included bhajans, Mukunda Mālā, Sankat Mochan, and the favorite, Guru Stotram. With great appreciation for the program, Acharya Mahadev Parameswaran (CM Los Angeles) said, "The rhythm of the body, melody of the mind, and harmony of the soul create the symphony of life."

Shashi Acharya, (CMLA Director), presented the financial figures and made the astounding statement that just one penny on the dollar was spent in total expense for the center's resident swami. CMLA core committee members were called to the stage and thanked for their dedication and hard work.

Additional presentations included those of Jagdish and Khyati Bhatt, who spoke on the value the Mission has brought to their lives. The program ended with a boxed dinner for all.



CM Discourses in Athens by Sujata Winfield

Swami Chaitanyananda (CM Boston) visited Athens, Georgia and gave eight discourses on various topics, November 27-31, 2014. The venues for the talks were provided free of charge by the First Presbyterian Church and the Healing Arts Centre. Both venues were spacious, beautiful, and conducive to learning.

The audience consisted of 30-35 people in the evenings and 10-15 people during the day. Swamiji said four people would have sufficed, as at his first public discourse, which included himself, his hosts, and the sound system operator. The audience of Indians and non-Indians featured professors, students, doctors, lawyers, physical therapists, and

spiritualists, amongst others. A core group attended all the lectures; several came frequently; and there were first timers at every talk. This diversity posed a challenge to Swamiji, who had to cater to the well-versed, the novice, the first-timer, and the regular attendee, alike. Accordingly, he spoke on various Vedantic topics, and quoted from several texts to illustrate his points.

Swamiji's discourses were enlivened by his congenial personality, his accessibility to all, and his spontaneous enthusiasm that even his physical discomforts could not dampen. His distribution of prasāda after each discourse allowed people an opportunity to interact with him more closely. His jovial and welcoming warmth emboldened several people to visit him at his host's residence with food and homemade remedies for his ailing throat. On one evening when talks had not been scheduled, many arrived just to dine with him, enjoy his company in a casual setting, and ply him with queries. His visit was an enlightening and enriching experience.

Lecture 1: Vedanta: A Manual for Joyful Living

After paying homage to Pujya Gurudev and giving a brief account of Pujya Gurudev's inspiring life, Swamiji began his discourse on Pujya Gurudev's manual to Vedantic knowledge, known concisely and unforgettably as the BMI Chart. Swamiji said that contrary to popular belief, joyful living is not in the fulfillment of desires, for this pursuit itself is an endless procession in this projected world, leaving emotional attachments, likes and dislikes, ecstatic joy, and brooding sorrow in its wake. He said, "Earlier, a person was miserable seeking shelter from the heat under a tree. Now he is unhappy in an air conditioned room." He said to live joyfully, we must detach ourselves from our BMI and be a witness to their functioning, thereby taking an objective view to all that is happening around us.

Lecture 2: The Ultimate Goal of Human Life

Swamiji explained the ultimate goal of human life as not to think and do as we please, but with the aid of the scriptures, to use our BMI to know the Truth and thereby attain eternal happiness. The Truth, also known as God, the supreme Reality, or Divinity, is of the nature of pure Existence, Awareness, and Bliss. Pure Existence is ceaseless, subject to neither birth nor death. Pure Awareness is Consciousness, Knowledge itself. Pure Bliss is happiness where change and death have no dominion. The individual jīva is in essence nothing but this absolute Truth. To understand this and thereby realize one's essential nature is to escape the fear of death and attain supreme Joy—the ultimate goal of life. To illustrate, Swamiji quoted Lord Krishna's words from Bhagavad Gītā: "I reside in the chamber of your heart as your Consciousness. If your heart is pure, like crystal clear water, you will see Me reflected there, motivating and guiding you."

Lecture 3: The Art of Right Action

In explaining the art of right action, Swamiji drew from the teachings found in Chapter 3 of Bhagavad Gītā. The purpose of the scriptures, he stated, is to provide a path to Truth for everyone, no matter what their innate tendencies. While some pursue Truth through the path of knowledge, others take to the path of devotion, and yet others follow the path of action. Lord Krishna cleared the confusions of Arjuna the kshatriya by providing the principles of right action—to dedicate all action to the Lord while remaining mindful of one's essential nature.

Lecture 4: Meditation and Life: A Silent Search

In his talk on meditation, Swamiji said that while we may know and agree with the theory of living joyfully through the proper use of our BMI, of attaining the ultimate goal of God-realization, and of acting rightly without expectations, this does not mean that we are equipped to act according to what we know. Translating theory into practice is the province of meditation, which is the inward journey to God-realization (the means), and

that realization is known as the meditative state (the goal). Swamiji said that on the inward journey of meditation, one contemplates on Vedantic truths learned from a Guru, but this practice is not for everyone and a seeker must become worthy of it by purifying the mind and making it single-pointed. Whether through meditation on the Lord with form or on the Formless, when the meditator ceases the act of meditating, the meditative state of Self-realization is reached. Once this state is reached, one ever remains in it, even if the BMI continue to function in their respective fields.

Lecture 5: The Role of Right Values on the Road to Success

Swamiji illustrated the relationship between right values and success through Vibhīṣhaṇa Gītā, as found in Shri Rāmacharitamānasa. On the battlefield of the Rāmāyaṇa, Vibhīṣhaṇa expresses his concern that Lord Rāma is equipped only with a bow and arrow, while Rāvaṇa is on a powerful, magnificent chariot. Lord Rāma then teaches Vibhīṣhaṇa about the Dharma Chariot, a chariot of inner core values that guarantees victory in the battle of life. The Lord describes parts of this chariot, such as its two wheels—fortitude and patience; two banners—truth and good character; four horses—strength, discrimination, self-control, and caring for others; and reins—forgiveness, compassion, and equanimity. The intellect, equipped with knowledge of God, oneself, and the world, is the driver that steers one on the right path for the right purpose.

Lecture 6: Cosmic Reality and the Empirical World

After the preceding preparatory discourses, Swamiji dove into the core of Vedantic philosophy in discussing the relation of the cosmic Reality and the empirical world. According to Vedānta, explained he, the emergence of the cosmos is from what people call God, supreme Being, Brahman, cosmic Reality, pure Existence, and the like. Swamiji explained how Reality is beyond time, and thus has no cause or beginning. He said the scriptures state that the empirical world manifests from, resides in, and dissolves into Brahman just as waves of an ocean temporarily come into existence, dance on the surface, and subside back into the ocean. Swamiji quoted Gītā Chapter 15 in painting the profound picture of the world as an upside down tree, its roots skyward and its branches earthward. He said the Self is the Root or Source of the tree, and the branches of desires yield fruits of joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, profit and loss, birth and death. Entangled in these branches, we can be free of them only when we transcend our identification with BMI, Swamiji said, and wittily added, “Outside drama, inside Rāma.” In conclusion he said, “Enjoy the picture; don’t identify with it. Recognize and remain in your Self, which is of the nature of absolute Bliss.”

Lecture 7: Absolute Bliss, the Intrinsic Nature of Human Beings

Swamiji said absolute Bliss is our intrinsic nature and therefore we aspire to it spontaneously, without the effort we put into fulfilling desires. Our search, he reminded, is to do everything to get back to Bliss, which is why our relative nature is sometimes happy and sometimes sad, but our absolute Self has no trace of sorrow. He illustrated with an example: “Just as heat is not the intrinsic nature of water, but water contracts heat when it comes in contact with fire, so, too, sorrow is not the true nature of the Self, but arises due to identification with desires. When the extraneous source of heat is removed, the water reverts to its natural coolness. So, too, when the jīva’s identifications are removed, the jīva merges into its natural state of Bliss.”

Lecture 8: The Power of True Devotion

The last of the discourses was on devotion, in which Swamiji said that devotion results when the mind directs emotions toward the higher Self, while attachment and sorrow result when the mind directs emotions toward worldly objects. Swamiji stated that the greatest teacher of pure love was Sage Narada. In his Bhakti Sūtras, or aphorisms of devotion, Sage Narada defines pure love as one’s sacrifice for, rather than demand from, the Beloved. After giving examples of the gopīs and Mother Shabari, Swamiji quoted Pujya

Guruji, saying, “The Lord does not see your ability or inability. He only sees your availability.” In conclusion, Swamiji enumerated the qualities of a devotee as given by Lord Krishna in Gītā, Chapter 12, and ended with an invocation for the Lord’s grace on all to be happy, to serve the world, and to realize Truth.



Junior CHYKs Learn about "Heroes: Past, Present, and Potential" by Vikas Bector

CHYKs of CM Washington DC hosted a Junior CHYK day camp this past Labor Day weekend, August 30-September 1, 2014. Titled “Heroes: Past, Present, and Potential” and led by Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara), this camp allowed CM students in grades 8-10 the opportunity to learn the positive values exemplified by superheroes in Hindu scriptures, such as Lord Rama and Shri Hanuman, as well as those in modern-day comic books, such as Superman and Batman. The JCHYKs explored the commonalities between the two genres and learned about adopting noble qualities in daily life.

The camp was attended primarily by students from Maryland and Virginia, as well as by a few out-of-state attendees, including from Illinois and New Jersey. Local CHYKs and CM volunteers coordinated all the activities and meals, and CM families housed out-of-state campers.

Throughout the camp, campers participated in various activities, such as the Marshmallow Challenge and the Nuclear Popcorn Challenge, that were designed to test focus, awareness, and/or critical thinking. Additional activities included satsangs with Swami Dheerananda (CM Washington DC) and Acharya Vivekji, a photo treasure hunt, sports workshops, movie night, creating custom superhero t-shirts, evening CHYK satsangs, and more. The camp was held at CM Washington DC’s Kailās Nivās ashram and the Walker Nature Education Center.





Bhaja Govindam in Boston by Vrittamani Ramapriya

Swami Chaitanyananda (CM Boston) conducted a jñāna yajña on Bhagavān Ādi Śaṅkarācharya's Bhaja Govindam at the Chinmaya Māruti ashram, October 10-17, 2014. Swamiji explained the vital importance of including spiritual studies in daily activities.

Bhaja Govindam provokes intellectual thinking and analysis through strong, logical reasoning, and powerfully shares the vision of Advaita. Swamiji's exposition of deep concepts in simple terms was a treat for one and all. He masterfully combined humor in his description of the Vedantic concepts and its applicability in our daily activities.



CM Pittsburgh Annual Family Camp 2014 by Sravani Hotha

CM Pittsburgh's second Annual Family Camp kicked off on Friday, September 26, 2014 in the serene remoteness of Southwestern Pennsylvania with a dedication of a gollu in celebration of Navarātri and a unified Chinmaya Family. Every family that attended contributed a token of their love to the gollu, adding to its beauty and significance.

As a prelude to the retreat's theme of "Pushing Your Limits," the attendees watched Cool Runnings, a moving tale of teamwork and perseverance. Interspersed throughout the weekend were short, challenging activities, such as eating meals blindfolded or without utensils, which helped the participants appreciate the many little things taken for granted on a daily basis.

Saturday was a day of nonstop challenges, from mind-bending team building activities, to a massive soccer game. Even mothers and fathers who typically hesitate to engage in sports played soccer like invincible pros. The games broke down everyone's self-imposed limitations on physical capabilities. The younger Bala Vihar students had a scavenger hunt on the campgrounds to challenge their minds while CHYKs and JCHYKs bonded over sports and board games. One of the more challenging activities was the Trust Fall, which not only forced participants to face their fear, but also to work as a team with love and encouragement.

After the discourses and sports activities, Saturday night included a garbā to celebrate Navarātri and a Fear Walk in pitch dark (with an added detour through an unused trail for

the more adventurous). All the attendees of the growing CM Pittsburgh family thoroughly enjoyed the retreat.

Silence in Niagara Falls by Priya Wiersba

CHYKs of Niagara hosted “Silence,” a weekend CHYK retreat, October 24-26, 2014. Led by Acharya Vivek Gupta and three recent graduates from the 18-month Vedanta Course conducted in Trinidad, this camp allowed participants to explore embracing silence externally and internally, not only in theory, but also in practice. The CHYKs spent 40 hours in silence, learning about the concept of maunam and why it is an important aspect of spiritual growth.

Through the discourses of four dynamic teachers, the attendees reflected on the purpose of speech, how silence is both the means and the goal, and how one’s very nature is Silence. CHYKs came from all across the US for this retreat, which was held at CM Niagara’s Chinmaya Dhārā ashram. During the retreat, the CHYKs also attended a Study Group and a talented four of them participated in a memorable Divāli celebration at the ashram.

Many of the reflection exercises took place outdoors amid the natural beauty in and around Niagara Falls. Campers went to the Falls to explore them in silence. The highlight of the retreat was toward the end of the 40 hours when campers hiked down to the gorge and became immersed in the timeless nature around them. At the conclusion of the retreat, the students learned how to perform a simple puja and then broke their silence slowly in discussion of their reflections over the weekend.



Jnānā Yajña in Calgary by Ashok Nair

CM Calgary hosted a five-session jñāna yajña conducted by Acharya Gaurang Nanavaty (CM Houston) on “Meditation: Explanation and Practice,” November 7-9. Despite the cold and snow, the yajna was well received by Mission members and local residents. Acharya Gaurangji simplified the concepts of meditation and vividly explained the logic of meditation with insightful examples and fascinating stories. Each lecture was followed by a guided practice session, both of which all the participants thoroughly enjoyed.

Many of us know the benefits of meditation for body and mind, but Gaurangji revealed its spiritual significance, and reminded that it brings everlasting peace and joy to one’s life. Sharing tips and tricks on the art of living, Gaurangji stressed the importance of faith in life, for a child believes a woman to be his mother based on faith and only later understands its significance. So, too, Gaurangji said, we need to develop faith in the scriptures first, and as we study and practice, we come to understand their sacred import.

In explaining the hierarchy of intelligence in the various species of living creatures, he said Gaurangji pointed out that animals have their belly, reproductive organs, and head at the

same level, whereas a human being's is at a higher level than his other parts, indicating that intellect should be used before any other organ.

Expounding on the fundamentals of Vedanta, Gaurangji spoke on the importance of turning within through meditation and identifying one's real Self, the one and only ultimate Truth. He said vāsanas create desires in the intellect; desires create thoughts in the mind; thoughts manifest as action through the body; and once the body, mind, and intellect are seen as mere instruments, one can identify with the Truth.

Scriptures declare that we are the infinite Truth, but as Acharya Gaurangji elucidated, when we identify ourselves with the finite body, mind, and intellect, we feel we are finite. And when we identify with the Infinite through meditation, we realize our infinite nature. Gaurangji emphasized the importance of regularly practicing meditation not for any sublime experience, but to know one is beyond body, mind, and intellect.



CM Ottawa's Navarātri Celebrations by Anu Ram

CM Ottawa celebrated Navarātri in 2014 at its Chinmaya Bhāratī ashram in South Indian tradition with a golu. Devotees prayed to invoke the presence and blessings of Divine Mother in the forms of Mother Durga, Lakshmi, and Sarasvati over the nine nights and the tenth day of Vijaya Dashami. Through fasting, chanting, singing, offering of haldi and kumkum, and dancing garbā, participants expressed their devotion and gratitude to Divine Mother, seeking Her benevolence for peace and prosperity in life.

Golu, a beautiful display of various dolls and figurines on steps, featuring the three forms of Divine Mother, indicating She is seated in the royal court for darshan with family and retinue. The dolls and figurines of various great saints, leaders, common folk, animals, plants, and countless objects are placed on and around the steps to indicate one's appreciation and value of everything and everyone in life, in all fields, including arts and crafts, and music and dance. Navarātri is the sacred and joyous celebration of Divine Mother, who protects all from negative tendencies, and blesses all with health, wealth, values, and wisdom.



CM Calgary's First Walkathon by Ramesh Uppal

CM Calgary held its first walkathon at North Glenmore Park on October 5, 2014. The successful fundraising event was attended by 60 participants, which included Bala Vihar students and parents, and other members and officers of the Mission. The 5-km route was walked by adults and older children, while younger ones took the 2.5-km route. The day turned out to be perfect for this activity, with the temperature ranging from 10-15 °C.

The event commenced with invocation prayers and interesting warmup exercises that everyone enjoyed. Snacks were served at the end of the walk and some even began planning for next year's walkathon.



Features

Shāṅkara-bhāshya Pārāyaṇa: A CBCC Tribute to a Missionary and Visionary by Trishna Gulrajani

The centennial of a spiritual master, whose lifetime was dedicated and devoted to learning and teaching Vedanta, naturally calls for a grand and glorious start. Chinmaya Mission worldwide will celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda from May 2015 to May 2016 in countless inspired ways. What better prelude to the momentous occasion than the first-ever recitation of *Shāṅkara-bhāshya* by, and the hosting of, over 100 mahatmas at *Chinmaya Vibhooti*, Chinmaya Mission's worldwide vision and resource center in Kolwan, India.

It was as if the sacred Himalayas had themselves come to shower their blessings of pristine spiritual knowledge at *Chinmaya Vibhooti*, November 15-28, 2014. The program of *Shāṅkara-bhāshya Pārāyaṇa*, or the recitation of the written commentaries of Bhagavān Ādi Shaṅkarācharya, was conceived by, and conducted under the guidance of, Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda. The program paid homage to the invaluable contributions of Bhagavān Ādi Shaṅkarācharya, who is synonymous with Advaita Vedanta, and to Pujya Gurudev, who tirelessly spread and taught Advaita Vedanta around the world for more than 40 years in service of mankind.

The Bhagavadpāda Bhakta Maṇḍali of *Somashram* in Uttarkashi was invited to chant Bhagavān Ādi Shaṅkarācharya's Sanskrit commentaries on the *Prasthāna-trayī*—the Vedantic scriptural trinity of the major Upanishads, *Brahma Sūtras*, and *Bhagavad Gītā*—as well as a short portion of the commentary on *Shri Vishṇu Sahasranāma*. The systematized recitations, with two select groups of one chanting and the other listening, were offered over 12 consecutive days on the stage of *Sudharma* auditorium.

A day before the program commenced, the sun peeked from behind grey clouds that showered blessings in the form of rain—an auspicious start, indeed, and most unexpected in the month of November in Maharashtra. The entire surroundings became clean, green, and pristine. Swami Sharadananda (Chinmaya International Foundation), appointed as an overall event coordinator by Pujya Guruji, had instructed the *pujārī* at the Praṇav Gaṇesh Mandir to arrange a special morning puja and havan to invoke divine blessings for the event.

Vedic mantras showered along with the rains later at the Chinmaya Māruti Mandir, in welcome of the visiting *sādhus* and *sādhvīs*, as well as CM *āchāryas*. The solemn start of the program featured the *Shobhā Yātrā*, a procession honoring spiritual knowledge, sought and taught. An ornate palanquin containing a set of *bhāshya* books was carried at the forefront, as sannyasis with orange flags in hand followed in this pilgrimage of splendor. Devotees were blessed indeed to be able to witness and participate in such a spiritually charged moment in time. The yatra began at the *Sundaraangan* portico and completed on the red carpet at the doors of the *Sudharma* auditorium, where a ceremonial *pūrṇa-kumbha* was offered in welcome of the mahatmas and the scriptures.

The *bhāshya* books were reverentially placed at the altar on an exquisitely adorned stage that featured a breathtaking image of Bhagavān Ādi Śaṅkarācharya seated on a throne, blessing the proceedings. Swami Medhananda Puri Maharaj of *Kailās Āshram*, Rishikesh, and other learned mahatmas, inaugurated the program and spoke on the greatness of Ādi Śaṅkarācharya-ji's works, expressing joy and appreciation that there are still people who value these works enough to organize and attend such an event. Pujya Guruji spoke of the importance of seekers familiarizing themselves with these great teachings and the need for further exposure still. Swami Vishnu Tirtha Maharaj shared an introduction to *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, the text on which various *āchāryas* expounded for the next 12 days.

From the following day, what unfolded was a beautiful collaboration and connection among one and all. There was an atmosphere of mutual love and respect among the visiting mahatmas, and the *āchāryas* and devotees of Chinmaya Mission. Everyone gathered every evening for the Upanishad discourse that was followed by a Q&A session. Before dinner were cultural programs that included *Upanishad Gaṅgā* screenings and bhajan programs. Many CM swamis also joined in the *bhāshya* readings on stage during the day, while an army of *brahmachārīs* provided behind-the-scenes support in every organizational aspect, and in the *Annashree* dining hall, in particular. The 2014-16 Vedanta Course students from *Sāndeepany Sāadhanālaya* (Mumbai, India) also arrived and participated in the final three days of the event.

Daily *bhikshās* (serving of meals) was offered with elaborate grandeur. All the sadhus were seated in rows, in comfortable and traditional *patha* and *chaurāṅga* style. *Sevak* teams expertly and quickly served all the sadhus amid the reverberating sounds of resonant and inspiring Vedic chanting. Visitors and residents could not help but stop and marvel at the wondrous site of so many sadhus collectively partaking *bhikshā* in this manner. More than 125 families from around the world had lovingly and spontaneously offered *bhikshās*. Each day, as the long list of sponsor names was announced, it was heartwarming to see the love and reverence that Chinmaya Mission devotees have for sannyasis. Devotees who offered *bhikshā* in person received a blessed token gift from Pujya Guruji's hands. All families who offered *bhikshā* were sent a personalized letter and photo collage after the event.

As the program came to a close with an *archanā* offered at the holy *pādukās* of Pujya Gurudev on the crisp and bright morning of November 28, a pure and deep spirit of

beautiful Guru-bhakti pervaded the ashram. Each and every *vaktā* (speaker), *pārāyaṇa-kartā* (reader), *shrotā* (listener), and *āchārya* who had participated in the recitations came on stage to receive *dakshinā* and a specially designed Om lamp memento from Pujya Guruji as a token of love and gratitude.

For all the attendees it was an honor and privilege to experience first-hand how gloriously divine and enchanting ancient Vedic traditions are, and how they can beautify and purify modern culture even today. All the mahatmas who blessed the event with their presence expressed great appreciation for the work being done by Chinmaya Mission to preserve the vast and vital Vedic heritage that delights and showers grace on all spiritual seekers. May the blessings of Bhagavān Ādi Shaṅkarācharya and the grace of Pujya Gurudev shower on all spiritual seekers to live true to Vedantic teachings. May all Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebrations worldwide shine with the splendor of pure devotion, knowledge, and service: Unto Him Our Best!



Announcements

CM Movie Release on Pujya Gurudev: On a Quest
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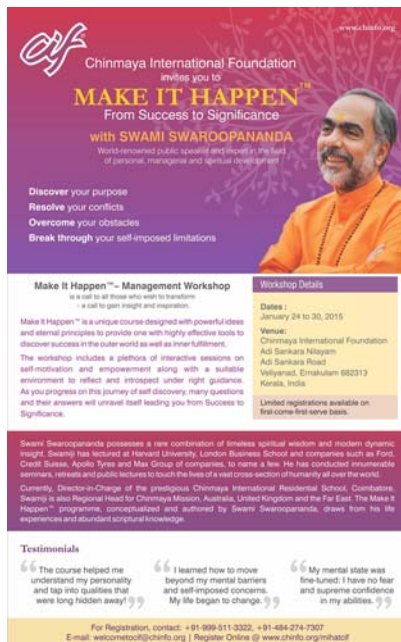
Here, I learned what is real practice, what is real riyaz. It was wonderful. I'll be trying to look for opportunities to come back here as many times as possible. - Sumit Bhatt



Monsoon Dance Intensive '15

Calling this experience a mere workshop will not do justice to it. It was a learning experience of a lifetime. - Radhika Kathal

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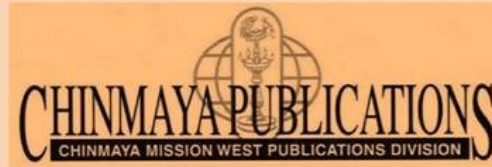
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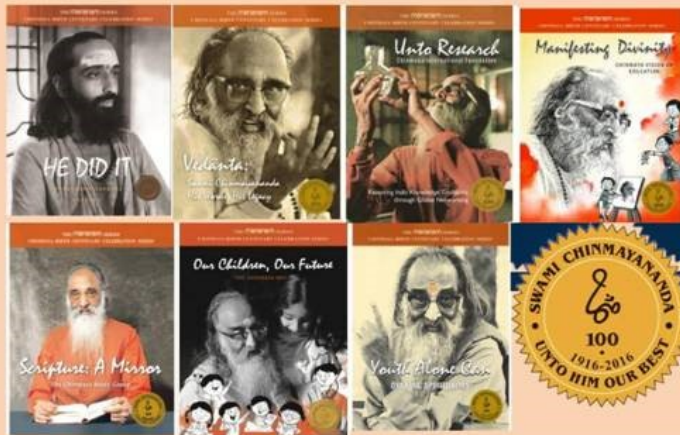
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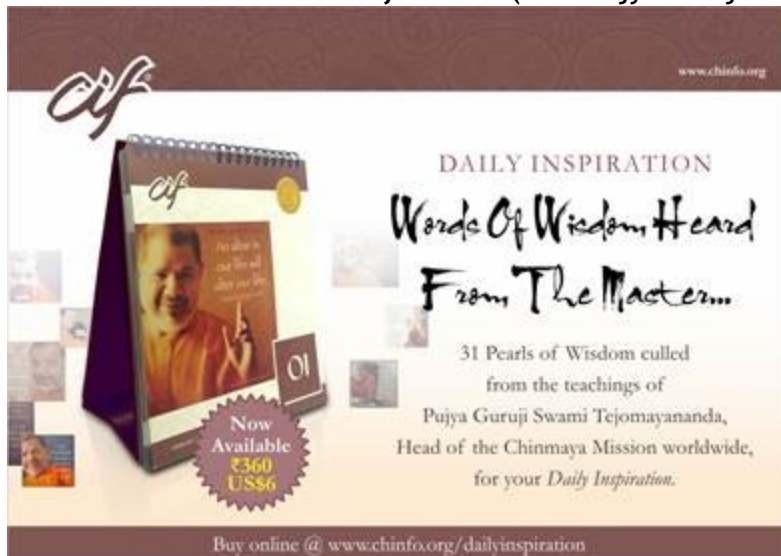
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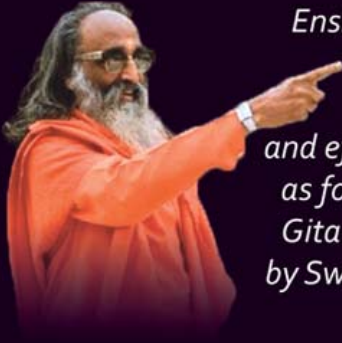
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- Easy Sanskrit



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Easy Sanskrit Online Study Course

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