



Hari OM
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My prostrations to Him, who is the Lord of Badri, who in truth is beyond both joy and sorrow, and yet, due to ignorance (Self-forgetfulness), experiences, from moment to moment, a variety of feelings, such as “I enjoy,” “I suffer,” “I fear,” etc.

The Self, pure Consciousness, is the illumining Principle that shines upon all experiences of body, mind, and intellect. The Self is other than concepts, such as joy, sorrow, fear, etc., which are attitudes of the mind and intellect. These different attitudes are but the objects of Its knowledge. Since the mind and intellect are nothing but thought flow, the patterns of thoughts can, by their very nature, never remain the same for even a short interval of time. Moment to moment they must necessarily change, as the waters of a river. Identifying ourselves with instruments of perpetual change, we come to live the experiences of mortality and finitude.

The reason we grieve is because of our identifications, our attachments, our personal likes and dislikes, our prejudices. If we understand the true nature of the world, we will not be easily affected by its situations and circumstances. We need to reduce our attachments, our desires, and our identifications with the body and the world of objects. It is our choice to grieve and to live in delusion. . . . From the absolute standpoint, as well as from the relative or worldly standpoint, worry or anxiety is useless—it does not serve any purpose. Our problem is that we do not deal with situations and events as they occur in life. We want situations and events to be conducive to our likes; we want to get things we like and avoid what we dislike. However, we should realize that the world is not going to change for us. Events and situations will always occur irrespective of whether we want them or not. . . . All we can do is change ourselves. We must do our duty without the sense of doer-ship and without the sense of pride.

SPIRITUAL TRAILS

Expressions of Wisdom

by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda

The Omnipresent Guru

I must thank some 800 devotees who had sent felicitations [May 8] by cables, both from India and abroad, and the endless letters of pure devotion and gratitude.

Who will not grow out of his imperfections and emerge into a greater dimension of living when he has understood the Vedanta and started his sincere sadhana?

In case you all really continue your regular and daily meditations, and keep yourself inspired by your study of the Upanishads and the Gītā, you shall come to experience how your Guru can help you “there,” from within your own heart.

Try. It shall be a unique experience of your Guru and of the grace of Swami Tapovanam.

Love, Love, Love,
Chinmayananda
Ujjain, April 29, 1980

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 scriptural 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, satsang at home, with mainly members of the family, wherein the reading of Itihasas like Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, or Puranas like Bhagavatam, 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 pranāms to the elders in the house by the younger ones should be followed and inculcated by Mission Members.

Gifts to Mission Trusts

Considering the services rendered by CCMT and other trusts founded by me for the revival of our rishi culture, many devotees have been offering through me, to those trusts, various properties for helping the great cause. Bound as they are by the rules and regulations applicable to all such organizations, the trusts often find it difficult to accept such kind-hearted gifts. The intentions of the donors are very well taken, but the requisite formalities have also to be complied with. Gifts should therefore be given plentifully, but with faith, modesty, sympathy, and understanding or knowledge—as so succinctly laid down in Taṭtiryopanishad. . . . Once the [required] points are taken care of, the gifts would generally meet all the conditions laid down in the Upanishad, and they would also be in tune with the commandments of the holy Gītā, which I have been trying to din into your ears all these years!

Message to Workers at the All-India Conference in Madras

It is perhaps for the first time in the history of India that enthusiastic young Hindus have come together to think in terms of planning in spirituality. It is so novel and its novelty is its irresistible enchantment. I am extremely glad to congratulate all of you who have assembled here for this sacred purpose in this rare conference. I need not emphasize the need for coordinated work. We must harness all the energies and effort, incentive and imagination that we have toward building the solidarity of our community, which is based on the cultural oneness of this great nation.

Each worker must learn to build a bridge between himself and the individuals around him, and lay the foundations for building an isthmus to connect all individuals into a community. Bridge builders who span the gulfs between hearts are the true spiritual workers. Ours is an era wherein communalism, sectarianism, caste-ism are all going, and they must entirely go. The torch has passed on to a new generation with a more universal outlook and a more daring idealism. People are looking forward to living an ideal that is far above the belly and even above the heart. Independent Bhārat has started rewriting her history—not in terms of a prophet and his creed, but in terms of life, its harmony, its productivity, and its beauty. Chinmaya Mission workers must learn to become a symbol of this aspiration in our country for an ideal way of life.

It is a fact, at once sad and tragic, that Hinduism at this moment is under a cloud; and we must strive to dispel it. Certainly, great sacrifices will be needed. We Mission members shall joyously make them in order to give our country its spiritual inheritance.

In this conference, you who have already gained a bit of personal experience of existing problems must very carefully deliberate, and finally determine, the new dimensions we are going to give to the future. We must plan, inching slowly, to totally rehabilitate our people with a national moral pride.

Strive to end all differences—personal, political, and communal—among our own people. Let us Hindus learn to unite, and with a single-throated glee, come to sing His glories in our actions, thoughts, and intentions. Let us strive to bring the glow of Bharat into the hearts of all. Let us throw a bridge across that all of us can, hand-in-hand, with songful hearts and hopeful joy, walk toward the temple of Perfection, inspired by love.

We believe that a nation cannot be built only by politics, economic planning, or scientific discoveries. These can no doubt enlarge and decorate the national life of a country, but the true foundations, we believe, are in the character and spiritual values that people express in their day-to-day life. Even the very politicians, economists, and scientists need these as much as the common folk in the country.

Toward this great re-orientation of our life in the community, let us work hard. You now know the glory that is our culture. Determine yourself to walk out of this conference hall to work among the people. Explain, expound, discuss, and argue if need be. Above all, strive to show to those around you what a glorious life we in our country live, by your own life. Remember, men are more influenced by what they see than what they hear. Your sermons fall flat if your actions are foul.

Let our personal life mirror truly the perfections that Hinduism declares in her scriptures. In an immoral world of corruptions and deceptions, I know I am asking too much from every one of you. But you are the dedicated soldiers in this field and I must ruthlessly ask—nay, demand—this sacrifice from every one of you.

Before we disperse into our fields of sevā, we shall hammer out a two-year plan for the effective spreading of these ideals. It is a fact that for the last eight years we have been concentrating only in the cities. I expect that the plan forged by you will take the message

to the villages—what the Americans call as “barn-storming.” There in the villages lie the hearts of our nation, and to serve them is to serve our great Bhārat.

Dakshina at Bhikshās

For the last two and a half years, Swamiji [referring to himself] was accepting bhikshā, along with an officially recognized and publicly demanded Guru-dakshina of 100 rupees from the host family. True devotees, emotionally hungry to serve, but materially incapable of making this much of a sacrifice, were disappointed. Discriminative and intelligent rich men who could afford it felt that it was an unjustified extra tax on them. Even mahāpurushas like Prabudath Brahmachari of Allahabad heard about it from his devotees in Delhi and Bombay, and in his divinely sincere and outspoken manner, totally misunderstood me and my actions. In spite of it all, I continued collecting my 100 rupees as my “fee” for supplying my hosts with the pleasure of my company at their dining table.

It was three years ago that a beautiful Devi Temple, with installation of the Nava Grahas, lying neglected and dilapidated in Trichur, Kerala, was on the point of being auctioned or sold to richer sects of a different faith who would have pulled down the temple, stockpiled the sacred idols or made them into doorsteps, and thus, perhaps openly, insulted Hinduism. The local people approached me. I intervened in the name of Chinmaya Mission and procured the temple from its royal owners.

It is only after I got the temple that I visited the city and saw the extent of its dilapidation. Therefore, from the general Guru-dakshina Fund we spent a few thousand rupees to repair and rebuild it. It is only then I realized that a temple without funds or immovable properties, cannot run regularly. The Trichur Chinmaya Mission was literally too poor to run it. Thus, there was an urgent need for funds.

As the chief sevak of the Chinmaya Mission, I have already sufficient pressure on me for funds. We needed, repeatedly, funds for the nursery schools, the diagnostic centers, the free dispensaries, the vijñāna mandirs—apart from the main Tara Cultural Trust and the newly opened Daya Kendra, the funds of which are diverted to the service of displaced victims of the Pakistan War. As such, to open a fund for the running of an ancient temple, especially in the geographically native place of the swami, felt almost impossible. Hence, I decided to collect a fund by having a “fee” for the devoted public to feed me at their own domestic dining table.

Each devotee was to give me, along with the 100-rupee donation, his own name, address, and date of birth. The amount went to Trichur as an endowment. The annual interest of the amount (Rs. 5-6) covered the birthday puja expenses of each devotee, and the divine prasāda was sent each year to the donor.

I am explaining this because today, I have collected all the funds necessary for the purpose, altogether Rs. 36,500, the interest of which will, for all time to come, make the temple run its minimum rituals.

Once set in motion, a momentum cannot suddenly be stopped and, therefore, even now, host families give me the same donation even when I say I don’t want it—because they have started feeling that bhikshās are not complete without dakshina. The amount is now going toward the Navarātri Pūjā, and for all the nine sacred days, the devotee will receive gifts from the temple.

On Shri Anandamayi Ma

On May 13, Bangalore celebrated the sacred occasion of the 84th birthday of Shri Anandamayi Ma. Pujya Gurudev flew to Bangalore for the occasion and spoke there.

Great saints and sages are people who cannot be compared with ordinary mortals, who work in the world ever seeking satisfaction. Saints need nothing. They desire nothing. They want nothing. They live in themselves experiencing exquisite Bliss and Perfection. All that they wish is to share their joy with others.

Our scriptures explain that the highest state of Consciousness, the Atman, does nothing, but by Its mere presence, everything in creation gets “activized,” drawing energy from It. In the Rāsa-kṛīḍā, we have the picture of the motionless Entity, Shri Krishna, around whom dance the gopis. Another such motionless Entity of the highest perfection, who is silent and action-less, is Ma. Such silent mahatmas are the most eloquent. Such a mastermind is very rare in any period of history. The very look of such evolved souls who are ever centered in the Supreme is sufficient to change the world.

When the well-educated (sa-akshara) behave as though not educated (ra-akshasa) compromising with their convictions, society falls spiritually, morally, materially and culturally. For cultural revival, masters like Ma sit in one corner, and attract and enchant. The embodiment of the essence of our culture, the symbol of the Reality itself is in front of us in the form of Ma. Let us bow down to her on this auspicious occasion.

The Means to Spiritual Perfection by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

When we want to achieve any goal, we must have a means or method to reach it. This necessity of a means is true in the material, as well as the spiritual, world. To reach anywhere, there must be a way of getting there. The means in itself, however, does not guarantee reaching a desired goal. Success lies in how the person uses the means. Right use of appropriate means presupposes intelligence.

In spiritual pursuits, the means themselves are inert (jaḍa) and it is the aspirant who is endowed with the power of intelligence. The intelligent use of correct means to achieve a desired goal brings success. The goal is called sādhyā; the spiritual aspirant or one who desires to reach the sādhyā is called the sādḥaka; and the process or means by which the sādhyā is reached is called sādhanā.

Two Types of Spiritual Practice

“Practice makes perfect,” is a commonly known statement. However, when we apply it to a spiritual goal, these words are not entirely true. What exactly is meant by “practice makes perfect?” The practice of any action at the physical level leads to mechanical behavior. Even though precision may be achieved, the behavior remains mechanical. In order to know the deeper significance of any action, there must be a correct understanding of its purpose. To have this kind of understanding is quite rare. In terms of material achievement, mere mechanical action may be adequate to meet a desired end. But when we examine spiritual goals, it is essential that we have correct understanding as to why we do certain things.

In spiritual practice, the effort must be conscious and calculated, not mechanical. Spiritual sadhana is of two types: 1) practices used to gain a purified inner equipment (antahkaraṇa shuddhi) and 2) practices used to remove ignorance of the true nature of the Self. In order to gain the Higher, we need to develop pure, sattvic qualities. Therefore, we must undertake various forms of spiritual practices that will bring about purification.

The first type of sadhana explains the various practices that will bring about purification at the mental and intellectual levels (physical purity is already taken for granted). Practices such as repeating the Lord's name (japa yoga), austerities (tapas), pilgrimages (yātrās), worship (pūjā), and other activities such as charity (dāna) and dedicated selfless work (karma yoga), are all performed to purify the mind and intellect.

As stated earlier, mere mechanical action is fruitless. It is the right use and understanding of the means that is essential if success is to be achieved. For example, when worshipping an idol, we must see the Ideal in the idol, see it only as the Truth that it represents, and not as a piece of stone. If our mind is not centered on the Lord with devotion, then no matter how beautiful the flowers, incense, or rituals, our worship will not lead to the purification of the mind.

The second type of sadhana, which when correctly undertaken brings about the removal of ignorance of the Self, is of three types: shravaṇa, manana, and nididhyāsana.

Shravaṇam is listening to Shruti (scripture) from a Guru. This is not merely the hearing of words, but rather the attentive and single-pointed listening to the true meaning of the Guru's words. Real listening is putting the mind behind the ears, and not allowing it to dissipate into any other field of thought. True shravaṇa must thus have a degree of antaḥkaraṇa shuddhi as a pre-requisite. The mind must be calm and non-dissipating to some extent before such attentive listening is possible. Hence the need for antaḥkaraṇa shuddhi.

Mananam is literally, "reflection upon what has been heard." It is the process of concretizing what the Guru has taught. Making that knowledge as one's own is a pre-requisite before the third sadhana of nididhyāsana can be undertaken.

Nididhyasanam is meditation or contemplation—that is, coming to know for oneself, through direct experience, what has been discussed in the scriptures. This process is the conversion of intellectual knowledge (theory) to subjective experience.

Spiritual Perfection

We now come to the question of spiritual perfection. What exactly is spiritual perfection? The spiritual goal to be reached is by nature already perfect, while the means, the sadhana to reach that goal, are imperfect. All actions, due to their very nature, are imperfect. So, there appears to be a paradox here. The goal is perfect; yet the means is imperfect. We can resolve this confusion by examining the nature of ignorance, the goal, and the Self.

The Self is already perfect. Whatever sadhana we undertake does not make the Self "more perfect," for the Self is already Sat-chit-ānanda. Actions are imperfect by nature. Sadhana helps purify the mind and prepare it for the revelation of the Self that is already there in all its perfection.

For example, ignorance is like dust on a mirror. When we dust off the dirt from the mirror's surface through sadhana, the essential nature of the clear mirror is revealed. The dusting itself did not endow the reflective capacity of the mirror, as the reflective capacity is the very nature of the mirror. It is like clouds covering the sun. The sun is always shining fully, but we think the sun is not there and see only darkness.

Swami Vivekananda gave another example of this removal of the veil of ignorance and revelation of the Self. When a statue or picture is about to be unveiled at its first public showing, the statue or the picture is already behind the covering. If we make a small hole in the cloth, we can see a small area of the picture. As we cut the hole larger, (through

more and more sadhana) more and more of the picture is revealed to us. We do not create the picture, as it is already there. It is only that the veil prevents our direct vision of it.

Devotion Brings Success

Correct understanding and single-pointedness of effort are necessary in order to achieve any end. But essentially, all that is required is devotion. True devotion brings real success. Devotion is defined as love at the supreme level for the work undertaken—love for a higher ideal. Devotion is the key to spiritual sadhana. With the attitude of reverent devotion, the seeker carries out his work as karma yoga, with all fruits of actions dedicated to the Lord of his heart. As the result comes, he gladly and humbly accepts it in an attitude of prasāda buddhi, taking all result as prasādam, or blessing from the Lord.

Hence, we see that the sadhana for spiritual perfection is: 1) purification of the inner equipment and 2) removal of ignorance. When impurities and ignorance are removed, the Self reveals itself in all its perfection and the seeker surrenders to the Lord in all devotion. This is the means to spiritual perfection.

REFLECTIONS

A Journey of Learning with Pujya Guruji

Anonymous (continued from CMW News, March 2015)

We were in a car and the lady driving had been waiting to talk to Guruji privately. She said, “Guruji, I keep thinking why this has happened. The reaction is not going away.” Guruji said, “It is the inability to accept and therefore we have so many questions. Even if I answer one question, another question will follow. We keep asking why. There is no end to the why-s. So look ahead and keep going forward. We have to move ahead anyway, so move ahead happily. Some say what cannot be cured must be endured, but I say what cannot be cured must be enjoyed.”

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The host had eagerly awaited Guruji’s arrival and was overjoyed to have him in her home. The first day, the puja went well. That evening, she looked at Guruji and said, “Already the first day is over.” Guruji just smiled. She repeated, “Guruji, already one day is over! How will I cope when you go? Now you are here and I am so happy, but when you go I will be so sad.”

He replied, “Be in the present moment. Don’t think about later. I am here now; you be here now.” I was with her a week after Guruji had left and I could see that she missed him, but she said she thought often about his advice and tried to stay in the present as much as possible.

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Guruji was seated for breakfast. Someone had made a dish, but had put less oil and less salt. Guruji knew this person well and said, “This dish is not up to mark.”

“Sorry Guruji.”

“You put less oil.”

“Guruji, it is healthier.”

“Where something is needed, why do you put less? If you don’t put the necessary amount, you will not get the right result. It will fall short. Everyone says it is healthy, but then the dish is not tasty. Then everyone goes out to eat and they enjoy the food more there. Why? Because outside, they don’t put less! Then, is it not better to put the right amount at home instead?

“This principle applies to everything, not just food. For any work you have to put in the required time. If you do less, the job will not be as effective. In the construction of a building, you have to put the right amount of material. For money also, you have to give however much is needed or you will not get the full result. For every job, you have to do it the right way. Don’t be kanjūs (stingy)!”

The lady said, said, “Yes Guruji, next time I will put more oil.”

Guruji replied, “Būndha se gayī, hauja se nahīn āti.” To explain, he told a story.

Emperor Akbar was gifted a small bottle of very expensive perfume. When he opened it, a drop fell on the carpet. He bent over and wiped it off the carpet and put it on his hand. Then he thought, “I am an emperor. Why did I need to do that? If it fell, I should leave it.” He looked around to see if anyone had seen him. Birbal was there and he had seen. A few days later, Akbar built a big tank and filled it with perfume. He then told Birbal, “Go bathe in it.” Birbal said, “Būndha se gayī, hauja se nahīn āti.” Meaning, what was lost in a drop cannot be made up with a tank.

Guruji explained, “Miserliness cannot be made up later by being generous. Right time. The right thing has to be done at the right time.”

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Once, while sitting informally with Pujya Guruji, someone extolled Vedanta and how much it has helped them. Guruji said, “You know, actually, what we know as Vedanta is very diluted. We don’t know actual Vedanta.” He indicated to the picture of Param Pujya Swami Tapovan Maharaj that was above him and said, “He knew Vedanta and lived it.”

Guruji’s face reflected a deep reverence as he continued, “Swamiji [Pujya Gurudev] used to say, even when it was so cold, Tapovan Maharaj would not accept the invitation to sit near the fire. And if went, he would sit only for two or three minutes, and move away. He used to tell Swamiji, ‘This is sense pleasure.’”

Guruji repeated, “Enjoying the warmth of fire is sense pleasure! And what do we practice?” We glimpsed then the loftiness of Vedanta and the glory of those who live it.

Fleeting Thoughts in a Slow Dance

by Chetana Neerchal

Many hours have passed,
my Friend,
since I gave you thought
and sought your company.

You have flitted in
and out of my thoughts,
like the fleeting warmth
in these cold days.

The days are swift,
but my thoughts dance
to a slow melody.

What is mine,
what is not mine,
in this fractional life?

The eternal question
moves in a slow motion,
in the void,
seeking fullness, courage,
to explore the Unseen.

"Love Thyself": CHYK Retreat in Chicago

by Prateek Garg

This past February I attended the CHYK retreat on "Love Thyself" at the Badri ashram of CM Chicago, and it completely refreshed my outlook on life. Before college, I was involved in Bala Vihar, and while in college, I attended CHYK meetings and events fairly regularly. However, once I graduated from college, I moved to Chicago to start my new job and effectively lost all contact with the Mission. I made excuses for myself thinking that since I had started a job, I would be too busy to attend Mission events anyway.

My friend convinced me to go to the CHYK camp by emphasizing how close it was and that it was on the weekend, so it wouldn't affect my work. And so I went, because it was the perfect intersection of interesting and convenient. Little did I realize that it would have such a profound impact, for it was an experience I didn't know I needed in my life.

The camp was scheduled near Valentine's Day and thus aptly focused on love. I spent three days learning from Acharyas Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara) and Dhiren Khatri (CM Chicago), as well as peer seekers. The lectures were split into three daily themes, which had been presented by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda at the 2012 World Workers' Conference: "Love Thyself," "Love Thy Neighbor," and "Love Thy Mother." My personal growth that weekend was exponential and it mirrored exactly the daily themes of the camp.

Day 1, Love Thyself: After having my eyes closed for a long time, I finally opened them and looked inward. I started asking myself important questions that I had not in a long time. Self-reflection is a practice that I have continued since the camp.

Day 2, Love Thy Neighbor: I started making friends with other campers, who were once complete strangers. I felt so comfortable with them that I was surprised to be sharing one of my most vulnerable and personal stories, and that, too, in such a short time. But after spending just a day with them, I felt like I had known them for a long time.

Day 3, Love Thy Mother: I learned that I need to stay connected to my spiritual roots to continue my personal progress and avoid stagnation. I am doing this currently by attending a weekly CHYK study group and hope to start getting more involved.

Keeping in touch with Hinduism, Vedanta, and Chinmaya Mission becomes difficult after graduating from Bala Vihar and starting college, but it becomes even more so after starting a job. My biggest gain from the "Love Thyself" CHYK camp has been a renewed investment in myself, and a welcome reconnection with CHYK, Chinmaya Mission, and ultimately, Vedanta.

If Truth Be Told

by Mira Krishnan

What is hell in this world?

To look at the world and see my reflections, not Yours.

What is heaven in this world?

To think I am coming closer to You.

What is happiness?

To be enveloped in Your arms and disappear.

What is to be given up?

All of the above.

What is the Truth?

To be or not to be: There is no question.

Chinmaya Inspiration Yatra III

by Neha Mehta

The third Chinmaya Inspiration Yatra was a life-changing journey for 31 CHYKs from all over North America, and conducted by Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara). Our journey began on December 21 in the serene, powerful, and knowledge-saturated atmosphere of Sāndeepany Sādhanālaya in Mumbai, India.

Little did we know that the first few days of the yatra would be the most intense. We spent three full days in the residential Vedanta Course, where our days began with Vedic chanting at 5:30 a.m. and concluded with satsang at 8 p.m. Swami Bodhatmananda, the course acharya, lovingly welcomed us for the few days.

We then took a bus to Chinmaya Vibhooti near Pune to attend a week-long camp with Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, who taught Shri Vishnu Sahasranāma. Once again, our days were packed. The days included the chanting of Shri Vishnu Sahasranāma, serving meals in kitchen, and attending beautiful cultural programs every evening. Every moment at Chinmaya Vibhooti was magical and rich with bhakti—from Pujya Guruji's explanation of each name of the Lord to the artists' laudable musical notes. The highlight of Chinmaya Jeevan Darshan, an exhibit on Pujya Gurudev's life, work, and teachings brought tears to our eyes, filling us with a powerful connection like never before to our Guru-shishya paramparā.

On New Year's Day, we traveled to the Ganesha temple in Pune, now the Hari Hara Bhajana Samaj, where Pujya Gurudev gave his first discourse to a group of four, including himself.

The second half of our adventure commenced with a 32-hour train ride in second class, three tier, non-AC compartments from Pune, Maharashtra to Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. We arrived at the train station in the early hours of January 3, ready to start our sevā at CORD Siruvani. Some of the highlights of our time here included visits to a local NGO meeting, a medicinal crops farm, a biodegradable plate factory, a betel nut refugee camp, and a village school. We also attended the weekly Bala Vihar session and a Mahila Mandal meeting. Everyone at the CORD center was so kind and loving; the staff personally cooked for us our last meal at the center. Brahmachari Vighnesh Chaitanya, (CM Coimbatore) graciously showed us around many temples in the area.

We left the Chinmaya Gardens ashram on January 6 for the Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) in Veliyanad, Kerala. We were all under the impression that we would take the train to Kochi, but Pujya Gurudev's grace had something else in store for us: All the Yatris went to watch On a Quest!

After our surprise stop, we traveled via bus to the birthplace of Bhagavān Ādi Shankarāchārya in CIF's ashram of Ādi Shankara Nilayam. We spent our 24 hours here in isolation, with minimal food, no electricity, and no technology.

On January 9, we returned to the Sāndeepany ashram in Mumbai, and completed our yatra more finely tuned than ever before to the spirit of Bhārat, to Pujya Gurudev, and to our own spiritual journey.



News

***On a Quest* Teleconferences**

CM centers may get more information on promoting, publicizing, and showing the new biographical movie on Pujya Gurudev, *On a Quest*, through weekly teleconferences on Tuesdays and Sundays. Contact Sivaprasad for more information.

Regional *Gītā* Chanting Competitions 2015

Chinmaya Mission centers across North America will be offering regional *Gītā* chanting competitions. Winners will be eligible to proceed to the national and international competition levels to be held in Chicago and Kolwan (India), respectively, in commemoration of Pujya Gurudev's birth centenary. To participate, contact the center nearest you. For general information, visit chantgeeta.com.

CM Phoenix Spring Break Kids' Camp and Yajna

by Madhu Lakshmanan and Uma Roy

Excitement was in the air as the CM Phoenix family prepared for its third children's camp during spring break, March 9-13, at its *Chinmaya Goloka* ashram. CM Bakersfield members, Ashok and Sudha Bhatt, came to help *sevaks* plan the camp for the third consecutive year. Swami Prakashananda (CM Trinidad) was the camp acharya, and the camp themes were "Ramayana Characters" for the junior group and "Leadership Qualities of Hanumanji" for the senior group.

Each day began with an assembly in the shrine that included invocation prayers and an inspiring address by Swamiji, who also taught the children to chant the *Guru Stotram* with Caribbean flair. After the morning classes, snacks and yoga breaks, and sumptuous varied lunches, the afternoons were devoted to arts and crafts, bhajans, and practice for the concluding day's cultural program for parents.

The teachers, kitchen *sevaks*, student volunteers, and everyone who worked behind the scenes helped the camp run smoothly. Some unexpected excitement even led to an outdoor picnic for snacks. Swamiji's presence and Trini chai kept spirits high and brought out the best in everyone.

The week's Fun Day featured carnival games, a treasure hunt, bounce houses, popcorn, and snow cones, and was held on Thursday. Friday brought the cultural program on stage with skits and bhajans performed by the children for their parents.

Each day after the camp, *Chinmaya Goloka* resounded with knowledge and devotion as Swamiji offered a *jñāna yajña* on *Sundarakāṇḍa*. Swamiji's emotion-laden singing and humorous stories, and the very beauty of the *Rāmācharitamānasa* itself, made for unforgettable evenings that left everyone wanting more.



Rāma Navami Celebrated at CM Boston

by Shanti Pasumarti and Vishwanath Subramaniam

CM Boston's Chinmaya Bala Vihar students celebrated Lord Rama's *jayanti* with overflowing fun and devotion at the *Chinmaya Māruti* ashram on March 29, 2015. The front lobby was decorated beautifully by volunteers with scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The entire ashram showcased *Rāmāyaṇa* paintings, drawings, and colorings created by the BV students.

The main feature of the celebrations was the presentations by the BV students. The "Parade of *Rāmāyaṇa* Characters" was presented by first graders who had donned *Rāmāyaṇa* costumes and excitedly involved the audience by quizzing them. An endearing "*Rāma Dhun & Dāṇḍiyā Fun*" was performed by the kindergarten students. The second graders dressed up as monkeys and chanted Lord Rama invocations and select verses of *Hanumān Chālīsā*. The fifth graders took it to the next level by enacting small skits on symbolism in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the practice of *Rāmāyaṇa* teachings in daily life. The sixth graders graciously danced to a bhajan adoring baby Shri Rama, while the seventh graders danced with devotion on the glory of Lord Rama and recited a poem (based on their *P.O. Box Mr. God* curriculum) to a popular tune and added modern dance movements. The teens enacted a modern *Rāmāyaṇa* skit titled, "Ayodhya Chemicals." The program ended with youth singing the famous Mīrābāi bhajan on Lord Rama and the renowned composition on Lord Rama by Bhadrachala Ramadas.

Included in the day's celebrations were games for all ages based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The Jeopardy-style game, in particular, was a learning experience for many. The day concluded with *prasād* for all and ice cream for the children.

The same day, the resident temple priests conducted the wedding ceremony of Shri Rama and Devi Sita. It was truly a community event with numerous volunteers pitching in the whole week. The program began at 9:30 a.m. with *Gaurī Pūjā* offered by ladies to Mother Sita. The bride and groom were taken in individual palanquins outside, where the snow flurries felt like showers from the Milky Ocean. A mangala-sūtra, clothes, jewels, and 20 different kinds of sweets were prepared for, and offered to, the divine couple. Garlands were exchanged between the two. The idols of various devas were gathered and everyone proceeded to the auditorium, where the wedding was conducted.

After the sankalpa, the wedding rituals continued. The *pravaram*, or ancestry of the bride and groom, were read to announce their greatness to the world. The priests explained this in detail to the wedding guests, stating that the purpose of a divine wedding like this was for the welfare of the whole universe. Instead of "*mama jīvana hetunā*," the prayer said was "*jagata rakshaka hetunā*," for the divine couple to protect the entire universe. The ceremony was interspersed with beautiful music, sung with each step. An *archanā* was offered to Shri Rama

and Mother Sita. This was followed by *ashṭāṅga sevā*, which included instrumental music and a dance performance, along with Vedic mantras. The ceremony concluded with *mantra pushpam*, *namaskāram* and *shānti* mantras.

The grand wedding feast that was offered and served as prasad consisted of more than 15 items that were prepared in-house by volunteers. The delicious traditional South Indian wedding feast was served by volunteers on a banana leaf to over 300 devotees. Most of the local community pitched in, buying groceries, making sweets, cutting vegetables, setting up the dais, or preparing the gifts and bags for the sponsors. Everyone was in a divine mood and did not complain about the wait when the dining hall was full.



Swamini Vimalananda's Talks in Atlanta by Anu Nathan

CM Atlanta hosted a *jñāna yajña* by Swamini Vimalananda (CM Coimbatore) at its *Chinmaya Niketan* ashram, March 21-24, 2015. The evening lectures on SMS, “Sure Mantras for Success,” featured select *Gītā* verses on leadership, and the nature and power of the mantras. Swaminiji shared her own simple and meaningful mantras, such as, “Don’t bang your head against closed walls; walk out through the open doors,” and encouraged everyone to create a personal mantra for themselves. Swaminiji’s style of delivery made the meaning and application of most profound mantras easy to understand.

In the morning talks on the “Theory and Practice of Rituals,” Swaminiji wonderfully explained that pujas and rituals are the time-tested methods to focus the mind, and that they are to be performed with *bhāva*, or deep sanctity. These empowering lectures were attended by over 100 devotees. Swaminiji will return to Atlanta for talks on *Shiva Sankalpa Sūktam*, May 6-8, 2015.



CM Orlando’s *Mahashivarātri* Observance by Satish Nagarajan

CM Orlando observed *Mahashivarātri* with devotional fervor, starting the festivities a couple of days early. The *Mahāmṛtyunjaya Havan* was performed on February 15 for Bala Vihar students

to participate. Each child sat at the *havan kuṇḍa* and offered oblations into the fire while the priests and other devotees chanted the *Mṛtyunjaya Mantra*.

On the sacred day of *Mahashivarātri*, February 17, the *kalasha sthapanā* and *Shri Ganapati Homam* were performed at 6 a.m. These were followed by a *Mahāmṛtyunjaya Havan*, *Laghurudra Pūjā*, and *Shiva Sahasranāma Archanā*. After a brief break in the afternoon, devotees lined up in the evening in large numbers to perform *abhishekam* of the Shiva-lingam amid the Vedic chanting of *Rudram* 11 times by a local priest and various devotees. At the conclusion of the chanting, the Lord Shiva's idol was bathed with due rituals and waters from the consecrated *kalashas*. While the officiating priests decorated the Lord's idol and Shiva-lingam behind closed curtains, the hall beyond resonated with bhajans by devotees.

When the clock struck midnight, the curtains parted and devotees waiting with bated breath were blessed to see the Lord, a sight to which words cannot do justice. After the final *ārṭi*, everyone was served prasād. Devotees left that night with sacred chants ringing in their ears and the Lord's vision imprinted in their minds.

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A three-day camp on "Foundations for Success: What do you stand on?" was conducted March 13-15 for children in grades 8-12. The overnight camp was held at CM Orlando's *Kaivalyaashram*. It featured spiritual discourses by Acharya Shailaja Nadkarni (CM Orlando), and yoga, meditation, chanting, and spiritually uplifting group activities conducted by CMsevaks. These were interspersed with movie night, outdoor and indoor sports and games, and telescopic stargazing. Even as the flame of knowledge was kindled in young minds through these enlightening and wholesome activities, a campfire was lit for children to gather, roast vegan marshmallows and s'mores, and share stories. The camp was a grand success and there is already talk of organizing more in the future.

*

CM Orlando's Acharya Shailaja Nadkarni's pledge to conduct 108 *Guru Pādukā Pūjās* and *Gītā jñāna yajñas* in devotees' homes in commemoration of Pujya Gurudev's birth centenary is well underway and proving to be very popular. As of mid-April, there have been 26 such events conducted and most weekends have been booked for the next several months.

In addition, another initiative undertaken to raise awareness is the production of short film clips showcasing portraits, locales, and events related to Pujya Gurudev, accompanied by a background narration. These short 7-10 minute clips are watched by all devotees at the start of every Sunday Chinmaya Bala Vihar session.





***Mahashivarātri* Celebrations in Calgary** by Aishwarya Ilangovan

CM Calgary celebrated *Mahashivarātri* on February 15, 2015, commencing with invocation prayers and a Lord Ganesha *stotram*. Milk and flowers were then offered to the Shiva-lingam, during which *Lingashtakam* and *Shiva-panchākshari Stotram* were chanted. Select Chinmaya Bala Vihar students then chanted the *Shiva Shaḍ-akshara Stotram*. The event came to conclusion after the recitation of Shiva bhajans, *Chinmaya Ārti*, the Chinmaya Mission Pledge, and closing prayers. The fruits offered to Lord Shiva were distributed to everyone as *prasād*.



CM Bakersfield Celebrates Parents' Day by Ambika Thampi

CM Bakersfield's Chinmaya Bala Vihar students celebrated Parents' Day on March 22, 2015 at the *Chinmaya Gokul* ashram with cheerful excitement, transforming themselves into singers, dancers, actors, playwrights, and audio-visual technicians for their parents, grandparents, and friends.

The program began with the chanting group of students reciting the opening prayers and *Gītā*, Chapter 15. This was followed by a song with movements by the Shishu Vihar children dressed up as various forms of God. The pre-junior and junior classes sang bhajans, filling the stage with little Lord Shivas and little Lord Krishnas, their costumes and jewelry sparkling throughout their performance. The intermediate class sang a medley of bhajans and spoke on symbolism in Hinduism. The senior students performed plays, including a video-recorded play by CHYKs. The play depicting the life of Pujya Gurudev by the senior group was well received by the audience. Students from the Hindi class recited poetry, and the Gujarati class performed a short skit.

CM Bakersfield president, Anil Mehta, addressed the audience, and spoke about Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda's visit to Bakersfield in June 2015. This was followed by the screening of a short film on Guruji's inspirational life.

The program ended with the recitation of the Chinmaya Mission Pledge, *ārti*, closing prayers, and delicious lunch *prasād* for all.



CMLA's Massive Colors at Holi

by Sonal Ladva

A section of Miles Square Park in Fountain Valley was awash in yellow with youth and adults clad in t-shirts that announced them as participants in CM Los Angeles's (CM LA's) annual CORD walkathon and Holi picnic on March 8. The event saw a turnout of over 1,000 people.

CM LA's resident acharya Swami Ishwarananda led the group of walkers for the first five miles. The walk path wound around various stations that featured, for example, kids' activities, Ayurveda, herbal teas, yoga, and more.

While the crowds continued to swell across the site, volunteers served a healthy and hearty lunch that catered to the taste buds of young and old, contemporary and traditional. The attendees lunched in glorious weather while volunteers scurried around giving out CM LA t-shirts. At the designated hour, there was a mad rush, handled ably by the volunteers, toward the tables where colored powders were being distributed.

Swamiji and Acharya Mahadev Parameswaran (CM LA), began the color-fest with a loud "*Holi hai!*" and released a fistful of color into the air. In no time, the air was filled with a riot of colors, and hundreds of people running around, squealing in delight at being caught by a friend who they barely recognized.

The event brought together the Chinmaya Family of Southern California, and people came from the ashram neighborhood of Tustin as well as from the distant satellites of Brea, South Bay, San Gabriel Valley, and Northridge, among others.

The numbers started to recede by mid-afternoon, but the hardworking volunteer teams continued their service of distributing water, preparing food to-go packets, and serving chai. Another set of volunteers went about cleaning up, leaving the park clean, though more colorful, as it was that morning.



***Mahashivarātri* at CM Houston** by Rajesh Thatte

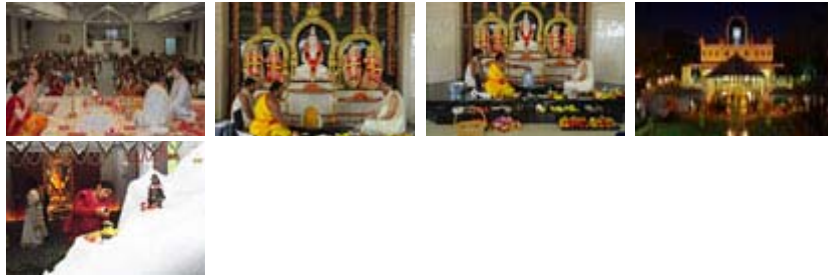
Chinmaya Mission Houston's grand celebrations of *Mahashivarātri* were held February 15-17, 2015. The celebrations were organized to perfection. Hundreds of dedicated and devoted volunteers lent helping hands in every aspect, from the kitchen, to audio-visual, to decorations, to parking.

In spite of cold weather on February 17, thousands of devotees flocked into its *Saumyakāshi Shivālaya* temple to experience bliss, offer prayers, and receive blessings. The celebrations commenced on February 15 with a *Mahāmṛtyunjaya Homa* that was performed for the good health and well-being of all. The resident priest conducted the *homam* in two sessions on stage, with Acharyas Gaurang and Darshana Nanavaty (CM Houston) as *yajamāns*. Each family was provided with all the necessary items to participate in the *homam*, which also included the chanting of the *Mahāmṛtyunjaya Mantra* 108 times, the *japa* of “*Om namaha Shivāya*,” and *ār̥ti*.

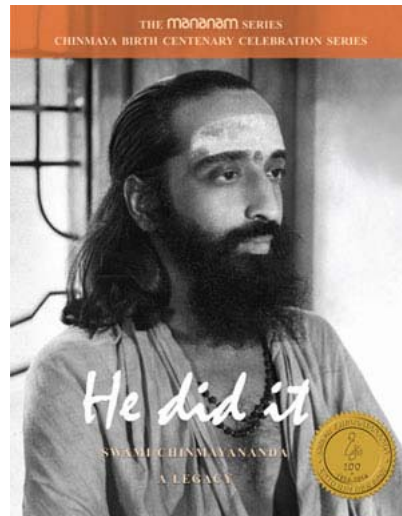
The puja of Lord Shiva's *utsava mūrti* was held in the basement of temple, which was decorated as Mount Kailash, Lord Shiva's abode. Here, offered milk *abhishekam* to the Shivalingam and Lord Shiva's *mūrti* throughout the day until late night. It was wonderful to see families bringing their children to offer *abhishekam* and the little ones wanting to make the offering themselves.

Rudrābhishekam was offered in the main temple in the morning and evening. The evening of February 17 brought in many more devotees. At dusk, the temple glittered with thousands of lights. As devotees waited patiently to offer milk *abhishekam*, the puja being performed in the main temple was projected on two screens in the courtyard. Devotees received *darshan* and *prasād* in the temple sanctum. *Ār̥ti* was offered after the final *Rudrābhishekam*.

Pujya Gurudev has said, “The process of constructive destruction is Shiva, the annihilator. *Shivarātri* is the destruction of the ego in the discovery of the Self.” The final hour and half of celebration aptly consisted of the chanting of “*Om namaha Shivāya*” and silent meditation.



Features



He Did It

Excerpts from He Did It; edited for print herein

CMW News is pleased to offer in this sacred milestone year of the birth centenary celebrations of Pujya Gurudev, His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda-ji Maharaj, a series of feature articles showcasing excerpts from the CBCC Mananam series of books. Our humble and unending prostrations of worship and adoration at the holy feet of our revered Guru, who is, and will ever remain, the Love of our hearts, the Light of our understanding, the very Fulfillment of our lives. Hari Om Tat Sat.

His life itself is a scripture.

His words are hymns.

His actions are blessings upon the world.

He is the Fulfilled, the Perfect.

In such an accomplished man,

We watch God and His play.

- His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda

He alone lives to become immortal in whose living millions of people derive inspiration to live a life of nobility, sacrifice, and service. Blessed indeed are those who have the opportunity to live in the company of such great men of spiritual enlightenment.

This book is an opportunity to learn about the world-renowned Vedantic master of the 20th century, Swami Chinmayananda, whom we reverently call Pujya Gurudev. It has the power to purify and light a spark of inspiration in open minds. Read it and be blessed! Come to realize that there is a vast and abundant existence just waiting to unfold within you.

- His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda

On May 8, 1916, near the backwaters of Kerala, India, a child of destiny, then Balakrishnan Menon, was born.

His chosen deity to suit his adventurous temperament was the form of Lord Shiva. Years later, he described, “This ideal Shiva was the ideal of my own heart, and somehow I had stumbled onto a new game. I would look at the picture and then shut my eyes to see Him, with every detail, in the darkness within. This gave me a game so sweet and pleasant that it became a habit to call up this picture onto the mental screen behind my closed eyelids at all hours of the day. The picture came readily as soon as it was ordered, and my wonder grew at my success.”



Swamiji said, “I had everything I wanted in my childhood. I never thought about the future.” Over the years, Balan grew into an arrogant teenager and considered himself quite an intellectual. When he thought of God, it was only with skepticism. He rejected all superstitious rituals. All those baths, he said, were another stupidity. Yet, even in those days, pocketing all self-dignity, he would secretly do his *japa* in bed. He did not let go of his relationship with the Lord of his heart. Spiritual Balan persisted, if only as a shadow in the background of the unconvinced sophist, to the day he left home to enter Lucknow University in 1940. And so, his teenage years ended not with a bang of enthusiasm and hope, but with a show of pride and defiance.



Balan excelled in his literature courses. He particularly admired George Bernard Shaw and was somewhat influenced by his Shavian manner of social and religious criticism, which showed

later in his journalism. He loved to talk on his favorite books and would often corner the distinguished scholar and professor of literature, Vilasan Nair, for long discussions. He ignored subjects that did not appeal to him, so, he had plenty of extracurricular activities, including the university tennis team, the literary committee, and the debate team.



In August 1942, Balan joined the “Quit India” movement, writing and distributing leaflets, and giving speeches to stir up national pride. When word of his impending arrest reached Balan, he went undercover, spending the next year constantly moving in Kashmir—a predominantly Muslim state where a “Madrāsī” was easily noticeable because of the accent, dark skin, and lean body frame.

Two years after the British had issued a warrant for his arrest, Balan was picked up in Punjab and thrown in prison, where he soon caught typhus. When he was carried out into the night and left to die on the city’s outskirts, he was taken in by an Indian Christian lady who never knew that she had saved the life of an illustrious Hindu sage to be. Swamiji said, “It was my nose that saved me on the roadside that day; it looked exactly like her son’s!”

In his journalistic days, Balan was lean and tall, with hair oiled, combed, and perfectly in place. He was a zealous follower of fashion, and the homespun cotton of his student activist days had given way to British-tailored sharkskin suits. He was an up-and-coming journalist, with an extroverted personality and impressive skill on the tennis court.

For three years, Balan pursued a life of strict spiritual practices along with his journalistic career. Once, when traveling, Balan inquired about the famous Arunachala Hill. When he learned that a great sage now lived at its base, he jumped out of the train to investigate. “I made my way up to a large thatched hut and sat there to await whatever it was that everyone else was awaiting. When my eyes adjusted to the dim light, I discerned the form of a human body stretched out with his feet in my direction. My eyes began to slowly scan the body, starting at the feet, part by part—his legs, his hips (he wore only a simple loin cloth), his chest, his arms. He had one forearm up and was resting his head on that hand. As my eyes traveled, they finally reached his face, and then his eyes. They were closed; he seemed to be sleeping. But just when my eyes focused on his, his eyes opened and he looked straight into mine. I knew in that one moment, with that one look, that he knew everything about me, even things I did not know myself. I sat there transfixed, as if seeing my whole life go up in a wave. Then he quietly closed his eyes again. I continued to sit there for a short time; I really don’t know how long. When I was again aware of my body and surroundings, I forced myself to get up, wondering what had happened to me. I shook my head to clear my thinking. Nothing has

happened to me I rationalized. This man is a hypnotist.”

In the summer of 1947, before leaving for Rishikesh, he boasted to his friends, “I am going to find out how these holy men are keeping up the bluff. I am prepared to expose the whole racket!” In truth, he was searching for more than he was willing to admit. He had effectively changed his future from a “dedicated loafer” to a sincere seeker when he met Swami Sivananda of Divine Life Society.

Once, a short drama on a story from the life of Gautama Buddha was enacted and Balan was selected to play the role of the distraught mother wailing for her child. With a scarf draped around his head and a cloth-bundle baby cuddled in his arms, he made such a caricature of the dejected mother, and elaborated such a display of weeping and wailing that the whole audience exploded into laughter. Swami Sivananda was delighted and declared, “The best I’ve seen,” as he wiped tears from his eyes.

At work, Balan began writing book reviews and these expressed his spiritual thirst. In his review on *Streamers of Light from the New World*, he wrote that it provides a “vision of a new, ideal world; a new race characterized by width of tolerance, height of vision, and depth of insight; an enduring peace passed from generation to generation. To work out the dream, we will have to train a generation to be perfect, a generation who are masters of themselves. In this, I find no impossibility. Perhaps some millenniums will be necessary to achieve this degree of perfection, but the goal is worth the attempt and the ultimate achievement is worth the wait.”

By the spring of 1948, for all practical purposes, Balan had taken up permanent residence at *Ānanda Kutir*. He once went on a Himalayan yatra with two spiritual aspirants. They visited Swami Tapovanam and when Balan went to bid the sage farewell, Swami Tapovanam advised him, “During the entire journey, keep continuous *Brahma-vichāra*—just as when a person is walking and he remembers a loved one who is far away.”

Near Gangotri, they met Shri Phalahari Baba, a renunciate who dressed only in a loin cloth and spent his days in silence and meditation. He was observing a one-month fast and appeared somewhat weak, so they asked about his health, to which Shri Phalahari Baba replied by writing in the sand: “It is the nature of all flesh to be now healthy, now sick, now fat, now lean. We are not to be concerned by transformations of the body, for we are the indestructible supreme Spirit.”

When they visited the naked ascetic, Shri Krishnashram, he, too, sat in silence. When Balan asked for a message, he wrote, “Drink true, pure Ganga water, not this river water. Visit the inner Source. The Guide to lead you is in you. You must only develop faith and love. There is no God beyond or beside you. God’s grace is really your own effort. *Karma yoga* is not for renunciates. Writing books, opening schools—these are duties of a charitable householder. One need not take to the spiritual path for this purpose. Nowadays, everybody writes. But what for? They are only culling ideas from old books and expressing them in their own language. This is a sheer waste. Write when new experiences and truths gurggle forth from the inner consciousness. Ādi Shankarāchārya wrote and he was justified. In such instances, the author is only an instrument. It means the time has come for those particular ideas to be given to this generation. Accept renunciation and end all outer activities. Delve within and reach the inner Source. Drink the true Ganga water.”

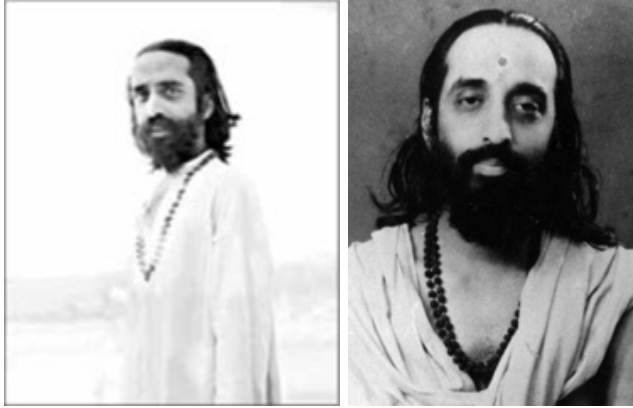
One day, Balan hiked to the cave of an aged sadhu, who he found was in poor health and had an ulcerous sore on his leg. Balan was horrified to see that there were maggots on his wound. Just then, one of the maggots fell off. The sadhu promptly picked up the creature and placed it back on his leg. “There, my son,” he said to the maggot. Then he looked straight into Balan’s eyes, and said to him, “Don’t you know that it is all only matter? Matter feeding matter.”

It was during his 40 days in solitude in Badrinath that Balan recognized the absolute necessity for his next course of action: “Wonderful! No words to describe the inner peace I enjoyed, the concentration I achieved, the entire world forgotten. Forgotten are all worldly contacts, for I have come to live in myself. For the first time, I tasted a bliss in meditation that I know is but an iota of what one can have from deep, long, steady, and powerful meditation.” It became clear to him that the death of the ego was the only way of awakening to the infinite Self. When he returned to *Ānanda Kutir* in late August, Swami Sivananda seemed to know it, for he told Balan to write to his father and ask for his permission to take sannyasa.



On the auspicious day of *Shivarātri*, February 25, 1949, Balakrishnan Menon was initiated into the holy order of sannyasa by Swami Sivananda. He plunged three times into the chilly waters of the Ganga, chanting the vows of renunciation with each immersion. His past life washed away like wisps of a faded dream.

Swami Tapovanam represents the Ideal, even among saints. He is one of those rare sages who personifies the Absolute in every sense of the word—eternal and infinite, radiant and resplendent—dazzling with the effulgence of a million suns. Swami Sivananda said, “You want to master the scriptures? Go to Swami Tapovanam.”



Swamiji braved all difficulties without complaint during his six years of study under Param Pujya Swami Tapovanam because he had an intense desire to study and understand Vedanta. He would bathe in the Ganga's icy waters each morning. Though this caused excruciating pain to his body, it also woke him up for the 6 a.m. morning class like nothing else could.

He took careful notes, spending hours after each lesson making sure no word was forgotten, no thought was incomplete, no insight left undigested. His peer, Swami Govindagiri recalled, "The subject matter of *Pañchadashī* is so subtle that it takes a brilliant, penetrating mind to comprehend the contents, and grasp the abstruse meanings that lie hidden beneath the words themselves. At that time, I had studied several texts with Swami Tapovanam and had not once dared to question him during class. But not this Chinmaya—he would put so many questions to the master. He was not willing to move on to the next topic until every doubt on the present subject was removed by the teacher."

At *Tapovan Kutir*, there was no electricity for night reading and Swami Tapovanam discouraged talking among students. If students were seen in the verandah at any time other than for class, he would chide, "What are you doing here? Don't waste a minute! You go to your own reflection. It's all in you!"

Swami Govindagiri said, "Chinmaya practiced an intense sadhana during his entire period of study with Swami Tapovanam. I often saw him sitting all night in meditation in a quiet corner of the forest or sometimes on a boulder beside the Ganga."

Every so often, Swamiji would cook for everyone the meal received in *bhikshā*. Swami Tapovanam would give a quizzical look at the misshaped, thick rotis brought to him. One time, he was particularly amused and said, "See, one never gets to give up *tapas* in these Himalayas—not with Chinmaya's rotis!" Nevertheless, he would always eat them with good humor.

A plain cotton cloth was once given to Swami Tapovanam as a gift and he had asked Swamiji to make a robe out of it for him. The fabric was dyed saffron, carefully cut, and stitched by hand. It had been laid to dry over some bushes, and then giftwrapped and presented to Swami Tapovanam. When he took it out of the wrapping, it had a tear in it. He said to his disciple, Chinmaya, "Look! You tore it. You were careless when you took it off the shrubs!"

“No, I was very careful, Swamiji. I don’t know how that happened.”

“You were careless. Your attention was not on what you were doing,” replied Swami Tapovanam. “And now you are surely lying!” This was a heavy blow to Swamiji—to be called a liar, especially when he knew he was telling the truth. What’s more, whenever he approached *Tapovan Kutir* thereafter, Swami Tapovanam would taunt him and say, “Liar!”

Swamiji could bear it no longer and he made up his mind to leave. Luckily, an older swami informed him that the Guru was in fact testing him. So, the next time Swami Tapovanam called out “Liar,” Swamiji was prepared with an answer: “Perhaps.”

“Oh, so now you see!” said Swami Tapovanam with a chuckle. “This whole creation is a lie. Why make a big deal over one little lie!”

The time came when Swami Chinmayananda decided to take the truth of the Hindu scriptures to his fellow countrymen. He thought, why should Vedanta only be taught in holy places and only to a select few? Why should its true meaning continue to be misinterpreted and misunderstood? His first challenge was to convince Swami Tapovanam, who said, “You can’t treat this knowledge like your newspaper business. It is useless to carry Vedanta to the marketplace!”

A month later, he suggested Swamiji take a trip to the plains to wander as a renunciate and live as a beggar among those he had once emulated. He said, “This will rub out your ego! To have the experience of the Divine is not enough. You must be able to keep this vision through all your activities. Go down to the plains and keep your *mananam* where it is the most difficult. The adversities of life will prevent you from falling into the dangers of complacency and self-contentment in your spiritual discipline.”

Swami Tapovanam knew his student well, including his determination to serve as the Lord’s instrument. The Guru gave permission to his student, but warned, “Consider yourself lucky if you find five to six listeners for Vedanta, especially when you take the Upanishads.” With these cautious words began the Vedantic renaissance soon to be witnessed by the world.



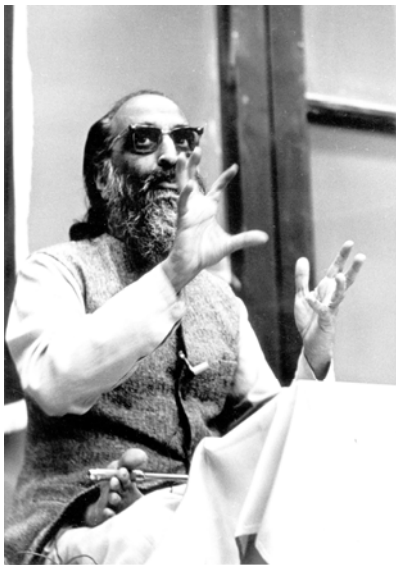
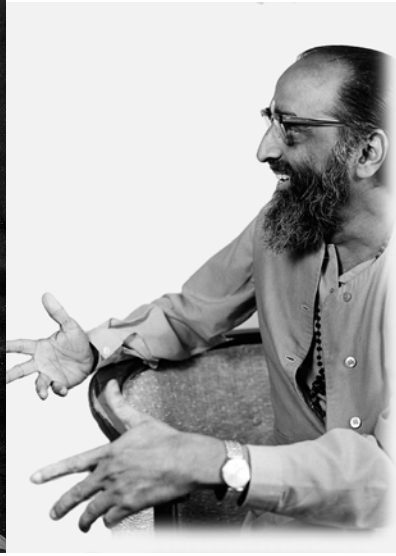
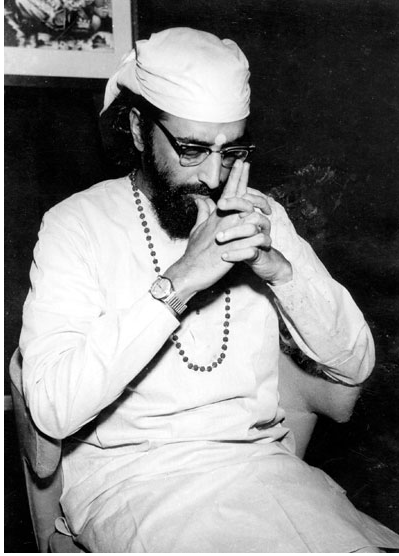
Swamiji arrived in Pune on December 23, 1951. The first Upanishad *jñāna yajña* was held at a Ganesha temple in Rastha Peth in Pune. The yajna began on December 31, 1951 and lasted 100

days. He said in his introductory address, “My proposal is that the wise thing for us would be to try and bring about a renaissance of Hinduism, so that under its greatness—proven through many centuries—we may come to grow into the very heights of culture and civilization that was ours in the historical past.”

Most people were impressed by the discipline maintained at the *yajñas*—the punctuality, orderliness, and silence—especially considering their experience of noisy gatherings in temples. Swamiji once explained, “The *yajñashālā* is my puja room and the audience is my *ishvara*, whom I worship for one and a half hours.”

The second Upanishad *jñāna yajña* began in Chennai on April 25, 1953. Two aspects of Swamiji’s discourses endeared him to all who listened. First, he was presenting the highest philosophy of the scriptures and it was entirely unknown to the general populace. Second, he was presenting it in a way they could understand and apply in their own lives right then, not after retirement.

During his 13th *jñāna yajña*, in Delhi in 1955, Swamiji introduced the world-renowned BMI Chart as a visual aid. By 1967, Swamiji had conducted 150 *jñāna yajñas* across India. After another 35 years, this number went to 773 — an impressive achievement for just one lifetime.



In the summer of 1953, Chennai devotees wrote to Swamiji in Uttarkashi proposing a plan for a new forum called “Chinmaya Mission.” Swamiji replied without delay, agreeing in principle, but saying, “Don’t start any organization in my name. I have not come here to be institutionalized. I have come here to give the message of our ancient sages that has benefited me. If it has benefited you, pass it on.” The dozen people insisted that the best way to “pass it on” was through the support of a group. They said the word “Chinmaya” did not have to refer to Swamiji’s name, since the word itself meant “pure Knowledge.” “As seekers of the truth” they proposed, “we are calling ourselves Chinmaya Mission.” It made sense and Swamiji conceded. Chinmaya Mission was formed on August 8, 1953.

On one occasion, a devotee suggested to Swamiji that Chinmaya Mission members wear a badge to indicate to the world their association with the Mission. Swamiji replied, “You are not a dog for the world to know who your master is by the collar. The world must know that you are a Chinmaya disciple by your actions!”

On the same topic, in a letter to Dr. V. K. Balachandran, Swamiji wrote, “Members of Chinmaya Mission are not subscription payers, or those who run after the swami, or even those who fall hundred times at his feet. God is all-pervading and the Mission’s hope is to make our generation more conscious of the God-principle. All who are sincerely practicing self-purification are faithful Mission members—more than those who give a donation or wear a badge on their chest.”

In March 1956, Swamiji emphasized the need for seekers to meet regularly with a set venue and study scheme. Those interested were allocated to a “Study Group” near their home. Each week, the groups met for 90 minutes to study various Vedantic scriptures in a systematic manner, with a focus on “logical reflection” to gain Self-knowledge. Swamiji said, “Mere listening will not add to your beauty. These ideas are to be reflected upon deeply, and digested slowly. This process is hastened only when you discuss what you have studied with others. Study Groups constitute the heart of our Mission. The ideas, when discussed with others, not only become deeply rooted in you, but as they become clearer in your own understanding, they also inspire those who listen to you. Each student, while trying to strengthen his own understanding, can become an instrument for the spread of knowledge. This process is the dynamic study scheme followed in Vedantic tradition. This is not a Chinmaya methodology; it is the most ancient Vedantic tradition of study.”

As early as 1955, a special program for children was organized in Delhi for them to learn values with fun. This “Children’s Well-being Center” brought together 35 children and within months, the number doubled and they ran out of space. The organizer, Janaki Seth, moved the classes from her home to a public park. This program was eventually formalized as “Bala Vihar” in 1957. Once a week, children between ages 5 and 12 met for 90 minutes to be exposed to India’s cultural and spiritual heritage by trained and dedicated teachers. In the manual for teachers, Swamiji wrote, “If, at this juncture, we can flood a child with ideas and mold him with a little discipline, it will be the greatest service man can do for his child, for at this stage of a child’s growth, mishandling can create a devil out of a child. But when rightly handled, we can make a saint out of even a crooked, underdeveloped child. Character-building of a nation must start from the cradle and the playfields. The seed of spiritual values should be sown in their young hearts, and the condition should be made favorable for its sprouting and steady growth by the exercise of proper control and discipline.”

From Day 1 of his *yajña*, Swamiji requested that each of his talks be transcribed in shorthand. By week 2, a handful of dedicated volunteers had established a routine for the 1951-52 Pune *jñāna yajña*. Mani Iyer would transcribe the lecture in shorthand and type it the following day. The same day, S. Seshadri would edit the manuscript and rush it to the printer. Three or four daily discourses were then combined into booklets called *yajña prasād*. The initial *yajña prasād* booklets are today part of Chinmaya Mission’s publication of *Kenopanishad*. The front page of the first booklet contained the only words Swamiji revealed about his Enlightenment:

“Chinmaya’s work is dedicated

To the *Shrutis*, which told me what Reality is;

To Swami Tapovanji Maharaj of Uttarkashi, who guided me to the end and pushed me into the Beyond;

And to Sat Gurudev Swami Sivananda Maharaj of Rishikesh, who showed me in this life how to live and act in God, as God!”

In September 1958, Swamiji introduced *Ushā*, a monthly newsletter with *jñāna yajña* and study group reports, articles on satsangs, photographs, and an occasional letter to children highlighting morals and values. *Ushā* monitored the Mission’s activities, shared Swamiji’s teachings, and spread the code of conduct for members and volunteers.

Swamiji’s *Bhagavad Gītā* discourses were published regularly in *Tyāgī*. After teaching up to Chapter 9, when he received word in March 1956 that Swami Tapovanam had fallen ill, Swamiji took a month off from his *yajña* schedule and rushed to Uttarkashi. During this period, Swamiji took up the arduous task of finishing all 18 chapters. He even borrowed lanterns from sadhus to continue working late into the night. On October 23, 1957, Divali day, Swamiji announced in Hyderabad, “The *Bhagavad Gītā* commentary, all 2,085 pages of the manuscript, is complete.”

Chinmaya Publications was established in Hyderabad in March 1961. Today, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust is one of the largest publishing institutions of Vedantic literature in the world. With new publications division, *Ushā* and *Tyāgī* were successively absorbed into one voice, *Tapovan Prasād*, which began in December 1962 and serves as the central international monthly magazine for Chinmaya Mission worldwide.

The idea of a “modern day *gurukulam*,” to teach Advaita Vedanta to young men and women, who would then take the knowledge back to their community, began forming in Swamiji’s mind as early as June 1955. During an inaugural address in Chennai, he said, “What we need are more spiritual teachers. The message of the Upanishads is to be interpreted, taught, and broadcast—carried from door to door.” He mentioned his plan again in Mumbai, then in Delhi, and again in Hyderabad. He kept at it until he gathered enough supporters, saying, “We want an army of Vivekanandas all over the country. Modern day problems are so severe that they can no longer be remedied by a handful of persons. Thus, I have to start many training centers, and our hopes are that all of them will bring forth true Vivekanandas.”

In January 1953, the first ashram, *Sāndeepany Sāadhanālaya* in Powai, Mumbai was completed. Later, all of Swamiji’s *yajñas* were canceled for a three-year period and he became the *āchārya* for the first Vedanta course in *Sāndeepany*. Swamiji’s exemplary life of alertness, vigilance, and conscious living each moment, in every action, remains as one of the greatest teachings for all disciples and devotees.



Brahmacharini Robyn Thompson (CM Vancouver) recalled, “On one occasion, when I was mailing Swamiji’s correspondence, I did not have the correct size of envelopes. I solved the problem by taking a larger envelope and folding it over at one end. Swamiji saw what I was doing and said, ‘No, that’s not how it is to be done.’ He then showed me how to do it. He cut the envelope carefully at the open end and fashioned a flap to fold over for closure. The procedure took a lot of time, but Swamiji was determined the task be done right, not just expediently. ‘This is God’s work,’ he said. ‘It must be beautiful.’”

Acharya Vilasini Balakrishnan (CM Washington DC), who served as his personal secretary, said, “There is one strong quality of Swamiji’s that was not so apparent on stage, and that was his deep, penetrating, soul-stirring silence. Swamiji taught this silence off stage. It is this teaching that made him a living Upanishad.”

Action without vision has no meaning. A vision without action remains an imagination. But when both vision and action come together, they bring about transformation. The vision of Chinmaya Mission is to reach the Supreme, the state of *Chinmaya*, or “pure Knowledge.” Swamiji said, “Ours is not a political organization. Ours is the human problem, the problem of character, the texture of social life. To revive them is to revive man. To reinstate the perfect personality within each person is the goal.”

During the All-India Chinmaya Mission Workers’ Conference in Abbotsbury in 1964, Swamiji dictated a pledge, in a moment of inspiration, to serve as a guide for all Mission members. On the closing day of the conference, he himself recited this pledge, now known as the Chinmaya Mission Pledge that is chanted around the world by every Mission member, to 140 delegates.”

Dr. B.V. Reddy meticulously arranged every detail of Swamiji’s first global tour, which covered 39 cities in 18 countries, namely, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, America, Mexico, Spain, United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, and Lebanon.

A group of sincere American students gathered in San Francisco to meet weekly and study the *Gītā*. One of them was Evelyn Vrat, later known as Mother Sadhana, who organized several of Swamiji’s talks in 1965, including one attended by Nalini Browning, and Bob and Solange Berg. Nalini Browning would play a key role in the formation and growth of Chinmaya Mission

West in 1975, and the Bergs would help Evelyn organize Swamiji's first *jñāna yajña* in the US, at the Bellevue Hotel in San Francisco.



In the early 1970s, Swamiji voiced his concern for Indian children growing up in western culture to Acharya Sharada Kumar (CM Ann Arbor). He said, "I am not worried about the adults who grew up in India because they will know to find the answers to their problems in the scriptures. But I am worried about these young ones who will be lost in a dual culture. Why don't you start a Bala Vihar for them?" Sharada Kumar was hesitant and said, "But I don't know how to start one!" Swamiji soon handed her a letter addressed to Nirmala Amma, a Bala Vihar organizer and teacher in Chembur, Mumbai, and said, "Go get trained!"

Swamiji himself taught the first Bala Vihar class in Manila in 1983, at the home of Deepak and Pooja Daswani. The children gathered around him and he told them a Krishna story. "What color is milk?" asked Swamiji.

"White!" answered the children in unison.

"What color is the cow?"

"Black!"

"What does it eat?"

"Grass."

"What color is the grass?"

"Green!"

"Who makes the green grass eaten by a black cow to come out as white milk?" The children were silent.

“Krishna!” said Swamiji. “It is Lord Krishna who makes the impossible possible!”



Swamiji had begun looking himself for land at the foothills of the Himalayas in the late 1970s to build an ashram to serve the *pahāḍī* folk, to teach them the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Hindi, and cooperative farming and medicine. Chinmaya Tapovan Trust was registered on March 24, 1977, and on May 22, 1979, land in Sidhbari was allotted to Chinmaya Mission. When the contractors reached Sidhbari and tried to start construction work, they deemed it impossible because of the hurricane-like winds that could lift away entire buildings. Swamiji went into meditation for a long time. When he opened his eyes, he said, “We will have an ashram here. But first, let us bring Lord Hanuman. When he sees his son, the father, Vāyu Bhagavān (god of wind), will calm down.” And so it happened! Once the 40-foot Hanuman idol was installed, the winds stopped. All through the construction of Sidhbari, in the early 1980s, Swamiji spent many hours watching and guiding every construction detail. Day in and day out, he would sit outside and watch the workers lay brick after brick. Swamiji later said, “I am in every leaf and tree in Sidhbari.”

When Swamini Sharadapriyananda started a social welfare project for the poorest of the poor in rural Andhra Pradesh, she discussed the water problem with Swamiji. He pointed to two banyan trees with his walking stick. “Dig along the line that connects the two trees. Water is sure to come.” Workers began the digging, and water was found along that exact line, even though they had earlier dug in the very same area with no success.

In 1965, Swamiji said, “Children are the very cream of our generation. They are the rulers and makers of tomorrow. Upon them depends the future of the nation, and the safety of our culture and tradition. Let us give them a healthy physical and mental atmosphere for growth, ingrain in them respect for life and love for all living creatures, team spirit and national fervor, and pride in our hallowed, divine culture.” The Chinmaya Education Movement is one of Swamiji’s most valuable contributions to society. It began in 1967 with a small nursery school in Kollengode, Kerala and gradually grew to 80 Chinmaya Vidyālaya (schools) and a Chinmaya International Residential School in Coimbatore, all which follow the Chinmaya Vision Program that integrates the best of Indian culture with the philosophy of secular education.

With a vision to provide a platform for individuals to perform selfless service, Swamiji started a rural healthcare and development program in Sidhbari, which eventually developed into the

Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development, or CORD. CORD has touched the lives of over two million villagers directly, and over one million villagers indirectly in over 700 villages across India and Sri Lanka.

After recuperating for two months in Houston and Detroit after his multiple bypass surgery on August 26, 1980, Swamiji pushed up his sleeves, rubbed his palms together, and said, “Now I have ten more years! Let’s see what I can do!” He was on a flight to India just 24 hours later, with a full itinerary for 1981.

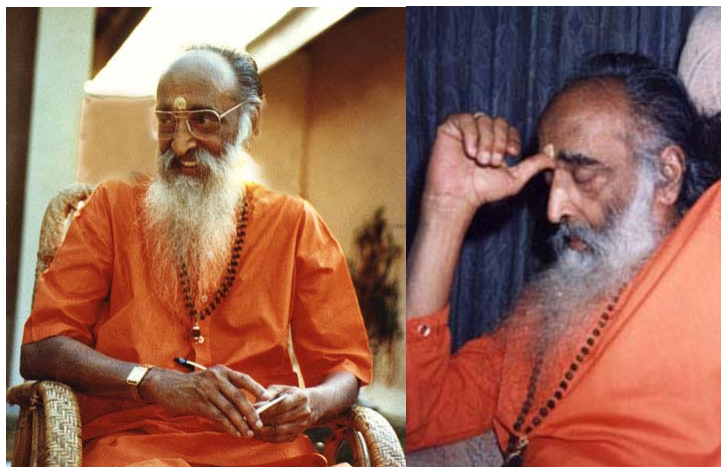
Of the *Ādi Shankara Nilayam* ashram of the Chinmaya International Foundation in Veliyanad, Kerala, Swamiji said, “My attempt here is to build a study and research center where both eastern and western scholars can come and stay, and thus bring out the relevance of the ancient terms and terminologies of our Sanskrit literature in the context of the modern way of life. This is the most appropriate place to do such research, because it is here that the great commentator of the Upanishads, Shri Ādi Shankara, was born 1,200 years ago.”

On July 26, 1993, Swamiji arrived in San Diego, California, where his cardio test results showed that two arteries were completely blocked, and a third was 90% blocked. From that night onward, Swamiji was heavily sedated. He was placed on life support and scheduled for emergency quintuple bypass surgery on July 29. On August 1, Swami Chidananda of Divine Life Society arrived and spent time at Swamiji’s bedside. When devotees asked his advice regarding the life-support system, he said, “Let destiny take its own time. Wait one more day. By the time we (indicating to himself and the person accompanying him) reach Washington, it will stop.” The hour came. On August 3, 1993, at 5:45 p.m., Swamiji attained *mahāsamādhi*.

A week after Swamiji’s *shodashi*, or 16th day after the passing of a mahatma, a young and unassuming disciple, Swami Tejomayananda, was unanimously elected as the next head of Chinmaya Mission worldwide. In one of his first statements to the devotees of Chinmaya Mission, he said, “So far you have seen the work that Pujya Gurudev did. Now, you will see the work that his name will accomplish.” True enough, Chinmaya Mission has grown exponentially since then. All the projects visualized and undertaken by Pujya Gurudev were completed, consolidated, and expanded. Swami Tejomayananda spent the first decade leaving no stone unturned in fulfilling each and every *saukalpa* his Guru had made.

Amid the picturesque Sahyadri hills, on 70 sprawling acres, sits the serene and majestic ashram of *Chinmaya Vibhooti*, or “the glory of Chinmaya.” This stunning tribute to Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda is the vision center of Chinmaya Mission worldwide. Its vast resources are aimed toward training and empowering Mission workers to serve society effectively.

After his first ventricular failure in 1989, Pujya Gurudev had said to Mission devotees, “I promise I will never leave you. Remember that!” Two years later, he had added, “If I leave you, where is “you?” I am verily Existence. The further I go, the nearer shall I be for each one of you. This is a promise!”



Announcements

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For More Information:

CONTACT - UNDERSTANDINGMARRIAGE@CHINMAYADC.ORG

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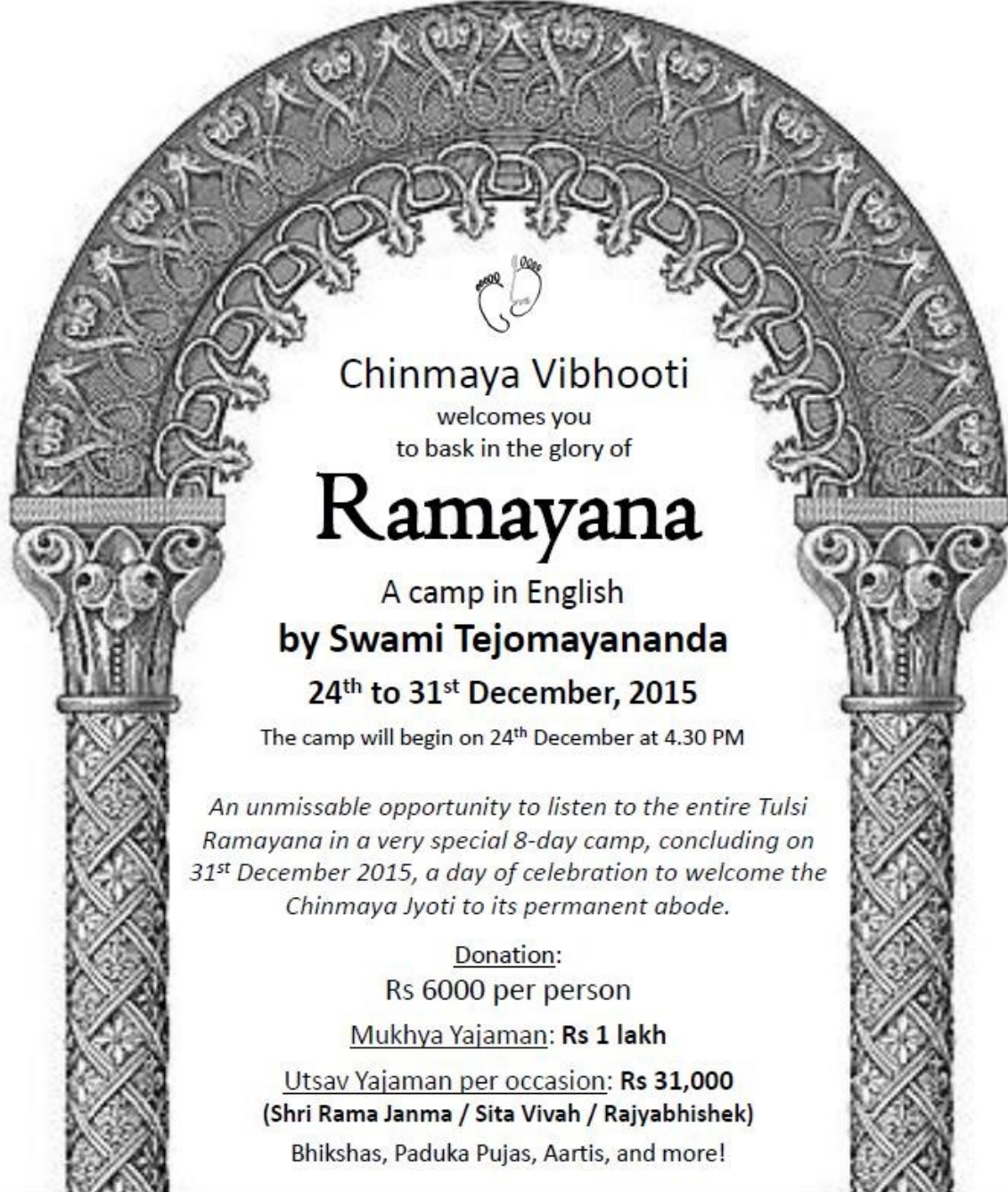
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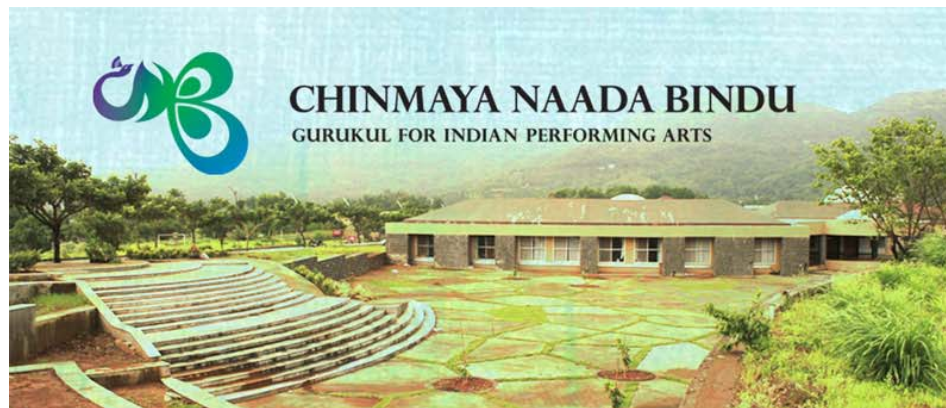
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