



Hari OM  
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Detachment, reveling in the concept of God, mental purification, intoxication of spiritual knowledge, unbroken mental peace—all these are gained instantaneously by mere companionship with the good. O mind, constantly remember the Lord of Badri.

The supreme reward for realizing the Reality is the intoxicating joy of experiencing the harmonious Infinite, the Divine, the Changeless, blissful Consciousness. . . . To awaken from your little ego, to unshackle yourself from the flesh, to escape from the prison-house of your emotions, to scale over the fortress around the castle of your intellect, to save yourself from the repeated explosions and constant volcanic eruptions of your *vāsanās*, and thereby to realize that you are the Infinite—these should certainly be intoxicating joys of endless satisfaction. . . . Unbroken peace is joy where there is no restlessness or agitation. Wherever there is agitation or restlessness, there is pain. Therefore, peace is the experience of joy . . . it is essentially a condition of one's own mental structure; it is the undisturbed mind. . . . This may be achieved through direct contact with some living, vital teacher, or through the indirect contact of such teachers' works and declarations.

The knowledge-experience [of Truth] is inexplicable . . . . Atman is the only Reality and yet It is fully hidden from us. Hence, many people consider It to be non-existent and untrue. Even though It is the only Reality, It is not available for our sense perception. But to a realized person, to one who knows the Truth, the world becomes non-existent or unreal, and he forever dwells in the experience of the Self. . . . The Truth is a wonder and to find a person who has realized this Truth is also a wonder. And trying to make that which cannot be revealed through words an object of our understanding, is also a wonder. The teacher who is able to explain this Truth to us is also a wonder. A disciple who comprehends and understands this situation is also a wonder. . . . But the fact that most people do not see the Self, that they miss It completely, that they do not understand It—this is the greatest wonder of all.

### Make Your Life a Sadhana

by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda

*Reprinted from Tapovan Prasād, 2013*

Be watchful and do not allow the lower mind to ignore higher values. The moment one weakness is removed, you will find that almost all other weaknesses have disappeared. But that single weakness cannot be eradicated so easily. The entire bunch of weaknesses lie interrelated to each other. For example, bad temper is caused by something else, which is connected with something else, and they are again connected with others. By the time we eradicate bad temper, we would have removed 80% of all our other weaknesses.

However, by the time we clip off one negative thought successfully, a dozen others will appear and we may despair. We will seem to grow worse than what we were before commencing our sadhana. The manifestation of weaknesses can end totally only when we cut asunder our false notions and attachments. This does not mean we should not love the world outside. Try to love the world, only without attachments. If this is not possible, it is better not to love the world at all. Without attachment, hate the world if you can. You will see that it is much better than loving the world with attachment, which leads to a huge cultivation of weeds and vanity.

The false sense of ego should be removed, and so, too, the false attachment with the body. These can be accomplished only by meditation. During the rest of the time, we should not try to fatten the ego. Try to become regular in your practice. Do not stop your daily sadhana for any reason.

Some people find that weaknesses surge within and attack at unknown moments. And there are others who realize that the more they struggle to end their weaknesses, the more strongly they become entrenched. For such people, it is good to do 25-50 *Sūrya-namaskāras* daily. Physical *tapas* is very good for such acute cases, wherein they themselves feel ashamed for having done what they had decided not to do. Such serious cases need a little physical *tapas* and for them, *Sūrya-namaskāra* is more than sufficient. If *Sūrya-namaskāra* does not seem to help, go on a fast every Monday. Make the mind understand: "I am not going to give you food because you are not behaving properly." Practice this on all Mondays until you are free of the weakness.

Never consider yourself hopelessly bad because of some weaknesses. You must regard yourself as a patient who needs a lot of careful treatment. Do not allow the lower mind to assert itself. In the beginning, it governs you. Constant vigilance is necessary. Observe and analyze. Think over the cure.

In the early stages, the more you meditate, the more will weaknesses manifest in you, because all the deep-seated, subconscious *vāsanās* will surface. The greater the seeker, and the longer he remains in deep meditation, the more surely should he hold

on to his faith in God.

A mind, when it emerges to express itself after powerful sadhana, may behave like a rakshasa. After tapas, bad temper should not be allowed to rise, because it will destroy not only you, but also others around you.

Be good inwardly and in your contacts with the world outside. Integrate yourself and be dynamic. Living, essentially, is to be in contact with others in the world. It is easy to listen to fine discourses and say, “*Madātmā-sarva-bhūtātmā*: The Self in me is the Self in all,” but in action and practice, we tumble down. People quarrel even in Rishikesh. The mere company of good people or places will not divinize you. That is only borrowed light. When that light goes away, your ulcer patches come out. Do not curse the teachers or philosophers, for they cannot serve you unless you help yourself—just as medicine will not cure the disease unless you apply it to yourself—this is emphasized repeatedly in our *shāstras*.

Many people know of Hinduism, but do not live up to it. Sometimes, when they see someone whom they consider a mahatma, they try to imitate him, his life, and his defects. You must take care not to repeat such mistakes, but instead, to live up to the *shāstras*. Slips are possible. When you know you have committed a mistake, apologize immediately. Sincerely follow the teachings of the scriptures.

In study groups, you must touch each other’s feet. Respect each other as divine. However much we increase our knowledge, it is useless if we cannot practice it in our day-to-day lives. Otherwise, in the end, you will say that Vedanta is useless. Live religion dynamically, inside and outside in the world—not only for your own benefit, but also for the world’s benefit. One hour of practice is not enough. The mind and intellect must become merged in the sadhana so that you can practice what little you know.

Your actions, behavior, and contact with other people must be in line with your sadhana. Be good inside and outside. Integrate yourself dynamically. Try to live vitally. You must not make your goodness a liability and let others swallow you. When you encounter evil, your reaction must be tempered with love. Try to digest and assimilate the ideas of the scriptures. One has to learn to live those ideas in day-to-day life. Make your life a sadhana.

## The Yoga of Karma

by Pujya Gururji Swami Tejomayananda

Despite the impermanent, sorrow-giving, and progress-obstructing nature of the results of actions, can man give up action altogether? It is not possible, for man cannot live even for a second without action. It is indeed a strange situation, wherein he can neither give up action nor find everlasting happiness from the results of action. Actions seem to get him into more and more bondage. This being the case, what should he do?

The answer is given in the following verse of Bhagavān Ramana Maharshi's *Upadesha Sāra*: "Action done with an attitude of dedication to the Lord, without attachment to the result, purifies the mind and is a means to attain liberation" (Verse 3). Action itself is not binding by nature and so, it is not the performance of actions that we fear. Fear, joy, and sorrow arise from the results of action. Hence, we need not give up action, not that we could give up action.

Action is the very insignia of life. Only a dead body does not act. Since action need not, and cannot, be given up, can we then renounce the results of action? This, too, is not possible, since results are inevitable. Then, how can we get out of their bondage? Shri Ramana Maharshi says actions performed without any desire for the results free us from bondage of birth and death. Performing actions without a desire for the results seems like an impossible and impractical philosophy to follow considering that man cannot perform any action without a desire. Thus, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the word "desire."

On inquiry, we understand that the result and the desire for the result are not the real causes of sorrow. We become sorrowful because we always want to attain a particularly 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 to study. However, if a student insists on ranking first in the class and ends up being second, his grade can become a cause of sorrow even though he passed the exam. On the other hand, a student who was not expecting to pass is elated to learn that he has passed. This shows that the cause of sorrow is neither the result of the examination nor the desire to pass, but the insistence (*durāgraha*) on a particular and specific result. This insistence is called attachment and it is the main cause of bondage.

We should always remember that only the proper performance of action is in our hands. The results are gained according to various universal laws. Therefore, the insistence that I should get desired results alone is futile. Only one candidate can win in an election. Everyone cannot get their desired results. Thus, act we must to the best of our ability, but free from the shackles of false expectations and insistence. The phrase "done without desire" in the above verse indicates this truth. To renounce false insistence is the lesson taught.

We get attached to results because we feel we are independent, self-sufficient doers of action. This notion is called the *ahamkāra*, or ego. The doer becomes the enjoyer, so the individual becomes naturally attached to the results. The first verse of *Upadesha Sāra* states that the notion of doership is false. In order to renounce the doership notion, the attitude of dedication to the Lord is advised.

How can one surrender all actions to the Lord? The Lord is the wielder of the three-fold powers of knowledge, desire, and action—namely, *jñāna shakti*, *icchā shakti*, and *kriyā shakti*, respectively. The individual cannot have any right or might apart from the Total. The part cannot exist apart from the whole. Hence, from the Lord alone we get the capacity to know, to desire, and to act. If we keep this in mind

before we act, then how can we have any doership apart from the Lord? He alone acts through us.

Renunciation of the false ego is known as the attitude of surrender to the Lord. Since all results are in accordance to the laws of the Lord, all results are the Lord's gift (*prasāda*) to us. The sweets offered to the Lord in the temple are received as *prasāda*, or sanctified food. The result of all actions should be received with the same attitude. We do not insist on a particular *prasāda* and we do not haggle over the quantity received. Whatever is received is shared with others ungrudgingly and then partaken. The attitude is one of cheerful acceptance. Such an attitude frees us from our likes and dislikes, and makes the mind pure. Such a pure mind becomes an aid to gaining Self-knowledge or Liberation.

Actions done with ego and ego-centric desires bind man. When actions are performed with the understanding that the Lord is the Governor of all actions (*karmādhyaksha*) and the Giver of all results (*karma-phala-dātā*), the mind becomes purified as *asvāsanās* get exhausted. Such a purified mind becomes an aid to liberate man. This attitude of surrender to the Lord while performing actions (*Ishvarārpaṇa-buddhi*) and the cheerful acceptance of results gained (*prasāda-buddhi*) is called *karma yoga*.

## REFLECTIONS

In Memoriam: Swami Ramananda  
by Anjali Singh



*Swami Ramananda, a long-time dedicated sevak at the Mission's Sidhbari ashram (initially serving as K. Pai), left his mortal coil on August 2, 2015. His shodashi (16th day) rites took place at Tapovan Kuti in Uttarkashi on August 17.*

There was an incident with Pai-ji (later Swami Ramananda) that took place when he was serving in the office at the Sidhbari ashram. Pai-ji was a polite and quiet gentleman who never got into any controversy with anyone, did everything that was asked of him, and therefore, was somehow overlooked by all. In his humility and dedicated service to Chinmaya Mission, and quiet contemplation in the serene surroundings of Sidhbari, he was unobtrusively growing spiritually.

One day, Pujya Gurudev was sitting in a chair in the satsang room in his cottage and he asked in a commanding voice, "Where is Pai?" The reply was that Pai-ji was working in the office.

"Call Pai here!" Gurudev thundered. We were all taken aback wondering what Pai-ji could have done wrong. It so happened that his devoted wife was also sitting in the cottage that day. She

looked particularly anxious for her husband, especially considering the many devotees who had gathered in the cottage that day.

When Pai-ji came, he looked most apprehensive. He touched Pujya Gurudev's feet and knelt down in front of him. He was a tall man as it is and Gurudev was seated in a chair.

Gurudev chided him for sitting for long hours at his desk without a break, and then said some words to him that we could not hear. Then, Gurudev took off a thick gold necklace that he had around his neck—a necklace that a devotee must have given him—and with great joy, put it around Pai-ji's neck.

We were stunned. It was like witnessing an award ceremony, with the highest award being bestowed by the supreme Commander! What else transpired between Guru and *shishya* on a mystic level is another story and we were not privy to it. For those of us watching the scene, there was great satisfaction in seeing Pai-ji's hard work and silent service so keenly observed and recognized by the only One who mattered.

Later, when I went to express my joy to Mrs. Pai, she nicely summed up her sentiments, saying in Hindi, "Fulfilled! Today, we are fulfilled! In all these years, whatever was done, or asked for, today was the fulfillment of everything! Now, there is no want remaining."

Years later, Pai-ji received initiation into *sannyāsa* from Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda. As Swami Ramananda, he spent his remaining days serving in the Sidhbari ashram. Many in the Chinmaya Family will remember him fondly and miss him immensely.

An Unrequited Song  
by Chetana Neerchal

An unrequited song.  
Yet hearts met  
in the shared longing  
for sweetness.

Yearning  
for a meeting.  
Meeting  
in the yearning.

We drove down our familiar road to Siri's viola teacher. The evening's clouds had parted to let the sunshine through, while the leafy branches of trees by the roadside met to shade our route. A beloved melody played an unrequited love. While the hearts in the song's lyrics did not meet, our hearts met its longing. If hearts met every time, would there ever be a longing? If there is never a longing, would hearts ever meet? This unrequited song is sweet, my love. Let me long for more meetings and let me meet every longing heart with sweetness.

The Making of *Bāla Rāmāyaṇa*  
by Vedika Prakash

When the Chinmaya Publications children's book, *Bāla Rāmāyaṇa*, was being prepared, due to Pujya Gurudev's continuous travels, Bharati Sukhtankar would mail him a few pages regularly for review. Pujya Gurudev would read them, and provide his edits and comments.

On one occasion, Bharati received a thick envelope. Pujya Gurudev had prepared the neatly packed envelope and written her address on it. She immediately opened the package and began reading his notes. Suddenly, she saw that one page was heavily smudged and the ink had diluted in that area, as if some water or other spill had taken place.

After going through all the pages, she noticed that a small note had fallen out. It was written by Pujya Gurudev and had one sentence: "Apologies for smudging your script. Ram-Bharat *milan* just had tears flowing." These remain for her the most precious pages that are adorned with Pujya Gurudev's love for the Lord.

Vedanta Camp 2015  
by David Brown

In this glorious year of the celebration of Pujya Gurudev's birth centenary, we, Mission devotees, happily and gratefully renewed our presence in the peaceful and auspicious environment of the *Krishnālaya* ashram, which is nestled in the foothills of the beautiful coastal mountains, streams, and redwood forests of northern California. The Eel River flows nearby, invoking the image of the River Ganga that so inspired Pujya Gurudev to bless this place of study and worship more than 35 years ago. Lovingly maintained, and blessed by the presence of Pujya Guruji, this place has been a beacon of spiritual teaching and learning, and a source for devout inspiration for thousands of seekers of the sublime knowledge of Vedanta.

On June 15, 2015, in the presence of our beloved spiritual teacher and guide, His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda, the Vedanta Camp opened with a brief inauguration of welcome and introduction. We then were embraced by the loving words of Pujya Guruji, who introduced the text for our studies, *Shrī Rāma Gītā*, and presented the camp program, which included a morning meditation session led by Swamini Shivapriyananda (CM Toronto).

This annual camp holds a special place in the hearts of the Chinmaya Mission devotees who return year after year to bathe in the sublime waters of Truth. Here, there is a beautiful, meaningful blend of head and heart – the two wings of knowledge and love that support the many seekers who continue to grow and deepen their knowledge of the Self.

*Shrī Rāma Gītā* from Valmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* is a profound and explicit text of the truth of the Self. In his masterful and inimitable blend of humor, poetic illustration, and musical accompaniment, Guruji effortlessly unfolded the deepest meaning of the text's stanzas. The path of understanding was laid bare for us all to see, partake of, and experience. Through the elegance of Guruji's examples and explanations, the wisdom and essence of Shri Rama's words to his devoted brother, Laksmana, were made available for our absorption and adoption.

Although Laksmana was the brother of Shri Rama, he already had sufficient understanding and awareness to approach Shri Rama as his enlightened Guru. Delightfully illustrated by Guruji, the deeper meaning became clear: The need for us to completely surrender our unmindful egos so that our purified minds could receive and become aware of the all-encompassing Presence, the one Truth, the Self in all and as all. Again and again, Guruji led us to the brink of direct perception, guiding us with a loving hand and apt metaphors, encouraging us to take that final step of letting go of our intellectual understanding so that Truth appears shining and effulgent. Such is the experience of Vedantic teaching in its finest and most direct means: The mirror of the mind, cleansed of its projections, becomes available for the appearance of pure

Awareness. How can we express our gratitude more sincerely than by following our teacher's pointing finger and realizing This!

Swamini Shivapriyananda followed the theme of the talks in her daily meditation sessions, encouraging us to witness the silence within, and to hold this awareness throughout the day. Focusing on the mind's capacity to enter into a state of conscious awareness, Swaminiji explained the presence of peace and awareness both as a state of mind and a way of being.

One of the achievements of some CM members of the San Francisco Bay Area has been to create a beautiful and inspiring exhibit of Pujya Gurudev's work and teachings. An impressive and elegant new building is nearly completed and stands next to Pujya Gurudev's *kutir*. With space for display, as well as puja and meditation, the new building will showcase accomplishments in Pujya Gurudev's life and work. The concluding session of *Shri Guru Pādukā Pūjā* was held in this newly dedicated space.

Another highlight of this wonderful week, as if the teachings alone were not enough, was a special viewing at the movie house in Garberville of the new Chinmaya Mission movie, *On a Quest*. Many of the camp attendees had not seen the movie yet, while some said they had seen it more than once. Depicting a faithful rendition of Pujya Gurudev's journey through life, the movie commences with his pre-sannyasi days as a journalist and freedom fighter, including a rather graphic episode of his imprisonment and near-death, his meeting and stay with Pujya Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh, his initiation into *sannyāsa* as Swami Chinmayananda, his tutelage under Param Pujya Swami Tapovan Maharaj, and the commencement of his life's work. The portrayals by the actors of these key personages were awesome in their authenticity, giving us some insight into the challenges of spiritual living.

To fill further the overflowing cup, Guruji delighted us with *bhajans* and *ārṭi* at the feet of Lord Krishna in the gardens of *Krishnālaya*, and we all joined in enthusiastically. We also enjoyed talented presentations by camp members, including a riveting one hour of dance performances by Anjal Chande from CM Chicago. The dances featured her original music compositions and choreography—and she played tabla!

The seamless and detailed preparation and execution of all the lodging and boarding arrangements by John, Maureen, the staff, and volunteers were deeply appreciated with much gratitude.

As campers, we never see the end of camp coming—perhaps because the awareness of its spiritual contents is so intensely with us in our hearts. Thus, it is with great gratitude and love that we carry *Krishnālaya* with us wherever we go, treasuring the teachings given, reminded of *Prajña*.

CM St. Augustine's CBCC Program  
by Shanti Shivaya

When I first walked in for the Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebrations program on the afternoon of Saturday, May 9, the beauty of the newly erected altar to Pujya Gurudev brought me to a full stop. I had to pause to take in the awe and gratitude that rushed into my heart. The multipurpose room of the Jacksonville Hindu Society had been transformed by an amazing group of Chinmaya devotees into an ancient temple filled with echoes of devotion, prayers of yearning, answers of hope, and the presence of our beloved Pujya Gurudev.

To my right was the bountiful bookstore set up by volunteers, offering just a few of the 90+ titles that Pujya Gurudev wrote in his lifetime. Pujya Gurudev offered the truths of God to all



people, with books for every age and of every size, from children's books to teenage guides to deepest philosophy, from the simplest and shortest books on Vedanta you'll ever find to lengthy in-depth explorations of Reality itself.

To my left was a corridor of 20 life-sized panels depicting the life and legacy of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda. Everyone was able to read these panels as they lined up to receive dinner prasad after the program. The nearly 200 attendees, many of them new to Chinmaya Mission, were given free, specially published CBCC booklets on Pujya Gurudev.

During the program, Swamini Radhikananda (CM St. Augustine) spoke on Pujya Gurudev's calling to bring the fulfilling wisdom of the scriptures and the experience of God to all people. After studying with his Guru, Swami Tapovanam, in the Himalayas, as he sat in meditation by the River Ganga, the holy river inspired him to take this sacred knowledge and share it with humanity. Thus began his lifelong mission to demystify the mystical Oneness with God that is every human's natural birthright.

The celebratory program was lovingly prepared and presented by Acharya Vilasini Balakrishnan (CM Washington DC) and Swamini Radhikananda, with the help of Pandit Shrinath, who performed the *Guru Pādūkā Pūjā* and *Rajopachāra Pūjā*. All three of them spoke devotedly of Pujya Gurudev's impact on them. After the opening puja, about 15 children sang a song composed by a long-time devotee, Sheela Kirpalani, "O Swami Chinmayananda, you give your love to everyone . . .," and broke everyone's hearts wide open with their rendition. A teenage Bharatnatyam dancer, Rhea Bansal, presented a beautiful dance to a song about Brahman's infinite presence within and without us. Both the acharyas shared their thoughts about Pujya Gurudev's life and passion. We heard how Pujya Gurudev was one of the first Indian swamis to teach the ancient Vedic scriptures in English—it was a revolutionary act that changed not only India, but the world.

Vilasiniji told of Pujya Gurudev's passion for teaching and longing to help every person, no matter how brief the encounter. She shared a story Pujya Gurudev told about coming across a man waiting at a bus stop. The man yelled out to the swami who was walking by, "Swamiji, what is Vedanta?" As the bus pulled up and the man was getting on, Gurudev yelled out "Detachment, Attachment!" Even in only a few seconds, he gave a teaching of great value—to detach from worldly desires and attach to the Divine.

As a special treat, Vilasiniji presented a 15-minute video of Pujya Gurudev's life and the trailer for the biographical movie, *On a Quest*. Through the video clips and heartfelt stories shared by his devotees, we all got a sense of who this joy-filled, brilliant, humble, and loving saint was and is.

The pujas and devotional chanting throughout the program created a space for deep meditation and communion with Pujya Gurudev, whose presence filled the room with such tenderness and love that no heart could remain untouched. I sat in deep gratitude as I received healing and reconnection, feeling transported to the Himalayas. The beautiful voices of Shweta Kamat and Kavita Sutaria rendered Sanskrit verses on the glory of the Guru in soulful melodies that penetrated our hearts. I felt within a coming together into the wholeness of the present moment. I felt Pujya Gurudev holding me and bringing me a deeper understanding of the *Sadguru* who is speaking to me in every moment. I felt uplifted and deepened, and encompassed by an eternity of loving God and yearning to know the truth of the Self. I thought of Pujya Gurudev's deep joy in knowing that his life's work was bringing fulfillment and happiness to so many.

Krishna, My Sanctuary  
by Swamini Aradhanananda

You have shown me  
nests in hills,  
ancestors in trees,  
secrets in skies.

You were once  
my tsunami  
and are now  
my sanctuary.

On a Quest to Give Back  
by Trisha Iyer

In Chinmaya Bala Vihar, I not only get to learn about my culture, but also get to make friends who are like the brothers and sisters I never had. It is wonderful to see how Chinmaya Mission is one big family. Here, I have learned from the *Rāmāyaṇa* the importance of God in our lives and how much good He has done for us. By being obedient and selfless, I feel like I am giving back to God.

When I saw *On a Quest* with the CM San Jose family, my favorite scene was where Balan switched off the radio after hearing that India was free of British control and said, “India is free, not Indians.” He meant that while the land of India was free, the minds of Indians were still being influenced, and played upon, by the British. This was a moving statement for me.

I admire Pujya Gurudev’s curiosity. He questioned everything and had an open mind. His determination is what I hope to see more of in myself. He was left on the road to die, yet despite everything hurtful and discouraging that people had said or done to him, he kept going. He had a vision and he made it happen.

Pujya Guruji's Visit to CM Atlanta's *Chinmaya Niketan*  
by Srinivas Garimella

I first heard Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda when I was nine years old at a *Gītā jñāna yajña* on Chapter 3 in Bhopal. As it turns out, Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda was at the same event as a college student.

I again had the opportunity to attend a 10-day discourse by Pujya Gurudev in Kanpur as a college student, and it was a defining moment. His deep insight and ability to communicate Vedantic wisdom to the masses had immense influence on me. The melodious chanting of Acharya Sharada Kumar (CM Ann Arbor) still rings in my ears from 45 years ago.

At his *jñāna yajña* at CM Atlanta’s *Chinmaya Niketan* ashram, the moment Pujya Guruji starting speaking, I was hooked. I saw a person who lives, breathes, and revels in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who exudes that insight to the audience like no other. It is amazing how systematically he presented a thesis on devotion, breaking it down into its constituents of *bhakta*, *bhakti*, and *Bhagavān*—and all this he accomplished in just the first hour. Every word was precisely

chosen and to the point. His talks did not drag even once in all the three nights. The listener got drawn into the story, into the quilt of bhakti, wanting to know more, impatient to hear more. The simultaneous combination of logical presentation and emotional expression is something I have never seen to such perfection. Pujya Guruji is a teacher and a communicator extraordinaire, without a bombastic style. You feel at once like he is a seer and your next door neighbor telling you a story, and often entertaining you with humorous examples that illustrate the core of the premise.

Pujya Gururji took us on a journey of the metaphysical abode of Lord Rama and taught us what is needed within for us to undertake this journey and prepare ourselves to welcome Lord Rama to reside in our heart. The experience was a most inspiring and rewarding journey, and to think, this was an exposition of just a few verses of *Rāmācharitamānasa*. If so much can be learned through just a few verses, it is impossible to imagine what is possible if one absorbs the wisdom of the entire scripture.

As children, we often learn about the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a story of virtues personified by Shri Rama. However, it never occurred to me that each verse is so full of *deepādhyātmik* insights of virtue, dharma, and spiritual Truth, with the story being just a vehicle to tie them all together. While I have always loved the story of Lord Rama, I have a much deeper respect for this epic after these three days and plan to make it a point to read the whole of Saint Tulasidāsa-jī's *Rāmācharitamānasa*.

Personally, Pujya Gururji's style was so reminiscent of the people, teachers, and friends I grew up with in Bhopal for the first 15 years of my life. The mannerisms, the vocal inflections, the idioms, the mellifluous singing, and the brief detours into Hindi brought back my childhood experiences, and helped me form a deep bond with the content and the context. I truly have great admiration for him and for what he did in such a short three hours of discourse.

News

Dream Project for CBCC

*Letter to Centers from Pujya Gururji Swami Tejomayananda*

Dear All,

Hari Om! Greetings from London!

When establishing the Chinmaya International Foundation, Pujya Gurudev had given certain objectives for it. One of these was to establish a Sanskrit university. A team of devoted Mission members have been working on this concept for some time now. The progress is significant and the Government of India is willing to give approval to establish such a university on the fulfillment of certain conditions, one of them being the creation of a corpus fund of Rs. 25 crores (USD 4.3 million) as approved investments, the interest from which are to be applied in operations of the university.

This project is huge, but most valuable as well. Our Mission members who have come to learn about this project are enthusiastic and have come forward wholeheartedly to give their support. Let us all fulfill Pujya Gurudev's wish.

Contributions in India may be sent to the Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF), specifying that the donation is for the University Project. Wire transfer details may be obtained from CIF.

Contributions in North America may be sent to Chinmaya Mission West: 1765 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, CA 9430. Contributions in other countries may be collected in one central location for that country.

You may visit Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth to get more details about the university and offer donations online. Additionally, a Powerpoint presentation on the vision of the university can be viewed, downloaded, and shared with those who may be interested to support this dream project of Pujya Gurudev.

With Prem and Om,  
*Tejomayananda*

In Memoriam: Swami Ramananda

Swami Ramananda, a long-time *sevak* at the Mission's Sidhbari ashram (initially serving as K. Pai), left his mortal coil on August 2, 2015. His *shoḍashi* (16th day) rites took place at *Tapovan Kuti* in Uttarkashi on August 17. See the article by Anjali Singh in the Reflections section.

CM Atlanta's *Mūrti Sthāpana*  
by Manhar Valand

CM Atlanta members were blessed to be in the august presence of Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda for the *mūrti sthāpana* (idol installation) of Lord Rama, Mother Sita, Lakshmaṇa, and Hanuman, and a *jñāna yajña* on "*Bhakti in Rāmāyaṇa*" at its *Chinmaya Niketan* ashram, July 25-27, 2015.

The three-day function commenced with a ribbon-cutting and a welcome by Acharya Geetha Raghu (CM Atlanta). The Vedic rites for the idol installation were held on Saturday and Sunday mornings with more than 500 devotees in attendance. Each day's ceremonies were conducted for three hours in outdoor tents and a little over one hour in the main shrine. Lunch *prasād* was served to all devotees on both days.

Pujya Guruji's evening discourses drew a large and eager audience of devotees longing to hear the glories of *bhakta* and Bhagavān. In his inimitable simple words, he said true *bhakti* is unconditional and never fails to melt the Lord's heart, and it manifests trust, respect, and love. The three-day yajna of discourses was based on the topic of the 14 places where the Lord resides. When Lord Rama asked the advice of Sage Vālmīki as to where to reside during His 14 years of exile, Vālmīki Rishi first replied, "Is there a place where You do not reside?" and then suggested 14 attributes as the 14 places. These 14 represent the qualities for which every devotee and spiritual seeker should strive, and having even one of them will bring the Lord to him. Once the Lord resides in one's heart, all desires fall to the wayside and the seeker is led to moksha. For a seeker who adopts *mūrti pūjā* as a spiritual practice, at a higher stage of

evolved spiritual growth, he can even choose not to perform *mūrti pūjā*. It is when devotion becomes a goal, and not just a means, that the seeker does not even desire moksha.

*Chinmaya Niketan* offers adult study groups, Chinmaya Bala Vihar classes, language classes (including Sanskrit), children's camps, weekend family camps, satsangs, festival celebrations, and spiritual discourses to the community.

Over the three days, Acharya G.V. Raghu (CM Atlanta) welcomed and recognized select donors, the Chief of Police of Norcross, the ashram architect and contractor, the exceptional priests who conducted the idol installation ceremonies, and the various volunteer teams that organized and executed the special three-day celebrations.



#### A Joyous Summer at CM Orlando by Satish Nagarajan

CM Orlando organized a two-week summer camp for children, ages 4-13 years. In homage to Pujya Gurudev's birth centenary, the camp theme was *Guru Mahimā*. The 65 children in the camp were split into three age groups. The children were introduced to the concepts of *Guru* and *Sadguru*. They also learned about the lives and teachings of Chinmaya Mission's *Guru Paramparā*, namely, Param Pujya Swami Tapovanam, Pujya Swami Sivananda, Pujya Gurudev, and Pujya Guruji. They grasped how these teachings and values could help them become disciplined, dynamic, and successful.

The camp wasn't all studies, however. In a fun and relaxed atmosphere, the children also learned yoga, Sanskrit chanting, bhajans, dance, and arts & crafts. Select high school students assisted the camp teachers and sevaks. Some of the high schoolers constructed a model of an *ashvattha* tree during the camp and explained the significance of the tree as outlined by Lord Krishna in Chapter 15 of *Bhagavad Gītā*. On the last day, the children presented a cultural program showcasing the bhajans and dance they had learnt during the camp.

CM Orlando's annual *Gītā* chanting competition saw the largest ever participation in its history. Befitting the special CBCC year, more than 120 children participated in the competition. The

children chanted in the *Kaivalya* hall, standing at the feet of Lord Krishna, facing an audience that had filled the hall to capacity. Many felt that it was a blessing to hear the Lord's words being chanted by the children. The winners of the respective age groups all agreed to participate in the national competition being hosted by the CM Chicago.

Acharya Shailaja Nadkarni has conducted 45 *pādukā pūjās* and *Gītā* satsangs in the homes of various devotees as of July. Earlier this year, she had pledged to conduct 108 such events in commemoration of Pujya Gurudev's birth centenary.

CM Orlando was honored to commence its part in the *Chinmaya Jyoti Yātrā* in July.



#### CMLA Revels in Pujya Guruji's Wisdom and Humor by Nimmi Ragunathan

For members of Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles and the larger Southern California community interested in Vedanta, the week of June 28-July 4 provided a veritable feast of spiritual wisdom. Hundreds of listeners gathered each evening at the CM Los Angeles *Chinmaya Rameshwaram* ashram to hear Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda's exposition on *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter 4.

With a clarity that broke down complex ideas to seem gloriously simple, Pujya Guruji reached out to a diverse audience while zeroing in on the yajna title of "Foster Your Freedom." He made clear that ultimate freedom lay in liberation from the cycle of life and death. On this *Gītā* chapter that expounds *karma yoga*, Guruji spoke of the different kinds of action and their effect on the individual. The true seeker will not be attached to his actions and will be rewarded with a pure mind, he said. Guruji's talks were studded with humorous nuggets that brought laughter, but unfailingly provided examples of Vedantic truths that easily lingered in the memories of listeners.

Each evening, prior to the discourse, a cultural segment showcased the talent and learning at CMLA. Bala Vihar children, from the near and far surrounding satellites that make up CM in Southern California, presented plays that were well scripted and well enacted. The chosen topics ranged from how students of today approach a guru, the caste system from the time of Adi Shankarāchārya to its distortion today, Lord Krishna's time at *Sāndīpānī*ashram, and a summary of the transcendental knowledge of the *Gītā*. The youth presented a musical on *nava-vidhā bhakti* and classical dances. Various adult members performed a lilting *garbā*. Additional performances included the chanting of *Gaṇapati Atharvashīrsha* and *Durga Sūkta* by youth, *shlokas* by adults, and bhajans and songs in praise of the Lord by children, including Pujya Guruji's musical composition of "*Koi Vando, Koi Nindo*." Chinmaya Swaranjali, the adult choir, sang with a full instrumental ensemble, and it was joined by Swami Ishwarananda (CMLA) for a bhajan.

Guruji released a book and music CD on different evenings, namely, a commentary by Swami Ishwarananda on *Guru Stotram* and the *Svaramañjari* CD by the Chinmaya Swaranjali group. Guruji praised the book saying it was good and a must-read for all.

Pujya Guruji's arrival on June 28 had been marked by the blowing of conches and a procession into the ashram with the chanting of *Guru Stotram* and offering of *pūrṇa-khumbha* by Acharya Mahadev Parameswaran and Viji Mahadevan. This was followed by the opening of the newly built *Chinmaya Smrti* conference room that also features a photograph exhibit on Pujya Gurudev.

The week-long event was highlighted by Pujya Guruji's 65th birthday, for which CM members gathered on the morning of June 30 for prayers that began with a traditional *Āyusha Homa*. Thereafter, children offered a *Guru Pādukā Pūjā*. In honor of Guruji's love of music, a musical afternoon followed, where he was regaled by a sitar and vocal concert.

During his visit, Pujya Guruji also spoke at a local temple in Brea on the need and love for God, after which Swagatha Chakraborty offered a vocal recital. Guruji met with members of several different organizations who called on him through the week.

CMLA held a *Guru Pādukā Pūjā* on the last day of the *jñāna yajña*, July 4, in which seniors, adults, and children participated. The congregation also chanted "*Om Shrī Chinmaya Sadgurave Namaḥ*" 108 times and then heard several speakers share their experiences with Pujya Gurudev and his irrevocable impact on them. CMLA devotees left further enlightened and eager for Vedantic wisdom.



#### CM Bakersfield Annual Kids' Summer Camp by Komal Desai

This year, CM Bakersfield's annual kids' summer camp at its *Chinmaya Gokul* ashram welcomed Acharya Mahadev Parameswaran (CM Los Angeles) and his wife, a long-time Chinmaya Bala Vihar teacher, Viji Mahadevan, for the camp theme on the first six chapters of *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. The camp was held July 20-24, 2015 with around 29 eager children, ages 5-18 years, eager to learn the topic of "YounGītā."

The older children were introduced to complex concepts such as the ladder of fall, dharma, *guṇas*, *karma yoga*, *navavidhā bhakti*, reincarnation, and equanimity. The younger children learned various basic tenets of the *Gītā* along with Mahābhārata stories. Yet, the camp was hardly “all work and no play” for the enthusiastic campers. The teaching sessions were followed by yoga, bhajans, arts & crafts, and games. The children created their own True ID badges, Thank You cards to God, camp T-shirt decorations, and wall hangings. The games provided a release of energy and a particular hit was Krishna Stealing Butter (based on Dog & Bone). Additional highlights included an extempore speech competition, *Guru Pāduka Pūjā*, and the all-time favorite “Fun Day,” which featured an afternoon filled with games such as Pin the Jewel (on Shri Krishna’s crown), a water slide, fresh popcorn, and snow cones.

On the concluding day, the children played a Jeopardy-style game that reviewed all that they had learnt during the camp. This was followed by a five-song music program by campers that was conducted by Mahadevanji, and featured vocals and instrumental accompaniments of violin, flute, clarinet, and harmonium. After hearing “Sing Along, Sing Along, Krishna’s Divine Song,” it is difficult to listen to Jingle Bells with a straight face.

The camp, organized and conducted in true *yajña* spirit, was indeed a memorable week not only for the children, but also for the teachers, parents, and volunteers.



#### Understanding Marriage: A Vedantic Perspective by Deepika Allana

Pujya Gururji once said he had read an interesting quote: “If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.” The second “Understanding Marriage” retreat was held at the Chinmaya Somnath ashram in Chantilly, Virginia over Memorial Day weekend, where Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara) repeated this quote that resonated with the 40 or so attendees who had chosen to attend the retreat.

The retreat on “The Joy of Giving” served as enriching lessons to navigate any human relationship, not just marriage. Single people and married couples gathered to learn tools to help overcome conflict, find inspiration to strengthen their existing relationships, take advantage of a rare opportunity for a meaningful weekend, and invest in self-development to offer their best self to their partner or partner-to-be.

The teachings were multi-dimensional and given through spiritual discourses, communication exercises, and small group discussions on insightful questions. The weekend’s intensive learning was interwoven with relaxation through a ballroom dance lesson, a picnic lunch “date,” a playful game of soccer, and entertaining bhajans. Participants were blessed to have the presence of five CM acharyas— Acharya Vivek Gupta, Swami Dheerananda (on



videoconference), Acharya Vilasini Balakrishnan, and Acharyas Rahul and Priya Maini; the latter four are all from CM Washington D.C.

While the participants enjoyed the retreat, their children enjoyed the games and activities organized by dedicated sevaks in other rooms.

Vivekji, brought alive the Vedantic interpretation of the meaning of marriage with his trademark, lucid discourses that were carefully crafted to resound with modern-day challenges. He wove in examples from sacred texts, pop culture, and personal experiences to make his point understandable, entertaining, and informative. Vivekji helped participants understand that marriage has a deeper purpose of exhausting vāsanās, and said marriage is training and an opportunity to develop virtues. How does one develop such virtues? He said, “By giving, giving, giving more than what we take. It is not that the grass is always greener on the other side. The grass is greener where we water it.” With such concepts in laser focus, the attendees felt inspired to dig deeper and find the motivation to water the grass every day!

Acharya Vilasini’s warm and inviting manner enveloped the room as she invoked both her Vedantic seeker side and her psychiatric counselor side to skillfully pair marriage philosophy and optimal relationship communication. Many spouses said this session forged for them a new territory in communication style and depth. The general consensus was that these exercises provided a worthwhile and golden opportunity to venture beyond one’s comfort zone.

To quote Pujya Gurudev, “What we have is God’s gift to us. What we do with what we have is our gift to God.” Indeed, all the attendees received precious gifts, for which they expressed much gratitude to all the retreat acharyas, volunteers, and organizers.



#### First Kids' Summer Camp at *Chinmaya Niketan* by Meenal Vashishat

CM Atlanta’s new *Chinmaya Niketan* ashram opened its doors to the first-ever kids’ camp this summer. The camp on “Saints and Temples of India” began with a prayer assembly, from which kids dispersed into classes categorized by age groups.

The camp classes were well supplemented with fun activities for the children, including yoga, volleyball, basketball, and water play, which was enjoyed by all students, teachers, and volunteers. Each day concluded with an assembly wherein Acharya Geetha Raghu (CM Atlanta) asked all the children whether they had fun and infallibly received an enthusiastic reply of “Yes!”

The meals and snacks menu created for the campers was healthy and child-friendly. The food served daily was fresh and enjoyed by all children. In addition to the other camp activities, all the campers also participated in meditation sessions and *likhita japa*, which they placed at the main shrine altar of Shri Rama. Throughout the week, they worked on an art project of building and decorating a temple of their own. Each camper was supplied all the materials as needed.

The camp was successful and the children and volunteers learned a lot. The attendees are already looking forward to next year's camp, especially for more water play!



### *Shiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* in Cleveland by Sidharth Kaw

Chinmaya Mission devotees welcomed Swamini Vimalananda to Cleveland, Ohio for discourses on *Shiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta*, April 22-24. This marked a Mission swami's first *jñāna yajña* organized by Cleveland devotees since Mission activities began in January 2014.

The audience of more than 100 not only included attendees completely new to Chinmaya Mission and Vedanta, but also those who were attending talks for the first time in several decades. In her inimitable wit and style, Swaminiji engaged the audience with practical examples and frequently asked questions about the mind.

She gave the classic analogy of electricity and the bulb in relation to God and our equipments, respectively. Yet, rather than having the audience accept such statements, she made them think about the limitations of analogies and examples, and said, "Does a rock have a mind? No. Does God exist in the rock?"

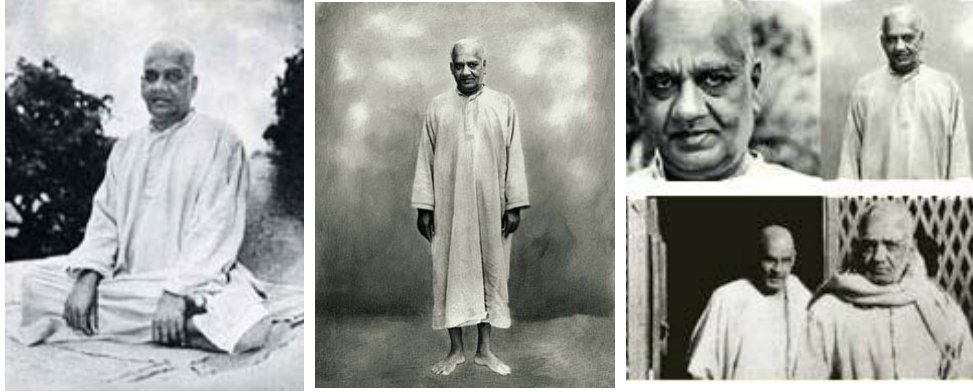
In addition to the evening talks, Swaminiji also conducted morning satsangs on "Happy Parenting" and "Mind in Harmony." Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara), who helped start CM activities in Cleveland, accompanied Swaminiji on this trip.



### Features

## Guidance from the Guru

*Letters from Swami Tapovan Maharaj; edited from the booklet, Guidance from Guru; continued from CMW News, March 2015*



*Param Pujya Swami Tapovan Maharaj, known to India's mahatmas as the glory of the Himalayas, spent his monastic life in intense austerity, reveling in the bliss of Brahman and the beauty of Nature. A number of sadhus and other aspirants sat at his feet and received his grace and guidance in spiritual knowledge. Well-informed as he was in Vedantic scriptures, his teaching was considered as the most authentic. An enlightened master and renunciate, his guidance was always sought by monks and householders, alike.*

*It is the good fortune of all seekers that his spiritual guidance in letters to a devoted couple in the 1950s became the booklet, Guidance from the Guru. The letters were written by Maharaj in his own hand, in Malayalam, to Mr. and Mrs. Chandrasekhara Menon. Swami Mahadevavanam published the originals in book form and TN Pillai translated them into English.*

## Aspirants Have to Face Obstacles

*Om Nārāyaṇa Smṛti*

November 17, 1953

Uttarkashi

With good wishes.

It is several days since I received your letter here, redirected from Gangotri. So far, we have been exchanging letters dealing only in generalities, without entering into particulars, and so I felt there was no hurry to send a reply. This was one of the causes for the delay.

To get a general idea of mental and physical control, of dispassion, *nishkāma karma*, and *bhakti*, the study of *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Yoga Vāsishṭha*, and other books of the kind will be found very useful. This is why aspirants read them every day. By such reading, it may be possible to get general knowledge of the goal and the means leading to the goal, but it is when people try to put these ideas into practice that experiences vary from individual to individual,

and obstacles, oppositions, fears, and doubts crop up. A consideration of these phenomena is spoken of as criticism of particular elements.

No detailed discussion is called for with reference to general, common aspects. Nobody doubts whether *nishkāma karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna* are essential. It is when we come to consider individual cases that difficulties arise. What sadhana is suited to a particular individual? Even if one sadhana of *karma*, *jñāna*, or *bhakti* is singled out for him, difficulties do not end. Doubts arise for individuals according to their qualifications or disqualifications. To discuss such doubts and resolve individual problems, aspirants usually seek the help of mahatmas.

These days, especially when there are plenty of opportunities to read, who finds it impossible—if he so desires—to acquire knowledge, even general knowledge, on temporal and spiritual subjects? It is only when one tries in earnest to translate one's ideas into action that one finds mountain-like obstacles standing directly in one's way. These obstacles are not uniform and they are not of the same magnitude. Aspirants have to face them and overcome them.

Mahatmas, who very well know the nature of the aspirants—their peculiarities, their doubts, their defects, etc.—suggest ways to overcome their difficulties. Aspirants accordingly perform sadhanas and gradually rise upward, thrusting aside their obstructions. Only then is there victory in the realm of spiritual life.

With loving regards,  
*Swami Tapovanam*

Intense Sadhana, Intense Divine Love  
*Om Nārāyaṇa Smṛti*  
January 26, 1954  
Uttarkashi

With loving Nārāyaṇa-smaraṇam.

“Practicing Shri Krishna *bhakti*, and in the course of practice, the obstacles of common evils such as desire and anger,” are the two points to be gathered from the letter.

The practice of Krishna *bhakti* is good, very good. At the beginning of spiritual life, one should prefer the practice of *bhakti* to the practice of *jñāna*, because it is simpler, easier. Even for those whose discrimination and dispassion are not well established, it will not be difficult to follow *bhakti*. Therefore, repeat Krishna mantra always, meditate upon His form, and listen to the stories of His great qualities and powers. Following these acts of *bhakti* regularly, one must try to develop divine love.

Samsara is none other than the evils of the mind known as desire and anger. Once these are destroyed, there is no samsara at all. He who has freed himself from samsara is said to be liberated—the form of Brahman. It is to combat the mind's evils that people resort to spiritual practices. So, at the beginning of practice, there is no meaning in complaining about them. If one is able to bring undesirable and unrestrained desire, anger, etc. under control, it is a great success in itself.

For householders, desire, anger, etc. within limits are no sin. But for aspirants engaged in spiritual sadhanas, the more these are restrained, the better it will be for their spiritual exercises and experiences. Indeed, these are terrible obstacles in their way. If, through association with the good, through prayers, through hearing holy stories, etc. one is able to find delight in the thought of God, then opportunities for the recrudescence of desire, anger, etc. will be minimized.

These points are, of course, well known. All people know, so there is no need to expatiate upon the topic. It is just that there isn't any intense desire to perform the sadhanas suggested above to curb mental evils. Accordingly, the benefit will be proportionately less.

All else is well. Wish you well.

*Swami Tapovanam*

### ***Japa and Mauna***

*Om Nārāyaṇa Smṛti*

With affection.

Ordinarily, in *mauna* (silence), only the word is not uttered. But in mental *japa*, the word is not only not uttered, the mind does not even turn toward sense objects—this is the specific feature. So, if one can perform mental *japa*, it is a noble sadhana indeed. As for these two sadhanas, mental *japa* and *mauna*, the more effectively they are practiced, the better it is for the aspirants.

The restraint of all the sense organs is a great duty enjoined upon people of all *āshramas*. Control of the senses is a blessing to any man in any of the *āshramas*; their free play is a curse. All sense objects of sound, touch, form, etc. should be totally discarded when they exceed the requirements of bodily existence. It is not necessary for any householder to wander in the mazes of sense objects when they are not essential to preserve life or perform one's duty. One had better keep all the senses under control, whether in eating, playing, or any other activity.

How do new environments affect a spiritual aspirant adversely? But, why tack onto new environments? The spiritual aspirant's duty is to keep away from any subject, any circumstance, that stands in the way of his search for Truth. "Why did you desert your very dear wife and child?" Somebody asked the Buddha. "Because they were obstacles in the way of my search for Truth," was his reply. Can a new environment and new civilization affect an aspirant of intense discrimination?

With good wishes,

*Swami Tapovanam*

For the Love of Om

*Om Nārāyaṇa Smṛti*

October 14, 1955

Uttarkashi

With loving Nārāyaṇa *smaraṇam*.

Your letter was received. The old indifference to external activities, such as writing letters, has been growing of late; hence the delay.

The repetition of *Omkāra* is of different kinds. Sometimes it is uttered as part of mantras, sometimes independently. “*Om namaḥ shivāya*” and similar Vedic mantras, as well as many hymns, begin with *Omkāra*, and so do sacrifices, acts of penance, etc. Thus, “all” people pronounce it as part of mantras and sacred rites. In this, there is no prohibition. Whether “all” people can pursue *praṇavopāsanā* is a matter that has been debated. *Praṇavopāsanā* means repetition of *Praṇava* (Om) by itself (not as part of or in conjunction with mantras and rites) and meditation upon its significance—supreme Brahman. According to Shri Shankara and other religious teachers, this is reserved for sannyasis only. The reason given is that only those who have enough purity of mind and power of concentration can perform this *upāsanā* in the proper way. The gist of the argument is that householders, and people like them, who lack mental purity and concentration, should not perform *praṇavopāsanā*. In other contexts, there is no taboo, because there is no need for such purity and concentration, which are essential for the contemplation of *nirguṇa* Brahman (Brahman without attributes). Thus, the objection is to the independent chanting of *Praṇava*. But these days, who ever cares for controls imposed by whomsoever?

There is one more difficulty. In the previous paragraph, “all” has been put in quotes. Why? It may be explained here. In this context, “all” refers to those who, like brahmins, have the right to study the Vedas. An orthodox section of the Hindus still holds that *shūdras* and women who have no *upanayana* have no right to pronounce the *Praṇava*. The modern sects, however, take a contrary view, demolishing the conservative one. In these circumstances, is there anything improper in holding that all people including householders can do *praṇavopāsanā*?

How can all this be expatiated here? Pay not much attention to such controversies. If you are already engaged in *praṇavopāsanā*, either according to somebody’s advice or by your own choice, why doubt its propriety? Do it with firm resolve. If you listen to each and every adviser, the result will be doubt and confusion, leading to the slackening of your performance.

It is your mind that the inner Being tests. It is your sincere love that pleases Him. Whether you repeat the holiest of Vedic mantras, “Om,” or the meaningless word, “*mara*,” the result will be the same—provided you have full faith in what you do. What pleases God is sincere devotion. If you have real love in your mind, all these rules, injunctions, and prohibitions will lose their relevance. With the mantra you love best, worship Him and develop your devotion—this is the advice of the broadminded mahatmas, most learned and most experienced.

With best wishes,  
Swami Tapovanam



### ***Chinmaya Jyoti Yātrā***

*Originally printed Tapovan Prasad; edited for print herein*

On a clear, sunny morning, the *Chinmaya Sandesh Vāhinī* (CSV) mobile carrying the CBCC *Chinmaya Jyoti* entered the Tamil Nadu from Kerala amid great spiritual fervor. The beating of the drums, the traditional *nāda-svaram* music ringing in the air, and the blowing of the conch welcomed the *akhaṇḍa jyoti* and Pujya Gurudev's *pādukās* and *vastram*, which were handed over by Brahmachari Mukund to Swami Anukoolananda at the Mahadeva Temple in Parasala. Other attending acharyas included Swami Mitrananda, Swamini Vimalananda, Swami Sivayogananda, Swamini Divyananda, and Brahmacharini Brahmi.

At the *Chinmaya Devika* ashram in Kumarakovil, the CSV was welcomed with a grand reception and a *pādukā pūjā* by devotees. The next day, the *pādukās* and *vastram* arrived at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. Years ago, Pujya Gurudev had collected Rs. 1 per person and gathered Rs. 10,000 as an offering to help build the Memorial. The waves lashing against the rocks in that quiet and serene atmosphere seemed to be offering their obeisance to the glorious masters.

The CSV continued its picturesque journey through the verdant landscape, threading its way through the Pearl City of Tuticorin and the windmills of Palayamkottai. CM devotees of Tirunelveli gave a grand welcome to the convoy. Long-time devotee, Rama Subramania Raja (Chairman, Ramco Industries) received it in Rajapalayam, along with Swami Mitrananda, Swami Sivayogananda, and Swami Anukoolananda. Raja reminisced about his first meeting with Pujya Gurudev on the Quilon Express. He said he was tremendously inspired by him and requested him to halt briefly at Rajapalayam, and thus began his long and fulfilling association with Chinmaya Mission.

As the CSV rolled into Madurai, laden with the fragrance of jasmine, large crowds came to offer their respects to Pujya Gurudev. Cultural programs were presented and the children enjoyed “yajñatarium,” a portable planetarium in a large dome with an audio-visual presentation on God symbolism for children and guided meditation for adults. The yajñatarium, a brainchild of Swami Mitrananda, is sponsored by Chinmaya Bala Vihar, Singapore.

In Madurai, the CSV visited the renowned Meenakshi Temple and Sethupathi High School, where Mahakavi Subramania Bharathi had served as a Tamil pandit for eleven months. The convoy also went to the Mahatma Kasturba Academy for Women, the Mahatma Montessori CBSE and HSS, and the Aravind Eye Hospital, where the public amassed in great numbers to see the CSV and offer homage.

The CSV moved on to Dindigul’s Balagurunathan Temple, Anjeneyar Temple, and Devi Karumariamman Temple. It was received in Karur at the headquarters of the Karur Vysya Bank with full honors. Brahmacharini Sharanya joined the CSV at the Pon Vidya Mandir and enthralled the audience with melodious bhajans. Wherever the CSV went, it spread the message of Vedanta and created a deep impact and awareness among the public.

The convoy then turned toward Tiruchy. Braving the scorching heat, the students of Chinmaya Vidyalaya Srirangam accorded CSV a grand loving reception to the chants of “*Om Shri Chinmaya Sadgurave Namah.*” The yatra proceeded to the Malaikottai Ucchi Pillaiyar Temple and Thayumanavar Sivan Kovil, as well as the Jambukeshwara Temple in Tiruvanaikaval, the Shri Ranganatha Swami Temple, and the famous Brihadeeshwarar Temple in Thanjavur.

The next stop was the Tyagaraja Swami Temple in Tiruvarur, where the CSV was led by the 600 nurses and staff of the Tiruvarur Medical Centre. In Nagapattinam, the CSV received a VIP welcome from the staff and students of Amrita Vidyalaya, where Swami Ramakrishnananda addressed the gathering and expounded on Pujya Gurudev’s message, and explained the CSV and its purpose.

After stopping at the Thillai Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, the CSV was given a grand reception at the *Chinmaya Sūrya* ashram in Puducherry, where many little Chinmayas—children wearing face masks in the likeness of Pujya Gurudev—were waiting eagerly to receive their *tātā* (grandfather) Guru. CSV visited the nearby temples in Puducherry before moving on to the Akshara Vidya Ashram in Cuddalore. Seven other schools in Puducherry and Cuddalore also got a glimpse of the life and works of Swami Chinmayananda through the *Chinmaya Sandesh Vāhinī*.

The CSV wended its way via Villupuram to Tiruvannamalai, where a young Swami Chinmayananda had had a memorable viewing of Shri Ramana Maharshi. The CSV visited Shri Ramana Ashram and the Arunachaleswar Temple in Tiruvannamalai.

The  *jyoti yātrā* reached Mandakolathur and proceeded to Chinmaya Vidyalaya Tada. Despite being a new school in the Chinmaya fold, one could see the love for Pujya Gurudev and his vision glowing in the hearts of everyone present. The CSV escorts were honored with flower garlands.



Tamaraipakkam celebrated the arrival of the CSV wholeheartedly. It was as though every house in the little town was welcoming their beloved Pujya Gurudev home after a long time. Here, Chinmaya Mission has been serving and enriching the lives of community members for more than 25 years through a free school, medical center, Shiva temple, CORD activities, and much more. People from all age groups participated to make sure that Pujya Gurudev received the grandest reception that Tamaraipakkam has ever seen so far. The students of Harihara Vidyalaya enthralled and touched the heart of all present by showcasing a diverse cultural show depicting Tamil folk arts.

On a moonlit night, the stars smiled brightly to welcome Pujya Gurudev at *Chinmaya Tarangini*, the newly inaugurated meditation park at Uthandi. As in all other places, a traditional *pūrṇa kumbha* was offered with the chanting of Vedic mantras. As dawn broke, an orange-robed sun brought promises of a historical day for Chinmaya Mission Chennai. The *pādukā pūjā* commenced in the presence of Swamis Mitrananda, Ramakrishnananda, and Aksharananda, and other Mission acharyas, member, and devotees. The 108 cars that were to escort the convoy to Chinmaya Heritage Center were already set to depart. The volunteers who had brought their cars first performed Pujya Gurudev's *ashṭottara pūjā* at the Mission's new Matsya Nārāyaṇa Temple, each one seated at one of the 108 pillars bearing a name and its meaning from the *Shrī Chinmaya Ashṭottara-shata-namāvaliḥ*, along with a name from *Shrī Vishṇu Sahasranāma*. The gigantic form of Lord Matsya Nārāyaṇa looked on, blessing them all. The chanting of His names seemed to vie with the gurgling waves, uplifting the mind to the blue horizon, where sea meets sky.

After the puja, the procession of orange flags flying high from each car began moving toward the city, kindling the curiosity of morning walkers and early risers. The convoy stopped at the home of senior devtee, Leela Nambiar, a founding trustee of CCMT who hosted Pujya Gurudev whenever he visited Chennai. Pujya Gurudev's room is still kept intact by the family.

The excitement at the Chennai center reached a crescendo when the CSV entered the premises to traditional *nāda-svaram* music. Hundreds of devotees were waiting to get a glimpse of their beloved Gurudev. After hoisting the Om flag and chanting the Chinmaya Mission Pledge, the *pādukās*, *vastram*, and  *jyoti* were carried into the ashram with great reverence and placed carefully on the dais. Devotees sat in neat rows with an Om lamp lit in front of them and performed the *pādukā pūjā*, while many more devotees seated around them witnessed the special program.

In the afternoon, devotees carried the *pādukās* back to Uthandi to give the fisherfolk an opportunity to show their love and gratitude for Pujya Gurudev. Later, a fleet of 25 boats transported the *pādukās* on sea from Uthandi to Marina Beach. Orange balloons and Om flags fluttered happily in the vast expanse of blue. The yatra proceeded to Vivekananda House, which overlooks Marina Beach, and was received with traditional honors by the monks of Ramakrishna Mission.

On five consecutive evenings, cultural shows were presented by different wings of Chinmaya Mission. Renowned singers rendered invocation songs. Every day, select senior devotees who have served the Mission for many years were honored. On the first day, the Bala Vihar children enjoyed the yajñatarium and presented a cultural program. A voice card that plays a 20-second audio clip of Pujya Gurudev was released by Swami Mitrananda. Radha Sadasivam, who held

the first Chinmaya Bala Vihar class in her home, was honored. The second evening featured the movie premiere of *Drop*, directed by Yuva Veer Mukesh Jaiswal, on the spiritual adventure of a trek undertaken by youngsters from Ganga Sagar to Gomukh.

*Shakti Pravāham*, a cultural program performed on the third day by the seven Chinmaya Vidyalayas of Chennai, was spectacular. The children staged dances and songs honoring Divine Mother, and showcased a mime on social issues. The Chinmaya Vidyalaya alumni again rose to the occasion on the fourth day, commencing with mellifluous bhajans rendered on the mandolin by U. Nagamani. They continued with a fusion dance portraying *nava-vidhā bhakti*, a colorful *rāsa-līlā*, and a dazzling presentation of the Lord's *dashavataras*.

The grand finale in Chennai was the sound and light show on *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa*. This show was first enacted on stage for Pujya Gurudev 35 years ago in Chennai. More than a 100 Mission members participated whole-heartedly to make it a grand success. *Ganga: More Than a River*, a coffee table book written by Rukma Sadekar, with beautiful photographs by K. Ramnath Chandrasekhar, was released.

The CSV visited all the five Chinmaya Vidyalayas on consecutive days. At the Anna Nagar Vidyalaya, the CSV was escorted by 108 school children on bicycles, led by Swami Mitrananda. The tiny tots of kindergarten released 108 saffron-colored balloons. The Vidyalaya in Avadi welcomed the CSV of Pujya Gurudev with a band, and a procession of students and teachers. At the Virugambakkam Vidyalaya, teachers on bicycles escorted the CSV. The procession then moved to the Vinayaka Temple in Chinmaya Nagar, to the accompaniment of a troupe of artists performing *karagaṭṭam*. Chinmaya Vidyalaya in Taylors Road carried the photo of Pujya Gurudev in a palanquin to the beat of *cheṇḍa mellam* and received him grandly in an overflowing auditorium. The CSV also traveled to Vivekananda Vidyalaya in Villivakkam, where Brahmachari Amaresh performed a *pādukā pūjā*.

Swami Mitrananda accompanied the CSV to Hosur where Swami Krishnatmananda devoutly received the *pādukas*, *vastram*, and *jyoti*. The students of the Shishya School, which has adopted the Chinmaya Vision Program, welcomed the yatra. The CSV escorts and Bala Vihar children of Hosur celebrated International Yoga Day by performing Surya Namaskar together.

The next day, the photo of Pujya Gurudev was escorted in a beautifully decorated chariot drawn by four horses. Swami Krishnatmananda led the *pādukā pūjā* with the lighting of a special lamp. This was one of the four lamps lit in the four corners of India during the 50th year celebration of the Chinmaya Movement in 2001. This lamp will be kept lit as an *akhaṇḍa jyoti* at *Chinmaya Kaivalya* in Salem. Many schools participated enthusiastically in the celebrations, which included a special online quiz conducted by local devotees.

Swami Yogirajananda and Swami Yatatmananda of Ramakrishna Mission, along with Swamini Brahmaleenananda of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, came to offer their respects to Pujya Gurudev. On behalf of Chinmaya Mission, Swami Krishnatmananda gifted them a copy of the newly released *Ganga: More Than a River* and a voice card. The CSV then proceeded to the Sugavaneshwara Temple and the Vinayaka Mission's 1008 *Shiva-lingam* temple at Ariyanoor. In the evening, a cultural program was presented.

The *jyoti yātrā* stopped at many schools in Kallipatti and then moved on to Tiruchengode,

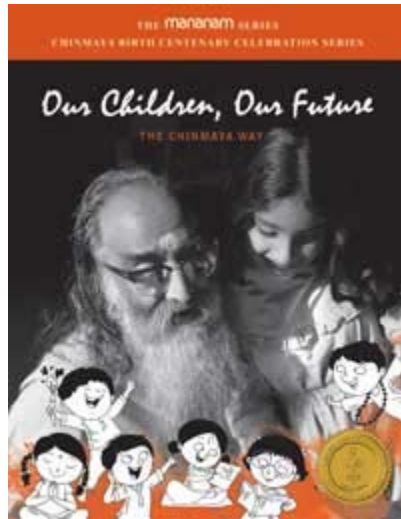
where devotees offered a befitting welcome, with showering flowers. Brahmacharinis Shraddha and Vedavati led the *pādukā pūjā*. Students of various schools along the way received the CSV enthusiastically and were educated on the life and teachings of Pujya Gurudev.

Chinmaya Vidyalaya Vadavalli welcomed Pujya Gurudev's CSV with flowers, folk dances, and thunderous applause. At Chinmaya Vidyalaya R.S. Puram, the children danced for Pujya Gurudev and shone in a spirit of togetherness. The yatra then proceeded to Kikani School, where it was received by Swami Swaroopananda, Swamini Vimalananda, Swami Anukoolananda and CM Coimbatore devotees. The chief guest for the function was S. Gurumurthy of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch. *Padma Shrī* G. Bhaktavatsalam, Managing Trustee of K.G. Hospitals, and Krishnakumar Warriar were the guests of honor. Coimbatore artists displayed their skill and creativity through their artwork, including a massive sand sculpture of Pujya Gurudev and a walk around *Guru Paramparā* painting. Five thousand children from twenty-two schools chanted the 15th chapter of *Bhagavad Gītā* on Purushottama Yoga, in celebration of the life of Pujya Gurudev as the *purushottama*. The evening was a tribute to Pujya Gurudev through music and dance. The Malladi Brothers, who grew up in Chinmaya Bala Vihar, mesmerized the audience with soulful bhajans.

The CSV visited the Marudamalai Temple (a shrine dedicated to Lord Muruga) and the Dhanvantri Temple at Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, both of which were close to Pujya Gurudev's heart. The CSV also visited the Shankara Eye Hospital, which was started in 1970 by Radha Ramani. When they were struggling for finances, Pujya Gurudev had advised them to serve humanity: "Hold on to Nārāyaṇa. Lakshmi will follow."

The yatra blessed the homes of long-standing devotees G.V. Eswar and Sangeeta Warriar. The next visit was to the Aravind Eye Hospital and CORD Siruvani center, where the villagers and Bala Vihar children joined the celebrations, and then proceeded from Alandurai to Chinmaya Garden and the Chinmaya International Residential School (CIRS). Whenever Pujya Gurudev visited the Chinmaya Garden ashram, he would be welcomed with the beating of drums (*jammāt*), and he would get down from the vehicle and walk into the ashram. Accordingly, the CSV was received at the Chinmaya Garden ashram and CIRS with the *jammāt*. Swami Swaroopananda, Swamini Vimalananda, Swami Anukoolananda, and Swami Aksharananda, and the school's management and students escorted the CSV lovingly onto the CIRS campus. After a *pādukā pūjā* at the multipurpose hall, the children visited the yajñatarium and enjoyed the exhibits. A select few students performed a unique *pādukā pūjā* in a raft in the middle of the lake on campus. In the evening, a gala cultural show was held, ending with magnificent fireworks. Floating lanterns lit up the sky.

The *pādukās*, *vastram*, and *jyoti* were handed over on June 29 to CM acharyas of Kerala at the Krishna Temple in Velenthavalam to continue the journey through Kerala.



### Our Children, Our Future

*Edited excerpts from Our Children, Our Future, CBCC Mananam Series (editing notations excluded)*

*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.*

### Pujya Gurudev and Pujya Guruji on Chinmaya Bala Vihar

It is important to provide children a cheerful atmosphere of affection and tenderness. Touch children and tell them that you love them, that they are beautiful, intelligent, and good. Let children see that you are eager to be helpful. These doings can quickly impress them and sink into their personality. A noble character can be thus easily formed.

*- His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda*

If parents want their child to be good, they must put effort toward it. Other than the rare exceptions of saints, children need support and guidance. To nurture them, help them reach their potential, and become truly great is the primary responsibility and role of parents. How good or great they become depends on how they are groomed. Though children are born with their own karma, we can mold their present in the best way possible and help shape their future.

Chinmaya Bala Vihar activities are specially designed to teach children to look at life as a game, as play (*vihāra*), in an enjoyable atmosphere. Yet, every sport has its rules, so discipline in life is important. Children love attending Bala Vihar classes when the teachers teach well and clearly, where they can effortlessly imbibe the knowledge—not as if the teacher has taught, but the child has learned.

Even as Pujya Gurudev worked with focus in the world of that day, his concern for future generations was etched in every plan he proposed, and, indeed, in every activity he undertook. He knew that special training was the need of the hour. Only protective armor could safeguard the children of the future so that they could live meaningful lives. The shield had to be shaped from the wisdom of the past and strengthened by the culture of their ancestors. The efforts to reach out to the children had to be in harmony with their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs—in consonance with nature.

As a solution, Pujya Gurudev responded with a clarion call: "Mold the child, mold the future." His appeal to empower the child and build an inspired future resounded far and wide. A collective response to his plea arose from the hearts of parents apprehensive about the future of their children. Thus was Bala Vihar born.

In Mumbai, in 1987, he said about the Bala Vihar program:

If the present children are molded in their attitudes, in their values, in their ideas, and in their ideals, we can logically expect a better and more organized world of tomorrow, and achieve the design for the world that we hope for at this moment. This future design cannot come in our own lifetime; it needs a long period of time for the changes to come. Change it will, but the kind of change will be determined by the moral fiber of the growing generation. Therefore, when we say that today's children are our future, we mean that we must strive right now to mold the children to think correctly, to judge rightly, and to have the heroism to live up to those convictions.

All progressive countries in the world are such because their progress is guided by, decided by, thought of by, and planned by the intellectuals of their generation. It is a slow process. So if the future is to be bright, we have to mold our children to think—not in our pattern, which is disastrous, as we have already seen—in a new pattern, with a new inspiration, and with a new vision.

Everyone will accept the idea that our children are our future, but we have yet to realize the implication of this and to start thinking about it. Mere talk is not sufficient—it will not help. Children do not learn from books. It is always the mother at home who imparts values and ideals to the child, who molds the mental thinking of the child. The mother gives the child the ideals of charity, goodness, tenderness, affection, and forgiveness. She never imparts values by giving the child a discourse. Through her life she demonstrates these ideals, and the child sees it—and these ideals become embedded in the child. It is through the child of today that we beget the leaders of tomorrow, but we must supply them with the vision.

Only when a plant is young and we sincerely care for it, can we train it to grow straight. A plant can be trained, but not a tree. If the tree has a bend, it has a bend—full stop. Then, we can only trim the branches, but not the trunk. We must teach our children not only to have right values and convictions, but also to have the heroism to live up to them. If this kind of training can be imparted to even one child, we will have shaped a better future.

We have to take responsibility for molding and beautifying the child, prepare him to face the world of the future. It is a tremendous responsibility. The remedy is with us.

Like Bhakta Prahāda, Gurudev understood the need for children to connect with the Supreme at an early age. He also knew that to achieve success in the outer world, they require a strong value system strengthened by discipline, for only then are they able to work fearlessly in the world while remaining rooted and peaceful within.

Pujya Gurudev wrote:

Children are not vessels to be filled, but lamps to be lit. Children are the architects of the future world. They are the builders of humanity. The seeds of spiritual values should be sown in young hearts, and the condition should be made favorable for their sprouting and steady growth by the exercise of proper control and discipline. Cared for with the warmth of love and affection, such a tree shall blossom forth flowers of brotherhood, universal love, peace, bliss, beauty, and perfection.

Pujya Gururji Swami Tejomayananda has given a mission statement for Chinmaya Bala Vihar: "To help children learn values with fun, to delight like the moon and shine like the sun." He has said, "To delight like the moon and shine like the sun means that while shining in themselves, children must delight other people. Well-mannered children do the right thing at the right time. The result is a win-win situation, and everyone is happy."

This same vision flows through Pujya Gurudev's motto given to the children of the Chinmaya Vidyalayas: "Keep smiling!" This motto of just two words became the Chinmaya Bala Vihar motto. Gurudev had said, "Keep smiling! When we smile, we make others happy. When we frown, nobody is happy. To be happy and make others happy, the formula is to keep smiling!"

Pujya Gururji has said, "Bala Vihar (BV) is *saṁskāra pradhāna*—culture is caught, not taught, as Gurudev said. The greatest service a BV *sevak* can render is simply to create love for God in the hearts of children. If this is achieved, then everything else will follow. *Guru-bhakti* and *ishvara-bhakti* are the pillars on which build strong spiritual growth. If this is achieved, the task is well done. God will do the rest!"

Gururji has clarified the vision and purpose of Bala Vihar as follows: "The general objective of the Mission is Self-realization and service. This remains the same for all activities across the board, though each activity also has additional specific objectives. The purpose of Bala Vihar, in particular, is the inner transformation of both the *sevak*s and the children. The Goal of the scriptures being subtle, it cannot easily be explained to children. Hence other methods are required to get the message across to them."

He says, "Children are not clean slates because they are *jīvās* who come with their own *karmas*, *vāsanās*, and *saṁskāras*. They are individual entities and do not fall into a single category. We must understand and deal with these differences without praising or condemning them. Moreover, their differences are not to be seen as a measure of superiority or inferiority. Each child is unique and no one common principle works. One gentleman said, 'Before marriage, I had six theories about raising children. Now I have six children and no theories!' Thus, some children are calm and contemplative, while others are hyperactive and outgoing. Some are leaders; some are followers; and yet others are counselors. All children do not respond in the same way. If the inactive child becomes proactive, or the active child becomes contemplative, consider it an achievement."

Pujya Gurudev said Bala Vihar is about providing the right starting point amid changing familial and cultural scenarios:

We must give children a glimpse of our history and expose them to our cultural tradition. When we have no respect for the past, we have no self-respect. We must have pride in our culture, which is one of loving and serving. To give young minds the right orientation of character, parents have to spend time and energy—thus the need for an institution like Bala Vihar to initiate young ones into the subjective art of discovering and cultivating inner beauty, so that the growing generation may lead a purposeful life of moral beauty and inner poise, so that they are able to guide and lead the world into a more meaningful program of peaceful coexistence and all-giving goodwill, in an easy mood of joyous sharing.

Pujya Guruji has said about *sevā*, or service:

Selfless service is both, a means of purifying the mind and a great unseen blessing. *Sevā* fulfills the need of both, the giver and the receiver. Those served benefit because their needs are fulfilled, whereas those serving gain because their minds become purified. *Sevā* offered to God increases our love for Him. Thus, *sevak*s gain on all fronts, because through *sevā*, an attitude of devotion, gratitude, and love develops and permeates all actions. Bala Vihar is not just confined to teaching children.

Pujya Gurudev once asked a group of children, "Why do we go to temples?"

"To see Baby Krishna," replied one child.

"To pray," said another.

"Because my mother wants me to go," said a third.

Gurudev said, "Yes, that is why we go, but we also go for one more reason. A temple is a playground for your mind!"

Some of the children looked confused. "Swamiji," one girl began, and asked with a smile, "How can the temple be a playground?" Swamiji was too old to understand, she thought to herself.

"Don't you go to the playground every day?" he asked the children.

"Yes!" came the resounding answer.

"And what do you do there?" he asked.

"We play!" shouted the children in chorus. "On the jungle gym!" one said.

"Ah! Your body gets to exercise on the playground, so you can become strong. Doesn't it? If you go to the playground, but never play; if you only sit, then will your body get its exercise?"

"No!" the children replied in unison.

"So, too, we come to the temple to exercise our mind. If you want your mind to be good and razor sharp, you have to go to the temple and tune your mind to the Lord." The children understood.

Gurudev took it to the next level: "God is everywhere, but when you come here to this temple, Bālākṛishna is here, right in front of you. See! Here, you can contact Krishna directly!"

At the Bala Vihar *Sevak* camp in *Chinmaya Vibhooti* in May 2009, Pujya Guruji said, "To be

successful, *sevak*s must be endowed with the qualities of fortitude (*dhṛti*), enthusiasm (*utsāha*), and patience (*samanvitah*). When the process sometimes loses momentum, the *sevak*has to accelerate, or motivate, and quicken the pace. It is of paramount importance that these *sevak* does not lose sight of the fact that, at the personal level, he or she remains a devotee of the Lord and worships Him through this process of *sevā*."

Pujya Gurudev had once remarked in an address to Bala Vihar *sevak*s in Bangalore, "The politicians of a country work keeping the next 5 years in mind. Diplomats work keeping the next 10 years in mind. Statesmen work, keeping the next 25 years in mind. All of you *sevak*s, whether you know it or not, are working like statesmen. You are molding the next generation. It takes 25 years to see the result of the work you are doing today. When your child comes back to you after 25 as a young adult, and declares that the values instilled by you helped him or her to grow to the present status, you will be able to see the fulfillment of your work."

On the continuing work of Chinmaya Bala Vihar, Pujya Guruji has said, "Our job is to do the right thing and to continue doing it. Let us remember: 'Leaders don't do different things. They do things differently.' The main objective of Bala Vihar is to connect children to *Bhagavān*. Children should blossom in such a way that they turn to Him not just in need or during difficulties; they should be connected to the Lord at every point in time."

#### Bala Vihar Students' Notes to God

"O my loving God, Hari Om! You have made a beautiful earth. If You want to come and see it, You are most welcome!"

\*

"Dear God, when I am ill, I pray to You. But when You are ill, to whom do you pray? I have many friends to play with and I hope you also have; otherwise, you will be lonely. I hope you will reply."

\*

"Hello, My Dear Friend God. A friend in need is a friend indeed. So you must take care of me, your poor friend on earth. Give my regards to your wife and love to children."

\*

"Dear God, are boys better than girls? I know You are one, but try to be fair."

#### The Funnies

A Bala Vihar teacher was telling the children, "Prayer is not begging. So, we must avoid asking God to 'give me this and give me that.' A child raised his hand and asked, 'Teacher, is it okay if my friend asks on my behalf and I ask on his behalf?'"

\*

Side by side on the altar were pictures of Pujya Gurudev and Lord Krishna. At the end of a class, a child pointed to Pujya Gurudev's picture, and asked, "Aunty, is that Lord Krishna's grandfather?"

#### Learn and Live

Note from a child: Thank you, Gurudev, for having thought of us even before we were born, and for making this Bala Vihar available for us.



\*

The children were asked to bring a gift for Lord Rama to class. The gift was to be an attribute they did not like about themselves, so that He could make it better and return it to them. A six-year-old put a note in a gift box that said, "I bite my nails." After presenting this, he never bit his nails again. Such is the faith and beauty of innocence.

\*

Puja Sabnani (CM Miami) wrote, "It took me a while to understand that gratitude and appreciation are not necessary for the work we do. Doing the work perfectly should be its own reward. This understanding influenced my choice of the hospitality industry as a career. The guest does not need to know who did the work, as long as it gets done."

\*

Kavitha Shreeharsha (CM San Jose) said, "My concept of God underwent a radical change when I heard Pujya Gurudev's sonorous voice enunciate, '*Shrī Bhagavān uvācha*.' And then in English, he continued, 'Lord Krishna said, Allah said, Buddha said, and Jesus said!' I was left with the undeniable truth that indeed they are all one."

\*

A young Bala Vihar student told her parents who were squabbling, "Please stop being angry. Blow your anger out of the window. I want peace in the house!"

\*

One child said to his BV teacher, "God is everywhere. So, we are in God."

\*

At a particular CIRS camp, children have to face a punishment if they sleep or yawn in class. Once, a young *sevak* was caught napping. The children demanded that a punishment be meted out to him. The *sevak* was accordingly asked to sing a song for the children. One cheeky little boy quipped, "But Swamiji, that would be punishment for us!"

\*

"Swamiji, no one has 'seen' God. How can I believe that if I live a spiritual life I will for sure experience God, or 'see' Him?" asked one little boy.

Gurudev looked at him mischievously and asked, "Can you see a beard or a moustache on your face?"

"No, Swamiji," answered the boy.

"Yet, are you not sure, and do you not believe, that in time, you will grow up and see it appear on your face?"

"Yes, Swamiji."

"Similarly, the Lord is hidden in you and will manifest to you at the time of your spiritual maturity. Remember to keep calling Him! In a tiny seed, you are not able to see the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the flower, and the fruit. Yet, you 'believe' they are all there in potential form. If the seed is planted in good soil, with a certain amount of sunshine and water, all the seed's hidden possibilities can manifest in front of you. So, too, you have the potential to make God manifest in your experience."

\*

Maliekah Harjani (CM Jakarta) wrote, "I understood the power of the *Gāyatrī Mantra* during a recent examination. When my mind suddenly went blank and I had no idea how to answer the questions, I chanted the *Gāyatrī Mantra* three times—and began to write!"

\*

Uma Kamath, a seven-year-old in CM Houston's Bala Vihar, has been participating in *Gītā* chanting for the past five years. Even as a two-year-old, she would chant a few verses of the *Gītā* to an astounded audience. She said, "God wants me to do it. And when I work hard, He always helps me."

\*

To the Bala Vihar class taught by Manisha Khemlani, Pujya Gurudev wrote:  
"Thank you, dear children! I got your *rakshābandhan* wrist-lets. I appreciate your love and faith in me. With these wrist-lets, I am trying to tie each one of you to your Gopal Bhaiyā.

May He bless you all!"

\*

One day, when Sridhar (now Swami Dheerananda) was five, his mother told him that the Lord would be visiting them that day. Sridhar loved his mother dearly and trusted her implicitly, so when Pujya Gurudev walked into their home one day, he had no doubt this was God. This laid the foundation for his life.

#### Alumni Speak on Chinmaya Bala Vihar

It's the little things that can sometimes make me feel out of place here in the United States. From my name, to how I look, to how I act, there are days when I feel as though I'm that puzzle piece that just won't fit anywhere. It's not that when I visit India I'm suddenly "back home." People there can tell that I'm not one of them either. I always feel like I'm "the American" in India. So if I'm American in India, and Indian in America, then where exactly do I fit?

The one place on earth where I am completely accepted is Chinmaya Mission. This is where I perfectly fit. It's the one place I can just be. I can be myself without having to worry about what I'm saying, doing, or thinking. It is a snippet of a perfect world, where everyone is simply accepted, where words and actions can carelessly twirl through the air and bounce off our shoulders. Of course, it's unreasonable for me to expect the whole world to be as perfect as

this, which is why having one place like it is perfect enough for me!  
- Anjali Madhok (CM Minneapolis)

\*

The story of Shravanakumar's dedication to his blind parents moved me deeply and made me want to live like him. I vowed to be the best child to my parents.  
- Srijit Nair (CM Bengaluru)

\*

The Bala Vihar storytelling sessions were my favorite activity. The stories unlocked a new gateway in my imagination. The description of the heavens, the *gandharvas*, *apsarās* and *devas* were splendid, though somewhat overwhelming. They introduced me to a fascinating world.  
- Mohit Wadhwani (CM London)

\*

The values I learned in Chinmaya Bala Vihar have changed my character and overall outlook on life. The advantage of being exposed to it at a young age is that you will never forget its essential teachings and can proudly call yourself a true Hindu!  
- Kris Dadlani (CM Jakarta)

\*

The family I inherited, thanks to Chinmaya Mission, is amazing. My vision of the concept of family grew. It started from my center and now expands worldwide.  
- Puja Sabnani (CM Miami)

\*

Travel to a different part of the world, and just walk into a Mission center and say, "Hari Om!" In an instant, you are connected to family—the Chinmaya family!  
- Deepa Balakrishnan (CM Bengaluru)

\*

We have a whole family here. We have a couple of hundred siblings, parents, grandparents, and cousins.  
- Anjali Madhok (CM Minneapolis)

\*

Chinmaya Bala Vihar introduced me to the concept that every person is nothing but a nicely packaged form of Consciousness.

- Bhavana Shivakumar (CM Ann Arbor)

\*

Little Raju's earliest memory of Puja Gurudev centers on the photo of Gurudev that he would always see on the Chinmaya Bala Vihar altar as a three-year-old. Looking back, Raju (now Swami Mitrananda) said, "It was the most wonderful thing that Bala Vihar did for me. His picture was established in the depth of my mind even before I met him. That early impression had a very strong influence."

### **Sevaks** Speak on Chinmaya Bala Vihar

"Chinmaya Bala Vihar *sevaks* are like gardeners, for whom every plant is beautiful and worth nurturing. I owe my grounding to Chinmaya Bala Vihar. I am now past the age of 35, and I still think of myself as a Bala Vihar child. Chinmaya Bala Vihar is where I have belonged the most and still belong. The one place where I feel truly at home is with a bunch of children, chanting shlokas, telling stories, and playing games!

- Gayatri Krishnamurty (CM Kolkata)

\*

My inspiration for storytelling Sunday after Sunday is the shine in the children's eyes when they "get it." I look for the point in the story when they stop moving and their minds are completely absorbed. It is thrilling to have a child's complete attention, but you have to be careful with such impressionable minds.

The most touching moment was when I was telling a story on how association with a sage can make you a better person. At the end of the story, I waited in silence for a moment to let the message sink in. Then, the class was dismissed. A boy came up to me and said, "Look, Auntie, my hair is still standing up."

- Nanda Subbarao (CM Princeton)

\*

The one resounding message of Chinmaya Bala Vihar is devotion to God—to make Him the underwriter of your life. Puja Gurudev's message has been a great source of strength and inspiration over the years: "Surrender and serve. Discover the joy of service by placing at His feet not your achievements, but only the sense thereof. It costs you nothing, but brings you everything."

- Ashok Grandhee (CM Ann Arbor)

\*

Bala Vihar has increased my faith in God and decreased my fear of God.

- Shobha Ravishankar (CM Houston)

\*

"Children are like God," I had heard my grandmother say a billion times. Now I have begun to see what she meant.

- Suman Rao

\*

Bala Vihar children from four to seven years of age repay their teachers with huge dividends, in the form of their laughter, joy, and infectious love of life. They are a veritable delight. Their innocence and freshness of outlook often lead to startling new perspectives for their teachers. The confidence of the five-year-olds and the enthusiasm with which they come to class on Sunday mornings are something to marvel! My three years as a Chinmaya Bala Vihar teacher of the kindergarten class have been some of the most important years in my search for eternal happiness. I was expecting to have a lot of fun with a bunch of naughty kids. I saw naughty Kanhaiya, hyper Hanuman, righteous Rama, good Ganesha, wise Brahma, super Shiva, notorious Narada, shy Sita—all manifestations of God were in my class.

- Suman Rao

\*

When I taught *Bālā Rāmāyana*, all the kindergarten students knew the story in such detail that I had no "story" to teach! Once, we were all seated in a circle on the floor, discussing the different ways we react in a toy store when a parent tells us we cannot have a toy we want. One child said, "I scream, cry, and drop to the ground, and my mother usually buys me the toy." Another said, "I keep on asking for the toy until my father gives up and buys it for me." And the third said, "I know my mother will not buy it for me, so I don't ask." Then I asked in what ways we could teach ourselves to react in this situation. One boy said without any hesitation, "We can learn to wait for it."

- Sivagami Natesan (CM Austin)

\*

I was teaching "Understanding Hinduism" in my Bala Vihar class of 10-13 year-olds. The discussion turned to the infinite nature of Brahman. It soon became intense, as the kids churned the concept of bigger than the biggest, and smaller than the smallest. One child asked, "What about supernovas, black holes, and expanding space and time?" They challenged each other and grappled with the contradictions, until one child suddenly piped up, "Oh! Now I get it!"

"What did you get?" I asked.

"Now I understand. When Yashodā Mā thought Kanhaiyā had eaten mud, she made Him open his mouth. All at once, she saw the entire universe and the movement of the stars in His open mouth. All the universes exist in Kanhaiyā, who is Brahman!"

This revelation of the power of the Puranic stories struck me like lightning. As a toddler, he must have heard that Kanhaiyā story, the deep impact of which emerged long after it was told. Just one story became the springboard to catapult his imagination into the realms of subtle Vedantic concepts.

- Arundhati Sundar (CM Singapore)

\*

Bala Vihar kids have worked wonders on me and changed me for the better. To work on *Balvihar* magazine means to enter the world of children. I had to learn to get under their

skin, think like them, and see things through their eyes. I had to learn to be simple, fun-loving, and carefree!

- Swamini Aradhanananda (Editor-in-chief, *Balvihar Magazine*)

\*

A teacher must know how to keep the attention of the class. If the class is bored, promptly divert the children's attention. Tell a story about a great person, share an anecdote, or crack a joke. Within a couple of minutes, the class is refreshed and you have the children's attention.

- Shyamala Acharya (CM Mumbai)

\*

Pujya Gurudev wrote to Ranjini Shastri: "Please judge my children lovingly. They are just children. But judge the group leaders harshly—they have to keep a very high spiritual beauty."

\*

Being trained as a Bala Vihar *sevikā* in 8th grade brought about a huge transformation in my personality. The confidence to address a group of people, the ability to think independently, and organizational skills are all byproducts of this training. I am indebted to Pujya Gurudev and Chinmaya Mission for all that I am today. The leadership and organizational skills that others acquire through expensive MBA degrees came to me simply by being a part of the Mission!"

- Pramodini Rao (Director of Music, Chinmaya Naada Bindu)

\*

I am proud to be a Chinmaya Bala Vihar alumnus, grateful to be a Chinmaya Bala Vihar parent, and enormously blessed to be a Chinmaya Bala Vihar teacher!

- Mahesh Shetty (CM Mumbai)

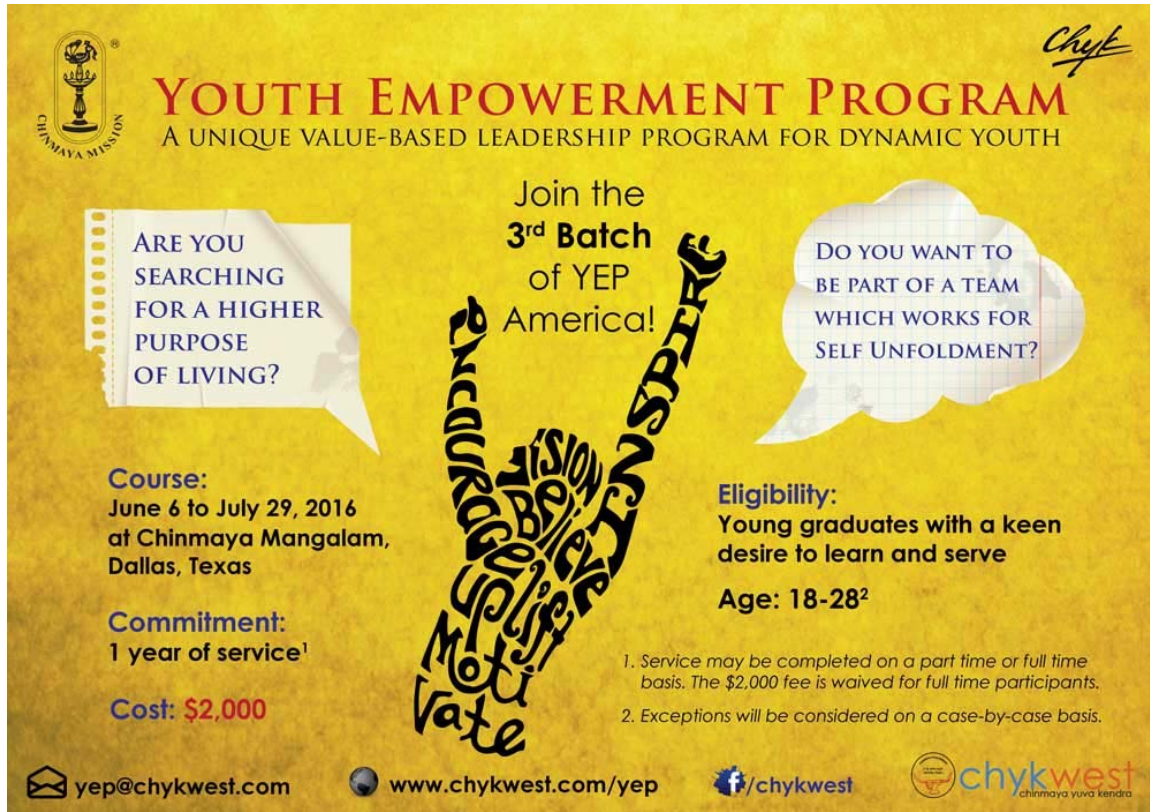




## Announcements

*On a Quest:* Theater Showings End September 30

## YEP America 2016 Sign-Up



The poster is for the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) America 2016. It features a yellow background with a central graphic of a hand holding a torch, formed by the words "COURAGE", "DREAMS", "INSPIRE", "GROW", "LEAD", "SERVE", "VOTE", and "CHANGE". The text "Join the 3<sup>rd</sup> Batch of YEP America!" is written above the hand. To the left, a speech bubble asks "ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR A HIGHER PURPOSE OF LIVING?". To the right, a speech bubble asks "DO YOU WANT TO BE PART OF A TEAM WHICH WORKS FOR SELF UNFOLDMENT?". Below the hand, the text "Course: June 6 to July 29, 2016 at Chinmaya Mangalam, Dallas, Texas" is written. Below that, "Commitment: 1 year of service<sup>1</sup>" and "Cost: \$2,000" are listed. To the right of the hand, "Eligibility: Young graduates with a keen desire to learn and serve" and "Age: 18-28<sup>2</sup>" are listed. At the bottom, there are logos for Chinmaya Mission, YEP America, and Chykwest, along with contact information: "yep@chykwest.com", "www.chykwest.com/yep", and "f/chykwest".

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**Course:**  
June 6 to July 29, 2016  
at Chinmaya Mangalam,  
Dallas, Texas





**Commitment:**  
1 year of service<sup>1</sup>

**Cost: \$2,000**

**Eligibility:**  
Young graduates with a keen  
desire to learn and serve

**Age: 18-28<sup>2</sup>**


1. Service may be completed on a part time or full time basis. The \$2,000 fee is waived for full time participants.  
2. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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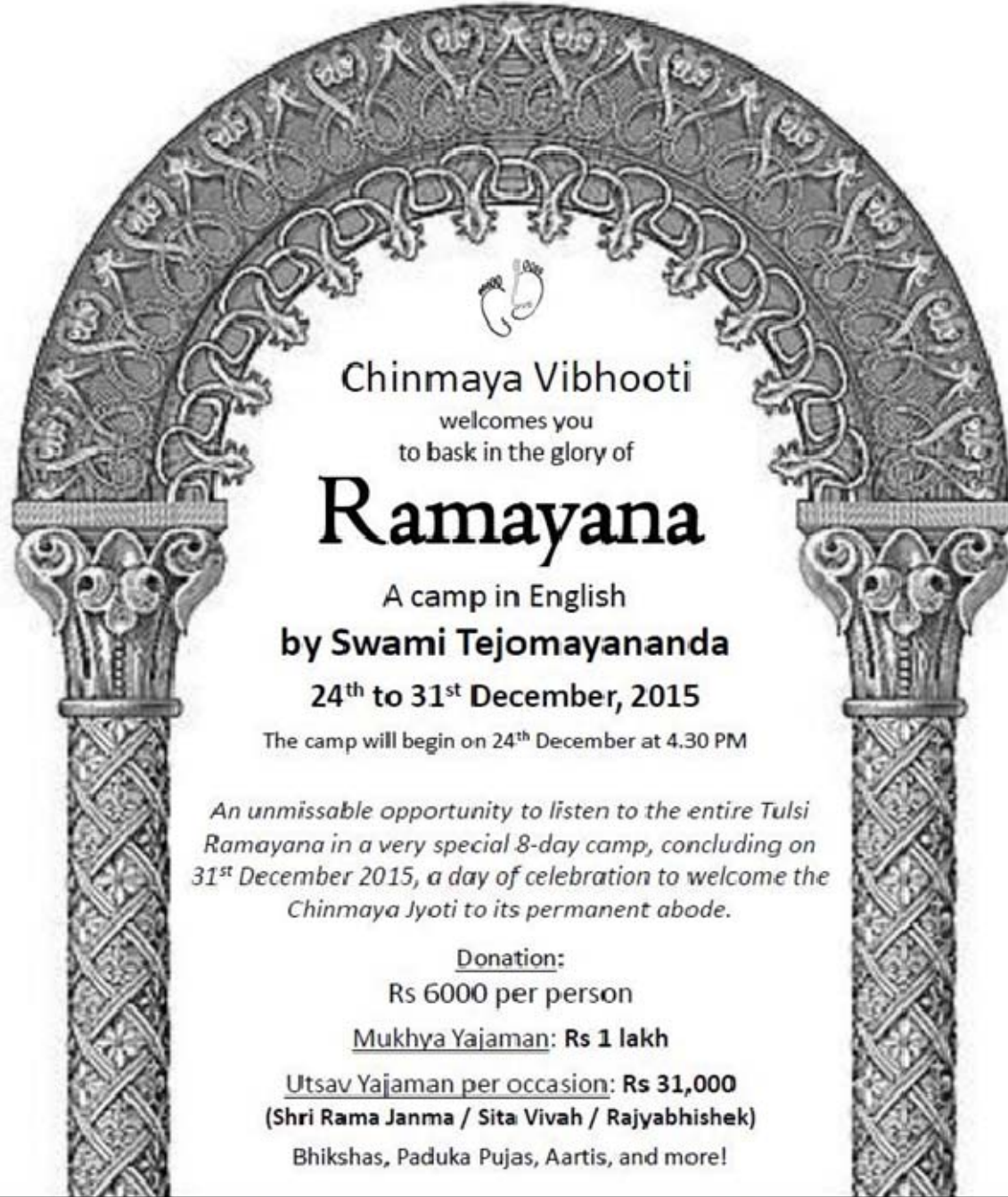
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Chinmaya Publications New Arrivals: CBCC Mananam, BV Storybook, and Gift Items

### Chinmaya Publications Gift Items – New Arrivals

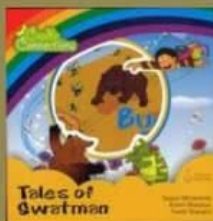
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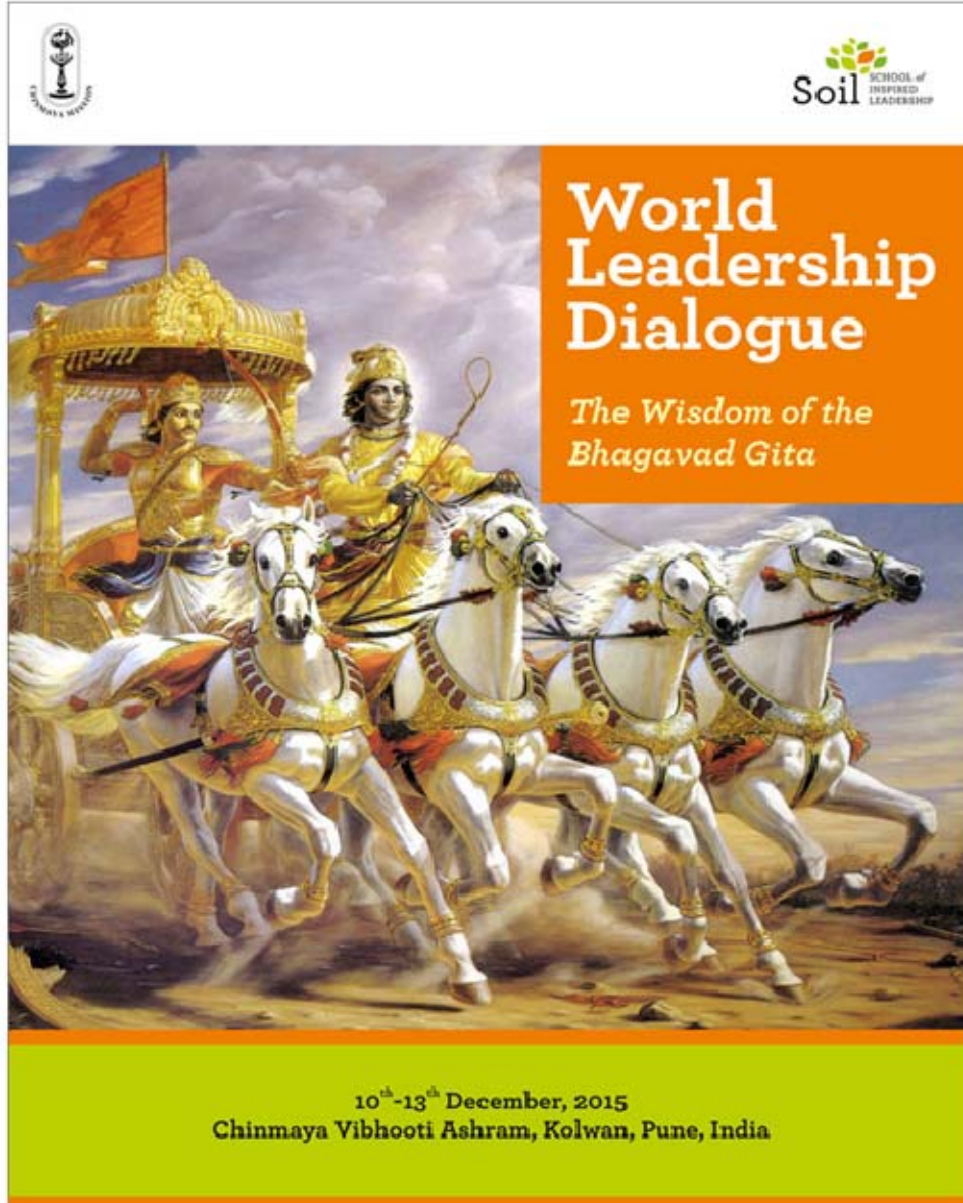
### Learn more:

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