

Chinmaya Smrithi



A Bi-Monthly News Magazine of the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC)

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A Special Edition Commemorating 60th Birthday Celebrations of Swami Dheeranandaji



Chinmayam Jagadeeshwaram Pranamaamyaham

A Special Souvenir Edition of Chinmaya Smrithi

In the Mahabharata, Lord Krishna asks for five villages for the Pandavas when he goes to the Kauravas on their behalf as the ambassador of peace. This story illustrates that Dharma (righteousness) can be rooted and exemplified by a single individual. CMWRC has been blessed that Sri Gurudev has gifted us Swami Dheerananda as our resident Vedanta Teacher. Over the past 33 years, Swamiji has worked tirelessly spreading the knowledge of Vedanta, both as a teacher, and as an exemplary role model embodying spiritual values. Starting from a humble beginning with one chapter and around 30 families and blossoming into four, thriving chapters, serving over 1000 families, Swamiji's leadership, vision, and inspiration has touched countless lives spanning multiple generations. He is extremely accessible to the members, acting as a friend, philosopher, and perpetual guide to the members, serving as the lighthouse providing spiritual guidance to navigate life's challenges.

In the Vivekachudamani, Adi Shankaracharya says that three things are extremely rare: human birth, intense desire for liberation and the opportunity to surrender to a man of wisdom. The families in the greater Washington DC area are indeed extremely fortunate that Swamiji provides us this extremely rare opportunity. For an entire generation of Chinmaya Mission members, who never had an opportunity to directly meet Pujya Gurudev, Swamiji embodies and lives the teachings of Gurudev. His ability to connect with the Bala Vihar children through stories is legendary and reflected in the popularity of the annual summer camps which he has designed and guided every year. He has also ensured their continued involvement with the mission through the Chinmaya Yuva Kendra. Through his weekend classes on Srimad Bhagavad Geeta and his weekly classes on Vivekachudamani (as well as many Upanishads over the years), Swamiji has lucidly brought out the principles of Vedanta in an extremely interesting manner – his ability to explain Vedantic concepts using modern analogies interspersed with his trademark humor is unique and

endears him to the members. Swamiji uses stories such as the elephant heading through a crowded market (whose trunk can be controlled by giving it a lamp to hold) which keep children spell bound through the vivid descriptions they create in the mind – at the same time, these stories contain deep philosophical truths; in this case illustrating how the mind can be controlled by giving it an object to focus on.

The reverence and outpouring of love and affection for Swamiji is reflected in the overwhelming number of articles submitted by members cutting across all age-groups and chapters. The editorial team is humbled by and grateful for this unique opportunity to consolidate all these submissions and bring out this souvenir as our offering to Swamiji. We sincerely thank all the members for their submissions and hope that the readers enjoy this collection as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Finally, we hope that this souvenir provides a glimpse into the extraordinary impact that Swami Dheerananda continues to have on our community and inspires the readers to rededicate ourselves to the values and live the vision and teachings of Swami Chinmayananda. This would be the greatest gift that we can offer to our beloved Swamiji.

With love and Pranams,

Lakshmanan Kodanate, Editor, Chinmaya Smrithi
& Sitaram Kowtha

Chinmaya Smrithi invites you to submit your reflections, event summaries and other inspiring articles. Send your submissions to smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org

Thanks to the following contributors (listed below in order of entries):

Deepika and Anil Darbari
Amit Mukherjee
Anu Prabhala
Amita Jain
Aparna Saravanan
Study Group members
Prabha Maruvada
Shilpa Garud
Ashlesha Tamboli
Aziza Meer
Benjamin Root
DC Rao
Geetha Raja
Gopal Yegnasubramanian
Krishnapriya Thirumala
Maanini Lakshmanan
Monica Thakrar
Murali Devarsu (pictures)
Gayathri and Srinath Thirumala
Nandini Duraiswamy
Nandini Kishore
Neelam, Agraja and Anuj Sharma
Padmini Sarma's mother
Pallavi Nithyanandan
Prakash Soman
Raghav Ghorakavi
Shobha and Raju Chidambaram
Ritu Sachdev
Radha Kowtha
Mina and Nilkanth Bhatt
Kuntimaddi Sadananda
Sankaran Nayar
Sarah
B.K.Sathya and Sukanya Sathya
Sukanya and Sathya
Seetaramayya Nagula
Shobha and P.K.Subramanian
Sitaram Kowtha
Sreedevi Kumar
K. Sreekumar
Videsh Vimalkumar
Brindha Mahadevan
Anirudh Ghodgaonkar
Vidhya Amirthalingam
Dhruv Ganeshkumar
Niyanta Ramakrishnan
Pranav Kashyap

Vijay Kumar
Nandini Vellanore (picture)
Sanjay and Vandana Bapna family
Vanita Venugopal
Varshitha Kasiraman
Vilasini Balakrishnan
Sachdev family
Vinod and Vibha Kulkarni
Omkar Kulkarni
Anil Kishore
Chinmayam Sunday AM class (poster)
Vimala Heda (pictures)
Sudha Sivaram & Krishnan family
Sudhakar Kalakonda
Nandita Bangalore
Aparna Durvasula
Ankita Bangalore
Swamiji Acronyms
A collection of pictures

Shubh Shashthi Poorti to our dear Swamiji! We feel really blessed to be a part of Chinmaya family for over 20 years now. Our kids attended Chinmaya mission during their school years and continue to be part of Chinmaya family. Swamiji's engaging style of delivering Vedantic knowledge is amazing, one that not only keeps children engaged but also makes adults understand in a simple way how we can live our lives guided by Vedantic principles. Swamiji's jovial and open nature allows us to ask any doubts or questions we may have. It does not matter whether our questions are related to Vedanta, food, or jokes; he is always available and happy to discuss. There are many times when I have benefitted from his guidance especially when my father passed away. Conversations with Swamiji were and have been instrumental in guiding me and my mother for which we are forever grateful. It must be our good karma that has brought Swamiji into our lives. Hari Om.

Deepika and Anil Darbari*****

Dear Swamiji,

Shat Koti Pranams. It would be an understatement to state that you have made a singular difference to my life. You have guided, supported, encouraged and mentored me and our family over the last few years.

When I "joined" Chinmaya Mission in 2011, I was a person who was "secular" which is defined (for me) by someone who believes in Bhagwan when it is convenient. But otherwise believes that we are what we make of ourselves. I had been married for seven years and had a child for 4. In hindsight, I now realize how directionless it was at that time. In the fall of 2011, two things happened that changed my life forever. The first was that I read the Mananam Series publication book "He did it" which chronicles Gurudev's life in all its glory and the second was meeting you.

Gurudev's influence in my life was extremely strategic and yours was extremely tactical. Over the next several years I had the great fortune of attending your Jnana Yagnas, Common-Time sessions, Bhiksha Get Togethers, Summer Camp meets and even some tumultuous administrative change meetings. What is most amazing is your "Sthitha-Pragyaness". Yes, I just coined a word. Your calm, your compassion, your love, your deep affection for myself and our family is so constant, like the pious Tulsi plant in our house.

Being so far away from family, I always felt out of place, almost like a missing puzzle piece in a jigsaw. However, whenever I come to 46, Norwood Road, everything seems to magically fall in place. There is a sense of peace, fulfillment, a sense of joy which (as you said today) no amount of money can buy. Your effervescent presence, kind (or even chastising) words possess divine love which makes all the active engagements in our lives that much special in Chinmayam and outside.

On the occasion of your 60th birthday, words cannot express much I am thankful to Bhagawan for having your divine presence in my life and all our Chinmaya family. So, all I can say is Thank You and Wish you a very very Happy Sixtieth Birthday.

Your Shishya

Amit Mukherjee*****

HAPPY ETERNAL BIRTHDAY

I met God
He wore an orange robe
And sported a fluffy gray beard
He laughed a lot, lo and behold
His teachings, into our soul seared

I met God
He used a laptop
Saffron no less
Filled with knowledge
To solve our mental stress

I met God
He announced, the Mind
Was like a river
To be tamed
He warned, the Mind
Was not us
Then who am I, I chimed
That's for us to discover
He said, no less

I met God
I asked a lot of questions
Only to learn from Him
That the answers lay, within our Self
The Self we ignore
The Self we run away from
Until the day
We begin dusting

The cobwebs of ignorance
 And unveil:
 The sparkle of the Consciousness
 The calm of the Sakshi
 The strength of I am
 The radiance of the Divine Life

I met God
 In Swamiji
 I met them both
 The same day,
 I realize
 Once again to realize, Hari Om
 They are one and the same.
 Our Swamiji, our God

Happy Eternal Birthday



By Annapurna (Anu) Prabhala*****

Four Photos submitted by Amita Jain



Swamiji enjoying Dosa Day Summer Camp 2018



Swamiji at Dosa Day Summer Camp



Swamiji with Henna and Saiya 2016



Swamiji feeds Saiya on birthday

CMWRC has so many families under the guidance of Swami Dheerananda. It is amazing that he knows everyone's name and connects to each member in a special way. When I lost my parents, I was depressed. I was not old enough to apply the Vedantic knowledge; my faith was shaken. Swamiji personally called me to make me understand and realize that they are alive in my memory/thoughts. They live in your memory, he said. He encouraged me to pen my thoughts and memories and feelings and share them with him. With no relatives around here, his words consoled me and rekindled my faith. Always grateful to him.

Thank you Swamiji for everything.

Pranams.

Aparna Saravanan *****

Hari Om Swami ji

We have been attending satsangs with you for more than a decade. Since the very first day, we have been receiving an understanding of every tiny part of Vedanta, and your ever-ready smile with a glow in your face, and your sense of humor is very beautiful, which brings an additional valuable meaning. This has helped us to further contemplate upon your messages. Through your grace, courage, motivation and love, I started this small group with the same mindset, to enhance and enrich your teachings. Our study group has covered these texts since the start:

Tatvabodha
Atmabodha
Self Unfoldment in Hindi
Bhaja Govindam
Prashna Upanishad

We are really fortunate to have the guidance of a compassionate and caring 'Guru' like yourself. Until recently, we were like wandering children without proper guidance, as to how to pursue understanding Vedanta. Through your guidance, we are trying to understand the same step by step on a wild horse-like mind that has been given a proper direction by your advice.

Inspired by your suggestions, we are learning the basics of Vedanta through our small study group. We are highly indebted to you for your complete and loving guidance in all our endeavors.

Rajeshwari Mannepalli, Prabha Maruvada, Sib Sankar Rana and Indira Pillalamarri, Aswini Veliveti, Kamal Dewan

Hello to all atmabandhus

Pranams to Swamiji.

My journey on this path started from Delhi when we used to attend Ramayana discourses of Pujya Swamiji Tejomayanandaji, then Swami Swaroopanandaji and Swami Nikhilanandaji.

Although I didn't understand many things clearly at that time, I was very hesitant to ask or talk about it, thinking that people may laugh, but now, I think I should have been bolder to ask questions.

After joining Vedanta group here, I felt that I still don't know anything...but because scriptures say that I am

Brahman. And so, to find our true Self I need to work harder. This journey is endless, and I am on the first step.

These classes have really inspired me to learn shlokas in Sanskrit and their meanings.

Right thinking and right understanding are getting better.

Thanks to all our group and Pranams to Swamiji for his support

Namaskaram.

*Prabhu Maruvada******

Swamiji has made Vedanta understandable to someone like me who had absolutely no idea about it. It is his various day-to-day life examples, stories, mnemonics (PROBLEMS, ALARUM), and metaphors that help me appreciate the meaning and significance of Bhagavat Geeta shlokas. I have many times used what I have heard from Swami ji in our study group discussions.

Spending time with Swamiji during our monthly Bhiksha is something we always look forward to. We come back refreshed from the Bhiksha; he infuses a sense of well-being and positivity. He has endless stories of his time with Gurudev, and it is through his words that we get to know of Gurudev's glories.

Swamiji has been the reason for my participation in Geeta chanting. His guidance makes it so easy to learn the complex-sounding shlokas. The way he breaks the words by syllables is very helpful. He has taught me and my family the correct way to chant Bramharpanam and was also patient enough to teach a Maharashtrian family to chant the Marathi version - Vadani Kaval Gheta.

Swamiji inspires me to be selfless in my actions, to be charitable, and also to reduce likes and dislikes. No matter what problem I have taken to Swamiji, his solution is always in line with my Dharma. I find his solutions (at times difficult to implement) but the only ones that works.

I consider myself and my family to be truly blessed to have the good fortune of his satsang. Swamiji likes to joke that it is his prarabdha to have students like us in his life; from our perspective it is truly our good fortune that he is part of our lives and will always be.

We pray to lord Jagadeeshwara and Gurudev to bless our beloved Swamiji with the best of health and happiness and for their grace and blessing to continue to flow through him.

******Shilpa Garud*

Hari Om Swamiji,

Pranams! 🙏 I have so many wonderful memories of you since the day you landed in Washington as Pujya Gurudev's camp began at the American University. From the very beginning your love, adoration and dedication to Pujya Gurudev was so palpable.

After that camp as you were settling into this new environment, and as we were looking to extend the property for Kailash Nivas, we would bring Bhiksha for you and have joyful time with you.

Then came the formal inauguration of Kailash Nivas in the presence of Pujya Gurudev. You coordinated this auspicious event with so much love and attention to the details. At that time, I did not realize how much effort must have gone into that preparation.

After that we would visit the ashram for arathi, study group, your lectures and special camps. It became like our second home. We learned a lot from you.

I got married at the SV Temple in Nov 1994, and after the ceremony Bina Patel was kind enough to arrange for a visit to Kailash Nivas to get your blessings. That was a very special memorable moment. It was so kind and affectionate of you to come to my parents' house to bless us before we moved to Minneapolis.

You came to Minneapolis for a Yajna and taught our Bala Vihar children. That visit was a tremendous blessing for our home and for the very beginning stages of our Center here.

I will never forget how your father helped us when my husband, daughter and I visited Ramana Maharishi's Ashram. Without your father's help we would have been totally lost.

My mother left her earthly abode in 2005. I can never forget your support and all that you did for our family to get through that difficult time. After her funeral we had arranged for a ceremony at the SV temple where you gave a talk that brought some peace to our minds as we were processing this loss. You were also kind enough to come to the house during the 13-day period to perform Devi Pooja since my mother was a devotee of Devi.

You have also given some very valuable advice to my father regarding his Sadhana which he is still following.

More recently, when my daughter was preparing surprise videos for our 25th wedding anniversary celebration, you took the time to prepare a small video clip to bless us.

Every time I visit Washington, I try to connect with you, and you affectionately invite me to join you for Bhiksha. I feel so blessed to eat with you on those occasions. After the Bhiksha, you show some interesting educational video or we reminisce about the good old days.

I am so very grateful for your presence in my life. You truly stand as our family member bound to us with love and respect.

On this wonderful occasion of your 60th birthday, I wish you good health, joy and complete fulfillment of your Seva to Pujya Gurudev. May Gurudev's grace and blessings continue to flow through you for many many many more years to come.

Prem and Om,

Ashlesha ❤️

PS: Post lunch Bhiksha Prasad is so special. Your humor is contagious. 😊



Swamiji photo submitted by Ashlesha

The face of a friend
Heart of a well-wisher
Intellect of a teacher
Soul of a Swami
Demeanor of a devotee
Authority of an anchor
Familiarity of family
Briskness of a bhikshu
Embodiment of energy
Humor of a heretic
Happy as a harp
Warm as the summer wind
Always a blessing to be with.
Thank you Swamiji!

*Aziza Meer******

My lifelong interest in Indian philosophy — and particularly Vedanta — brought me to Swami Dheerananda in 2001. I already knew about Ramana Maharshi and could sense how genuine he was. I wanted to hear from a real Swami instead of just reading books. So, I typed 'Advaita' and 'Virginia' into Google and came up with Satsangs at the home of Raju and Shobha Chidambaram not far from me. I called the number and was graciously received. I spent the next 10 years or so going there every Tuesday to study the Viveka Chudamani. What most impressed me about Swamiji was his unfailing kindness and good humor. His knowledge of Sanskrit and the Advaitin literature is excellent, but his character affected me the most. It made me a better person. Thank you Swamiji! (The Chidambarams helped too!)

*Benjamin Root******

Our beloved Swami Dheeranandaji has shown us what Guru Bhakti is. Basking in the Grace of Gurudev, Swamiji has poured out pure love for all members of the Chinmaya family in CMWRC and beyond. His rapport with children in Bala Vihar is legendary and several generations of BV graduates now treat him as a much-loved member of their family. He has combined love and laughter to make Chinmayam a happy place to be. In subtle ways, he has taught us how to live the life of Vedanta.

*DC Rao******

The year was 1990. A small group of dedicated parents in Baltimore wanted to start classes for kids to impart our culture. Sudheerji, as Swamiji was called then, and some senior members of the Chinmaya mission energized and

guided the parents to become teachers and start the Baltimore Balavihar chapter of Chinmaya Mission. Swamiji and other mission teachers would come regularly to Baltimore. The children young and old loved Swamiji very much and could not wait to hear his stories and his play on words. Here is one. Once Swamiji asked the kids who was the first person who worked on the computer. Children kept guessing. Then Swamiji with his sweet smile said it's Lord Ganesha; we all know that he was the only one with a mouse!!! Swamiji also took classes for adults and introduced us to Vedanta. The children and the adults have fond memories of Swamiji's visits. Our gratitude and pranams to Swamiji on his Shastiabdapoorthi. We pray for his good health and continued inspirational teaching in the years to come. We are fortunate that we were able to spend quality time with him during the early days of Chinmaya Mission in the Washington area.

Sanatana Dharma
Witty
Admired
Masterful
Ingenious
Joyful
Inspiring

*Geetha Raja (reflection and poem)******

Smart
Wise
Awesome
Mindful
Inspirational
Jokester
Incredible

*Gopal Yegnasubramanian******

I have known Swamiji since I was five years old. I could not begin to sum up in words the profound, transformative impact that Swamiji has had on my life in the last seventeen years. I can simply say that I would not be anywhere near the person I am today—in terms of my values, interests, goals, spiritual beliefs, or anything else that shapes me as an individual—were it not for his grace and blessings.

I have never seen anyone 'walk the talk' the way that Swamiji does. Having known him throughout these years, I now understand what it means to be a truly 'righteous' person: one who is fearlessly authentic, who unfailingly practices what they preach. His example has thus kept me

grounded throughout life; whenever faced with a difficult moral choice, I will find myself asking, 'would Swamiji approve of my decision?' Indeed, it is my connection to him that kept me on the 'right' path all these years.

We are taught that Bhagavān is the One who loves us unconditionally, who is always looking after us, always holding our hand and ensuring our wellbeing. I feel that I have seen and known Bhagavān throughout my life, in the form of Swamiji. Through his unwavering support, he has taught me the meaning of unconditional love. He has always been there for me—when I was a shy young girl; when I was a distracted teenager; and while I am an adult who is still figuring herself out—never judging me, constantly cheering me on. Even when not physically present, he is there with me in spirit: in any difficult situation, I can pick myself back up simply by thinking of his support, his love. Swamiji's compassion shines brilliantly in and through everything he does—making jokes, offering advice, appreciating us, pushing us to be better—he yearns to see us happy, and to help us become happier.

Again, words cannot do justice to my relationship with Swamiji. Thus, I will end here with an anecdote. In March of 2016, when I was attending Bhiksha with Swamiji, some people there were asking me about an event in my life. As I struggled to convey my feelings about this event (which had been somewhat unpleasant for me), Swamiji turned to me and said, with a smile: 'Keep Marching.' To all others present, this simply seemed like a joke (indeed, 'Marching' was a reference to the month of March). For me, it was a powerful, loving reminder to move on from this painful experience. I had never even discussed the event, or my feelings about it, with him before. Somehow, he just knew. And this, essentially, sums up Swamiji's presence in my life: *he always knows*.

Krishnapriya Thirumala*****

Since Day One
You were with a smile
With a quiet mind and an alert and vigilant intellect
You set the intention and the style

We laughed about the airport Oreos
Learning that we should share
You sang on Mother's Day
To help us realize their love and care

Telling a Story about Gurudev's photographs
That our Guru will offer us the best

Explaining the purpose of our prayers
To invite gratitude and feel blessed.

Not to forget the *Prasadam*
Our chocolate raisins and jellybeans
Always a favorite
From childhood to teen

From the summer camp days of
Swamiji theme, chanting, and hopping game
To the weekly sessions for almost 12 years
You made it enlivening and never the same

We were taken to new heights
Enlightened by your wisdom and grace
Encouraged by your dedication
Tried to bring ourselves to a higher place

And over all of these years
To my drooping fountain from carrom at Bhikshas
To the lessons you have taught
For being that ever-smiling beacon of light
For being my teacher, for being my Guru
Thank you Swamiji for all you have done
And for all you continue to do

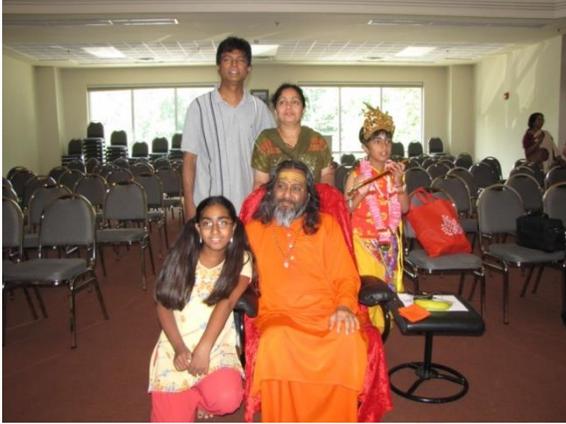
Maanini Lakshmanan*****

Hari Om Swamiji - I just wanted to thank you for all your dedicated service, efforts, and guidance for me for a number of years as I began my spiritual journey. You were instrumental in making it fun, helping me start a small CHYK group, inviting us to lunch with you, and getting to spend time seeing how you live in the world. Now I am so happy to be able to introduce my daughter to your teachings and guidance as she starts her journey.

Monica Thakrar*****



Swamiji with Bhuvan Devarsu; below Swamiji with Devarsu family



Swamiji is our Chinmaya Mission!

It was like love at first sight when we met Swamiji the very first time in Gita Jnana Yajna, in Richmond, Virginia in 2002.

Swamiji's explanation about the symbolism of Adishesu turning inwards to be able to experience and enjoy the Blissful Presence of Bhagavan Ananta Shayana Vishnu (indicating the same practice for us to feel the Lord within), and the symbolism of Lord Krishna dancing on the hoods of serpent Kaaliya, and later leaving His foot prints on him, thus giving him Abhaya (indicating that whenever our ego raises it's hood, Almighty dances on it to then give His Abhaya upon the surrender of ego), was incredibly effective and never lost from our memory! By telling the simple story of a crow, where it puts different things in a particular order into a pot to bring the water up to the top, Swamiji beautifully conveyed the significance of careful choosing of our priorities while filling our schedule or while doing any given work in an efficient way!! And Swamiji's powerful anecdote that the mind, which is like the river/flow of thoughts, can smoothly move and merge with its source (Ocean/God) by steadily and sincerely working on the Quantity, Quality and Direction, is tattooed in our minds serving as a wonderful reminder in being mindful of our choice of thoughts!! That was how inspiring and long lasting the very first impression of Swamiji was on our minds and hearts!

Since we didn't have much idea about Chinmaya Mission then, we thought that there is very little to no chance for meeting Swamiji again, which was very disappointing and disheartening for us.

And by God's grace, after three years, with the introduction of Chinmaya Mission Frederick (by Sukanya ji and Sathya ji in Walmart store in a casual meet) led us

to join Chinmaya Mission where we miraculously got to see our Swamiji during the Auspicious Shivarathri program at Frederick! Our happiness had no bounds when we saw the same Swamiji whom we didn't expect to meet at all in the near future!!! That same day, being sent on stage by her Balavihar teacher Shalini ji, our older daughter Krishnapriya, who was five years old then, went on chanting and singing for 45 min until Swamiji's prasad distribution (which Swamiji dearly quotes even now)!! Ever since then, Swamiji has been the primary part of our lives, guiding us in the most kind, simple and effective way!!

And later in the years, it was like a God sent blessing that monthly Bhiksha opportunities came our way and every Bhiksha time was so blissful beyond imagination! Even simple offerings of soaked almonds and sprouted methi seeds, and even just making coffee or mixing avakaya rice, were also kindly recognized and relished by Swamiji because of his love, care and compassion! Swamiji makes everyone feel special and encourages us to improve and move forward in our journey towards the Source! Every text, email, talk, Bhiksha and meeting with Swamiji is so joyful and peaceful, blessing us with what we need the most at that specific moment and would help us evolve from wherever we are, in a fun and most amicable way!

Our younger daughter Sridhanya (when she was just three years old) would literally think and call Swamiji as Chinmaya Mission---and she was right---Swamiji IS our Chinmaya Mission and a real-life representative of Pujya Gurudev!!

If we have to put it in words, Swamiji is like the Causal thread holding all CMWRC family members together to be the instrumental, beautiful flowers in the adorned garland for Sri Gurudev! (See below). Sincerely ever grateful for Swamiji's Loving Presence in our lives!!

Gayathri and Srinath Thirumala*****



Hari OM! It is very pleasurable and an honor to write about our CMWRC Guru Swami Dheerananda ji. I started listening and paying attention to his Advaita Vedanta classes quite recently and find it difficult to express my gratitude for the positive changes that he has made. Slowly and steadily, I have come to feel, say, and see with utmost sincerity the real truth behind the Vedantic teachings. I think he can easily challenge any person or group to think and contemplate on what we see all around us and in us (Self) with his simple sweet and sour (Khatta-meeta, Chak de Phatte!) speeches. On his joyous occasion of Shastiabdapoorthi and by the grace of Gurudev, I only hope that his teachings can reach all audiences throughout the USA and other countries as well. And pray that everyone benefits as much as how I feel towards achieving a peaceful and joyous existence. Gratitude cannot be quantified, only seeking blessings from him. Jai Swami Dheerananda! Unto Gurudev! Hari OM!

*Nandini Duraiswamy******

My best friend Swamiji

I am so blessed to have known Swamiji my entire life, and I don't mean that figuratively... but literally. I was born into Chinmaya Mission which means I was born into Swamiji's unlimited amount of love and compassion. Being 28 years old means I have 28 years of memories with Swamiji and looking back, each of these memories has such a special place in my heart.

Within a week of my birth, my parents took me to Swamiji in Kailas Niwas where he held me in his arms and sang "Aye Giri Nandini." Of course, this isn't something I can remember, but I don't think it's a coincidence that I find myself singing it to myself even to this day, as it's one of my favorite songs. This first meeting of me and Swamiji is a story that I retell over and over again, because even though I wasn't there I realize how lucky I was to have this moment with him.

My first memory of Swamiji actually is still from a younger age when I wasn't even old enough to be in Madhuram yet. I remember walking into someone's house and seeing (what I thought at the time) a "strange man" wearing the boldest of oranges. His iconic long hair and beard seemed odd to me and naturally, as a shy small girl, I was nervous and scared to approach him. Nonetheless, within minutes he was able to win me over with his stories, jokes and playful attitude and he gladly sat me on his lap to entertain me since there weren't any other children

there. By the end of the day Swamiji was my BEST friend, so close to me at that point that when it was time to leave, I INSISTED that he put my shoes on for me. My mother was MORTIFIED at my words and was trying to get me away. As stubborn as I was, I needed to have my way... and as one could imagine, sweet and compassionate Swamiji wouldn't have it any other way but to tie my shoes and bundle me in my jacket to go home.

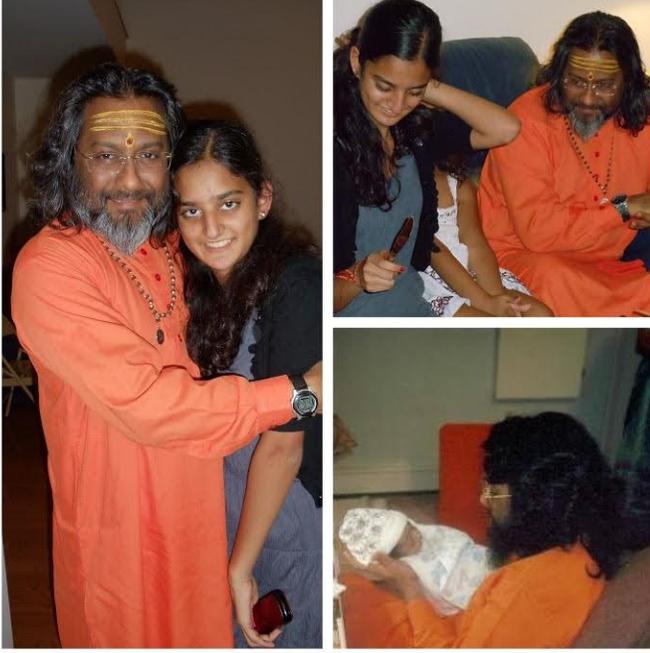
When I got a little older, I started attending music classes. And once Swamiji heard this he would INSIST that I sing "Darshan Do GhanShyam." I think I sang this song to him a least 100 times.... And I'm not exaggerating, and I have no idea how he wasn't tired of it. But nonetheless, I would sing each time just as enthusiastically as the first because this was something that we shared and something that made me smile, because it was making him smile.

As I got older, I started to build a special bond with Swamiji. Bhikshas were my favorite time of the month. The enthusiasm I had that Swamiji was coming over was that of a little kid excited that they are having a playdate with a friend. Swamiji would have me sit next to him, and make sure I had my food just the same as he did. After dinner, we would play games (of course I was always losing to him at Connect Four and the Word Game) and chat about anything under the sun that I wanted to. My fondest memory of one of our Bhikshas is when Swamiji told me that he had learned something from me and my brother. I was confused...this great and auspicious Guru learned something from ME?! He told me that he noticed the bond between me and my older brother. He said that our trust and care for one another was so special and unique. I felt elated that something that I thought was so little was something that others would admire and learn from as well. From that day, I realized or learned that our biggest strength in life is the ability for us to love and be loved back. Something that I have always carried with me into adulthood.

Living in California, when I come home, I try my best to reach out to Swamiji to see if he is available when I'm home. While being across the country, I am constantly being told that Swamiji is sharing my videos and photos to mom and dad, because he is just as proud and interested in my life as they are. Swamiji never fails to text me on important occasions in my life and forever is letting me know that he is thinking of me. I wish Swamiji a very Happy Birthday and hoping for many more auspicious years in his future.

*Nandini Kishore******

Photos shared by Nandini Kishore



Our Dearest Swami ji,

We are eternally grateful to you for always being loving, kind, joyful, humorous in teaching the wisdom of the Vedas to all of us throughout these years here with us since 1990. Swami ji when you used to come to Fairfax Virginia only once a month for many years, we waited patiently & tried our best never to miss your class. My children & I love you & are eternally grateful for all we have learnt from you!

Gratefully,

Neelam, Agraja and Anuj Sharma*****

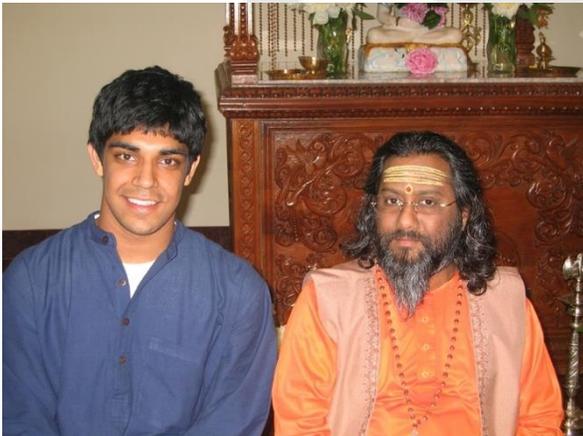


Photo submitted by Neelam Sharma



Photo submitted by Neelam Sharma

சுவாமிஜியின் வைரம்

சுவாமிஜியின் பிறந்தநாள். அம்மாவின் வாழ்த்துக்கள், நமஸ்காரங்கள்.

நான் U.S. ல் இருந்த போது உங்கள் ஆசிகளும், ஆதரவான வார்த்தைகளும் எனக்கு கிடைத்தன.

பத்மினி வீட்டில், நீங்கள் உபநிஷத் class எடுப்பீர்கள். உங்கள் எல்லோருக்கும் உணவு சமைப்பேன். தவறாமல் வத்தக்குழம்பும், அப்பளம், உருளைக்கிழங்கு கறி. நீங்கள் அப்பள டப்பாவை எடுத்துவைத்துக்கொண்டு எல்லோருக்கும் கொடுப்பீர்கள். எவ்வளவு இனிமையான நாட்கள்!

ஒரு முறை, Centerல், சீதா
கல்யாணத்திற்கு எங்களை பெண்

வீட்டுக்காரர் என்று சொல்லி, சீர் வரிசைகளும் + நிறைய பால் கொழுகட்டை செய்து வர சொல்லி, எல்லோருக்கும் கொடுத்தீர்கள். நினைவில் இருக்கிறதா?

நீங்கள் class எடுக்க பீடத்தில் அமரும்வரை, குழந்தைகள் முதல் பெரியவர்கள்வரை சேர்ந்து பேசுவோம். நீங்கள் பீடத்தில் அமர்ந்துவிட்டால் குரு என்று பயபக்தி வந்துவிடும்.

சுகீர் சைதன்யாவாக இந்தியா சென்ற நீங்கள் சுவாமி தீரானந்தாஜியாக வந்து, எங்களை திடீர் ஆனந்தம் அடைய செய்தீர்கள். அங்கு இருந்த நாட்களை என்னால் மறக்கமுடியாது.

இப்பொழுது எனக்கு 82 வயது ஆகிறது. ஆனாலும், என் மனது உங்கள் பாடங்களை கேட்க ஆசைப்படுகிறது. உங்களை பார்த்து 13 வருடங்கள் ஆகிறது. என்றும் உங்கள் உபதேசங்களும், “ஜோக்”குகளும் எனக்கு நினைவில் இருக்கும்!

லலிதாவின் நினைவுகள்

ஒரு சமயம் சென்னையில் கணேஷ் லலிதா இருந்தபோது, நீங்கள் வந்து தங்கினீர்கள். ஒரு நாள் அவர்கள் Office சென்று திரும்பும்போது, வாசல் கதவை lock செய்துவிட்டு, வாசலில் ஒரு மணி நேரம் நிற்கவைத்து பனிஷ்மென்ட் கொடுத்தீர்களா?!!!!

நீங்கள் அவர்களுடன் தங்கியதால்தான் அவளுக்கு சின்மயா மிஷினில் சேரமுடிந்தது. லலிதா இப்பொழுது சில classகளிலும் மற்றும் தபோவன் பிரஸாதிலும் இருக்கிறாள். குருவின் ஆசியால் classகள் எடுத்து மகிழ்ச்சியுடன் இருக்கிறாள். உங்களுக்கும் நன்றியுடன் நமஸ்காரங்களை சொல்கிறாள்.

நமஸ்காரம் – அம்மா

Translation in English below of above article submitted by Padmini Sarma (her mother's reflections)

Om Sai Ram

Swamiji's Diamond

For Swamiji's birthday, Amma's best wishes and pranams.

When I was in the U.S. I received your blessings & supporting words. At Padmini's house, you would take Upanishad classes. I would cook for everyone attending. Without fail we would have Vathakuzhambu, appalam (pappad) and potato curry. You would take charge of the appalam container and would distribute to everyone. How sweet were those days!

Once when we had Sita Kalyanam at the Center, you had asked us to be the members of the bride's family and asked us to bring "Seer Varisai", gifts from the bride's family plus plenty of Paal Kozhukattai, steamed rice balls in coconut milk with jaggery syrup, which you distributed to everyone. Do you remember?

Prior to taking your seat for the class, kids and adults alike would have conversations with you. Once you take your seat, we would become devotees and hold you with utmost respect as Guru.

You went as Sudheer Chaitanya to India and came back as Swami Dheeranandaji and gave us "Dhideer" instant joy. I can never forget my time there in the U.S.

Now I am 82 years old. In spite of that, my heart desires to hear your lectures. It has been 13 years since I last saw you. I will always remember your "upadesam", scriptural instructions and your jokes!

Lalitha's remembrance

Once when you were in Chennai you stayed with Lalitha & Ganesh. One day, when they were returning home from their office, you had locked the front door and made them stand outside for an hour. Was this a punishment?!!!!

It was your stay with them, that has prompted Lalitha to become a part of the Chinmaya Mission. Lalitha is currently taking some classes and is involved with Tapovan Prasad. With Guru's blessings, she is enjoying and rejoicing in her classes. She offers her pranams to you with the utmost gratitude!

Pranams – Amma*****

Swamiji's presence is a great blessing in my life. My first meeting with Swami ji was in early 2014. Swamiji spoke on Gurudev's name **Om Aprameyaya Namah** from the Astotthara shata namavali, and Bhagavad Gita Chapter 13, verse 8 explaining the values that are the elements of knowledge. I felt a deep connect with Gurudev through Swamiji's words about him and was very inspired by the Gita verse. It must have been a divine indication that I need to start working on Amanitvam and Adambhitvam to begin my spiritual journey!

Like many others, my family joined Chinmaya Mission for Bala Vihar classes. Although, I have always had questions about the purpose of life, nature of mind etc. in the back of my mind, some of which bothered me more after an unexpected event in our extended family. I was pleasantly surprised to know through Swamiji's talks that Vedanta and Gurudev's teachings had all the answers to my questions, and that I can receive spiritual knowledge right here in Maryland.

Initially, I did not understand all the concepts of Vedanta but listening to the discourses made my mind peaceful, so I wanted to listen more. I would request my husband to sit with our children in Madhuram class few extra turns if he didn't mind and let me attend Swamiji's class. Many of the questions in my mind were answered by Swamiji's talks without asking. Swamiji's message about the presence of divine life in us before the Om Namah Shivaya meditation and the meditation itself is an experience that cannot be explained in words. With time developed a keen interest in Vedanta. I kept listening to Swamiji's recorded talks on Upadesa Saram, Taittiriya Upanishad and others on my drive to work although they were above my level of understanding at that time. Swamiji's talks also introduced Dakshinamurti and Ramana Maharshi to me, which inspired me to seek and learn more about them.

Swamiji's Vivekachudamani discourses have enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of Advaita philosophy and furthered my spiritual evolution. The importance of self-effort was one of my key takeaways during the initial years. Additionally, hearing seemingly simple messages from Swamiji increase the impact and makes those words profound such as his new year message on having both love and respect in all relationships. Swamiji has a way of explaining complex concepts in simple ways such as teaching children about Sakshi bhav by watching their hands wash themselves and his various acronyms.

Swamiji leads by example by demonstrating what true Guru bhakti is, how to be alert and vigilant by paying keen attention to what every child has to say, taking genuine interest in watching their performances. When I needed it, Swamiji has taken the time to provide kind guidance. Our entire family has benefitted from Swamiji's teachings and his presence in our lives, and we are forever grateful that we are blessed with a Guru and the opportunity to study Vedanta faraway from our motherland.

*Pallavi Nithyanandan******

Our Swami Dheerananda ji:

Background:

Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda ji conducted his first Jnana Yajna in 1978 in American University in Washington DC area, and later in 1985 and 1986. After the Jnana Yajna, Vilasini Balakrishnan ji had formed Study Groups in Northern Virginia at her home and in Bethesda, MD at Nanik Lahori ji's home. With a modest beginning in the initial year the study groups started getting greater participation. In 1988, the study group members organized a residential camp for devotees across the US.

Based on the enthusiastic participation and keen interest in knowledge of Vedanta expressed by many attendees in Swami Chinmayananda ji's Jnana Yajnas and Camps and the local study groups, Pujya Gurudev felt that Washington DC Region was ready to have a vibrant Center of its own.

Pujya Gurudev, therefore, suggested to the core sevaks in the 1988 Camp to officially form an organization and register it as a nonprofit organization under current laws. Thus, Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC) was formally formed on the auspicious day of Vijaya Dashami in October of 1988 and registered in the State of Maryland.

In 1988, with the help of Sri Rajesh Bhalla ji, (a Real Estate Agent and devotee of Pujya Gurudev), after extensive search, CMWRC (with the strength of 15 members at that time) purchased a single-family home situated on a 3-acre lot at 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905. This new building was named as **Kailas Niwas** by Pujya Gurudev and was to be officially inaugurated on July 11th during the spiritual Camp and Jnana Yajna that was to start from July 4th, 1989.

The Real Story:

It was an auspicious day of July 4th, 1989, when Puja Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda ji had arrived from Sydney, Australia to Washington DC to conduct a Spiritual Camp and Jnana Yajna. Next day on July 5th, Swami ji held a meeting with the organizers of the Camp to take stock of preparations made up to that point. Swamiji had appointed Br. Sudheer ji of Hyderabad to come serve in CMWRC, but the arrangements for his travel were lagging completely. In that meeting Puja Gurudev announced that (in Gurudev's words) 'my son' **Br. Sudheer Chaitanya** is appointed as the Resident Acharya of CMWRC and that the organizers need to contact CCMT in earnest and make necessary arrangements for Br. Sudheer Chaitanya to be present at the inauguration of Kailas Niwas on 11th of July (only 6 days away for us, and only 5 days for those in India). A trunk call was booked immediately to CCMT (there were no mobile phones in those days), and Puja Gurudev conveyed to Sri Narain Bhatia ji, the CEO of CCMT, to do everything possible to get Br. Sudheer Chaitanya to Washington DC by the 11th of July.

At that time Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji, a young Brahmachari was in Hyderabad - Andhra Pradesh, India. We were quite skeptical if all arrangements including his travel to Mumbai from Hyderabad, his VISA and travel arrangements could all be accomplished in 5 days. However, Puja Gurudev's **Satya Sankalpa** shakti showed us one of many miracles that we witnessed during those 5 days. To our surprise, Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji's VISA and travel arrangements were all completed in record time, and he arrived here for inauguration of Kailas Niwas on July 11th, 1989.

After the inauguration, Kailas Niwas was to be the home for Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji. The camp was over on 11th of July and on 12th of July CMWRC had a meeting of its Board of Trustees to decide on a few critical things. Besides the arrangement for a comfortable bedroom for Br. Sudheer ji, and daily Bhiksha arrangements etc. one of those items was to decide on acquiring a vehicle for Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji's travel/transport needs and to decide on an appropriate amount of monthly pocket money (allowance) for Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji.

Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji was also invited to the meeting. He was a silent observer during the meeting. After the due deliberations and discussions on the issue of vehicle and pocket money for Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji, the board was just about ready to vote on the proposal when Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji raised his hand and very humbly asked a question to the Board. He said, 'since the decision

is being made for Brahmachari's comfort, is it ok if Brahmachari can express his views on this matter?'

Of course, everyone in the meeting agreed.

Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji with a smile said, "On the point of the car, I do not need a car. I will not drive a car here. If I start driving everyone will expect me to visit their place. They will drive me crazy! (We all laughed). If they are eager and keen to have me at their place, they can simply arrange to pick me up and drop me off. That is all. On the issue of pocket money, I do not need any pocket money. I will not handle money. If I need a toothbrush, I will ask for it. If I need anything else, I will simply ask for it."

Thus, both the questions we had discussed in the meeting were resolved in a flash by Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji with a smile.

What we had witnessed was a live demonstration of **Vairagya** in action. Anyone would think that a young 28-year-old person would fall for the temptation of a car of his own and pocket money to purchase one's personal needs. NO!!! Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji is an exception. True to his name 'Su-Dheer,' he has firm conviction and courage to walk this path of renunciation.

In 1993 Puja Gurudev bestowed the rare Sannyasa Diksha on Br. Sudheer Chaitanya ji and declared him to be "Swami Dheerananda." We know now it is because -

Dispassion is His identity
Happiness is His nature
Enthusiasm in every function
Efficiency in all actions
Righteousness in every approach
Abundance of knowledge
Non-dual in every vision
Abode of tranquility
Nominee of the divinity
Divinity's living splendor
August is His presence

That is our Swami Dheerananda ji. Our sincere salute to the embodiment of dispassion on his 60th Birthday!

Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center is truly blessed by our Puja Gurudev in giving us this rare GEM, under whose leadership the Center has grown so very well. Like a skilled gardener, Swami ji has nurtured this tree in every aspect to make it healthy and vibrant. In his care innumerable beautiful flowers have grown into

admirable personalities. May the Lord Almighty grant long healthy life to our beloved Swami ji!

Prakash Soman*****

Hari Om!

Swami Dheerananda has changed my life with all the new things he teaches me each time I meet him.

Swami ji always told me to remember to have a healthy body, pure body and brilliant intellect in any situation. He made sure we always remembered it by making us recite it whenever he gave us something like chocolates or prasad.

Raghav Ghorakavi*****

Before There Was Taco Tuesday



Photo of Tuesday class 2007

..... there was Swamiji's "Talk of Tuesdays" in our home in Alexandria, VA lasting nearly twenty years. Starting around 1990, Swami Dheeranandaji initiated a large, dedicated group of CMWRC members into Vedanta.

The Tuesday classes are a big memorable part of our life. In its early years, Raju would go on Monday evenings after work to Kailas Niwas. There, he would attend the same talks Swamiji - then Br. Sudheer Chaitanya- gave to Maryland members. Raju would drive back with Swamiji after the class to our home around 9pm for dinner. After dinner, Swamiji would watch TV, often fine tuning his familiarity with the American accent by listening to the talking horse Mr. Ed. Next morning, we would get up early around 5 am for a hot cup of coffee with Swamiji and a short meditation session.

In later years, a rotating pool of volunteers from Chinmayam was formed to drive Swamiji on Tuesday evenings for the class. This way we were fortunate to host at our home many Maryland friends like Urvi & Mehul Mehta, Chandrika & Jay Sriram, Vandana & Sanjay Bapna, Narayan Sharaf, Sitaram Kowtha, Meena & Parameswaran Sankar, Lakhanpal, Meera & Raja Kirkire, Anil & Rita Kishore and Ramakrishna. We would have a simple meal at 7:00pm before the classes started. This dinner menu subsequently gained some attention even from Gurudev for featuring Shobha's *kichdi*.

The classes were held in our basement and commenced with Ganga Stotram and Arati to Lord Siva. Swamiji had taught us the two prayers with their meaning. He also coached our ten-year old daughter Vrinda to lead the class in their chanting. This demonstrated what Gurudev had told us in 1988 before Swamiji's arrival in the US: "Your center is going to get a Brahmachari who is exceptionally good with children". After the Arati, Shobha would offer "teertham" (water sprinkled with ground cardamom and camphor) to all present. Then it was time for invocation mantras and Swamiji's well-prepared talks. In the first several classes, Swamiji took on the challenging task of teaching us to chant the four *sooktas* (Purusha, Sri, Durga and Medha) with proper intonation even though many of us were not comfortable with Sanskrit. Swamiji's talks on *Tatva Bodha*, *Atma Bodha*, *Upanishads* (*Isavasya*, *Mundaka*, *Kathopanishad*, *Mandukya*, *Prasna*, *Aitareya* etc.), *Drk Drysya Viveka*, and *Aparokshanubhuti* gradually opened up for us the beautiful vision held by Vedanta, with each text drawing us deeper and deeper into it. The crown jewel was naturally the epic text *Vivekachudamani* which took almost ten years to complete. We truly enjoyed every minute of these Tuesdays. Swamiji combined wit with wisdom seamlessly. We learnt much and owe much debt to Swamiji for what these talks have done to inspire so many of us.

The classes ended with distribution of prasad in the form of fruits, candies and on special occasions with some extra delicacies like *rasgolla* and *neyyappam*. On many evenings we were also treated to melodious bhajans by accomplished singers like Urvi Mehta, Suresh Balakrishnan, Charita Balan, Prakash Soman and Chandresh Mamlatdar.

Altogether, the evenings were joyful affairs although one time it proved otherwise. In the middle of our class on Aug 3, 1993, we received a phone call from San Diego informing us of the *Mahasamadhi* of Gurudev. A few

including Swamiji and Shobha left for San Diego the next morning.

We have been fortunate to forge lifelong friendship with many attending the Tuesday classes. This included Sucharitra & Sethuraman Balan, Prakash Soman, Meena & Sushil Baluja, Benjamin Root, Vijay Kumar, Maya & Chandrakant Bhatia, Pramila and Bishnu Poudel, Kamala & Ram Nagula, Jaya and Sri Gopalakrishna, Veena & Kishan Gupta, Bala Kishore, Sudhita & Kasturi Srinivas, Sailaja Gunda, and Jay Kalathil, to name a few. Many others like Sadananda, Meena and Nilkanth Bhatt, Usha Vasi and Srinivas Nagulapalli attended the classes during the years they were in the area. Every few months our neighbor Rev. Dr. Richard Jones would bring his students in Virginia Theological Seminary (-which was across the street from our house-) to the class. On these days Swamiji would introduce the basics of Vedanta to the students adopting a simple, humorous (“You see the board? Are you bored?”) teaching style. Under Rev. Jones, Swamiji’s Tuesday class was possibly a required session for the seminarians.

Then there were several occasional attendees who dropped in just for one or more classes. Their names are far too many to list or for us to remember. In Nov 2017, while traveling in New Zealand and Australia, we were among a crowd of people near the Sydney Opera House watching a native Australian artist playing enchanting melodies on a long pipe like instrument. Suddenly a lady from the crowd came running towards us and introduced herself saying “Do you remember me? I was in your home once to attend Swamiji’s class.” This of course came as a total surprise to us. But perhaps it is hardly a surprise that Swamiji’s “Talk of Tuesdays” had been heard around the globe. ******Shobha and Raju Chidambaram*

Swami Dheerananda – Our Guru of Acronyms

Here’s one for our beloved Swamiji!
Happy 60th birthday 🙏

DHEERANANDA stands for-
Divine
Humble
Enigmatic
Energetic
Righteous
Awesome
Noble
Anant aanand
(K)nowledge bank

Dessert lover
Adbhut

*Ritu Sachdev******

Hari Om!

When contemplating on where I am in my life today, and looking back at the last 20 years, I realized Chinmaya Mission and Swamiji were so central in my life. And that has evolved to become a way of life. Swamiji has been an anchor, my Guru and through his discourses and discussions has guided me to have a high goal in life. Swamiji’s attention to everyone in our family - us, kids, in-laws, extended family, has impacted each of us in a unique way and made us all have a lifelong commitment. I feel many times that Swamiji is our family member. I like to express my gratitude and pranaams; and pray for his wellbeing on this special occasion of his 60th birthday celebrations.

*Radha Kowtha******

Ruminations

In 1989, we attended a weeklong retreat with Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda at Mount Vernon College in Washington DC. During the retreat, Gurudev asked the organizers to arrange for Br. Sudhir Chaitanya to come to Washington, DC, from Hyderabad before the retreat ends. Most of us did not think obtaining a visa and arranging that trip in such a brief time was possible. To our utter surprise Br. Sudhir Chaitanya arrived during the retreat.

The Washington group had recently purchased the Kailas Nivas property and Br. Sudhir Chaitanya became the resident acharya. A few days after the retreat, we visited Kailas Nivas and were surprised to see a message on the notice board in Gurudev’s handwriting. Little that we know that Br. Sudhir Chaitanya wrote in the same style as Gurudev. We soon realized that Br. Sudhir Chaitanya’s identification with Gurudev was so complete that he emulated Gurudev’s mannerisms in all aspects of his life. It was a wonderful treat for us to experience Gurudev’s presence through him.

He never made us feel that he was not one of us, and soon he became part of our family. We sought his guidance and presence in all aspects of our lives, and he was always there to guide us. We learned Vedic chanting and Ganga Aarti from him. He traveled from Maryland to conduct

Vedanta classes during the weekdays at our home and other devotees' homes in Virginia and coordinated all mission activities in Virginia. We loved singing Bhajans and Br. Sudhir Chaitanya played Tabla in our Bhajan sessions. He gave us Bhajan lyrics to prepare new Bhajans.

When Gurudev initiated him into Sannyasa a few years later, and he became Swami Dheerananda, we wondered whether we would have the same access and closeness to get his guidance. Swamiji remained available to help us in all our pursuits as before and more. He encouraged us to organize the Bhajan Group for Youth, and the youth called it Moksha. When the group recorded a bhajan album in 1994, he recorded an introduction to the Album.

We moved to Richmond, Virginia, in 1996, and Swamiji continued to guide us in organizing Chinmaya Mission Classes in Richmond. He conducted the annual Gita Gyan Yagnas in Richmond from 1997 to 2007 till health concerns prevented him from traveling long distances. In 2006 he inspired us to buy the property next to our office to establish Vision Learning center, which became home to all Chinmaya Mission Classes in Richmond since then.

Swamiji's Gita Gyan Yagnas were well received in Richmond, and many families whom Swamiji visited for Bhiksha remember fondly the unique experience they had hosting him at their homes. They never expected a Swami to be as friendly, humorous, and good with children as Swami Dheerananda. They keep inquiring when Swamiji would revisit Richmond so they can attend his Gita Yagna and invite him for Bhiksha to their homes. We pray to Gurudev and almighty Sri Krishna to make Swamiji recover from the ailment which restricts his travels and make their wishes come true.

Swamiji, we wish you a long life; so many devotees like us benefit from your guidance and learn the wisdom of Vedanta through your teachings. You are the embodiment of Guru Bhakti, and may God grace us all with the same Guru- Bhakti. All of us here at Richmond Chapter of CMWRC wish you a very Happy 60th Birthday.

*Mina and Nilkanth Bhatt******

My association with Swami Dheerananda ji goes a long way, and many of the members who joined the mission later may not know the early days when the center was established. After our first camp at Mount Vernon College, Gurudev said we were ready for a center and asked me to look for a place. He gave us the excess income that was generated at the camp as the seed

money for us to start. After a couple of months of extensive searching, we found this place in Silver Spring, a building with a three-acre lot needed for future expansion. It was sold by the original owner, who also happened to be the builder. He was happy to know that Chinmaya Mission was interested in buying. He brought down the cost and was ready to provide the needed mortgage for the purchase. An Indian bank also volunteered, and ten sincere seekers came forward with capital for the down payment and a commitment to support with a monthly donation for the mortgage. When we cabled this information to Gurudev, he immediately responded, congratulating us, and even giving the following year's camp dates. He assigned Brahmachari Sudheer Chaitanya (Swami Dheeranandaji) as an Acharya for the Center. When we signed the purchase agreement with the seller, Swami Tejomayanandaji was there and blessed the undertaking. Swamiji came to give Geeta yagna that we organized at the University of Maryland.

Gurudev named the center Kailas Nivas as Lord Shiva decided to leave that Kailas and settle here. The night before the camp day, around 8:00 PM, I got a call from Gurudev's secretary from California informing me that Gurudev was coming on a red-eye flight and arriving in Washington around 6:30 AM the next day. Then she said, 'make sure Lord Shiva is at the center before Gurudev enters the building.' I gave her a typical response, 'we will do our best', which works, without knowing what that means. Being a pakka Vaishnavate, I had no idea of Lord Shiva's plans and what kind of Immigration problems He would be facing. It is a wonder how the events shaped up during those early days. To make the story short, after half an hour of the Secretary's call, I got a call from a person named Kalidas. He said Lord Shiva came by first class on the Air India flight (to New York) but now must come by train to Washington DC. With the help of Vilasiniji, Lord Shiva entered the center at 4:30 AM and was ready to receive Gurudev to His new abode, as Gurudev planned.

Up to that time, we were dragging our feet to fix the building and the rooms for our needs. Time went fast. After Gurudev settled in his room, he called me and told me to make immediate arrangements to send the required papers for Brahmachari Sudheer Chaitanya to come. Gurudev said, "I want him to be here before the end of the camp, that is, within a week." The paperwork involved all the sponsorship documents that the immigration department needs, along with the supportive bank statements of the center. He gave further instructions about the camp and the

arrangements needed for the installation and inauguration of the center. As usual, just at the last minute, camp registrations were pouring in, and Suresh and Vilasini were struggling hard to fit in the demands of the registrants; some wanted AC, some wanted a single room, some needed rides from the airport, etc., etc. The campsite is at the other end of town. We had to arrange to transport all the delegates to the center for the inauguration. We must also make arrangements for the Vishnusahasranaama Archana to be performed at the Center after the installation of the deity. With all the instructions carefully noted down, I came out of Gurudev's room and met Mr. Nanik Lahori, the President of the Center, to get the paperwork done for the Brahmachari to come.

Nanikji, unfamiliar with Chinmaya Mission operations, was almost in a state of panic. With all the anxiety, he said, "Today is Sunday, how can we get any papers signed? We need bank statements, and banks are not open today, and we need notarized statements, and it is impossible to get all of them that quickly. Even after getting all the papers, it will take more than seven days even to send those papers by mail. How can we have the Brahmachari here before the end of the camp; this is all most impossible," etc., etc. With presumed wisdom, I asked him to calm down and requested him to start working on the papers and see what could be done and how much could be done on that day before we went back to Gurudev.

In the words of Nanikji, it was almost miraculous that he could get all the paperwork done on that day itself, a Sunday. The bank that financed our Center was an Indian-owned bank, and the owner, out of obligation, provided the needed bank statements and the notarized statements. The only question left was how to send the papers to India. Our Godsent Air India steward, Kalidas, who may be the incarnation of the original Kalidas, as he brought Lord Shiva by Air India right on time, came to our rescue again. He was returning to Mumbai by Air India that evening. With Gurudev's blessings, we gave the required paperwork to him with instructions by Gurudev to deliver it to CCMT and ask them to give a cable to Br. Sudheer Chaitanya to pack and come to Mumbai immediately for visa processing.

It was a real surprise that Sudheerji arrived the following Sunday before the camp ended, just as Gurudev wanted. The *sankalpa shakti* of Gurudev was phenomenal. The system yields to accommodate the wishes of a mahatma. Another lesson for all of us to remember is "Do not

question the master, just follow the directions, and 'His-will' will be done."

The next day Gurudev instructed me on what needed to be done for the center's inauguration. He drew a sketch of the pedestal that needs to be built in the hall, in the center. It is about 4 feet X 4 feet X 4 feet all around with white marble outside; the stage should be covered with a marble plate, a central place for the Murthy to be installed, with couple inches high marble lining so that the abhishekam-water gets collected inside without spilling out, and the drainage to be provided for the water via a tube in the back that is connected to the outside sink. As he was drawing and instructing what needed to be done, I took all the notes of dos and don'ts. Since the hall was not big enough to accommodate the campers and any outside guests, a tent had to be installed outside with facilities to do the Vishnusahasranaama puja. We also need a priest to conduct the function, etc.

With all the list of dos, I met all the volunteers during our daily meeting at lunchtime. We had in the group architect Nilkant Bhatt, expert engineer Narain Sharaf, meticulous accountant Prakash Soman, executer Nanik Lahori, human resource management expert Balan, and ready-to-go types, Srikumar, Vijaykumar, Suresh, etc. When I presented what Gurudev wanted, pandemonium broke loose, with everyone screaming that it was next to impossible. Our history had been that it took a month to get one light fixed in the bathroom at the center. After everyone quieted down, I repeated the mantra that Gurudev taught me – 'Do the best you can do and leave the rest'.

Nanik took charge of finding the suitable marble tiles, Narain Sharaf said he would find a carpenter to do the job since the stage has to be built at the center itself as it will be too large to transport, and one took charge of getting the required base materials, the other in charge of the outside tent, etc., etc. Vilasini knew a person who was a jack of all trades and who was willing to do the job, including the tile work, Nanik found a place for marble but was not sure exactly what type Gurudev wanted. Later, Gurudev himself went with Nanik to select the suitable marble for the job. Everything was assembled, and the person started to work on it the very next day and finished the job on Friday at 8:00 PM.

The following morning at 7:30 AM was the installation function. The huge tent was set up by Friday evening. Since it was on the open grass field, we were setting up the area around midnight after the evening class was over. Meanwhile, Vilasini had organized the vanpool for

all the delegates to be taken to the center after breakfast. Special lunch prasada was catered not only for delegates but to an unknown number of outside guests who came to witness the inauguration. Mr. and Mrs. J.K. and Carolyn Naidu were excited to make all the food arrangements during the camp and for this special function. For some reason, the Goddess-Sleep took leave from all the volunteers, perhaps to pounce with a vengeance when we were attending the lectures.

Everything went like clockwork, as Gurudev wanted. As usual, Gurudev was very punctual. He did the inauguration, and we had many who participated in the Vishnu Sahasranaama Archana. Many senior members of the Mission and the CMW board members were also present for the occasion. It was a festive day. Only the volunteers knew what went on behind the scenes and what a miracle it was that everything they felt was impossible was happening right before their eyes. That night we had a call from Mumbai that Br. Sudheer Chaitanya was arriving the next day. It is the *Sankalpa Shakti* of a Mahatma at work.

The next day, I was going to the Airport to pick up Br. Sudheerji, Vilasini said she would also come since I may not recognize the Brahmachari. Only the other day Gurudev, in his lectures, was saying – the longer the beard, the greater should be our suspicion and saying that he was stretching his beard as long as possible. On that day, by that scale, the most suspicious-looking Brahmachari arrived on the Washington scene, and Vilasini thought that I would not recognize him!

Once he arrived, we learned that this Brahmachari had never entered the Kitchen in his life (it looks like his grandmother had pampered him a lot) and did not know how to make even a cup of coffee or tea. It got our president Nanik Lahori all worried. His concern was who would cook for this Brahmachari since everybody is busy working on weekdays. As he was giving a ride to Gurudev to the lecture hall, he raised this question to Gurudev. Gurudev just listened and kept quiet. Nanik raised this question every time he met Gurudev thinking that Gurudev did not hear him.

When I was passing by, Gurudev called me and asked me if I had his itinerary for the rest of the year. When I answered affirmatively, he instructed me to give cables to all the people canceling all his scheduled programs. I knew very well that Gurudev never canceled his scheduled program, and even if he was not well, he would send some swami in his place. I just looked at him with puzzlement saying- “Why Swamiiiiii?” He just put a

serious tone and said, “Because I have to stay back here to cook for your Brahmachari, as your president is very much worried.”

I could not contain my laughter and promised Gurudev that we would take care of the Brahmachari. It so happened that the Brahmachari had to put up with my cooking for a few days after the camp was over until we could make some Bhiksha schedule. I used to go around 10:30 AM from my office after cooking for his lunch/dinner return back to my office. At night, some ladies used to volunteer. In between, his hunger screams were satisfied by ice screams. In fact, I cooked for Gurudev for ten days in 1980, when he had a yagna, organized again by Vilasini’s mother, Barbara, near Williamsburg, VA, as there was no one else to cook. Here, we would all ignore the fact that Gurudev had to undergo emergency heart surgery in Houston only a few days after eating my food. This Brahmachari, of course, survived my cooking.

Later I visited Swamiji’s house in Hyderabad, where they were running a school for children. I was fortunate to meet his parents and brother and his beloved grandmother, if I remember. I had a wonderful time. By that time, he has changed to Orange robes. We have a fond association, and in a way, as we grow up spiritually serving Gurudev and the Mission. When we wanted another Brahmachari for Virginia, Gurudev asked me to start teaching. Slowly I moved to complete teaching and used to conduct two-day spiritual camps during the Memorial Day holidays. Swami Dheeranandaji was also instrumental in making sure the camps were successful.

Under the guidance of Swamiji, the Washington center grew a lot and is still growing to expand in Virginia and Maryland, now with many teachers helping it to grow. The early growth pains always remain as fond memories.

With Best Wishes to Swamiji for his 60th Birthday and for the continued growth of Washington Regional Center.

Hari Om!

*Sadananda******

“I have the right Brahmachari for this center,” said Sri Gurudev Swami Chinmyananada in the camp held at Mount Vernon College of American University, Washington DC in 1989. Kailas Nivas had been purchased on Vijayadasami day in 1988 and Gurudev was happy with the activities of the center.

We were blessed to have been able to give Bhiksha for Sri Gurudev during the camp. Gurudev enquired about who

had gone to pick up the Brahmachari. It was a double blessing. In walked Brahmachari Sudheer Chaithanya who later became our beloved Pujya Swamiji Dheerananda.

Swamiji started teaching right away; many, many classes from Tattva Bodha onwards starting with Vedic chanting. The meditation verses from Hymns to Dakshinamoorthy came to mind:

Chitram Vatatarormoole Vriddhhaah

Sishyaah Guurur- Yuvaa

Strange indeed! ----the aged disciples around the youthful Guru! This was the only applicable portion of the verse.

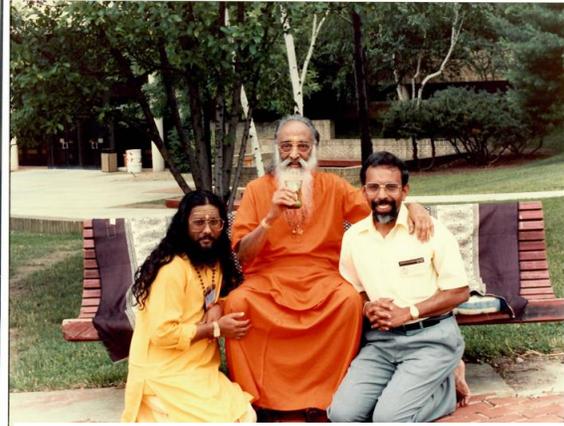
Pujya Swamiji was travelling to Philadelphia, Salisbury, Virginia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh and even to Canada and India giving lectures. On Tuesday evenings Pujya Swamiji used to go out teaching classes and he asked me to start meditation sessions at that time. That is how I started Contemplation-Meditation session on Tuesday evenings in the Meditation room at Kailas Nivas, later at Chinmayam and now virtually. It has been a great blessing for me. I am extremely grateful to our Pujya Swamiji for this divine opportunity and also for the numerous blessings that he has been showering on our family. When Pujya Swamiji tells us something, it is Gurudev himself talking through him.

What we revere we become. Pujya Swamiji's heart is brimming with love and respect (reverence) for Gurudev. We can actually see Gurudev in Pujya Swamiji. We are indeed fortunate to have him in our midst and continue to receive his infinite blessings. He has been tirelessly trying to light this light of knowledge in our hearts with equanimity in his approach; he lives up to the name given to him by Sri Gurudev.

Pujya Swamiji, in spite of his busy schedule pays attention to each and every one of us and suggests the very best for our spiritual development----such is the skill of this master. All we have to do is to yield to His will with a pure heart.

The Divine Grace of Gurudev is ever present; and it shines ever so brightly in Pujya Swamiji. Even though unborn, eternal and immutable is the form of the Guru, we still celebrate Pujya Swamiji's SASTIABDAPURTHI and pray for all the Blessings! May the light of Consciousness (Chinmaya) continue to kindle for many, many years the light of knowledge and compassion in our hearts.

Hari OM!



Sankaran Nayar with Pujya Gurudev and Swami Dheerananda

Sankaran Nayar*****

I met Swamiji in the early 2000's in Richmond. Neil (Nilkanth) and Mina Bhatt asked if I would volunteer to pick up and drive Swamiji to meet them when he visited our chapter. Little did I know what an honor this was and how deeply it would affect me. I am not Indian, born in the U.S., but I was drawn to the Hindu Center and straight to the Bhagavad Gita study group by Neil and Mina. I was intimidated to meet Swamiji, honestly, and not sure what to say about why I showed up as his driver! The journey was magical - we covered many topics, and he asked about the meaning of Passover. Having studied several religions before being drawn to the Chinmaya group, I was surprised at how he drew me out in this way to ease my nervousness. Since then, I have continued to be inspired by him, Gurudev, and our Chinmaya family. I wish many years of us all seeing the twinkle in his eyes and learning from him. Hari Om. 🙏🙏🙏

Sarah*****

First of all, Our Dear Pujya Swamiji! Happy 60th Birthday to you!

Sukanya and I are indebted to you Pujya Swamiji, Swami Dheeranandaji for directing us into this spiritual path throughout our life.

25 years back when we wanted our two daughters to be exposed to Indian customs and Indian festivals and Indian way of living, we approached Pujya Swamiji who advised us to start a Chinmaya Mission in Frederick. With the help of many of our Indian friends, we started a chapter for

Chinmaya Mission in Frederick, which by Gurudev's blessing is flourishing well and catering to the need for so many Indian families who wanted their children to be not lost in this western civilization and to be exposed to their Indian roots.

Most importantly, something that we never ever dreamt of and once in a lifetime opportunity of studying Vedanta for two years in the Gurukul at the Sandeepany Sadhnalaya Mumbai was made possible with a constant support and encouragement from our Pujya Swamiji for which we will be ever grateful to Him all our life! Thank you Swamiji for this wonderful gift for life you gave us!

And Swamiji! You continued to shower us, your blessings and love by asking both myself and Sukanya to teach the Vedanta classes at Frederick chapter of Chinmaya Mission, which has helped us enormously in enriching ourselves with the greatest Adhyathmic knowledge! This is another boon given by Pujya Swamiji to us!

What amazes me about our Swamiji is, his everlasting smile, a hearty laughter for any joke, we tell (which obviously he already knows), that too without displaying any bodily discomfort he may have! No words to thank you for all your guidance and love and affection you show us all!

Happy 60th Birthday and may God's grace and Gurudev's blessings be on you so that you bring in more of the spiritual awareness to maximum number of people in a maximum time!

B.K. Sathya and Sukanya Sathya*****

What Swamiji means to us?

Hari Om! Sri Gurubhyo namah!

Swamiji means everything for us. He is like our parent, friend and more than that: he is our Guru taking us to Nishreyas.

We met Pujya Swamiji about 25 years ago on Shankara Jayanti held at Kailas Nivas. Chinmayam was not yet built. Our daughter Savita's music teacher 'Māmi' took her students to sing bhajans for the occasion. At that time, we were introduced to Swamiji while taking His blessings-for 2 seconds may be "as Savi's parents "

Next, we met Pujya Swamiji, after 2 years at another musical meet. As soon as he saw us, he said Savi's parents! We were awe struck at this great memory of

Swamiji. Only a pure heart can have this much Medha Shakti.

Since then, Swamiji is guiding us all along.

Pujya Swamiji inspired and guided us to have a satellite chapter at Frederick MD. उत्साह वर्धकाय नमः-utsāha vardhakā namah | Our pranams to the great inspirer.

Good old days!! Swamiji used to visit Frederick chapter once a month. We looked forward for Swamiji's visits. Children used to jump with happiness as though maternal uncle is visiting them. It is very admirable how much effort he puts in to bring us into spiritual path. We are ever grateful!!

I always remember this Gita shloka. In Bhagavad-Gita 12th chapter Bhagavan talks about whom he likes the most.

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ १२-१३ ॥

adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca

nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī

He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving.

This is Our Swamiji. Every time I see our Swamiji, I remember this shloka and I become mum and lose myself in bliss!

What he means to us is indescribable. We may not be visiting him often, but we have Pujya Swamiji in our heart and thoughts, and we know he is always there with us.

It was a very happy moment for us when Swamiji made a surprise Zoom-visit to us on New Year's Day 2022! We really appreciate it Swamiji!! We were thrilled to have Swamiji's darshan on that auspicious day. Everything Swamiji does is for all of us.

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो

वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।

Our Swamiji is Shantah, Mahān and Santah. We are very fortunate to have him as our Guru.

Jan 1st, 2022: the day was a busy day for Swamiji. With so much love he surprised us. It was a great blessing for us.

He is Prema mayah. He is giving us the most invaluable knowledge, guidance and love. Swamiji's Vivekchudamani classes are a joy indescribable.

What can we offer him?

There is nothing we can offer him other than our love and gratitude and follow his Guidance. We see our Pujya Gurudev's glory in our Pujya Swamiji-Swami Dheeranandaji!

स्वामी धीरानन्दम् गुरुवरम् सुहृदम् करुणामयम् |

श्रीमच्छिन्मयप्रियशिष्यवर्यम् वन्देऽहम् गुरुपुङ्गवम् ||

svāmī dhīrānandam guruvaram suhṛdam karuṇāmayam

sṛīmacchinmyapriyaśiṣyavaryam vandeham
gurupungavam ||

We pray and invoke great health and longevity to our Pujya Swamiji. With Pranams, wishing Swamiji a very very Happy Birthday! May Swamiji's blessings flow on us always!

*Sukanya and Sathya******

Swami Sri Dheerananda ji is synonymous with Chinmaya Mission in our DMV area for nearly 3 decades. Any spiritual seeker or any parent whose children attended Balavihar over the past 3 decades will agree with my statement that Swamiji's spiritual teachings are enlightening and as great as his affectionate cuddly dealings with children. Every adult or child who attends his class for the first time is very much eager to attend his subsequent classes. His way with words, particularly when he teaches the children and young adults, is unique among all Chinmaya centers in the United States.

I distinctly remember Swamiji conducting a spiritual discussion organized by my son, Satish, with the Hindu students at the University of Virginia 25 years ago. His teachings were so impressive that the students wanted him to come back annually. His participation and blessing to the students at the annual Balavikas of Fairfax youth competitions were very memorable to the students as well as to the parents.

I was fortunate to attend his weekly classes at Drs. Raju and Shobha Chidambaram's residence for several years. Swamiji not only enlightened us with his spiritual wisdom but motivated us to take lead roles in organizing separate study groups. Now we have more than 15-20 study

groups in our DMV area under the umbrella of Chinmaya Washington Regional Center. Swamiji has kindly attended several of these spiritual discussions at our home. We always had a list of spiritual questions whenever he attended our group and received superb answers every time.

There is no exaggeration in saying that our DMV area residents are fortunate and blessed to have Swamiji Sri Dheerananda as our spiritual teacher who himself is the last Acharya blessed by Hon. Swami Chinmayanandaji. On this auspicious occasion of his 60th birthday, on behalf of Chinmaya family, we wish him good health, happiness and peace.

*Seetaramayya Nagula******

Hari Om 🙏

Our humble Pranams to Swami Dheerananda on his Shashti abdapoorthy. Swamiji has been a huge influence in our lives in Maryland. Right from the early 90s, our children Ashwin and Aishwarya were under his able guidance at Kailas Nivas Bal Vihar. From common time prayers to Geetha chanting to summer camps, and adult Satsang sessions, we all learnt a lot from Swamiji. He attended Bharatanatyam Arangetrams and blessed both our children and several students of Jayamangala. Over the years, Ashwin (along with his wife Lakshmi), Aishwarya and more recently, we ourselves relocated to California but our roots are still in Maryland, and we visit Swamiji whenever possible to get his blessings. As encouragement to the next generation achievers, Swamiji organized music performances of Aks & Lakshmi as fundraisers for Chinmaya Mission. His ability to connect with all ages, sense of humor and patience with children has endeared him to everyone that he comes into contact with. We are always indebted, invigorated and inspired by his energy to serve the community. We all love Swamiji and wish him the very best of health and happiness in the coming years.

Thank you Swamiji for what you do and who you are.

*Shobha and P.K. Subramanian******



Swamiji with Aks and Lakshmi (above)



Swamiji with Shobha and P.K.Subramanian

summer camps for children, study of Geeta, Upanishads and Vivekachudamani, inauguration of Chinmayam, Chinmaya Somnath, blossoming of youth movement, and most importantly, many a family finding their bearings, thanks to the gardener.

It is through his single-minded devotion to Swami Chinmayananda and a clear, determined, and purposeful carrying out of his duties, Swami Dheerananda radiates. He embodies the teachings that he received from his Guru and passes on to us in small consumable morsels. In Chapter 2 of the Geeta, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna about 'Sthita-prajna-lakshana' – how a man of wisdom conducts himself. We can see those descriptions Sri Krishna gives, personified in Swamiji.

In Swamiji, there is an unmistakable presence of Swami Chinmayananda and the entire Guru-parampara. In his auspicious presence, we flourish.

Like many, I had my hang-ups, thoughts and (mis) understandings about Hinduism -before meeting Swamiji. Swamiji was not only a welcome signpost showing the right way ahead, but through personal empathic connection he pointed out that the path is within. With Swamiji's continued guidance, there is no further journey in the wilderness, but sadhana along a glorious path within.

Thank you, Swamiji. We are blessed to be in your presence. On this special occasion, we pray for your health and through Sri Gurudev's grace, your continued presence.

Sri Gurubhyo Namah. Hari Om!

*****Sitaram Kowtha

Swami Chinmayananda sowed the seeds for a center in the Washington DC region in 1989 and he also appointed a gardener who fully understood and appreciated the vision for a Chinmaya Mission center here.

Over the 33 years since that day in July, the gardener, initially as Brahmachari Sudheer Chaitanya and later as Swami Dheerananda nurtured what we know today as CMWRC spanning Maryland and Virginia.

These 33 years saw brutal winters (including 4-ft snow from back-to-back storms), many a thunderstorm with heavy rains and winds (including a derecho in 2011), a national reckoning of September 11, 2001, a global pandemic, and so on. The gardener and the garden weathered and prospered through all those challenges. There were many glorious moments during those 33 years as well - annual graduation of Bala Vihar children, annual

Swami Dheerananda- my Teacher

Chinmayam vyapiyatsarvam thrilokyam sacharacharam

Tat-padam darshitam yena tasmai Sri Guruve namaha

I came to know Swami Dheeranandaji (then Brahmachari Sudheer Chaitanya) in late 80's at the international camp held by Sri Gurudev at the American Univ. I heard a lot about this new Brahmachari before his arrival from India from Vilasiniji, Sadanandaji, and some other senior members of Chinmaya Mission. I still remember Vilasiniji and other senior members commenting this Brahmachari is very good, he is very enthusiastic, he is the right Acharya for our center, we are lucky that Sri Gurudev appointed him as our Acharya, he speaks very good English, etc...etc... You can imagine how much curiosity

those comments made on all listeners. All of a sudden, it was a new subject that everyone was talking about among the camp attendees. Finally, the wait was over. I heard someone saying the Brahmachari's flight arrived at Dulles, and he is on his way to the campsite to meet with Sri Gurudev. My anxiety to meet this new Brahmachari was so high that I kept looking at the door whenever someone opened the door. Finally, when he arrived, I was really surprised how young this new Brahmachari was. He was very friendly with everyone. Swamiji's enthusiasm was contagious. It was almost like people were mesmerized in his presence.

When the camp came to an end Swami Dheeranandaji presented his plan for weekly classes at CMWRC to the senior members of the Mission, Nanikji, Vilasiniji, Sadanandaji etc. It was happily welcomed by all. When I came to know Swamiji will be holding classes on working days in early morning hours, 6:30 am, I was surprised. I thought to myself who is going attend classes on working days that early in the morning. But to my surprise there were members who came for classes that early. Some of them even brought a change of cloth and breakfast with them so that they can freshen up before reaching the workplaces! Swamiji offered same classes in the evenings too so that households like me could attend.

Swamiji gave special attention to Balavihar and Yuvakendra classes just like Sri Gurudev did. Swamiji has a knack to hold children's attention with jokes, stories etc. When he is with children, he becomes one among them. When my children were young, they loved Swamiji's company.

I was first introduced to Vedantic teachings by Sri Gurudev in late 80's. But it was from Swami Dheerananda (then Brah. Sudheer Chaitanya) I started learning several Upanishads, Vedic chantings, Arathi, and so on and so forth. It was Sri Gurudev who introduced me to Bhagavat Gita. But as we know, Sri Gurudev's busy schedule did not allow Him to stay in one place more than a week at a time. After I was introduced by Sri Gurudev, it was from Swami Dheerananda I listened to several chapters of Bhagavat Geeta talks in detail chapter by chapter. Not attending Swamiji's classes was not an option for me. They were almost like my lifelines! I rearranged all household activities and work-related commitments to work around Swamiji's class schedules so that I will not miss any classes. This shows how interesting and captivating Swamiji's talks were.

The first Upanishad Swamiji taught at CMWRC was 'Kenopanishad'. I remember Swamiji saying this was the first Upanishad taught at the Brahmachari course and he really liked this Upanishad very much. When I heard that I was thinking are we householders really qualified to listen to such an Upanishad of very high standard? But the way Swamiji explained the Upanishad made me think maybe we are fit to listen to it. He took great pain in finding cross references all the time. Swamiji even wrote down notes for us (most of the time in large fonts...you can imagine why) and distributed to all students. It was literally the young Guru sitting up on the pedestal and old ladies and gentlemen sitting below to Him as students! He always reminded me of the famous verses in Dakshinamoorthi Stotram-

Chitram vadatarormoole, vridha sishya gurur-yuva

*Gurostu mounam vyakhyanam sishyastuchinna
samsayah:*

Swamiji gave discourses on several Upanishads such as Kena, Mundaka, Taitiriyi, Prasna, Kathopanishad etc. He also taught Bhagavan Adi Sankara's Tatva Bodh, Atma Bodh, Viveka Choodamani, Vishnu Sahasra Namam. Swamiji introduced us to important vedic chantings such as Purusha Sooktam, Sri Sooktam, Narayana Sooktam, Durga Sooktam, Medha Sooktam, Rudram-Chamakam, Taithiriyi, Mantra pushpam, Hanuman chalisa, etc... etc...

I felt absolutely blessed to have such an opportunity to learn all these sacred things which were almost forbidden to ladies in the Indian culture, where I grew up!

There are a couple of anecdotes from His early days that still remain very fresh in my memory— It was about a week or so after Swamiji's arrival at CMWRC from India. A group of Yuvakendra students who were born and brought up here in the US were going to a park in VA where there was facility for Kayaks, paddle boats etc. They asked Swamiji if he wanted to join. I don't think these youngsters knew how we adults respect and revere a sanyasi back in India. The young Brahmachari was equally excited and joined them for fun. I kind of felt Swamiji did not know what to expect from these youngsters! They spent almost all day at the park and returned in the evening. Someone asked Swamiji how his first outing was in the US. Swamiji's shock was very visible. He turned to the person who asked the question with wide eyes and said something to the effect of- these girls and boys are so unbelievable... I could see how

surprised he was in their behavior and mingling with each other!

Once Sri Gurudev was on his way to a camp in the US through Dulles airport. Gurudev had a layover of several hours at Dulles. Vilasiniji came to know about the layover and informed the study group members that Sri Gurudev will be at the airport for couple of hours and if we wish we can go and meet Him at the airport. Of course, everyone was excited, and we prepared breakfast for Gurudev and went to the airport. Swami Dheeranandaji came with Vilasiniji and Sureshji. Swami Dheeranandaji's father Sri Govindaraj was also traveling with Gurudev at that time. Gurudev and Sri Govindaraj came out to the waiting area and had breakfast. We were all very happy to be with Him. Someone from the group wanted to take a photograph of Sri Gurudev. Swami Dheeranandaji was sitting next to Gurudev on the carpet and Sri Govindaraj was sitting close by. The person asked for Gurudev's permission to click the camera. Sri Gurudev in his usual jovial way said pointing to Sri Govindaraj, Swami Dheeranandaji, and Himself- "yes, yes, here is the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost...take picture"!!!

His dedication to Sri Gurudev and His teachings are beyond words. As we all know, Swami Dheeranandaji consider Sri Gurudev as His Mother, Father, and above all His sacred guide in spiritual path. Swamiji always mentions Sri Gurudev as Chinmaya Krishna. I have no words or capacity to express how much Sri Gurudev is part of His life.

It is very important to mention how much Swami Dheeranandaji put in time and effort for Bala Vihar and Yuvakendra. It is for the welfare and spiritual growth of our children that He puts in so much effort and time in planning Bala Vihar/ youth classes and summer camps. Our family is always indebted to Swami Dheeranandaji for the guidance we have received from Him.

Jai Gurudev!

Sreedevi Kumar*****

Transformation of a common man to a Sanyasi

Sri Gurudev Swami Chinmayanda asked, "What is this Brahmachari doing flipping channels on the TV!". Gurudev was sitting in the home of a Chinmaya Mission member who had invited Him for a Bhiksha (food offered to a divine person) in his home. The member had invited a number of prominent members in Chinmaya mission. After reaching the member's home, there was a small

delay in serving the Bhiksha. In the meantime, Gurudev started watching TV. The Brahmachari was embarrassed and started muttering... "Gurudev, the screen is not clear... I changed the screen...!". Gurudev said nothing. As we all know, Gurudev is very much interested in Tennis, since he was good player; he was watching the match and the Brahmachari started flipping channels. That Brahmachari, who is the youngest to become a Swami and the last Swami ordained and deputed by Sri Gurudev to CMRC as the Acharya, is Swami Dheerananda now.

The Brahmachari did not take any offense with this action. On the contrary, his devotion to Sri Gurudev only increased. Now we all know Swami Dheerananda follows the footsteps of Sri Gurudev in indelible impression in the sands of time. When Swami Dheerananda came from India at the behest of Sri Gurudev, he came into the hall where Sri Gurudev was giving discourses on Bhagavad Gita. The hall was astounded to see the new Vedanta Teacher with lots of vibhuthi covering his entire forehead. Seeing this, one of the persons sitting near me said, 'he is really Paramasiva!'. But his long beard and thick hair qualified him to be described as Veda Vyasa.

Swami Dheerananda was a novice in cooking and washing his own clothes. So, the Secretary of Chinmaya Mission had extra duties to develop a Bhiksha list and laundry. Our family was very much involved in the activities of Chinmaya mission from its inception in MD, VA and DC. Since there were only a few families to be listed for Bhiksha and laundry, we took some of the schedules. This association with my family and Swami Dheerananda made us very close to him, particularly my son.

The arrival of the young and vibrant Vedanta Teacher energized the members when he introduced early morning meditation sessions, Vedic chanting, discourses on Bhagavad Geeta, and Vivekachoodamani. Initially, the same people were attending the different sessions while Swamiji was giving discourses based on the above books. Since there were not many members at that time, each one of the active members took a heavy load of schedule. I volunteered to drive Swamiji for different Satsangs. Although I have many interesting anecdotes about these trips, I will narrate here my experience of one such trip.

Every two weeks, I used to drive him to the Salisbury eastern shore or Crisfield, MD and Swamiji used to give discourse there. After a heavy lunch, we return to Kailas Nivas. Since we used to leave early morning, neither Swamiji nor I could eat any breakfast. So, Sreedevi, my wife, would make Upma every time and give two packets

for us - one for Swamiji and one for me. We shared the tea we brought in a thermos, which would keep it hot. Halfway through our trip to Crisfield, we would take a break in a place which had a lot of greenery, plenty of trees and a bench for the people who want to take a break. We never had the problem of others waiting, so we used to break our trip there and we go to the bench and finish the Upma and tea. Swamiji's hosts in Crisfield were very devoted to him, so they took good care of him while he was there. On one such trip on our return to Kailas Nivas, when we reached Route 50, I asked Swamiji a Vedantic question and Swamiji started giving the answers for this question. Both of us were absorbed in our respective capacities - Swamiji as a lecturer and me as a student. We were very intensive about the roles that we took on the road. In the meanwhile, we lost the entrance to I-495. I did not want to let Swamiji know that we have lost the way, so we drove into DC. Although I could initially hide the fact that we had lost our way, gradually Swamiji started doubting why we are taking so long to reach Kailas Nivas. When we reached Kailas Nivas, it was already 9.30 at night! At home, Sreedevi was worried and Swamiji's hosts at Crisfield were also worried when they called Sreedevi. But both Sreedevi and the hosts at Crisfield did not know our whereabouts. In those days, we did not have any mobile phones or car phones. Swamiji's hosts in Crisfield were doctors and they worried so much that they were about to call the Police. Fortunately, by then, we had reached Kailas Nivas, I called Sreedevi, and she in turn, called the hosts at Crisfield. When I dropped him off at Kailas Nivas, he asked me a question, "Why did you not tell me that we were lost?". I told him, "I was not worried that I was lost. Since you are in the car, I never felt lost". He gave me a sweet smile and told me to get home fast. This capacity to endure any adversities with humor is a classical trait in Swami Dheerananda.

Swamiji and my family used to drive together to different places that he wanted to visit such as Sri Venkateswara temple at Pittsburgh and if I remember correctly, we drove him also to the Prabhupada's Palace of Gold in Wheeling, W. Va. Feeling my difficulties to comply with the schedule, Swamiji was kind that he started calling members himself and pass on the information to me. In this effort to make to assign different members for various trips, Sri Balanji was very instrumental. I was so touched by Swami Dheeranandaji's compassion to us. But he made it more official by assigning drivers for his trips, which was a big relief for me.

There are many more such instances where I volunteered to drive Swamiji because of his cordiality, forbearance, goodness, grace, sweetness and tolerance towards my family. My son is attached to Swamiji, so much so that he didn't go to school for a day waiting to request me to take him to the airport when Swamiji was leaving for India. Despite these humanitarian and divine characteristics, he was also seriously interested in reading Vedantic books other than that of Chinmaya Mission. This was a good move for him as that gave him a trans-religious perspective that helped him in giving excellent talks extemporaneously. Sometimes I feel that Swamiji is the reflection of the books that he teaches.

His teaching capabilities, the simplicity of language and humorous style of delivery are the features that attracted me to his discourses. Although it is not mandatory, I used to call him when I was unable to attend the discourse. During the early days of Chinmaya Mission in Kailas Nivas, he used to return my calls and check whether I am alright. Therefore, I did not miss classes unless it was an absolute necessity.

One amazing feature of his classes is his ability to transcend from a lower level of teaching to children, to higher levels of discourses to adults and vice versa, very effortlessly. His storytelling to children is characterized by enthusiasm of children to go to the classes. The children trained by him to chant slokas, the pronunciation of which is very difficult, but Swamiji amazingly made it very easy for them. I am impressed by his capacity to instill the values of Vedanta in the children at a very young age in such a way that they carry these values through to their adulthood. Swamiji's BMI (Body - Mind - Intellect) *prasadam* was a hit among children and adults alike so much so that the adults would line up in a queue to get the *prasadam* in the pretext of accompanying the children.

Another characteristic of Swamiji's discourses to adults is the way by which many important values in life are driven into the brains of adults. For example, the Gita slokas 47 as well as 54 thru 72 (who is sthitha-prajna) of Chapter 2, 21 of Chapter 3 and 25, 26 of Chapter 6 and 20 of Chapter 10; verse 2, verses 250 thru 253, and 254 thru 266 of Vivekachoodamani. I have found that among the spiritual texts Vivekachoodamani is the best. Swamiji's exposition of this book and the principles therein and the practical methods to reach the supreme goals as expounded by Swamiji is outstanding.

I am sure that in spite of some difficulties that Swamiji experienced, we all have a soft corner for him in our hearts. I can narrate several instances with positive outcome that resulted in my association with Swamiji. But due to page limitations, I will reserve it for some other occasion.

Our family salutes Swamiji on this occasion of his 60th birthday. It goes to the credit of the members of Chinmaya Mission that Swamiji could spend major portion of his life till now in this center. We wish him all the best and success in his life.

K. Sreekumar *****

Messages from various Sunday PM Sundaram students

Thanks, Swamiji for all the great stories you tell us and the knowledge we get from it. You are cool, humble and your words help me calm down when I am upset.

Videsh Vimalkumar *****

வணக்கம் ஸ்வாமிஜி,

(Hello Swamiji),

I would like to say thank you for showing the right paths in spiritual life. You teach all ages in a very understanding way. you teach great shlokas ஸ்லோகாஸ். நீங்கள் ஸ்லோகாவுடைய பெருளையும் சொல்லி தருவீர்கள். (You also teach us their meanings.) உங்களுடைய கதைகள் சிரிப்பாகவும் இருக்கும், நல்லாவும் இருக்கும், நல்ல பெருளையும் கொடுக்கும். உங்களுக்கு தமிழ் தெரியும்னு நீனைத்து, நான் தமிழ் எழுத்துக்கு ரொம்ப முயற்சி பன்னுகிரேன். நான் இந்த கடிதத்தை உட்சாகர்த்துடன் எழுதுகிறேன். நீங்கள் சொல்லி கொடுக்கும் பொழுது எல்லாரும் அமைதியாக இருப்பாங்க. நீங்கள் சொன்ன எல்லா வார்த்தையில் பொருள் இருக்கு. Your stories are humorous and have deep meanings.

நன்றி,

பிருந்தா மஹாதேவன்

Brindha Mahadevan *****

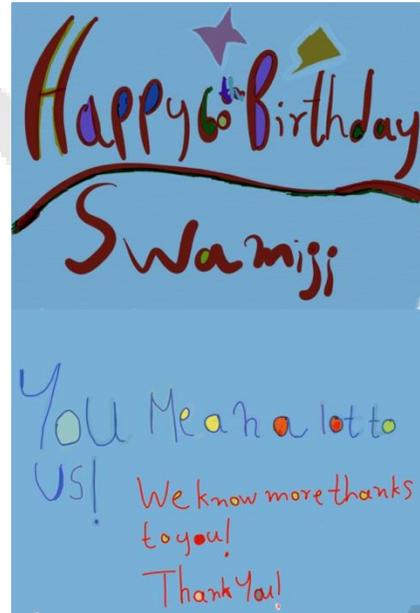
Swamiji is a remover of darkness and a giver of light. He teaches us good qualities and is a Guru to me. He imparts

knowledge to us to make us a better person and to go on the right path of life. He is God in a different form, and I look up to him.

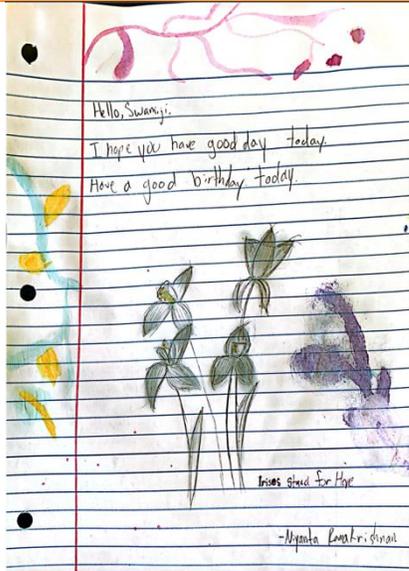
Anirudh Ghodgaonkar *****



Vidhya Amirthalingam *****



Dhruv Ganeshkumar *****



Niyanta Ramakrishnan*****



Pranav Kashyap*****

33 Years.... Was it Yesterday?...

Hari Om. It is hard to convince myself that it has been 33 years since our beloved Swami Dheeranandaji landed in U.S. Have heard that time flies. But never thought it will be this fast. As per Vedanta, time is a concept of the mind, yes, we learned that, but never experienced so. When it is conducive, time flies and non-conducive it crawls. This is Swamiji's own words, and they are still ringing in my ear.

It was 1989, Gurudev's camp in American University. Since we had a camp the year before in 1988, this was more organized and had more attendees. Also, the number of study group members had increased, and Gurudev sensed the need of an Acharya is overdue. So, before the camp itself, Gurudev has assigned Brahmachari Sudheer Chaitanya for Washington D.C. and Gurudev announced that in the camp. He also said that Sudheerji is excellent with Bala Vihar and CHYK.

So, we were all eagerly waiting to see him. And it happened, in the middle of the camp, one fine afternoon, Bri. Sudheer Chaitanya arrived in Mt. Vernon, where the camp residence was. We few were sitting with Gurudev, and we ran outside to greet him. Sudheerji got out of the car in his full shining yellow robes. I did pranams to him and ran to get his luggage. He said, "Be careful, that is heavy, it is full of books." I said that is fine. When I lifted, it was really heavy! I thought maybe he was in a rush to meet Gurudev and did not get enough time to transfer the data from the external suitcase drive to his internal brain database. Well, now he travels light because all those files have been transferred to his memory.

Sudheerji introduced the whole Ganga Arati every day in Kailas Niwas, and I used to attend on weekends. Sudheerji used to come to Virginia once a month to attend our Monthly Bhajans which we used to host at different sevak's houses. He used to stay in the same house and addressed the class next day and went back to Maryland. This continued for several years. A couple of times we were blessed to have Sudheerji at our home. Later, in 1993, the Deeksha ceremony happened. Bri. Sudheer Chaitanya became Swami Dheerananda. We all walked with our heads up with pride, and we told "Hey, guess what, we also have a Swamiji in our center now". Between then - 1989 and now in 2022, whatever change took place in CMWRC, for all the progress which we see, the several Vedanta classes, Bala Vihar programs, the Summer camp, The CHYKs Retreats, The CHSK Satsangs, to name a few, Swamiji was the main pillar behind all those. Of course, many dedicated volunteers, inspired by Swamiji, were there too.

Gurudev gave the Washington Chinmaya Family the best gift. Our Swamiji. We are fortunate that we have several Vedanta teachers which other centers don't have. I remember one incident. In 2016 AFR, I was sitting with Swamiji in one table. In that table was also our guest speaker Swami Ishwarananda. Our Swamiji was introducing me to Swami Ishwarananda. "This is Vijay Kumar; he teaches Gita classes in Chinmaya Somnath". He replied. "Yes, I know Vijay Kumar". Then Dheerananda added. "He is going for Vedanta course next year". Swami Ishwarananda replied. "You already have so many teachers". Our Swamiji replied immediately. Like a bullet it came "We produce more than what we consume". The whole table turned into a laughter.

His ability to shoot for a quick answer and to be hilarious at the same time, is amazing. This is one of the qualities

which Gurudev had. Swami Dheerananda acquired many such qualities from Gurudev.

Another incident I would like to quote here. This, I often quote in my class. There used to be a small white board on the left side of the door leading to the main hall of Kailas Niwas. There was no Chinmayam then. Swamiji used to give Satsang in this hall. On this white board with blue marker pen, Swamiji used to write some quotes of Gurudev. As everyone knows, the handwriting of Swamiji is exactly like Gurudev's.

I always wondered how it is. It is a wonder. Any way, it was once written as follows. "You change and the world will change". Short sentence and it is one of Gurudev's quotes. I used to read it every time I came to Kailas Niwas. Swamiji used to change the writing every after a week or two. This one somehow, he did not change. After 3 or 4 times. I stopped looking at the board. Why look, I know what is already there. You change and the world will change. I used this in my class too. No big deal.

One day I looked again and there was something added below the quote. It caught my attention. What is it? It was written in small letters. Of course, Swamiji's handwriting. "If this does not happen two reasons are possible". I said to myself. "Wow, this is what I want. I changed, and the world did not change. I was thinking why Gurudev's quote is not working. Looks like Swamiji knew. He could read my mind." I continued reading.

"Reason no. 1. You think the change in you is complete. In fact it may not be." This is possible. According to me, the change is complete. Maybe it is not complete. Okay. The next line was very interesting and is a lesson for all of us. "Reason No.2. The un-conducive atmosphere around you is necessary for your change to complete". I read this over and over, again and again. This was not in original quote of Gurudev. Our Swamiji might have added. But somehow it is absolutely right.

The un-appreciating spouse, the disobedient children, the un-appreciating boss at work, and the irritating neighbor they all are necessary, for our change to complete. After reading this, I was so calm and relieved. I thanked Swamiji within.

There are so many other incidents but because of lack of your time, and in view of keeping this article short, I refrain. I know many will not read this. If you have reached this far, congratulations. Hari om to you.

Like in Vedanta ...In the beginning there was only one. We only had Vilasiniji as our Vedanta Teacher. From that we became many. Now we have Swamiji, Anantji, Sadaji, Medha ji, Arvind ji, Sathya ji, Sukanya ji and myself.

Koti Pranams to our Swamiji for all the Vedanta teachings and spiritual guidance to all of us in the Washington area. Congratulations on this beautiful occasion of celebrating 60 years Swamiji. A life dedicated to knowing the truth. Of course, the 60 years is for the body. In knowledge he is much much more than that. We don't have words to say thank you for lighting up the thirst for knowledge in all of us.

A very happy 60th Birthday. Janma dinam idam...

We are blessed to have you Swamiji.

With Pranams at your feet,



Vijay Kumar and Swami Dheerananda

Vijay Kumar*****



Swamiji Tribute by Nandini Vellanore

Sanjay Vandana Tarang Mayank (Bapna family)



Swamiji with the Bapna family

Our beloved Swamiji,

Hari Om!

We are grateful to have been blessed with your unconditional love always, for over 25 years!♥

On Your special 60th, here is an attempt with a few words that is in no way suffice to describe your complete glory 🙏 🕉️

- Swamiji =
- S** Selfless
- W** Witty
- A** Admirable- affable - amiable
- M** Magnanimous
- I** Ingenious
- J** Joyful
- I** Incomparable

Wishing you many, many more happy returns of this precious 60th milestone... health, joy, contentment, and continued glory 😊. Your dedication & love for Pujya Gurudev is priceless!

With lots of love and gratitude 🙏❤️

Hari OM,

I am Vanita Venugopal, a long-term member of the Washington area Chinmaya Mission. I resided first in West Springfield for 5 years, and then for 30 years in Vienna, VA. In October 2020, just two years back, Venu and myself relocated to Augusta, GA to be close to our daughter Priya and family.

I started attending the Mission with my little toddler Priya, when she was just about three years old in Naidu ji's home. Even after moving to Vienna in 1990, we continued attending the Sunday weekly Satsangs, as I enjoyed it a lot. I met many like-minded members from all over India. Growing up in Mumbai, that was a definite plus for me. I had also attended Gurudev's lecture as a teenager in Mumbai on the Chowpatty Sands with my mother and siblings and was bowled over, hooked for life so to speak.

I remember clearly when our Vijay Kumar ji started with the Springfield Chapter, and also when a newly minted Brahmachari Sudheerji was posted in the Washington DC Chapter. Brahmachari Sudheerji enthralled the audience with his talks sprinkled with humor and laughter. As the

years went by my daughter Priya grew up in the Bala Vihar program until she was a teenager. The summer camps that I enrolled her was when we spent many hours in the company of our beloved teacher Swamiji who was the program administrator and head. I helped with the Summer Art program and continued with the Virginia Bala Vihar program as a teacher of Sathyam and Sundaram classes for 5-6 years. When in high school, Priya stopped coming due to juggling a lot of academics, dance, crew and other activities. I continued as a teacher and then was appointed as Bala Vihar coordinator for about 5 years. In 2007 when my parents had medical issues and I had to spend more time in India, I decided that I would need to step down. I spoke to Swamiji, and he gave me encouraging words to follow my duties. At the Annual program that year, Swamiji presented me with Gurudev's Signature lamp for my years of dedicated service. I still cherish this memory, as well as all the strong bonds of friendships I had built over the years. The Chinmaya family had become a home away from home for me.

On this Occasion of Swami Dheerananda's 60th Birthday Celebrations here are some thoughts.

Some of the lessons that Swamiji taught that comes to my mind are the following.

The Eighteen ities which are not taught in any University.

**SERENITY, REGULARITY, ABSENCE OF VANITY,
SINCERITY, SIMPLICITY, VERACITY,
EQUANIMITY, FIXITY, NON-IRRITABILITY,
ADAPTABILITY, HUMILITY, TENACITY,
INTEGRITY, NOBILITY, MAGNANIMITY,
CHARITY, GENEROSITY, PURITY.
Practice daily these eighteen 'ities',
You will soon attain immortality.
Brahman is the only real entity.**

This was taught as an interesting song but was also a valuable life lesson. I can still hear Swamiji singing this and asking us to repeat... it has remained with me!

Another important lesson Swamiji taught was to have a QUIET, VIGILANT and ALERT mind at all times.

During many Bhikshaas as well as chauffeuring Swamiji to and from camps, I got to converse with him one on one. I always found Swamiji very down to earth, cheerful, and amazingly curious, open and alert like a child. During one summer camp, my maternal uncle who was very dear to me passed away, and I couldn't control my tears. That

day I was driving Swamiji to the host families' home. Swamiji spoke to me about how death is like changing one attire to another and chanted the appropriate verse from the Gita. I felt comforted and cheered up.

Swamiji, I wanted to let you know that this year my daughter Priya has enrolled her four-year-old son in the Hindu Temple Society, Bala Shaala program here in Augusta where we all live now. We don't have a Chinmaya Mission; however, this program seems a good substitute. I humbly request your blessings for our families continued interest in the study of our scriptures and to pass on our Hindu culture to the next generation. Priya bought many of the Modi toys – Gods like Ganesha, Krishna, Hanuman, Durga and Saraswathi dolls that chant mantras for her kids. She also loves to talk about and celebrate Holi, Krishna Janmashtami, Dassehera and Deepavali whenever possible in spite of her juggling hospital duties as an Emergency Physician. I am happy she is keeping up such traditions.

Venu, and I want to come see you with our kids Priya and her husband Robbie and our grandkids Akash and Avani someday when we are in DC.

Wishing you a Happy 60th Birthday celebration on November 19th, and many many more years of Health, Peace and Prosperity for yourself and the greater Chinmaya Family.

With Humble Pranams, Prem and OM!

Vanita Venugopal*****

I still remember Swamiji's talks to us all the way back when I was only a 6-year-old in Satyam. He has a way of communicating to children with humor and wonder that makes all of his lessons memorable. But my best memories with Swamiji are not from common time. Back when I played cricket on my school and county teams, he would occasionally ask me how my season was going. Now, I have since quit cricket, but he still sometimes asks how my brother's games are. I appreciate that he remembers these little details about us, and he asks us these questions as a friend might. I want to thank Swamiji for being an approachable source of guidance for me for my past 12 years at Chinmaya Mission. Happy 60th Birthday!

Varshitha Kasiraman*****

SWAMI DHEERANANDA 60TH BIRTHDAY SPECIAL SOUVENIR EDITION

Hari Om! CMWRC is very blessed to have such a Swami leading our center for the last three plus decades as our Swami Dheeranandaji. Swamiji has overseen all of CMWRC's growth. Out of his love for his students, he has created an atmosphere where people feel like getting involved, joining, and serving. He has lovingly raised many generations of children and they keep coming back. For me, the most inspiring aspect of Swamiji is his love and devotion to his Guru, our Gurudev. He has kept Gurudev in his heart and soul and offers all his actions to Gurudev. This is the greatest bhakti of a Jnani, to always keep the divine perfection of his Guru as his guiding star throughout life. Swamiji is very rare with this degree of devotion, and we are fortunate to experience it. Pranams and Prem to Swamiji on this special 60th Year!

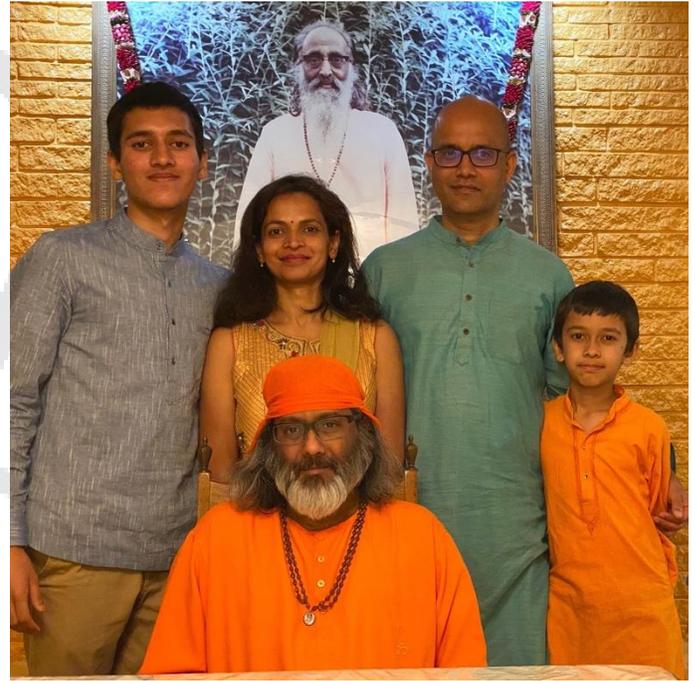
Vilasin Balakrishnan *****

Not enough Nouns and Adjectives to describe our Swami ji!"

We stand as one family bound to each other with love and respect. No one epitomizes this line from our pledge better than our Swami ji himself, and in fact he does so much more than that for all of us. There is no denying his important life changing role he has played as the Spiritual Guru and Guide for multiple generations of the Chinmayam family including ours. But we wanted to take this opportunity to also share a few recent experiences that highlight his magnanimous and caring nature even in our day-to-day interactions with him. When all of us couldn't make it to our family Bhiksha because of my dad's deteriorating health situation, he would ask the rest of us to join via video call and eat and talk alongside. When we started bringing my mother to the mission for Sunday sessions recently, he was so concerned about her safety that he called me in the middle of the day later on in the week to tell me the route that she could take to the auditorium so she would not have to climb any stairs! He pays attention to even the smallest of the details of our lives. It is like having a family elder watching over all of us all the time.

While it took us a few years after our joining the mission to get comfortable with him, knowing him and having him around since then has been such a blessing and honor for our family over the last 10+ years. We couldn't think of that period without him and wouldn't want it any other way.

Happy 60th Birthday, Swami ji! Praying for your good health and wishing that you continue to look over us, bless and inspire us for many more years!



Swamiji with Sachdev family

Sachdev family. *****

It was during the summer camp of 2008 in Reston when our family's association with Swamiji started. Kapil was not even the age of summer camp student but had to be around with Vibha the whole day at the camp. Swamiji's guidance for our children started at that young age. Swamiji was staying at Sudhita's and we used to go offer Bhiksha as well as enjoy playing carroms with Swamiji. Swamiji's witty quotes and subtle ways of teaching Vedanta through everyday interactions were attracting our entire family to seek more opportunities to meet Swamiji through monthly Bhiksha at Kailas Niwas and his short stays with us during December Yajna.

We are fortunate that after Chinmaya Somnath construction was complete, we got opportunities to host Swamiji for 4 weeks during summer camps. During the formative years of our children, Swamiji's presence and guidance helped build their character. The great advantage for Vibha and I was that we would not only get answers to our questions from Swamiji, but we would learn through various questions from any other families that would come to visit Swamiji for Bhiksha and Satsang.

The most important thing we like about Swamiji is he brings the knowledge of Vedanta according to the receptiveness and the level of spiritual progress of the person listening. He would explain certain things through movies, some concepts through some songs on YouTube or quotes and jokes from a vast treasure on his phone.

Like exercise is to improve physical health, many people consider spiritual knowledge like a tonic or medicine to improve the health of our mind. From that perspective, Swamiji is a master physician who prescribes and gives the right type of Vedanta medicine in the right amount of dosage depending on the nature of the person. Moreover, he gives the Vedanta medicine in various enticing flavors like Mango, Pineapple or Bubble Gum, etc. depending on your liking. The vitamin C tablets he gives us come only in orange flavor as manufactured by Costco, but Swamiji's Vedanta tablets come in so many flavors!

Vibha and I think that it is our Punya from past lives that was fructified in this life by Swamiji's presence in our home. We have many memories but the one to highlight is from 2012 during Tulsi Ramayan Yajna by Pujya Guruji. To celebrate my 50th birthday, Swamiji asked me to choose a book of my liking from the bookstore and took me to get blessings from Pujya Guruji along with his autograph. During that time, we were blessed to host Chinmaya Mission Swamis and Brahmacharis for a Satsang to share their memories about Pujya Gurudev. To top it all, because Swamiji was staying with us, we got an opportunity to host a Bhiksha for Pujya Guruji.

Some of the memories that highlight how compassionate our Swamiji is. Gaurang Bhai Nanavaty came to visit during the inauguration ceremony of Chinmaya Somnath. He needed some rest before catching a flight. Swamiji not only offered to bring him home for rest but also offered the front seat in the van. He always makes sure to offer Vitamin C tablets to his limo drivers. Once he had the limo driver sit next to him for dinner. When families come to offer Bhiksha, Swamiji makes everyone feel really comfortable, children, parents, and grandparents too.

*Vinod and Vibha Kulkarni******

I remember my first time playing the hopping game at summer camp. "Out!," exclaimed Swamiji over the speakers. I trudged sadly back to the sidelines, waiting for my name to be called once again. This is how my relationship with Swamiji first started. Now, it has evolved to much, much more. If I'm ever stuck pondering a

difficult question and I need advice, I know I can drive to Kailas Nivas, Ledo's in hand, and ask Swamiji for his help. I know I can also just go to Kailas Nivas to hang out with Swamiji and watch the new videos and photos he's saved to his phone.

Over the years, I've socialized with Swamiji in many different ways. What I didn't realize in those moments was that he was still teaching me important lessons. When we played carrom, it was also an exercise in concentration. When we watched TV or movies, he would point out Vedantic ideas that could be extracted from the plot. When we played checkers, it was an enlightening seminar in making sure I didn't have expectations going into things (especially the game).

Now that I've moved out of the DC area, it will be more difficult for me to see Swamiji often. It certainly will be harder than all the summers we lived in the same house. However, all that does is make the meetings even more special.

*Omkar Kulkarni******

Salutations to our Guru

As we embark on this journey of being together to celebrate Swamiji's *sastiabdputri*, it also serves as a reason to experience and witness the works of our Guru who we revere so much. Our Guru is our very own Swami Dheerananda. He has been the guiding light for us. As I reminisce through the almost 30 years I have been with the Mission, I have positive vibrations of where it has led me personally, professionally and most importantly, spiritually. I picked some of the moments I captured with Swamiji in the pictures included.

With Gurudev's blessings, we continue to thrive despite the various limitations imposed on us especially during the last two years. We really have no words to express our gratitude to Gurudev as He gave us His most precious gift, His son Swami Dheerananda to lead us. In Swamiji, we find our true spiritual leader who is always there for us and never hesitates to listen to us. His confidence and trust in the sevaks give them the energy to keep on working in serving Pujya Gurudev. He is not only our spiritual leader, but our trusting friend and our guide.

Swami Dheerananda's discourses, his style of teaching and his wonderful ways of telling stories to our children keeps them engaged. Their look while listening to Swamiji is in itself mesmerizing. Some of them choose not to blink as they may lose the punch line!!! We know this since

many of them pick Swamiji as their number ONE reason why they come to the Mission!!! When visiting us for Bhiksha, he always kept my children, Nikhil and Nandini entertained. I remember the discussions and even a gathering at Halloween when Swamiji carved a pumpkin with the BMI chart with Nandini's class.

He not only has a special place in our hearts as a member of our family, but also makes us feel part of his family! Even my children, who have now grown and settled down in various parts of the country, still look forward to seeing him, visiting him and enjoying his company. The care is mutual. At Bhiksha, Swamiji continues to entertain us with sweet memories and incidents. Quite often, these memories are of our own children and video clips of them performing for us that he saves as they are his memories too. Swamiji remembers minute details of their interactions with him, and they smilingly acknowledge and cherish those memories. Swamiji never forgets to ask about each and every one and wants to hear of their new endeavors.

I distinctly remember while taking care of my elderly parents Swamiji was a source of mental and spiritual uplifting for them. While they were not associated with the Mission, they looked forward to visiting Chinmayam and would enjoy Swamiji's visits for Bhiksha. Swamiji would keep them engaged with his anecdotes and advice and even referred to them as "Papa and amma." My mom would look forward to cooking his favorite *lauki* dish when she had the chance. When my dad, who would not admit to his aging, had nodded off of the dining chair and fell to the tiled floor, only Swamiji could convince him to wear his neck brace and not sit on the dining table to read and fall asleep!! On dad's last days, Swamiji performed paduka pooja with us and relieved him of ten months of nursing home confinement. Swamiji gave an uplifting talk at my dad's funeral, one to be remembered by all the family and friends.

While Swamiji could not be with my mom due to Covid, he was there to uplift me during those difficult times especially when she passed away. She had no one at the funeral despite her love for masses she knew. Rita lost her mother in India too and had to rush there to be at her side. Swamiji again did a pooja virtually to give us peace and courage at the time of sorrow.

My first trip to Siddhabari with my son in 2002, was also with Swamiji. We enjoyed the entire trip because Swamiji made sure we could do a paduka pooja right at Gurudev's samadhi. It is a cherished memory with my son carrying

the padukas from Lord Rama's temple to the samadhi and us performing the pooja. How blessed could we be to have this opportunity with our Guru, our Swamiji and Gurudev in our hearts.

Swamiji, thank you for your trust in me and your care and affection for me and the family. It is indeed a blessing to experience such joy. Every time I took up a leadership role at the Mission, it was Swamiji who had more faith in me than I did!!! Accompanied by Vilasiniji as they approached me, I could not say "no" to the various leadership positions they had asked me to take on, and why should I. When someone is there to lead and guide you to serving Him it is an honor. Swamiji, you have been that guide.

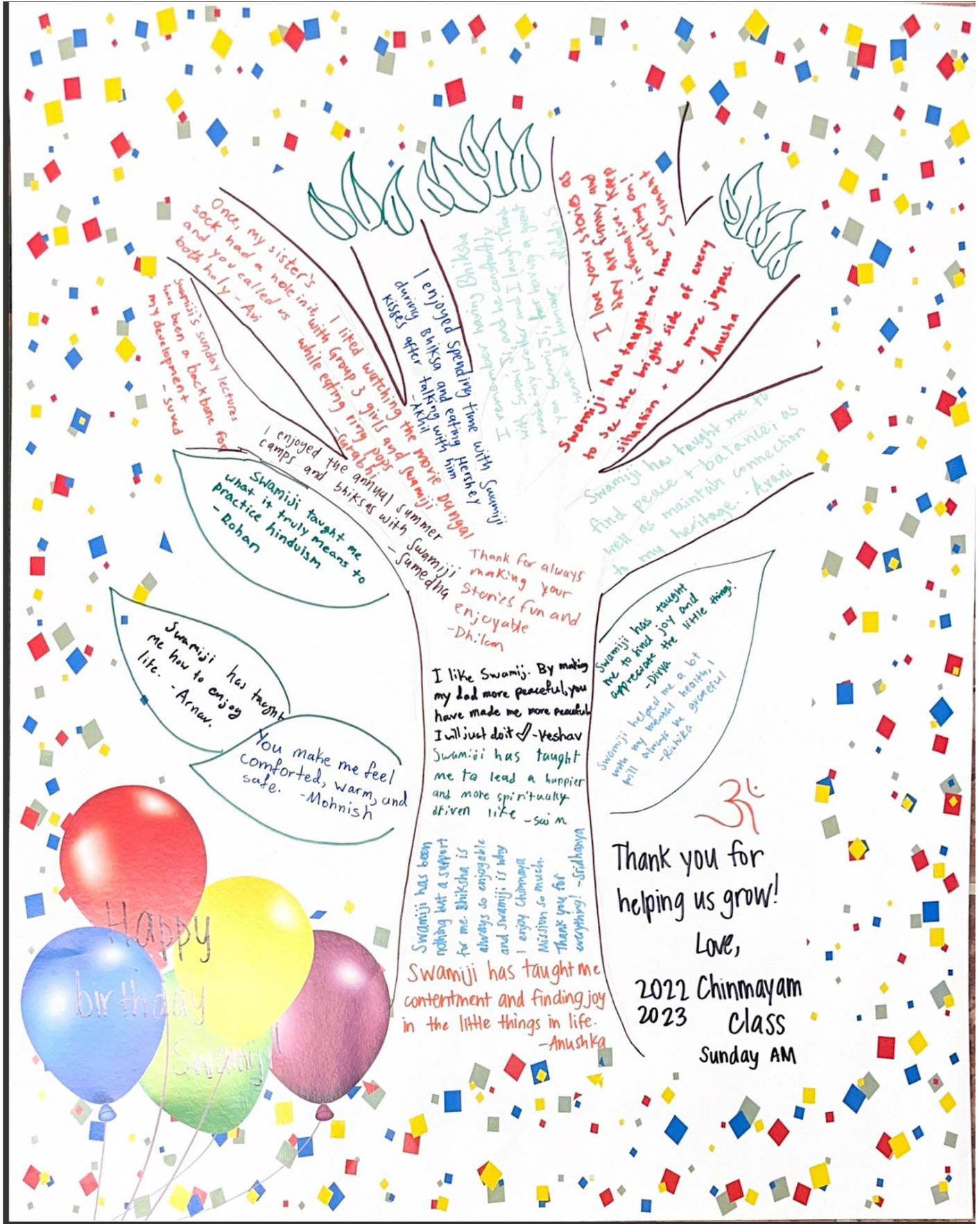
Swamiji – we are not only indebted for all Swamiji does for us. It is indeed a blessing to be amongst inspiring gurus like Swamiji. We wish Swamiji good health and joy. We thank Swamiji for being a part of our lives and many milestones to come.

Sri Gurubhyo Namah

Hari OM

Anil Kishore. *****





Once, my sister's sock had a hole in it, and you called us both holy - Avi
 Swami's Sunday lectures have been a backbone for my development - Suvad



I enjoyed spending time with Swami during BIKSA and eating Hershey kisses - Akhil
 I liked watching the movie Dargah while eating ring pops - Garabhis
 I enjoyed the annual summer camps and biksas with Swami - Samedha

Swami has taught me to see the bright side of every situation - be more joyous. - Anusha
 Swami has taught me to find peace + balance, as well as maintain connection to my heritage. - Ayani

Swami taught me what it truly means to practice hinduism - Rohan

Swami has taught me how to enjoy life. - Arnav

You make me feel comforted, warm, and safe. - Mohnish

Thank for always making your stories fun and enjoyable - Dhilom

I like Swami. By making my dad more peaceful, you have made me more peaceful. I will just do it. - Veshav
 Swami has taught me to lead a happier and more spiritually driven life. - sai m

Swami has taught me to find joy and appreciate the little things! - Divya
 Swami helped me a lot with my mental health, I will always be grateful. - Anika

Swami has been nothing but a support for me. Biksha is always so enjoyable and Swami is why I enjoy Chinmayam. Mission so much. Thank you for everything! - Srithanya
 Swami has taught me contentment and finding joy in the little things in life. - Anushka

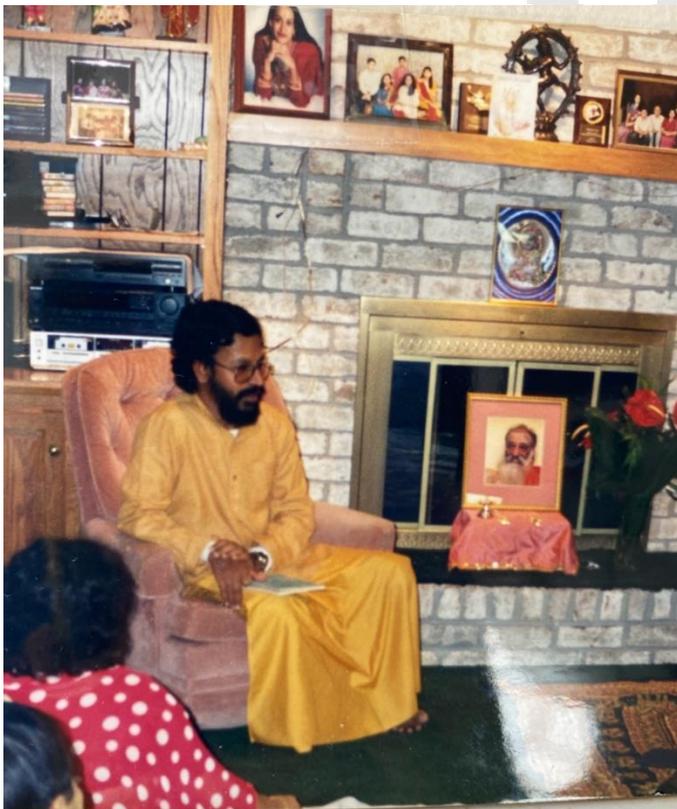
ॐ
 Thank you for helping us grow!
 Love,

2022 Chinmayam
 2023 Class
 Sunday AM





Pictures shared by Mrs. Vimla Heda (sent by Anita Heda Khetan)



We are struck with awe when friends and family talk about their meeting with Gurudev. His sharp intellect, his sense of humor and the power of his words and vision – all who met him seem transformed.

We never had the opportunity to meet Gurudev. For our family, Swami Dheeranandaji embodies the grace, learning, sharp intellect, kindness and compassion one seeks from a Guru and headlines our Chinmaya experience. We are blessed to be members of the Chinmaya family and be guided by our dear Swamiji. Thank you for your blessings, for guiding us in times of joy and sorrow with just the right words and encouragement. Thank you for helping us seek the knowledge of Vedanta, for inspiring seva, and a sincere yearning to learn. Happy 60th birthday Swamiji. May the years ahead be full of happiness, laughter and peace.

With Namaskaarams,

The Krishnan family – Krishnan, Sudha, Varsha, Meghna and Jay

I am From

మానవులకు మణులు సహజంగానే ఇష్టం
మానవుల మదిలో ఆందోళనలు కష్టం

మన ఆందోళనలు తొలగించే మణి
శంకర భగవత్పాదుల వివేక చూడామణి

వివేక చూడామణిని మా మదిలో నిలిపిన
నిష్కలమమైన గురువే స్వామి దీరానంద

విశ్వానికి గురుదేవ్ స్వామి చిన్నయానంద
గీతా జ్ఞానజ్యోతిని వెలిగించిన పరమానంద

అజ్ఞానాందకారాన్ని తొలగించిన మాగురువు
స్వామి దీరానంద కు పఫ్లి పూర్తి శుభాకాంక్షలు

సుధాకర్ కలకొండ

A poem in Telugu - meaning

The gems of the world attract us, causing agitation in our mind.

A gem that removes our agitations is Vivekachudamani of Sri Adi Sankaracharya.

The one who brings this gem into our minds is the Guru, Sri Swami Dheerananda

Swami Chinmayananda kindled joy in the world with Geeta Jnana Yajna

I salute my Guru Swami Dheeranada for removing the darkness of ignorance and wish auspiciousness on his 60th birthday

Sudhakar Kalakonda *****

I am from the BMI chart
from all the summers I have spent at Chinmaya and the lifelong friends I have made I am from the Shiva statue who watched me grow from Maduram to Shivanandam and all the vibrations of chanting Geeta and singing songs

I am from Swami Ji, whose personality shines through anything, whose smile makes everyone feel better, and whose stories put smiles on everyone's faces

I am from all the friends I have made and the lessons I have learned from Swami Ji and his teachings and from a big family who loves each other unconditionally, and a sea of people who have everyone's back from having Swami Ji as my role model and thinking of him every time I need to do something important

I am from staying up till midnight on Janmashtami from the ring pops and jellybeans from watching Hindi shows and songs with Swami Ji, making me realize anything is possible if I try and from having fun during bhiksha and telling him about my life all the times I have played hopping game, with Swami Ji cheering me on

I am from the moments I have spent with Swami Ji, only making it proper to give him the grandest "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" he could ever ask for

I am from "thanksgiving" under Swami Ji's grace and blessings, so I wish him a great, big, happy birthday!!

Nandita Bangalore *****

S - Sage

W - Who

A - Aligns

M - Mind and

I - Intellect to be

J - Joyful through

I - Introspection

We are blessed to have Swami Dheeranandaji in our lives. Through his sacrifice and service, thousands of us are enlightened with the wisdom of the Gita and the Vedas. He has ensured that the DMV area has a thriving Chinmaya Mission community through his constant reminder of service and continuing the work of Gurudev. Those of us who did not get an opportunity to meet Gurudev, see Gurudev in swamiji, ever smiling, bringing humor to his Vedanta teachings while also bringing discipline and order to the mission.

I have never stopped being amazed with how well he can relate the Vedantic teachings to the current times and his use of technology to provide a teaching moment we can never forget. He remembers everyone by name, and always ready to respond to questions and concerns we have.

If it wasn't for swamiji, and Chinmayam mission, my life would have not been enriched with the knowledge and wisdom of the Vedas, for which I am deeply grateful!

His service of 33+ years, will remain in the DNA of all those who have come into contact with him and will continue to grow and spread for generations to come!

Swamiji, thank you, may you be blessed with good health, and May you continue to be a source of inspiration forever!

Aparna & Naresh Durvasula *****

From small bob (blister-o-blister)

To BIG BOB (Bliss-O-Bliss)

Shri Gurubhyo Namaha 🙏🙏🙏

Mehul Mehta *****



Swamiji, thank you for inspiring me!

Anvita Bangalore *****

Swamiji's Acronyms!

Swamiji conveys profound messages sometimes using acronyms. Here are a few some of his devoted students shared for this edition. The idea for this originated with Sri D.C. Rao.

PROBLEMS - Purposeful Roadblocks Offering Beneficial Lessons for Mental Strength

GOAL - Go Over All Limitations

FEAR - Feverish Excitement in the present, Anxiety for the future, Regrets of the past: have no FEAR in life

CAR - Chinmayananda, Anandamayi Ma, Ramana Maharshi: Swamiji's "vehicle"

BUG - Brahma Sutra, Upanishads, Geeta: primary texts in Vedanta

MOTHER - Maintains our true heritage eternally religiously

NO – Next Opportunity

SEVA - Service eliminates vasana accumulation

KBJ - Karma, Bhakti, Jnana,

GPS - Guru Parampara System (gets us back on the path to our destination – supreme goal)

WDDS - Washington (Waking), Delaware (Dream) & Dakota South (Deep Sleep).

R4D - Reception (Prana), Rejection (Apana), Rotation (Vyana), Reaction (Udana) & Digestion (Samana).

IAK - Inertia, Activity & Knowledge (for Tamas, Rajas & Sattva)

IDK – I Don't Know (ignorance; but I know that I don't know, that points to the ever present consciousness in us, Chinmaya)

ALARAM - Attentive Listening, Attentive Reflection & Attentive Meditation.

FEAR - False Experiences Appearing as Real.

SAGE - Shastra kripa, Atma kripa, Guru kripa and Eashwara kripa (for a sadhaka).

FAIL – First Attempt in Learning

END – Effort Never Dies

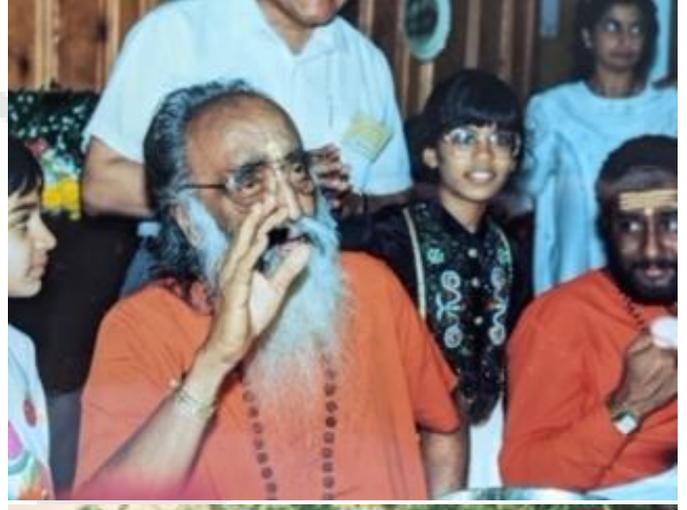
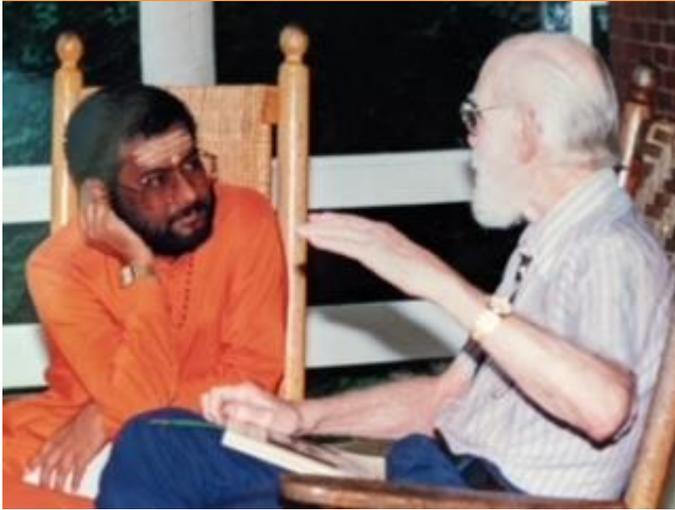
FAITH – Forward All Issues to HIM

SDS – Selfless Dedicated Service

Several Contributors *****



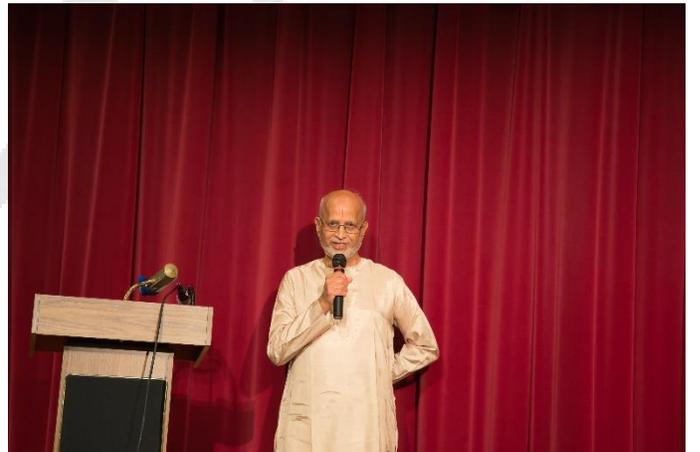
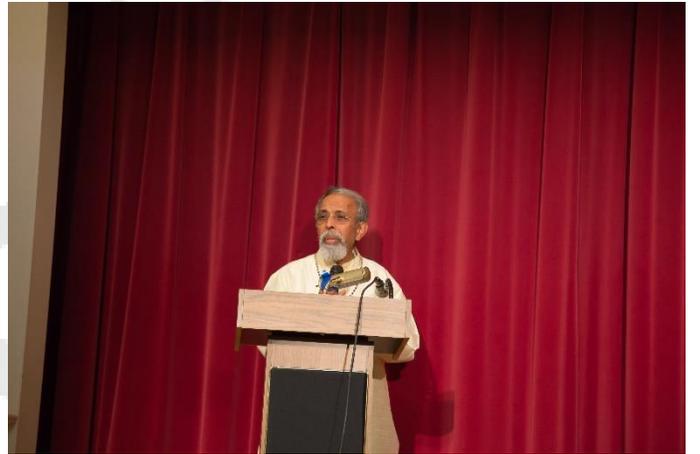
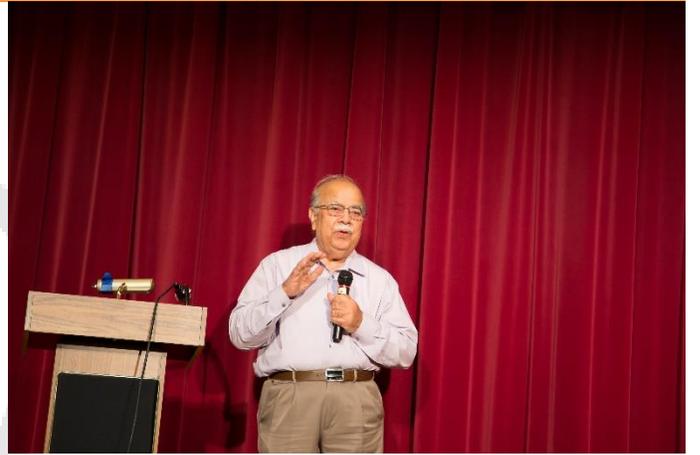
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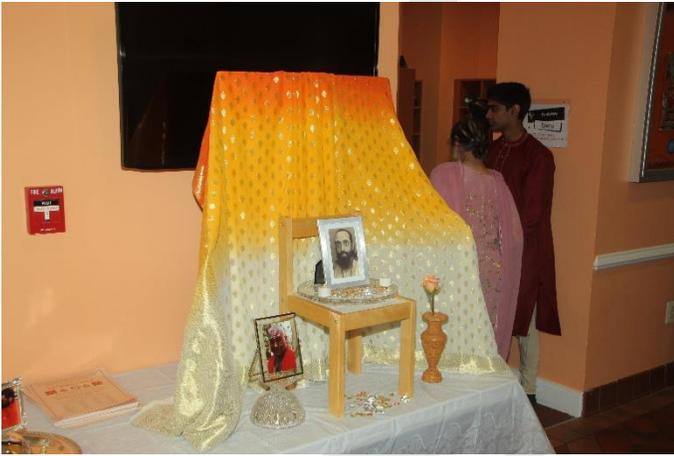
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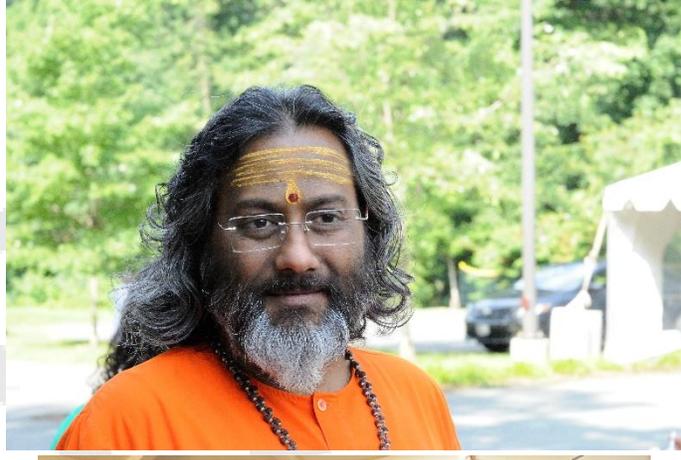
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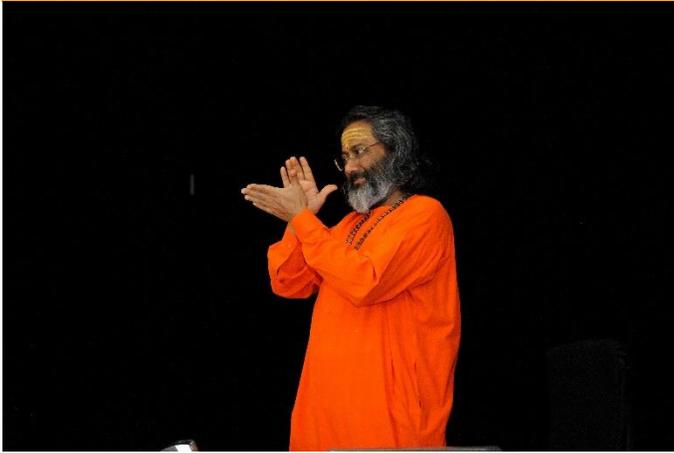
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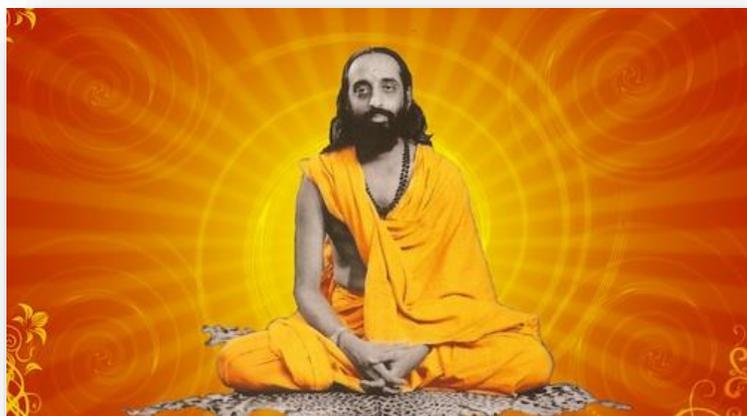


SWAMI DHEERANANDA 60TH BIRTHDAY SPECIAL SOUVENIR EDITION



SWAMI DHEERANANDA 60TH BIRTHDAY SPECIAL SOUVENIR EDITION





Dear Dheerananda,

Hari Om!

Hearty greetings to you on your 60th birthday which falls on 19th of May!



Right from your young days inspired by Pujya Gurudev you have been living your life with total devotion for Him and dedication to His work. Pujya Gurudev's love for you and your family is very well-known to me. I invoke His Grace and Blessings for your firm abidance in glowing spiritual life. I am pleased with your work for Chinmaya Mission in your vision.

With Love & Om,
Tejomayananda



SWAMI DHEERANANDA 60TH BIRTHDAY SPECIAL SOUVENIR EDITION



