

# Chinmaya Ganapati Inauguration and Gyana Yagna By Swami Tejomayananda, Minneapolis, MN, July 13-17, 2009

Chinmaya Mission Twin Cities (CMTC) officially started in 2002 after Guruji's visit for a Gyana Yagna. It started with about 30 kids and with Gurudev's blessing grew to 220 children and 150 member families by 2008. The activities were always constrained by limited rented space. With earnest efforts of a few and support of all, CMTC was blessed with a building of their own and Guruji named it "**Chinmaya Ganapati**". It has about 13,000 square feet built space which includes an auditorium with Altar, 15 classrooms, bookstore, office, kitchen, dining room, shoe/coat room and a storage room. The Center has about 13 acres of land which provides ample space for kids to play outside and parking lot for about 125 cars. The Center is located in Chaska which is about 15 miles southwest of the Minneapolis metro area. The drive to the Center is through beautiful and serene countryside and is a perfect setting for Chinmaya Ganapati.

**Preparation and Transformation** CMTC closed on the property in Chaska on Gurudev's birthday, May 8. Board members and families came together for a **pooja ceremony** on July 4<sup>th</sup>. The pooja performed invoked Lord Ganapati, Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati's blessings. Panditji offered prayers to Puja Gurudev and performed the Kalasha, Navagraha, and Vaasthu Shanti pooja. This started the preparation for transforming this building into Chinmaya Ganapati. The core members and volunteers worked tirelessly for the next 10 days as a family...it felt like preparing for a wedding! There was not only participation from members here but from our extended family in India. Chinmaya Mission Kolkotta members made garlands and presented a beautiful Tanjore painting of Ganapati. Chinmaya Mission Delhi members sent a 10 ft long toran to adorn the Altar and many other decorative flower garlands.



Entrance decorated with rangoli and flowers

## Inauguration Ceremony: July 13, 2009

Puja Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji inaugurated **Chinmaya Ganapati**, the new CMTC Center in Chaska, Minnesota on July 13<sup>th</sup>. There were about 400 guests, including the Mayor of Chaska, as well as dignitaries from Judaism and Islam. The Governor of Minnesota sent his congratulatory letter. CMTC sevaks and sevikas directed flow of traffic, answered questions of guests and served snacks and water before Guruji's arrival. Guruji arrived with the President of CMTC at 6:45 PM and was welcomed by assembled guests. The children offered flowers at Guruji's feet as he walked towards the main entrance decorated with a colorful rangoli and flowers. Guruji received the Purna Kumbha pooja



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and addressed the guests welcoming them to the Center and thanking for their support. Guruji tried a few attempts at untying the ribbon knots to “non-violently” inaugurate the center, and then he picked up the scissors and did the great honor of cutting the ribbon. After this, Guruji toured the Center while the guests were seated in the auditorium. Guruji lit the lamp and invoked blessings from Pujya Gurudev. The children of “Chinmaya dhvani” sang melodious bhajans. The president of CMTC welcomed Guruji, and invited guests and members.



The theme of the inaugural speeches was “Unity in Religion.” The Mayor of Chaska spoke of the historical context of Minnesota, and how the migration of peoples lead to the great diversity we see today. The speaker on Islam spoke about how his religion advocated for Oneness in All. In a quote from the Qur'an, he explained that when we reach Heaven, God will show the human soul that nobody is different, or unequal, and that no religion is better than one or the other. In his closing statement, he said, “I always thought I was me; but no, I was you.” The speaker for Judaism was a lady Rabbi, who started by chanting a few short lines from the Old Testament in Hebrew. She translated it to, “Hear O Israel, you who wrestle with Adonai (God). He is one, and he is all.” She said this in order to show that God only sees oneness in all. In her closing statement, she stated that, “The world only *looks* very fragmented, very diffuse. But really, the world is one.” Guruji spoke about the three layers of relationships within a family. First was the outer layer, or outer appearances; the second was the adversity that families face, and lastly was the layer of love and spiritual connection that binds a group of people together. He stated that we as an organization must always strive to improve that third layer, which will make us work selflessly. He also stated that one must always look at a situation from every possible angle, so that misunderstandings never happen.

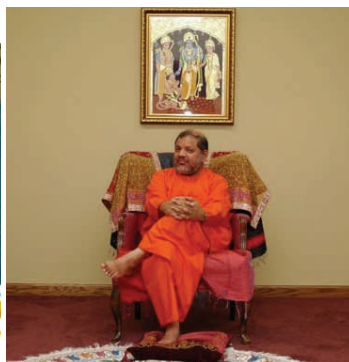


## “Understand Your Mind and Transforming Your Life”, based on Chapter 14 of Bhagvad Gita Discourse

Guruji started with a bhajan and gave a general introduction to how he would conduct discourses. The Gita Chapter 14 deals with the ways to achieve Moksha (Salvation) through knowledge. It also explains the three Gunas, or inherent tendencies. The first aspect Guruji addressed was the question, “Why must one study the Gita or any holy scripture?” Guruji explained with an analogy: He compared the study of Gita versus the study of physics to getting a gift of a mirror versus a watch. He explained that the study of physics will give worldly knowledge like a watch which one views with great interest to obtain the knowledge of the time. The Gita or a holy book is like a gift of a mirror that shows the individuals their reflection. They try to make themselves better by contemplating on their spiritual reflection. Guruji spoke about the nature of satva, rajo and tamo gunas. He explained the characteristics of each, bondage associated with the rajo and tamo gunas and means to overcome them. Guruji then explained how the 14<sup>th</sup> sloka of chapter 14 spoke of what happens after death. Though the body disintegrates, the intellect, mind, and soul leave. The destination is determined by the prevailing gunas during the respective person’s previous life. Satvic people attain the purest of lives. Rajasic people get a life full of activity, and tamasic people get lives of the ignorant. One cannot expect after leading a tamasic lifestyle that in their last moments of life a utopia like satvic nature will settle in. It was said how guna leads to thought, which leads to karma, which leads to the result.



Guruji explained that the first step is to lose all traces of the tamasic guna. By doing so, a person cuts down their laziness and their inattentiveness. To do this, Guruji gave some practical tips; the first 'Satvic sleep.' His advice is to only sleep when one is truly sleepy. He also advised that one should wash their feet, and chant the name of the lord before going to bed. He taught the listeners how to get rid of carelessness with a strict reprimand, saying, “Do it now! Leave nothing waiting for another day, do not procrastinate. Just do it now, and make it a habit!” Guruji explained that in the last six slokas Sri Krishna answers the three questions of Arjuna. What is the nature of a realized man? What are the signs that a realized person is present? Is there another path to realization (go beyond the gunas through equilibrium) other than gyana margam? Guruji explained that the nature of a realized soul is infinite bliss. He/she raises their mind above the material world and the play of the three gunas. He/she observes and does not become the doer of actions. That person is indifferent to pairs of opposites, and performs all actions selflessly, with unconditional love. The other path to realization is bhakthi margam. Guruji explains how the name of the lord is precious and priceless and that unwavering devotion to god raises one’s mind above the three gunas. He concluded the Yagna with a bhajan.

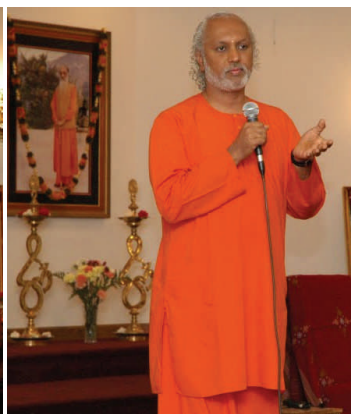


## Banquet, July 18, 2009

Saturday was a day of mixed emotions. Many were elated that the gyana yagna and inauguration of the new center were well attended and organized. While others were more somber as they were not ready to part Guruji's side. There were about 160 adults and 110 children. The day began at 10:30am with Guruji lighting the lamp and invoking blessings of puja Gurudev. The theme of the program was "Bhakthi". Chinmaya Dhvani children started the program with bhajans. Ganesh Raman, a CMTC student sang devotional songs in the carnatic style. Then, a Bharatanatyam piece 'Ganesha Kautavam' was performed by CMTC students.



Swami Ishwaranandaji was invited to speak to the group. Swamiji has been conducting our study group via Skype. He talked about how a center grows with the support of its members. Finally, Guruji gave a brief address to the members. He recognized the CMTC Board members. He sang the new Center celebration song and concluded with a bhajan. There was recitation of Chapter 15 and a delicious, satvic lunch was served. This was the last day for the book stall was manned by volunteers everyday through out the Yagna and showcased the books, magazines, audio, video and DVD formats. After lunch, members bid farewell to Guruji with a heavy heart and prayed that he would return to celebrate moorti sthapna. Members felt that the wedding celebrations in their extended family had come to an end. We need to internalize the teachings of Pujya Gurudev and Guruji and then only we can go beyond the physical form.



This article was written by **Aditya Valluru** and **Ganesh Raman**. They are senior students of CMTC Balavihar. It was edited and formatted by Manu Madhok and Satyam Valluru. The pictures were provided by Subbarao Uppaluri and Venkat Narayanaswamy.

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