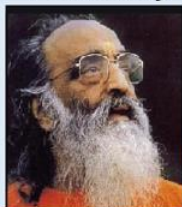




CHINMAYA MISSION CHICAGO

BADRI - A School of Vedantic Studies

Monthly Newsletter – January 2024



Chinmaya



Wisdom Quote

"The gross can never condition the subtle." – Swami Chinmayananda

Swamiji's Message



Every day is bursting with opportunities for us to do and to serve, to act and to express, to love and to live. – Chinmaya

Actions of the past decided our present. Actions of the present decide our future. If this is the law, why not make use of every moment in the present to chisel and shape a noble future?

The wise ones hence convert every situation to give, to love, to serve and to sacrifice.

This was the time when India was already independent. Babu Shreeram Singh, who had worked in the ministry as a stenographer, had great reverence for Gita and Ramayana. To spread the message of Gita, he had established a school in Lucknow.

It was decided to invite Smt. Sarojini Naidu, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, as the Guest of Honour to inaugurate the annual function of the school which she kindly agreed. Singhji also wanted a person on the stage who could speak on Gita with authority. Hence it was decided to invite Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddarji (Trustee of Gita Press Gorakhpur) as the Chief Guest.

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Upcoming Events -

- **New Year Puja – 1/1 @ 6 pm**
 - Puja, Chanting & Bhajan @ Shrine
- **Vishnu Sahasranamam: 1/7 @ 9:15 am**
- **Bhajan Sandhya – 1/13 @ 6 pm**
 - Host – Smt Bansari & Shri Uday Mehta
- **Group Vedic Chanting – 1/27 @ 9 am**
- **Chinmaya Vanaprastha Program – Launch**
 - Sunday, 28th Jan – Online
- **Yoga & Meditation Retreat**
 - 1/26 – 28 @ Abhyudaya Center

Highlights from Previous Month

The month of December is dotted with several celebrity occasions starting with the Annual Fundraising Dinner and along the way having Tapovan Jayanti, Geeta Jayanti, Vaikunta Ekadashi and finally ending with the Winter Vedanta Retreat. With the Christmas and New year days falling a week apart on Mondays, for two consecutive weekends our Badri center was also closed for the regular Bala Vihar and Study Group activities. With the long weekend closures and other planned weekend activities on the calendar, the regular monthly chanting activities were rearranged and comfortably conducted.

1. Monthly Vedic Chanting

We had our Monthly Group chanting of Vedic mantras and suktams on the 17th Dec as the last two Sundays were declared long weekend holidays. Anyone willing to join the chanting or listening to an hour of Vedic chants, can join the group who meet on the last Sunday of every month at our Badri Shrine.

2. Vishnu Sahasranamam Chanting

The first Sunday of the month always starts with the revibrating chant of Vishnu Sahasranamam at our Badri Narayana's shrine. A larger group also assembled later during the month for Vaikunta Ekadashi to chant Vishnu Sahasranamam.

3. Geeta Chanting Competition

The bi-annual Geeta Chanting competition was conducted on 9th Dec at 1 pm. We had several enthusiastic participants for this in-person event. All the participants were divided into various groups based on their age/ grade level with the adults grouped separately. All the participants received certificates and based on certain criteria around diction, memorizing ability etc the top three winners from each category were also chosen. The next competition coming up in April is planned to be a National event.



ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER

The only fund-raising event organized by Chinmaya Mission Chicago is the much-awaited Annual Fundraising Dinner and that is usually during the first weekend of December. With the arrangements and canvassing for Souvenir advertisements having started several weeks earlier, all this culminated with the grand gala event that evening. The theme for this year's event was 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

After an hour of ice breaking and networking that included a variety of snacks along with a choice of tea, coffee or Mango lassi, the event formally started with offering Purna Kumbha to both our Swamijis accompanied by vedic chants. This was followed by a short address by our Swamijis and a brief note by Smt Rajul Bhalala, who is the new President of Chinmaya Mission Chicago. There was also an update on the inclusion of Abhyudaya Retreat to the Chinmaya Mission Chicago family. There after the donations started pouring in and the sumptuous dinner serving also began.



4. Tapovan Jayanti/ Geeta Jayanthi

Its an auspicious coincidence that the anniversaries of Swami Tapovan ji Maharaj and the birth of our revered scripture The Bhagavath Geeta, fall on the same day, 23rd December. World over all ardent devotees celebrate the twin anniversaries by chanting all 18 chapters of The Geeta and that was how the Badri family also celebrated the day. The event began at 8:30 am with the chanting of Vedic hymns followed by Guru Stotram, Tapovana Shatakam and Geeta Dhyanam. Following this all the 18 chapters of Bhagavath Geeta were chanted without a pause or break. Various individuals and families were pre-assigned specific chapters or sections of some chapters to lead the chanting. The celebrations ended with a concluding prayers and a simple lunch prasad.



5. Vaikunta Ekadashi

Going by our annual tradition, on Vaikunta Ekadashi, all devotees will gather at Badri Narayana's shrine and chant Vishnu Sahasranama. This year the auspicious day coincided with Tapovan & Geeta Jayanti day. Hence, after chanting all 18 chapters of Bhagavath Geeta in the morning, most of the devotees stayed back for an afternoon session of Vishnu Sahasranamam chanting twice along with a few Vedic Suktams including Purusha Suktam.



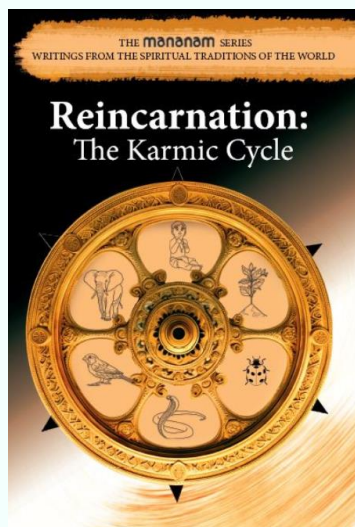
Winter Vedanta Retreat

The Winter Vedanta Retreat had brought together several enthusiastic devotees, many of whom preferred to stay over at Abhyudaya for the three-day event. The inauguration of the event was on Wednesday evening followed by three full days of program packed retreat. Guided by both our Swamijis, the retreat provided an opportunity for each participant to contemplate and review their journey. Everyone were also treated to great array of satwik foods through out the day.

Every day started with the chanting of Vedic Mantras and Suktams for the first 30 mins, followed by Swamiji's talk on Kaivalyopanishad. There after there were several more such discourse sessions and a Q&A session with Swamiji. In the evening, Swamiji also conducted a session teaching everyone the right way of chanting Kaivalyopanishad. This event has opened the possibilities of conducting several such short retreat sessions in the future.



Mananam Publication – New Release



Rooted in the teachings of Swami Chinmayananda since 1975, Mananam has evolved from a newsletter to a collection of over 75 titles, with a focus on the spiritual dimensions of various subjects.

The next issue of the Mananam series continues to enrich the spiritual quest with the December release - "Reincarnation: The Karmic Cycle". This book delves into the timeless exploration of rebirth with contributions from spiritual masters across traditions. You can watch the promotional release video [here](#).

Experiences with Gurudev

There was a time when there was a major crisis in running the Mission, dissent amongst members. A devotee was discussing the difficulties the Mission was facing with Pujya Gurudev and finally managed to say, “Swamiji, but your life’s work, Chinmaya Mission, is itself in danger of being destroyed!”

“So, what?” was Pujya Gurudev’s reply. “The mission was established to serve a purpose. If that purpose has now been served, what’s to cry about? If it’s His will, the Lord will provide us with another vehicle for work.”

These few words of wisdom were a reminder about the absolute nature of Vedanta and the purity of the selfless Teacher who lives in detachment from all temporal events.

As Pujya Gurudev said Chinmaya Mission did survive the tests it passed through at that time and has emerged even stronger every passing year!

Why do we suffer?

“Suffering depends, not upon the factual happenings, but upon the texture of each one’s mind. Things happening around us are interpreted by our mind and we label them and come to experience them as great tragedies or wonderful blessings”. ~Swami Chinmayananda”

Swami Sharananandaji’s Weekly Program Schedule

Program Name	Details
Saddarshanam (on Zoom)	Sunday/ 8:00 – 8:45 am
Bhagavad Gita Discourse (In-person at Shrine)	Sunday / 10 – 10:30 am
Viveka Choodamani (on Zoom)	Tuesday/ 7 – 8 pm
Mandukya Upanishad (on Zoom)	Wed/ 7 – 8 pm
Drik Drishya Viveka (on Zoom)	Monday/ 7:30 – 8:30 pm

Badri Weekly Class Schedule



Chinmaya Mission Chicago
Badri



Weekly Class Schedule

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Geeta Chanting	9:15 – 9:45 am 12:00 – 12:30 pm	7:00 – 8:00 pm *					
Sanskrit Classes	7:15 – 8:30 pm *	6:00 – 7:00 pm *			7:00 – 8:00 pm *		
Stuti Vandana			6:00 – 6:30 pm * 6:30 – 7:00 pm *				
Swaranjali (Bhajans)	12:30 – 1:00 pm			7:00 – 8:00 pm *			
Vedic Chanting	9:15 – 9:45 am 7:30 – 8:00 pm *				7:30 – 8:00 pm * 8:00 – 9:00 pm *		
Vishnu Sahasranamam	6:00 – 7:00 pm *						
Yoga							9:30 – 10:30 am

* - Online Classes – Please check website for details – <http://mychinmaya.org>

Contacts	Please check website for registration and zoom information
Geeta Chanting Ramesh Turuvekere : rameshrt@gmail.com Sudha Gouthama : sudhagouth@yahoo.com	http://mychinmaya.org/gita-chanting
Sanskrit Venkat Palli : vsp410@gmail.com	https://mychinmaya.org/sanskrit-classes/
Stuti Vandana Suchi Achar : suchiram@hotmail.com	https://mychinmaya.org/activities/stuti-vandana/
Swaranjali (Bhajans) Pavithra Anand : pavithra.anand@gmail.com Raman Mahadevan : ramdevan23@gmail.com	https://mychinmaya.org/activities/swaranjali-2/
Vedic Chanting Sunil Narayanan : pnsunil@outlook.com Sashi Narasimhan : laksharag@gmail.com	https://mychinmaya.org/activities/vedic-chanting/
Vishnu Sahasranamam Sudha Gouthama : sudhagouth@yahoo.com Sini Narayanan : sini_athul@yahoo.com Venkat Palli : vsp410@gmail.com	
Yoga Shila Sanghani : shilaom@gmail.com	https://mychinmaya.org/activities/yoga-meditation/

Updates from around the world -

- [Swadhyaya Series of Self Learning](#) – Online learning with access to materials
- [CIF – Courses](#) available this month
 - Online mode only | Registration required
- [Puja Vidhanam Course](#)
 - 1 month in-person/ English
 - Swami Sharadananda Sarasvathi
 - Basic and Advanced level courses available
 - 12 Aug – 10 Sept 2023 @ Adi Shankara Nilayam
- [Chinmaya Viboothi](#) – Summary of Events
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nYbe5AEqRM>

OM Shanthi

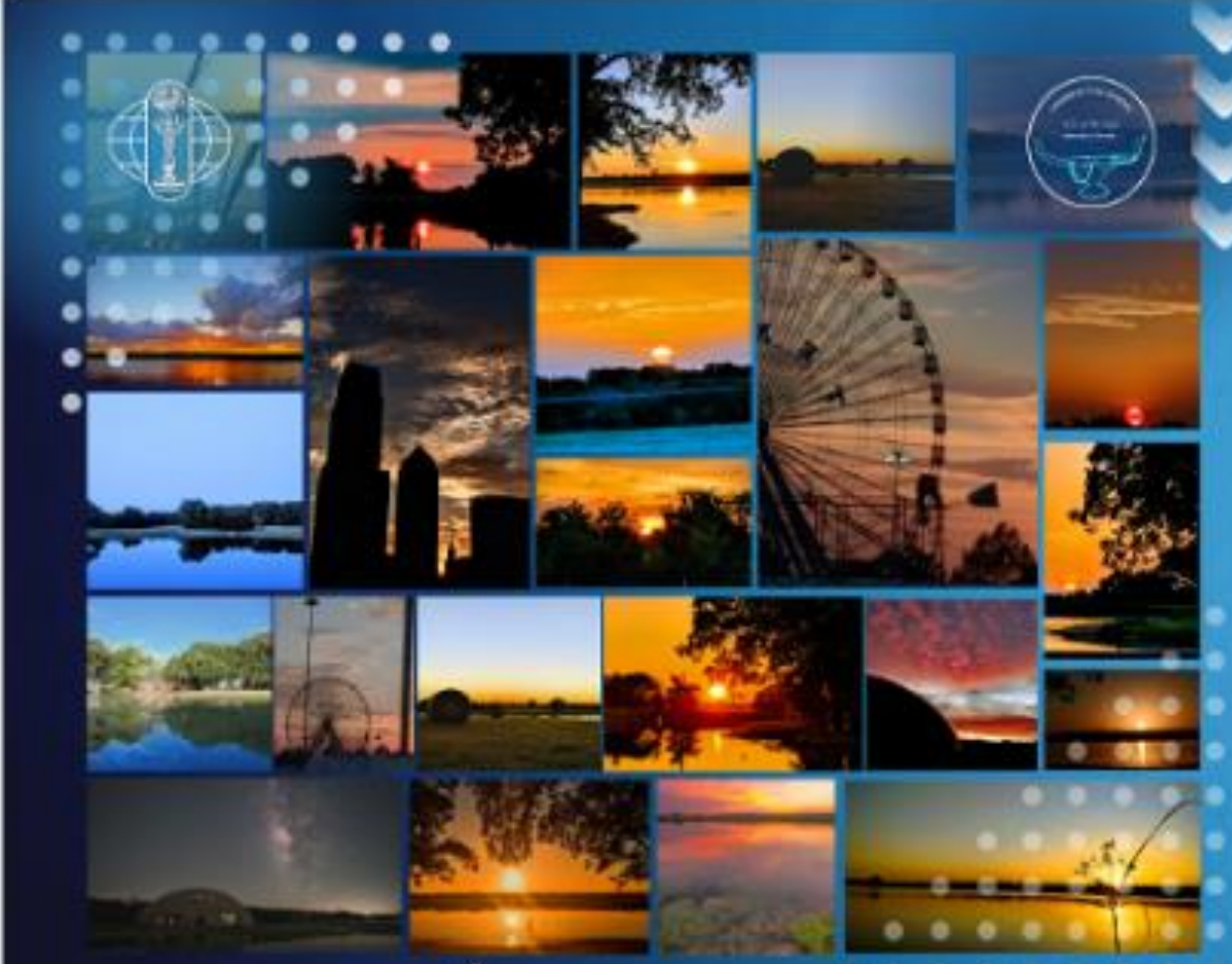


With great emotion and a heavy heart, we bring the information of the unexpected demise of Ms Medha Rajashankar, daughter of our Sevika Smt. Suma and (Late) Shri Raj Rajashankar on Friday, 29th Dec 2023.

Visitation and funeral will be held on Wednesday, 3rd January 2024, between 10 – 11:30 am at Beidelman-Kunsch Funeral Homes & Crematory, 24021 Royal Worlington Dr. Naperville, IL 60564


We offer our support and strength to our family members in grief.


Youth Empowerment Program




*Youth Empowerment
Program*


L E A R N | S E R V E | G R O W

 CHINMAYA MANGALAM
10470 FM744, Barry, TX 75102

 DATE
JUNE 10 - JULY 19, 2024

 QUESTIONS?
HARI@CHINMAYAMMISSION.ORG

COST
\$2,000



Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth – An Update

The University Grants Commission of India has bestowed upon Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth an enduring extension of approval, solidifying our esteemed status as a Deemed-to-be-University (also known as **Deemed University**).

This remarkable achievement synchronizes with the auspicious occasion of the 108th Jayanti year of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, instilling in us a profound sense of gratitude and blessings.

In this edition of the [CVV Donor Report](#), you will discover this news alongside numerous exceptional accomplishments of our dedicated students and faculty.

Furthermore, we extend a warm invitation to watch this video showcasing the recent visit by Pujya Swami Swaroopananda (Chancellor of CVV and the Global Head of Chinmaya Mission) to CVV. This visit serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to upholding the highest standards for the betterment of our students, faculty, and the new campus.

Our deepest gratitude goes to each and every one of you for your unwavering support. We are grateful to have you as part of our family and eagerly anticipate celebrating more milestones with you in the New Year.



Chinmaya Mission Chicago Badri ♦ Yamunotri ♦ Gangotri



Starting on Sunday, January 28, 2024. Details to follow
Chinmaya VANAPRASTHA Program - Chicago Chapter

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM:

1. To make a smooth transition from householder raising a family to being an empty nester moving towards a spiritual lifestyle.
2. To improve the quality of life and age gracefully (joyfully also).

Ages 50 plus are welcome to join!

Link to join: <https://shorturl.at/GSV67>

PROGRAM PLAN

- Monthly online meeting via zoom with satsang and invited speaker on varied topics for health and wellbeing
- Quarterly In-person meeting to meet, learn and socialize
- Potential weekend retreats and much more!!

CONTACTS

Pushpa Soundararajan (630) 290 - 1344 (Badri)

Ganapathi Shankar (847) 212 - 9864 (Yamunotri)



Chinmaya Mission Chicago - Yamunotri

YOGA & MEDITATION RETREAT



JAN 26, 6 PM - JAN 28, 3 PM, 2024



ABHYUDAYA CENTER, 11S250, IL-83,
WILLOWBROOK, IL

Explore and immerse yourself in a caring environment that supports your personal transformation under the spiritual guidance of Swami Sharanananda ji and certified yoga teachers - Arun and Anitha Bellary



Scan QR code
to register

Fee: \$275

includes accommodation
and meals

Yoga Asana : Pranayama : Meditation : Satsang : Bhajans : Chanting : Yoga Nidra

Experience the rejuvenating power of physical postures and
energizing calming power of breath.

Connect with the power of sacred sounds.

Savor the peace and joy.

Contacts: Arun Bellary, arun.bellary@gmail.com, 847-323-4422
Anitha Bellary, anitha.sapuru@gmail.com, 224-280-1100

Swamiji's Message cont....

Everything went according to plan. On the previous day of the function, a pandal was set up, the stage was decorated, and the chairs and the tables were properly placed. By evening all arrangements were made for receiving the dignitaries in a grand way.

Unfortunately, there was heavy rain in the late night, and it went on for hours. The ground became wet and soggy. Pools of water got collected in various places. In the storm, some of the bamboo poles fell and the pandal collapsed. The chairs became wet, misplaced and soiled. The stage was flooded with water. The rain continued till early morning.

The function was supposed to start at 11 am. The train in which Poddarji was travelling from Gorakhpur, being four hours late, arrived at Lucknow station at 10 am instead of the scheduled 6 am. Poddarji went straight to the venue and reached there at 10.30 am. He saw that the whole venue was in a mess and those gathered were wondering what to do.

Without wasting time, Poddarji quickly sprang up into action. He called all people who were present there – the teachers, the students, the staff, the workers etc. and said, “This is neither the time to blame anyone nor the to sit and relax. We still have half an hour time. Let us all unite together and do what we can. Together we all can set things right. Now come on...”

People present there were divided into groups and each group was given a task to finish.

Within minutes, chairs and tables were cleaned and properly placed, the poles were fixed, the pandal was set right, the flooded stage was soaked dry, the stage was broomed clean, and everything got over in 20 minutes!

Poddarji's inspiration and perspiration became contagious, and everyone joined hands wholeheartedly in setting things right. Maybe this was the only function where the Chief Guest was seen wiping the chairs and sweeping the venue!

In the third chapter of the Gita, Karma Yoga, the Lord says: “When people come together in a spirit of sacrifice, pouring out their best for the welfare of all, without ego and egocentric desires, then success is sure and guaranteed.”

This situation became a wonderful opportunity in the hands of Poddarji to give this valuable lesson to the students and the teachers. In the hands of the masters, every calamity is but an opportunity to teach something profound and valuable!

Smt. Naidu arrived at 10.55 am. She could hardly make out that the whole stage was arranged just ten minutes back! She was accompanied to the stage along with other dignitaries. After the formal inaugural ceremonies, Poddarji stood to speak.

He gave a brilliant discourse on Gita. Those who witnessed Poddarji as a Karma Yogi a few minutes back, now saw in him the expression of a Jnani steeped in the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita.

In his short speech of just 15 minutes, Poddarji emphasised that Gita was not a book for the renunciates and the retired, but the manual of right living for everyone who was battling the challenges of day-to-day life. He blessed all the students saying that they were indeed fortunate to get this knowledge at a very young age.

The talk ended with thundering applause from the audience. For many of them, this talk was a life-transforming one.

As soon as Poddarji finished, Smt. Naidu rose to speak. It was not her turn according to the list of events, but she could not contain herself!

She expressed her heartfelt appreciation for Poddarji and exclaimed that the joy she felt while listening to Poddarji was so much that she was reminded of the discourses of Mahatma Gandhiji in Sabarmati Ashram. She said that those who lived the life of selfless service preached by Gita had in their words a special attraction and power to transform the masses.

A beautiful quote from Rabindranath Tagore says: "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

A letter from a village in the state of Himachal Pradesh came to the Ministry of Defence.

The writer introduced himself as a school teacher and put forward a request:

"Sir, my only son has died a heroic death in the Kargil war on 7th July 1999. The first death anniversary will come in a few days. As that day is very special for me and my wife, we would like to visit the place, the spot where he breathed his last.

If you think that this wish can't be fulfilled due to security reasons, I am alright with it and I withdraw this request."

The Department Officer who read this letter called his subordinate and said, "We must see that the desire of this father is fulfilled, to bring the teacher and his wife to the place where their boy had died. I am ready to bear the expense if the Department refuses to pay it. Do the needful immediately."

The order was acted upon accordingly.

On the day of remembrance of the deceased hero, the elderly couple was brought to the narrow mountain range in Kargil with due respect. When they were taken near the place where their son died, the soldiers who were on duty there stood erect and saluted.

One soldier did something which no one expected.

He came forward with a handful of flowers and offered it at the feet of the teacher and prostrated unto him. Controlling his tears, he stepped back, stood straight and offered his military salute.

The teacher was stunned. He said: "Sir, you are a military officer. Please don't touch my feet. I don't deserve this."

The officer said politely: "Sir, there is a reason for this. I was with your son. We were in the same regiment and we fought the Pakistanis together on this mountain ridge. I am the one who had seen the heroism of your son live on the field..."

His voice got choked with emotion. He paused.

The teacher went near him, held his hand and humbly requested, "Please, sir, please tell me the whole story. I promise you, I will not cry. I will not break down."

The officer said: "Sir, you may not cry, but I may find it difficult."

Controlling himself, the soldier pointed to a mountain range and continued: "That's where the Pakistanis were shooting from their bunker hundreds of bullets from their HMG (Heavy Machine gun). Five of us advanced. We were hiding behind a rock, just 30 feet away from the Pakistani bunker."

With a sigh, the officer continued: "I told the group, 'They will keep shooting. No point in wasting time waiting here. I am going to do the death-charge. I am going to take the bullets on me. I will run to their bunker and throw the grenade. Once they are killed, you all can come to the bunker and capture it.' And I was getting ready for it."

"That is when your son looked at me and said: 'Are you crazy? You have your wife and children to look after. I am still unmarried. I will do the death-charge and you capture the bunker.' So saying, even without waiting for my reply, taking the grenade forcibly from my hand he charged towards the enemies."

"Bullets showered on him from the Pakistanis and your son dogged over and reached the bunker. He took the pin out of the grenade and threw it right into the bunker. Thirteen Pakistanis died on the spot. HMGs were paralysed and there was total silence from the bunker. The area came under our control."

"I was the first to lift and evacuate your son's body. There were 42 bullets all over his body. Sir, I placed his head in my hand. Only then did he breathe his last. I asked my superior to give me the responsibility of bringing the coffin to your village. But I was refused permission because of some other responsibility."

"Had I had the privilege of lifting the coffin, I would have put these flowers at his feet. I couldn't. But now I have the privilege of putting at your feet sir."

The teacher's wife broke down, but with great dignity controlled herself, covering her face with her saree.

The teacher controlled his tears. From his shoulder bag, he took a package and handed it over to the officer and said: "I had brought a shirt for my son expecting him to come for vacation. But he did not come. Then came the news of his heroic death...."

I had brought it to keep it where he died, but now I know who is to wear this shirt. Please don't refuse. Please take this..."

Tears rolled down his cheeks as the officer received the package.

The Kargil war hero was none other than Captain Vikram Batra who was posthumously awarded the Param Veer Chakra, India's highest and the most prestigious award for valour.

The world is bursting with opportunities.

The majority misuse them to complain and to quarrel.

A very few employ them to love, to serve and to sacrifice.

O M T A T S A T