

Journey to Enlightenment

On the Wings of Light and Love

Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu
Chetana Catherine Florida

Journey to Enlightenment On the Wings of Light and Love

**Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu
Chetana Catherine Florida**

**Edited by:
Nirmala Nancy Hanke
Raksha Penni Helsene**

BookSurge Publishing
7290 B, Investment Drive
Charleston, SC 29418
www.BookSurge.com

ISBN: 1-4392-0186-2
August, 2008



Lighthouse Center, Inc.
740 East Shore Drive
Whitmore Lake, MI 48189
www.LighthouseCenterInc.org

Acknowledgements

A special thank you to Gurudev Shree Chitabhanuji, whose idea it was to compile a book in remembrance of Chetana, a book of all the spiritual messages from the Lighthouse Center Beacon newsletter. His inspiration, patience and encouragement have been invaluable.

We are also thankful to Richard J. Smoot for his expert and expeditious rendering of the document into publishing format and his high-tech expertise in working with the publisher.

Many thanks to Aum Terry Abrams and Jyoti Betsy Thorne for generously providing photographs and to Liza Cheuk May Chan for the cover photograph.

A special thanks to Raksha Penni Helsene for diligently and tirelessly keying all of the messages from the Beacon newsletters into electronic form.

Thanks to the Lighthouse Board of Directors and the entire Lighthouse family for their support and enthusiasm for this project.

Most of all, we are forever grateful to our beloved spiritual mother, Chetana, for her words of wisdom and her loving heart.

Nirmala Nancy Hanke
Raksha Penni Helsene
Editors



Photo Credit: Aum Terry Abrams

Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu and Chetana Catherine Florida

Contents

Preface	8
Messages from Chetana Catherine Florida 1989 to 2003	9
Biography of Chetana Catherine Florida	66
Photographs	67
Messages from Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu 1991 to 2003	77
Biography of Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu	139

Preface

The Lighthouse Beacon newsletter was first published in 1989, ten years after Catherine Florida founded the Lighthouse Center for meditation and spiritual development. In each issue Catherine would write a message, and after she met Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji, she invited him to contribute a message as well.

After Catherine received her spiritual name Chetana from Chitrabhanuji in India, the Lighthouse Center began to be a bridge between East and West, and this was reflected in the Beacon Messages. Lighthouse members and friends looked forward to these messages for inspiration, new information, especially about Jaina teachings, meditation, and the challenges and lessons along their spiritual paths.

To those of us at the Lighthouse Center, Chetana was and always will be our spiritual mother, teacher, mentor and friend. Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji continues to grace us with his presence, his compassion, his peace, and to illuminate for us the Jaina teachings of Ahimsa and Reverance for all Life. We are hopeful that their messages gathered here will be a source of inspiration, clarity and encouragement to you.

Messages from Chetana Catherine Florida

“We all know that she was the incarnation of love and light.”

Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji

December 1989: Choices

The following is taken from the “Twelve Facets of Reality: The Jain Path to Freedom”, page 45 by Gurudev Shree Chitrabanu.

“We have not come into the world to fight, to quarrel, to be sad and in the evening to go to bed miserable. We are not here in the world for that. There are many who are engaged in such vicious circular behavior. Let them do it. Those whose minds are obsessed with worldly things, power, position, money cannot do otherwise!”

In contemplation of the above statement, I have come to the conclusion that again life has many, many choices. So I share a couple of my choices with all of you. Maybe they can be helpful to you in making some of your choices in life.

“The Choice”

We all have the power to choose whether to react in anger or love. Use the power of choice wisely. Choose LOVE.

“A Choice”

I choose to be an open channel for love, light and order to always be coming in to me.

Namaste,

Cathy Florida

March 1990: Spiritual Work

Let us all be renewed with the blessings of love and joy as spring comes in.

Many students, as well as people who come to see me wish they had some type of “spiritual work” to do. There seems to be a misunderstanding about what “spiritual work” is and what it is not. Let it be known that when you are dedicated on a pathway of your choosing that moves you with the direction of light that you are involved with “spiritual work”, no matter what type of job you hold or work you do on the earth level.

A number of years ago I was inspired to write about life’s work when I was still working in the College of Nursing at Wayne State University. I was inspired just because at that time, I too, felt I wasn’t really doing “spiritual work”...

Employment:

Q. Are you employed?

A. Yes

Q. How long have you been employed?

A. Always

Q. What is the nature of your work?

A. A little, and sometimes a lot of everything!

Q. Do you enjoy your work?

A. Sometimes...not always

Q. Did you have training for your job?

A. On-the-job training

Q. Is your boss fair?

A. When I stop and think about it, he is very fair. Even when I feel I cannot handle something – I end up managing it! He never really gives me more than I can do.

Q. Is your boss an equal opportunity employer?

A. Yes. Total acceptance of all races, religions, creeds, and he is not a sexist!

Q. Are there benefits included in your employment?

A. Yes, many – sometimes so many I miss taking advantage of them, but they are there!

Q. When your boss gives you a job, does he give you enough time to accomplish it?

A. Yes – I have all the time in the world! And if I feel like I just can’t get it done, he will let it go for the time being, but he knows and I know that eventually it will have to be done.

Q. One final question. Who is your boss?

A. God.

Namaste,

Cathy Florida

Fall 1990: Harvesting What you Planted

Many blessings of prosperity as you begin to harvest this fall all that you have planted in the spring.

In the spring, many people are busy with the planting of flower or vegetable gardens or both. After making sure that there is enough water and food for the garden as it grows, they then wait until it is time to harvest that which they have planted. They can expect tomatoes from tomato plants, cucumbers from cucumber plants and so on. We have a very clear understanding of what we plant is what we will get!

And so it is with the mind and with everything. That is “As ye sow so shall ye reap” and/or “For every action there is a consequence or Karma.”

So it becomes very important to watch what we plant and nurture in our minds. If we desire a beautiful healthy harvest in time, we must take time to plant beautiful and healthy thoughts towards self, others and the universe. Beautiful and healthy thoughts turn into beautiful and healthy words and actions.

Take time to plant love instead of hate, pleasure instead of pain, forgiveness instead of anger, and admiration instead of jealousy. And know that what you do plant does grow and you do indeed reap the harvest of what you have planted.

Namaste,

Cathy Florida

Spring 1991: Activate Thoughts for Peace

In order to change an action, the thoughts must be changed first, since the action is the end result of the thinking that has taken place...

Think about peaceful conclusions being made regarding the war in the Middle East and in the rest of the Universe.

Then

Activate your thoughts of peace through meditation, prayers and visualization.

So we can all do something to help support the efforts and actions that work towards peaceful conclusions.

And lastly, remember...

World peace truly begins within each individual consciousness. A person who truly experiences a state of "ahimsa" (non-violence) cannot create violence outside of himself or herself, for what is within self is also outside of self.

Namaste,

Cathy Florida

June 1991: Live Life to the Fullest

It's hard to believe sometimes how fast time goes by! Here it is summer already and it didn't seem so long ago when we were bundled up for winter. And soon we will be bundling up again for another winter.

One "unchangeable" circumstance in life for all of us is that no matter who you are or where you are in this universe, everyone has the same 24 hours a day. As we live life we see some people do so much in a 24-hour period while others accomplish very little. And because we are in a "doing" society, most of us pay attention as to how much we can "do" in life.

To really make the most progress in life toward greater and greater happiness and fulfillment one must plan and implement time daily towards this accomplishment.

Again, since we all have the same 24 hour period of time, why is it that some progress daily towards all of their goals, including being more happy and fulfilled, while others watch the days pass by?

What does it take to live life to the fullest?

It takes vision. It takes clarity within the mind to see how to plan and implement a most worthwhile day. And after you achieve clarity within the mind, it takes you to organize your time to include right practices in order to accomplish the most each day that you can have and achieve clarity within the mind.

Clarity of purpose in life is achieved through "listening". The most complete listening that we can do is accomplished through the different meditation states. Through meditation we see what needs to be done in order to progress towards ALL our goals, including greater happiness and fulfillment in life.

Take time NOW today; begin to get "clear" about what is important in life not only for today, but for tomorrow, next week, next year and for the next lifetime....Meditate daily.

Namaste,

Cathy Florida

October 1991: What is the Truth?

What is truth???? I have my understanding of what truth is....AND you have your understanding of what truth is...AND did you know that there are 242 breakdowns of what "TRUTH" is within Christianity alone?

So it does get confusing to think of how many people "know" the truth and to know that it can be different at some level from person to person.

The most accepted truths contain thoughts about Love, and that Love is the Master Key. This really becomes interesting to observe and what this really means to different people. For instance, I have had the personal experience of growing up and being told in and outside of churches that I could and should love all people of the same religious preference and of the same color and preferably they would be American! My mother, not being attached to any church, allowed me to go where I wanted and I virtually remembered hearing in essence the same message. So very early in life I became aware of love in a conditional sense only. So love being the Master Key was only able to fit certain locks.

However, in my perception of Truth, love is not to be experienced on a conditional level, but to be experienced in an unconditional way...beyond different religious preferences...beyond the color of the skin...beyond the nationality...beyond the conditions set up by other humans...and it is only then that Love becomes the Master Key for humankind to evolve towards perfection.

Love and Light to all of you always.

Namaste,

Cathy Florida

January 1992: Happy New Year

A happy, peaceful, healthy and prosperous New Year to all of you.

We have come a long way together and we still have much to do and share together on many different levels of life. Sometimes we will share a smile, a telephone call, time, class or meeting together and whatever we share, let us do so in love, light and order.

We have all chosen to travel a path that leads us to the same destination and let us do that also with Divine Order, Love and Light.

We have gone through the “ME” decade and now let us all work together in the “WE” decade for the rest of the 1990’s. We can help each other learn and grow together in order to elevate the consciousness to the State of Bliss.

Namaste,

Chetana

March 1992: Celebrate Each Day

It's getting to be the time of celebrating spring. Springtime is like the dawning of a new day for many, of new life and rebirth to many...It's a time when many get inspired to get in tune with nature and accelerate their own personal growth. It's a time of "opening up" and a time of receiving new life and giving back to life.

It becomes a time for many to work with planting and nurturing, whether it's the seeds of thought being nurtured to be born into actions, or the seeds within a garden being nurtured to grow and blossom forth into the sun.

The feelings that are conjured up for springtime are feelings that need to continue to be nurtured in order to grow in the process of **celebrating each day**...celebrating life!!

Everyone feels so much better when the sun is out and when the days become longer and lighter. And on days without sun, or less light, people feel less positive. So sun "light" becomes preferable over cloudy, overcast days for the majority of people. Unfortunately, some will go through life feeling good only when there is sunshine outside. Thus, winter can be a very depressing time to many people.

In the West we are such a "doing" society – let us definitely be aware that we can all "do" something about having more sun "Light" in all of our days – and let us "do" individually and collectively something about it.

If what we plant and produce in our inner mental worlds affects not only us but our environment wherever we choose or need to be, then why not put in the "seeds of light" within us? Why not nurture those seeds of light within ourselves to be able to give into our environment the "seeds of light" that we can plant daily in ourselves? These can be the seeds of meditation, prayer, singing, chanting, good thoughts, light affirmations and visualizations. Then we need not be dependent on the outer sun only, when we can create our own inner sun that becomes a source of light to ourselves and to others. Let us begin to celebrate all of life, each day as a sun-filled Spring/Summer day by developing the sun "light" within ourselves now.

Namaste,

Chetana

Summer 1992: New Vibrations

New members in the Lighthouse? No, just new vibrations! Part of the vibration change that is being felt is the change that is experienced from receiving our new spiritual names given to us by Gurudev Chitrabhanu.

To me, this was one of the most profound experiences in my lifetime. I feel that through my spiritual practices I have had several “quickenings of spirit” movements of energy, so to speak, but this was like all of those experiences literally at the same time – like including all solid forms of matter, including me, melted into a state of nothingness that somehow felt whole or complete. Before everything “melted” I felt a deep sound moving up from my solar plexus that I could not control. As I heard the sound, it was coming up out of me for several seconds; I was truly witnessing something that I (ego) had no control over. Then again, I had no control over the profuse tears that kept pouring out of me as I received my new spiritual name, Chetana, which means many things (as I found out through the course of the trip. Some of the meanings are: pure consciousness, wisdom, and fertile ground). The tears I found out were tears of joy!

The ceremony also had another very significant meaning to me. As I received my new spiritual name, I also became Gurudev Chitrabhanu’s “first” chosen apostle. The apostle’s name carries part of the teacher’s name, such as CHIT-rabhanu and CHET-ana.

Since that time I feel even more directed with the purpose of my life, and what keeps surfacing in my mind is that “one flame can light many candles”.

The other new vibrations of the Lighthouse Center are:

Aruna	Olga Bachmann
Lalita	Lucile Doke
Niana	Nancy Dinius
Bharati	Brenda Heiber
Vondana	Terry Fischer
Samata	Charlene Florida
Asmita	Anna Schmitt-Heatlie
Prachi	Pat Thiel

Namaste,

Chetana

June 1992: Love All and Serve All

Blessings for a happy, beautiful summer.

Many people, sometimes seriously, sometimes playfully, have asked me about what goes on in my mind when I am not working. In view of that question I have decided to share some of the things (in capsulated form) that have “gone on in my mind”.

Between extremes
Is enlightenment

With passion there is pain
So teach me compassion

For every lock there is a key.
Sometimes people forget where they have left their keys.

Are actions right or wrong,
Really only lessons to be learned for someone, somewhere, someplace...?

Some people don't dream –
Some people do –
And then some people become **bold** enough to live their dreams. So tell me, who YOU are.

They say opposites attract. For me that used to be-
Now opposition wearies me.
So now I work with
“Like attracts Like”
And I wait for “like”
To like me too!!

Jainism

Many people have asked me different things about Jains and Jainism. Jains are people who:
Live and let live

Love all and serve all

And believe in the practice of

Ahimsa (non-violence)

Anyone who practices these principles would/could be considered a Jain along with whatever religious choice or preference they have already established in this lifetime.

I would like to share with you the following statement on Jains by Vincent Smith, Historian and Orientalist:

ain ethics are meant for men of all positions; for kings, warriors, traders, artisans, agriculturists and, indeed for men and women in every walk of life. Do your duty, and do it as humanely as you can. This, in brief, is the primary principal of Jainism.”

Namaste, Chetana

Fall 1992: Gifts of Chitrabhanu

LaLita-Lucille Doke, Prachi-Pat Thiel and I journeyed to New York this summer to help celebrate Gurudev Chitrabhanu's 70th birthday. Many students and friends from all over the country were there for the celebration. I wrote this letter and message the morning of Gurudev's birthday and want to share it now with all of you.

Dearest Gurudev:

All of the students in Michigan wanted to join in celebrating your birthday today, so as I say "happy birthday" to you, Gurudev, it is said with the echo of over 100 students from Michigan.

With birthdays we always think what we can give the person. However, all I can think about is what you have given to me. So using your name CHITRABHANU as my focus, I would like to share with you what you have given me.

C is for Creativity – getting me to see and understand my personal power to be creative.

H is for Help – giving me the help I needed to get through those "dark times".

I is for Integrity - Being my example of what integrity is in working with everyone.

T is for Truth - Through the light of your awareness, I become more and more aware of the truth.

R is for Reconciliation – to reconcile all of my differences with people so the "molehills" do not become mountains.

A is for Ahimsa – to be non-violent and more reverent for all life.

B is for Better to Best – learning how to live better to become the best that I can be.

H is for Healing – how all things can be healed with, and through, the light of inner awareness.

A is for Adoration – for life and for you Gurudev.

N is for Not – as you have shared what to strive for in life, I have also seen what not to strive for!

U is for Unlimited ness – what we experience when we truly experience who we really are.

I thank you for all these gifts. What I would like to give to you on your birthday is my love and commitment to you as my teacher in helping you to spread the message of "ahimsa" (non-violence) to all those I meet and work with everyday.

Namaste,

Chetana

March 1993: Planting Seeds of Love and Light

Thoughts of spring bring back my memories of warm days, longer days, and the new growth of the plants and flowers that is nurtured through the summer and harvested in the fall. It is a time of renewed energy and rededication to growth; and to me personally, it's a time to look at what I want to have in my life's garden.

If I want love to be harvested in the future, I must take time to plant the seeds of love. If I want light harvested in the future, I must plant the seeds of light. What I have in future harvest depends on the seeds I plant today in my mental garden. *For today we are harvesting what we have planted in the past.* Each day we plant the seeds that will be harvested in the future. The seeds come from our meditations, prayers, thoughts, affirmations and visualizations, and in our actions and accomplishments. If we have things in our life today that we don't want, we must become aware of the seeds we are sowing from day to day.

Several members of the Lighthouse recently participated in a Visioning Day, dedicated brainstorming and envisioning what our Lighthouse Center will be in the future. We in essence, planted the seeds of our Lighthouse Center that day. As a collective consciousness, we all came into agreement of philosophy, including how the Center will serve individual members as well as non-members from a state of acceptance and reverence of all life. To help all find liberation through classes and seminars offered at the Lighthouse Center. We have planted the seeds for the Center; we will nurture those seeds with love, light and order. And we will "harvest" the Lighthouse Center for all to enjoy!

Namaste,

Chetana

June 1993: Manifesting

Hooray! We have manifested our first “Lighthouse Center” building! As of June 1, 1993 we are leasing a three-bedroom house for the next couple of years. It has a Great Room for meditation, classes and meetings. The house is located at 815 East 5 Mile Road in the Whitmore Lake area. We are planning an “Open House” sometime this summer. Please plan to join us in this celebration. More details about the date and time will be sent later.

In the last newsletter, I talked about planting seeds for manifesting our center, and also mentioned that our “harvest” would be the Lighthouse Center.

So this is our time of “Harvesting” the Lighthouse Center building. There is a very important fact to realize about this: which is that the more one is working in and with the Light, the easier manifestation becomes on the earth level. Some people have difficulty in getting **anything** that they desire, while some people seem to get it all. Why? The main reason is acquiring knowledge of, and working in and with the Light. For those who do, manifestation becomes easier. And, after the first manifestation, it becomes easier and easier still. The act of manifesting is your “feedback” from the Universe that you are working in and with the “Light” knowledge, which is the RIGHT knowledge to work with.

When you work with manifesting **anything**, do so with awareness of a state of “Ahimsa”. So that as you are manifesting, you do so without harming any being anywhere.

Let us all work toward manifesting Love and Peace in our inner worlds so that the whole world outside of ourselves becomes a place of love and peace.

Namaste

Chetana

September 1993: Forgiveness Festival

As over 30 million Jains around the world celebrated the Festival of Forgiveness this year, members of the Lighthouse were especially blessed because Gurudev Chitrabhanu made a decision to be with the Jain community in the greater Detroit area. He was in Detroit for eight days and he came to do a weekend seminar with the Lighthouse members. My personal blessing was that I was able to be around Gurudev for 11 days straight. In the past, Gurudev went to many places that were difficult or costly to go for the Forgiveness Festival. The Festival goes on in all Jain communities whether or not a Guru can be present with them. So to have Gurudev leading and guiding the Forgiveness Festival in Detroit was truly a special blessing for all, and especially for all who attended any or all of the Festival.

I have learned many, many things in my years of being around Gurudev. One thing that has really stuck in my mind is to just be able to open up to experience life fully from moment to moment. To be with the moment with my full beingness. *This has translated itself to me during the course of time as living more and more of life without expectations, or attachments to any preconceived ideas of what should or should not happen during any point in time.*

So with this in mind I attended the Forgiveness Festival with various other students. With each day each meeting came, bringing new vision and understanding to me. If I'd had certain expectations or attachments about what should or should not happen in the meeting, I would have blocked the blossoming of the full flower of knowledge as it developed during the Festival. Each day of the Festival brought new information, understanding and opening for me. I felt lighter and lighter as the week progressed. I kept feeling the empowerments of Love and Light from Gurudev as the week progressed. A "high experience" for me came on Friday night when we sat and did a specific forgiveness meditation for 1-½ hours with more than 300 people. There are no words to describe this experience, which I felt and still become aware of as waves in my consciousness, of the total experience of the Festival.

I would like to give a big "Thank You" to the Jain community of Detroit for opening their hearts, homes and space for Lighthouse members to be able to join in this enlightening experience. I give our and my special love and thanks to Gurudev for being there and for continuously guiding us along the pathway to enlightenment.

Namaste,

Chetana

September 1993: Happiness is Knowing Who You Are

Greetings and Blessings of Love and Happiness to everyone.

“I just want to be happy...” I have heard this statement many, many times during the course of my life and in the past I have also said it many, many times. Happiness is thought of as some “thing” that is given to you just by wanting it. Waiting around for it to happen will be futile if you do not take the responsibility of making it happen. Often I have shared with others that it is “their” responsibility to make happiness happen. There has been a varied and mixed response to this, from anger to wondering why it can’t just happen; from frustration because of thinking it will never happen to questioning “How do I go about making myself happy?”

The people who are really angry about hearing that it is their responsibility, I leave alone until they are ready to take, first of all, responsibility for their own anger and work towards releasing it. Because before you can have the positive action of happiness in your life, you must be willing to give up, release, let go of your own anger, to have room for happiness to enter. A person, however, can be angry and frustrated but also open to finding out “how to” make happiness happen. These people I can work with by sharing the steps I have taken towards greater and greater happiness.

Before you can be happy, you must know who you are. Many people want to be happy but do not know who they are. When we want to “make someone happy”, with a birthday gift for example, we find what he or she want by who they are experiencing themselves to be. So if they are identifying themselves with music in this lifetime, then we buy them something to do with music, we give them at that time, a gift that makes them happy. So you need to find out who you really are. *You can only find out who you really are when you stop searching outside of yourself and go within.* When you go within yourself, you go through your conscious state of mind, your subconscious mind, and your unconscious mind to Divine Consciousness, to find out whom you really are. And then happiness is the experience of knowing who you are.

As the fall time of the year is the time of harvesting in the literal sense, when the farmer harvest what has been planted, so it becomes a time symbolically speaking of looking at what is happening in our lives. It’s a time when we take stock of our lives to see what is or isn’t there. We begin to think about what we want to plant for the future. The “New Year” then comes bringing us new hope, new life, and new beginnings. Let the “New Year” be blessed with your decision and commitment to fin out *who you really are in order to have happiness!!*

Namaste,

Chetana

December 1993: Manifest the New Year

Many Blessings of Love and Light to everyone for the journey that is yet to manifest in 1994 and beyond. A “new” year for many of us brings awareness of the “new” hope and “new” faith for a good “new” year, and we make out our new resolutions to do this...and this...and this...! The excitement for the New Year grows as our minds reach out in front of us to manifest all of our resolutions.

Thus the time is here for you to become more aware of what you are doing and looking for in life.

At one point in this lifetime, I looked only to manifest material things for the New Year; that is to say, what I could gain materially speaking. Then my desires grew from “things” to wanting to manifest certain types of situations, people, and environments around me in life. Now finally I am at the point where I desire more and more Divine Knowledge. To me, Divine Knowledge is more than just hearing the words of the Divine; for me it is living the experience of that which is Divine. Many people and students get stuck in their minds about what is Divine. For instance, love is Divine, but instead of working with trying to experience love, they will get involved with love only through their minds and not through their feelings. Another example of Divine Knowledge is being able to forgive. Many will talk and think about forgiveness, and even understand that if they cannot forgive someone, that someone becomes their own stumbling block. They will not be able to go forward to get around that block until they can *experience forgiveness* in their hearts.

Let this year be one where we resolve to work towards going beyond the words and thoughts to experience and manifest Divine Knowledge in our lives. As more individuals choose to manifest Divine experiences in life, the greater the illumination of light within all consciousness will be. So instead of just *words and thoughts of love and forgiveness*, we can as a group consciousness begin to *experience* love and forgiveness in our hearts. Through the human mind we have lost our way and forgotten who we really are. When we begin to remember who we really are, we begin experiencing and expressing the Divine presence of God. And, as we manifest the Divine in the individual consciousness, we increase the awareness of love and forgiveness in the collective consciousness.

So for the New Year the greatest resolution I make and can make for myself is to be open to the experiences I need in order to grow in and with wisdom of what is Divine.

Namaste,

Chetana

May 1994: Sunrise Meditation

Many Blessings of Love and Light to all of you. Every morning we send you Love and Light during our Sunrise meditation practice at the Center. Each morning 2-15 students on the pathway meet from 6:00 am to 7:25 am to begin their day. Chanting begins at 6:00 am sharp. Students, however, if running a little late, can come in and join us up until 6:30 am. After chanting we have prayers and silent meditation until 7:00 am. Some students must then leave the Center (for work or other obligations). The rest of us then continue with an affirmation and visualization for healing, reenergizing and rejuvenating, followed by giving thanks and sending light.

The Sunrise Meditation program started in December 1992. It was originally only going to be for one month, but as you can see, we have continued. The students who have come in have mentioned how fantastic their days are when they take time to do this practice. Working with others, meeting deadlines, enjoying the day, having more creativity and productivity – these and many more are the blessings and by-products of meditating together in the morning. On the other hand, people who have then missed a day have said they could really tell a big difference in their day, because without the morning program their day would not be as enjoyable or creative. There definitely must be something to it, to give up sleep for!!!!

So the next time you find yourself up early and don't know what to do, come in to join us to see what I mean. Or better yet, make a commitment, set your alarm, and meet us for a "Spiritual Rendezvous" every morning at the Center. The morning schedule is:

6:00 – 6:30	Chanting (if you are not familiar with this, you can pick it up easily)
6:30 – 6:35	Prayers
6:35 – 7:00	Silent Mantra Meditation
7:00 – 7:25	Affirmation, Visualization, thank yous, sending White Light.

Then you can begin your day with a feeling of great peacefulness, calmness and clarity, in order to be more productive and creative and have a general feeling of well being-ness of self and all others.

Whether you come to meditate daily at the Center or not, remember to keep meditating wherever you are, in order to keep raising your individual consciousness, as well as the Collective Consciousness in the Light.

Namaste,

Chetana

August 1994: Inner Enemies

Many Blessings of Love and Light to all of you.

Many Lighthouse members and students who have studied together have a basic understanding of what “inner enemies” are and of what to do with them. The newer meditators and non-meditators often get confused about inner enemies, so this message is written with them in mind.

At one time or another we have all had inner enemies to conquer in order to move forward. What are inner enemies? They are those emotions inside our minds that keep us from growing up spiritually. The more inner enemies we conquer along the way to Enlightenment, the greater happiness and fulfillment of desires we experience. Some of the inner enemies most of have had are: fear, anger, resentment, bitterness, hate, greed, deceit, jealousy and a prideful ego. If these mental states occupy any part of the mind, they become known as inner enemies. These then are enemies to be conquered. When the inner enemies are conquered, the people, situations and places that we considered our enemies out in the world will also be conquered, and they will be gone from our lives.

The important concepts to realize, to keep in mind are: “As above, so below” and “As within, so without”. In other words, the enemies we experience in our outer world will also be experienced in our inner world. Our inner world reflects our outer world, and vice versa. For example, if we have an inner enemy of anger, we will attract LIKE A MAGNET, all things, people, and situations that will trigger the anger within us. This means we can never be free of anger by just removing it outside ourselves. In order to be free of anger we must remove it internally, by conquering the anger.

Often I hear people say, “If only I didn’t have to work with that person, I wouldn’t be so angry all the time.” This is really a misunderstanding of the truth. The truth is: *If you didn’t have any inner enemies of anger, you could not experience feeling angry.* No one person can make us angry unless we have accepted the invitation to get angry. This means that at one time or another we have accepted having the inner enemy of anger within us. This anger can then stay and grow, magnetizing more and more people and situations to be angry about. This can go on for lifetimes if we do not choose to conquer the anger.

It is very important to become aware, to become conscious of one’s inner enemies, because only then can YOU exercise your power to choose to conquer them. As you do this, the corresponding outer enemies are no longer magnetized to you. Thus your outer world is no longer filled with angry people or situations, *since your outer world is a true reflection of your inner world at all times.*

For me, mantra meditation has been first and foremost a basic tool in helping me discover and conquer my own personal inner enemies. It is important to keep on meditating, so that the experiences of inner Love, Peace and Harmony can grow within you. Then you will attract “Like a magnet” those beings who are loving, peaceful, and harmonious into your outer environment. When enough of these individual experiences are collected together, we can all truly begin to share a “Heaven on Earth”.

Namaste
Chetana

Christmas 1994: Channeled Message

Dear Children of the Light,

We wanted to join you for your Christmas celebration tonight.

We also want to share with all of you the following – Part of your Christmas custom includes giving gifts for the celebration of Christmas. How many have taken time to wonder why this began?

We begin at the beginning...God **gave** the gift of life to both male and female. One of the female beings, called Mary **received** in her body a male child to be named Jesus of Nazareth. She **gave** birth to Jesus. Wise men came to celebrate the birth by **giving** gifts and **receiving** blessings. Jesus's message **gave** us the gift of love and forgiveness. Having received this gift from Jesus, we then can give the same gift back to all other beings everywhere.

Spiritual human beings give the gift of forgiveness and love and they have chosen to give it through the vehicle of celebrations, especially at Christmas time. So always keep in mind that whether you are giving or receiving, you are really receiving and/or giving forgiveness and love. This will give you a fuller picture and perception of gift giving during the Holidays.

On the other hand, when we are not exercising our spirituality, we will many times get caught up in materialism, where in essence the gift may be given or received without the right motivation being present. So be always spiritually aware that whatever you give – the greatest gift you can give is your love to that being.

And lastly, the greatest gift you can give back to God is what you do with His gift to you of life.

So the life that you live is what you are giving back to God. Check often to see if it is what you want to give to God.

So, Dear Children in the Light,
Celebrate with love, forgiveness if necessary, and have a joyous, peaceful, harmonious Christmas and New Year.

Namaste,

Chetana

January 6, 1995: Sharing a Message from Intensive Meditation

It is easier to run down the mountain than it is to run up the mountain. The top of the mountain is Heaven, the Earth is at the bottom. It is easier to run down the mountain, so in going up the mountain it is best to take one step at a time. Since Enlightenment is not going anywhere, you might as well enjoy yourself along the way.

It is also important to honor yourself. To experience the fullness of honoring yourself, you need to also honor the needs, the space of all other beings. You decided to come into this life, so it is important that you treat others kindly. Think kindly of others, speak kindly with others, act kindly. This will give you greater insight into yourself and all beings.

Note from Chetana

Many times people ask me how to burn their karmas. Of course we burn karmas by meditation, chanting, prayer, and by doing good deeds for others. We also burn karma by financially supporting Spiritual education and development for ourselves, our families, our community. In order to make the most of this lifetime in erasing karma, work on erasing them in ALL of these ways.

January 27, 1995: Duality

Dedicated to some of the ones I love –
You wanted me to love you
 But were afraid to ask.
You wanted me to love you –
 But you kept your heart closed.
You wanted me to love you –
 But it became too painful.
You wanted me to love you –
 But what you wanted
 You really did not see,
You wanted me to love you –
 But never realizing that
 What you wanted
 Was already there.
You wanted me to love you –
 But that can never be
 Until you love you
 Only then can you see
That as you wanted me to love you –
 I always did!

February 1995: Removing Negative Karmas

Dear Students and Friends,

We have grown individually and collectively in Light in past years, and I look forward to the rest of our journey. Many blessings of Love, Light and Divine Order to each of you as we travel in 1995 together.

In the collective consciousness of our group, there was generated a question during 1994 which became known as “the most often asked question” from students. The question was: In what ways can I help facilitate the removal of my negative karmas, so I don’t stay “stuck” in life and can move forward to my desired destinations?”

The answer I received was:

In order to get “unstuck” in life and be able to move quickly forward to your desired destinations, you can do the following:

- 1) Spend 1 hour out of 24 hours in spiritual devotion. This includes meditation for listening, prayer, chanting, study of spiritual works, inspirational reading, contemplation, affirmations, visualization, etc.
- 2) Do “noble” work for your livelihood. Noble work means any work that supports and helps any life become all it can be, either directly or indirectly. Noble work would also include Ahimsa, nonviolence towards any being.
- 3) Above and beyond noble work, you must do a least one good deed daily for some being. So even if you are in a helping profession, you must also do something beyond what you do for your livelihood.

There is a “Law of the Light” that says that knowledge is power and one who has true power within the Realms of Light must take responsibility for helping beings of lesser consciousness become all they can be. Sometimes, as with animals, this means protecting them from abuse and ensuring their right to live a full life. One must also work to protect the lives of human beings who are unable to protect themselves, such as the children of the world, the aged, and the sick.

So your good deeds could include any of the aforementioned. They could also include helping someone in a daily life situation, like driving them someplace, helping them move, making a phone call to let someone know you care, cooking food and sharing with someone else, and so on.

All good deeds need to be practiced until it becomes “natural and normal” for you to do them daily without even thinking about doing them.

Good deeds and actions must also be practiced until there is not one thought left to think about what this may or may not do for me in life. We are creatures of habits, whether good

or bad, and many have the mental habit of always looking for some sort of return. That is why it is important to “practice” until it becomes your new habit just to do good deeds.

- 4) Financially support your choice of Spiritual Awareness. This is above and beyond the doing of good deeds. Centers, Churches, Temples, and Synagogues are supported only by those who are directly or indirectly connected to them. There is no support from local, state or national governments to keep Spiritual scriptures and traditions ongoing for future generations.

This then becomes necessary for everyone to understand that they need to financially support their Spiritual choice. I can only speak for myself here, although I have heard many others also attest to the fact that they have received 100 times more back from the universe than they have ever given. I have not yet experienced losing anything I have given and shared with others in the universe. I experience the Abundance of Life all around me as I have shared all things in my life – food, shelter, clothing, money, time, energy and love. And again as I look back on my life, I have truly experienced receiving 100 times more than I have ever given.

So again, practice giving financial support to your Spiritual choice, until it becomes natural and normal for you, without any thoughts of personal gain.

In summary, to release your blocks, remember to spend one hour a day in Spiritual devotion, do noble work and good deeds daily, and financially support your Spiritual Choice. This will quickly move you forward to your desired destinations in this lifetime and your ultimate destination, Enlightenment.

Namaste,

Chetana

June 1995: Our Dreams

Many Blessings of Healing and Health, Love and Light, Harmony and Happiness as we continue together on our life pathways towards enlightenment.

As spring comes into play, bringing us visions of new life, we wait eagerly to again see Mother Nature's greatness and grandness as she begins to unfold her beauty for all to embrace and behold. As spring makes manifest her new life, the dreams of summer begin to enter, from children dreaming about being out of school for summer vacation to adults who dream about what they want to do, who they want to be, where they want to travel or not travel for their summer vacations. Springtime, more than any other season, seems to trigger the dreamer within us. For many, the dreamer part of our personalities seems to receive a special bolt of "Green Energy" from Mother Nature herself in order for us to begin to create new life through our dreams.

The dreams we have in springtime for the summer will either end in fruition or frustration by the time fall begins to artfully change the colors of summer. Some dreams are indeed triggered by the seasons of the year, and some dreams are triggered by life's purpose or circumstances and will continue through all the seasons of life, until manifestation occurs or the dream has changed or the dream has been released.

Of all the people I have met, "Light" dreamers are the most creative, exciting, enlivening, igniting, and inspirational people to be around. (Find yourself a Light dreamer to see what I mean, or better yet, become one yourself and let others find you.) Those dreamers who manifest their "Light Dreams" become masters in life instead of victims of life's circumstances. As most of us have experienced, masters seem to be able to create and give energy, while victims seem to continually need and take energy.

Dreams and dreaming are only limited by the dreamers themselves. Some dreams seem to be inspired by Spirit, and other dreams by life. Dreamers are the creators in life -- support your "Light" dreams now and always.

Some of the greatest dreamers began with a dream and their dream then ignited many others to share the dream. Gandhi had a dream...Martin Luther King had a dream...Many people now have and share the same dreams for Love, Peace, and Healing for the universe. *And now I have a dream...* My dream is that we ALL have the creative vision to build a Center, where we can all come together, regardless of race, religion, or creed, in order:

To meditate and pray and spiritually grow up together;
To know that many pathways can be taken to Enlightenment;
To have reverence for all pathways;
To have reverence and respect for the Divine presence in all living beings, and to live in the state of ahimsa (non-violence);
To have a Center where we can continually learn how to live life to the fullest, by studying and experiencing all that can be learned from the ancient past to the present day;

To share all that we learn for the benefit of the soul, mind, emotions, and body;
To have a Center which takes an active part in influencing daily life to be all that it can be
by having meditation, prayer, and healing be a part of daily activity at the Center.

Since I was blessed and initiated by Gurudev Chitrabhanuji to be his first apostle in the Western world on Mt. Shatrunjaya in Palitana in December 1991, Gurudev has inspired me (and us) to create a Center where all beings could come together to celebrate ahimsa and reverence for all life from East to West and from North to South.

Let this Center be filled with “light” for all to be able to see, and let this Center be called **“The Lighthouse.”**

Come share my dream with me and bring your dreams too, and together we will build a Center of Love and Peace, Healing and Health, Harmony and Bliss for all Beings in the Universe.

Namaste,

Chetana

March 1996: A Challenging Year

Dear Lighthouse Members and Friends,

Let your lives be blessed and filled with Divine Order, Love and Light until you become One with all there is to be.

We can all relate, at one time or another, to having challenging days, months or years during our lives. Some people, however, have a difficult time seeing that these challenging times can also be the most “spiritually productive times”. So instead of seeing them as a “challenge” to be met, they turn them into a “lesson”. And that takes much more effort in the long run because lessons have a way of becoming repetitive. Lessons repeat themselves over and over, sometimes for lifetimes, until we learn what we were meant to learn through the initial challenge.

One thing is certain: We all will be faced with challenges and lessons until we become Enlightened Beings. I, for one, have had a life particularly filled with challenges and lessons. In fact, it seemed like a “sink or swim” lifetime...so I learned to swim!! I also learned that it felt much better to find the positive within the negative to dwell on, rather than dwelling on the negative. I learned, too, that it is much better to laugh more and cry less, since I still have many times of purification, Releasing and Healing on my pathway.

I have also concluded, from having been a “loner” type of personality before meditation, that I really prefer to spiritually grow up with like minds on the pathway, so that we can share together the joys and sorrows, happiness and sadness, laughter and tears, blessings and challenges, and all things together rather than alone. So my Spiritual Family has become very important to me. Having a Spiritual Family helps us, I feel, to keep things more in perspective. Instead of converting all challenges into lesson to be learned over and over again, we can meet our challenges and overcome them more easily.

For instance, my challenges in 1995 began in January, when I started the New Year with pneumonia and several sinus infections that continued into March. In April I found that my beloved teacher Gurudev Chitrabhanuji had severe back pain (from an old injury he sustained as a young man saving two women from a burning building). Later on in the summer he did have back surgery, which turned out very successfully.

During this time, my first mother-in-law who has been like a mother to me since I was 17 was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. Also, my husband Paul, was diagnosed with diabetes.

In June I was hospitalized and diagnosed with congestive heart failure and atrial fibrillation (heart out of sinus rhythm). In August I went back into sinus rhythm. I played the Navkar mantra throughout the procedure, with permission of Dr. Bhatia, at Beyer-Oakwood Hospital in Ypsilanti and, of course, success was inevitable!

That same evening my mother was taken into the emergency room at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in respiratory arrest. Since I'm her only child, I got barraged with many questions about her medical condition: whether or not to have a code; whether or not to wean her off the ventilator; trying to decide what kind of quality of life she could still have. All this while my heart was trying to keep sinus rhythm. I talked to her in my mind and sent the message: "Please don't make me make the decision on your life". I alternated between praying and talking to her mentally.

My prayers were answered, my mother heard my messages; she got off the ventilator and was able to go back to the nursing home. But with all the stress, I lost sinus rhythm. If it wouldn't come back, I would have to go back to the hospital for another cardioversion.

Within three weeks my mother went back into the hospital, this time in a coma, and she never regained consciousness. She transcended on August 26, 1995. Four of us, Prachi, Lalita, Nirmala and I were with my mother the night before she transcended. That was one of the most beautiful ceremonies I have experienced – we sang her the Navkar Mantra and other chants, we remembered and shared many "funny" mom stories, and sent her healing energy for her transition, all with Love and Light and tenderness and sadness.

The next day, Nirmala and I were running late from a doctor's appointment I still had to keep. The nurse was worried that we wouldn't make it before my mother died. We got there ten minutes before she transcended. I remember looking at the heart monitor and thinking about LaLita's comment the night before...that my mother wanted to give me her sinus rhythm as a gift if she could. Oh, how strong her heart was, how perfect her sinus rhythm was, even in those final moments. She seemed to be waiting for me to come and be there with her before she left. I know that she knew we were there, even in her coma. As she left at noon, I felt an energy come into my heart. I later found out that my heart had indeed returned to "sinus rhythm". One final gift from my beautiful, loving mother – she gave me life, not once, but twice.

We had a beautiful memorial service for her, and since she was always wanting to give people things (even though she didn't have much), I decided that what she would like best would be to give a gift to the Lighthouse.

The year was not over yet. On November 16th, Crystal, my little Yorkshire who did readings and meditated with me, also transcended at only six years old.

With everything happening so quickly, I remembered and will always remember what my beloved teacher talked with me about one morning on the phone. Gurudev Chitrabhanuji said, "Remember Chetana, it is not what happens to you in the present that matters, for the present is an accumulation of past thoughts, words, actions and reactions being played out in the present moment. So this we cannot change. We must meet the challenges as they come. But we can create our futures differently by watching and being aware of how we

react to the action that is taking place. For indeed, the reaction becomes our new action in the future.” Gurudev’s words helped me through all the challenges this past year, and they also helped me to see the positive within the negative, instead of creating a negative chain of reactions.

Also, in 1995 there were many blessings. We manifested our new Lighthouse Center which Gurudev and Pramoda blessed in a special Celebration Ceremony; we had our second, best-ever Dimensions in Light Festival, the second largest such festival in Michigan; I was able to travel to New Orleans to see Gurudev and Pramoda at a Jain Art Conference; and seventeen of us traveled to India in December for a special pilgrimage with Gurudev and Pramoda. Trance class members and other students and Lighthouse members gave me the gift of Amber, a small white Havanese puppy for Christmas. Also I witnessed a lot of students receiving much healing energy during this year. With all the stresses of this year, I would not have been able to experience or enjoy these beautiful blessings if I had not been meditating, for I would have been over-whelmed by all the negative, and unable to embrace the positive. So this year has shown me once again some of the “101 reasons to meditate”. And I gave many thanks and gratitude for the Love, Light and Generosity given to me by all of you who were with me during my very challenging year.

Love and Light,

Chetana

July 26, 1996: A Tribute to Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu

I feel so honored and blessed to be part of this celebration and tribute to Gurudevji for his 74th birthday as well as his 25th year in the United States. We are all here tonight not only to celebrate Gurudev's birthday and 25 years in America, but also we are here for another reason, irregardless of who we are, where we have been or where we are going. The reason we are here is that we love Gurudev.

Each one of us has, in many different ways, experienced Gurudev's love and guidance. Through his love and guidance we have become more than we ever thought we could be. For me personally, Gurudev has been my Spiritual Father, mentor and friend. He has loved me when I felt I couldn't love myself, when I felt I didn't do the spiritually best I could do. He was and is always there, giving love and light to help me through some of the "dark" times of my life's journey.

Each of us here tonight, I believe, has felt his love and understanding, for he has the kind of love that does not start and stop with the seasons, or reasons of mankind; his love goes on and on to touch all of those open to receive it. He has a way of making everyone feel loved and special for who they are, just as they are. Sometimes we get lost in the darkness of our minds and temporarily we forget, we have spiritual amnesia about who we are and how special we are. When that happens, Gurudev astrally, mentally and physically sends us his unconditional love which then gives us the light to see clearly again. We can then see Who We Really Are.

Gurudev's messages of Jainism: "Reverence for All Life" and "Non- Violence: Ahimsa" would probably not have been heard here if Gurudev had not come to America in 1971. For me, those two messages alone have changed my whole thinking process about living life.

When I first met Gurudev, Reverence for All Life and Ahimsa were new and fascinating concepts for me inasmuch as I had come from a meat-eating, prejudiced, drinking background. The more he talked, the more I listened and the more I realized that this was indeed what I needed to have in my life. This was what was missing from my life. This was the Spiritual Path I had been seeking.

Since then I have learned so much about the truth. And what I have learned from Gurudev I have shared with many, many Westerners. The Lighthouse Center's mailing list is over 700, and over 1500 people have attended the introductory meditation lectures. That means that many, many Westerners have been touched by Gurudev's teaching, either directly through him or indirectly through the Lighthouse Center and me.

In closing I would like to propose a spiritual toast to Gurudevji, and that is: As he has blessed us one and all with love and light, so let us in turn give him the blessing of love and light so that he stays with us here on earth until he is 100++.

Happy Birthday Gurudevji, and Happy 25 years in America.

Love and Light always,
Chetana

September 1996: Making Bliss a Priority

Dear Lighthouse Members and Friends,

Many blessings of love, light, wisdom and healing to all of you – and remember it is **good** to be alive! It is only through being human that one can become an enlightened being. Sometimes in living life, we get our priorities mixed up. We get confused as to what is really important and what isn't. We hear a great deal from health professionals and self-help books about getting your priorities in order – to do this in order to get that. One of the priorities many people have is that they just want to be happy. But often they do nothing about it. Happiness comes to you as you make it a priority in your life, as you choose things to support this desire.

What we all have in common, whether we recognize it or not, like it or not, is a deep need to be perfect. When this is esoterically understood, being perfect means becoming One with the light, the God/Goddess energy, becoming an Enlightened Being. And this is the highest priority a human being can have. One aspect of moving towards perfection, toward Enlightenment, is having a priority beyond being happy, the priority of being Bliss-filled. If one can be happy, one can also at times be unhappy as one goes through life's changes, challenges and lessons. But when one is Bliss-filled, there are no fluctuations – the Bliss-state stays stationary in the Divine field of Energy. A being filled with Bliss is being filled with the never-changing field of Diving Energy. The difference between happiness and Bliss is like the difference between a rhinestone and a diamond. A rhinestone doesn't last forever; a diamond does.

Once we make being filled with Bliss a priority, we then find out what we need to do to support and manifest this desire:

- 1: We need to communicate daily with the Divine Blissful Energy. Communication means to listen in order to learn, and to talk in order to share. In meditation we listen to the highest intelligence that we are. We talk through our prayers, chanting, affirmations.
- 2: We have reverence for all life everywhere.
- 3: We work daily on maintaining Ahimsa (being non-violent) in our thoughts, words, actions and reactions.
- 4: We support our Spiritual choice mentally, emotionally, physically, financially, and voluntarily (with service).

All of the aforementioned create “punya” karma or good karma, which leads one to a Bliss-filled life on earth and an Enlightened one in time.

Namaste,

Chetana

September 1997: Experiencing India

Dear Members and Friends of the Lighthouse,

Let the Blessings of Love and Abundance flow to each one of you.

Each time I have gone to India on a pilgrimage with Gurudevji and Pramodaben, I learned and experienced more than mere words can express. It's difficult to be always in touch with what is going on at the time it is going on. However, as time goes by, we grasp fuller and fuller understanding of the different layers within us that were touched by being in India.

Being with Gurudevji and Pramodaben in India, one cannot remain unchanged or untouched by the whole experience. Inevitable changes from spiritual ignorance to spiritual knowingness become profound and pleasantly gestate even after leaving India. What we need to experience, we experience there. And through our experiences, we change and grow more quickly toward enlightenment.

This India experience places our loving being under one big microscope: we are seeing ourselves, sometimes all too clearly, as to what needs to be purified within ourselves – maybe thoughts, words, actions, reactions – things we would not see or accept about ourselves without a catalyst. We begin to see what we need to be aware of and to perceive what to work on within ourselves. I've experienced this magical and mystical energy of India, sometimes with awareness, always in the months after getting back to everyday activities.

Each time we go to India, there are famous places I want to see again and again, especially Shatrunjaya; climbing this holy mountain helps us to conquer our inner enemies. And seeing Shri Manubhai and his smiling face welcoming us, taking us to his home, and then continuing with us to Palitana is always a joy. Each year there are also new holy places, such as this time visiting on top a mountain the 57 foot statue of Bahubali.

One of the most profound and spontaneous experiences of the 1996 pilgrimage was meeting an old friend of Gurudevji's, Jambu VeeJay, a monk and a "living saint". According to custom, the women in the group would not be allowed to see him but the magical and mystical experience was possible because Gurudev was with us. Jambu VeeJay gave his individual blessing, touching the men's head and brow but with the women only sprinkling the blessing powder on our heads without touching. We felt the electrifying energy being with Gurudevji and Jambu VeeJay together.

One can go to India anytime and stay for months, but not until we have the experience of being there with Gurudevji and Pramodaben can we feel and understand the magical and mystical part of India. When Gurudevji is welcomed by all wherever he goes, the imploring of blessings from him when recognized and the red carpet treatment we receive because we are with him, we see that he is equal to the Catholic Pope among thousands of Jains. The veneration cannot be duplicated anywhere and the inspiration becomes sublimated spiritually in us. Yes! There will be another pilgrimage to India for me and others who wish to accelerate their growth. If you are interested, please let me know.

Namaste, Chetana

March 1998: Be an Original Thinker

Dear Members and Friends of the Lighthouse,

If you have listened long enough through your meditations you will eventually hear and experience and know everything you need in order to become enlightened. If you have only listened on earth with your physical ears, you will be continually confused from “hearing” many contradictory statements. From hearing that religion is good for you down to what cereal is best for you each morning, from the sublime to the ridiculous, whether in the media, in books, or in person, people are always telling you what to do, what to think, what to believe. Whether consciously or not, people tell us from their thoughts and experiences what to believe and what not to believe. So whoever has the most persuasive argument (so to speak), wins our attention and gets our vote about what is the best: for us. Soon afterward we believe that what we are doing is best.

But how do we really know it is the best? We don't! We have been convinced by what someone else has heard or read or experienced: it sounds good so we adopt what we have heard as our own. So, if we have listened to philosophers, historians and spiritual teachers, we will have learned a lot about their thoughts and experiences in life. We learn too, from their commentaries and translations of Plato, Socrates, Des Cartes, the Upanishads, The Rig Veda, The Torah, the Koran, and the Bible. If you remained open to embrace and incorporate all that you heard from others, as well as all you have read in books yourself, you would be living in a state of mass confusion with the truth being sandwiched in between.

When a healthy person is in a state of confusion, even with all the information the mind has collected, the mind will still be restless to find out what the truth is. If we were to repeat again and again the process of listening to others and reading everything we could, we would still be looking for the truth. Why? Because the personal experience is missing: the interaction between what you heard with your head and what you experienced through your heart. Before anything can be truly recognized as “your truth” it must be not only heard in the mind but most importantly, experienced in the heart and mind.

We all love to hear about “Love”. From other people's experiences to what has been written in books, as poems, as prose, as songs. Love catches everyone's attention.

This is because the experience of love is already felt in everybody's heart, whether a little or a lot, from the least to the greatest extent. Love is the experience of the heart. When we say we don't feel loved, it is because we have felt love before. Just as we can feel love, we can also feel unloved because we have experienced being loved at some time or other. So, it becomes our personal experience that there is Love. Throughout all of history, love has been written about, talked about and experienced. It is a Truth!!

What about everything else we have heard or read? What if anything, comes under the heading of truth? We will not personally know until we experience it. There are intellectuals who sometimes will talk and teach about what different philosophers through history have thought about truth. I wonder how many of them have really experienced the truths they intellectualize about.

Original thinkers are original because they have personally experienced in some way at some time what they then think and talk about. They are open to experience life before they intellectualize about the experience. Intellectuals on the other hand will think about experiences, analyze them, compare them to others' experiences and philosophies and come to conclusions about what is the truth. I choose to be an Original Thinker because I choose to be open to experience life before I think about it and analyze it. Being open to receive experience (through the right brain), I can then learn from it, understand it, analyze it and know it (through the right and left brain). Having the experience and the knowledge of the experience together give me the wisdom of all of life everywhere.

Everyone can be an Original Thinker. To become an Original Thinker, one needs to "listen and go beyond what the conscious mind can conceive at any given time". We are all limited by our own intellectual abilities, but we can go beyond them through our experiences of listening to all there is to know.

Through our personal meditations, we listen to and experience the highest intelligence within ourselves. That is a true meditation – going beyond the analytical thinking of the human mind to experience the source of truth.

In conclusion, whether one has many degrees and titles or not, whether one is an intellectual or not, all can become divinely inspired Original Thinkers by doing their daily meditations in order to experience the source of truth.

Love and Light – Namaste,

Chetana

October 1998: Visit with the Guru on September 22-24 1998

Dear Lighthouse Members and Friends,

May you always recognize how blessed you are so you can consciously enjoy life to its fullest.

I felt very blessed when Gurudev Chitrabhanu asked me to come to New Your City for a three day visit, before he left for Bombay. Each day I came with my questions and each day I left with answers...and many more questions (does that sound familiar?)

My heart spills over with love and gratitude for the hours and days I got to spend with Gurudev. It was magical. Life offers everything if you are able and willing to receive it. As in: one day I am talking with Gurudev on the phone, the next day the travel plans are made to go see him and four days later I am in New York! Some students have said to me, "I didn't know you were going to New York to see Gurudev", and I said, "Neither did I, it just happened." Twenty years ago I would have agonized over whether to go or not to go -- because of the money, because of the time off of work, because I wasn't ready, because of fear, and so on. And I probably would have talked myself out of receiving this inspirational and loving gift that was given to me.

So much has been given to us from Gurudev: The knowledge and wisdom of having Reverence for all life, Ahimsa, "The Psychology of Enlightenment" and all his other books, the teachings from the ancient scriptures, 5000 years old, and the pilgrimages to India. I could go on and on. Yet, if I or you were not open to receive, look how much of life and about life we would have missed and not known about. I count my blessings every day for having a fuller, richer, more meaningful life than I ever could have imagined having.

I would like to share one of our talks with all of you, since it pertains to all of us. The talk was about Spiritual Inheritance. Gurudev said, "Dear Chetana, people worry so much about getting so much money, but when they go, what have they really gained? The money stays...they go. What kind of inheritance do they really have for themselves? It's only the Spiritual Inheritance that goes with you when you leave the earth and returns with you when you come back."

Gurudev went on talking and he mentioned the five years of silence he did, talking only with his Guru. Right away I thought, "Oh no, how can I do this? Am I supposed to do this?" So, I asked him. Gurudev said "No Chetana, I have done that so you don't have to do that. That is part of your Spiritual Inheritance from me. What I have done is the inheritance your receive, just as what you have done and will do will be the students' inheritance from you and from me and from my Guru and all the other teachers."

I was awed as I sat speechless for a moment, and Gurudev continued, “Also, no one can be mad or angry at you and come to me after you have been their teacher. There must be love for you as a teacher before they can come to me as a teacher.” This made me realize that we as students will always have our Spiritual Inheritance as long as we love and respect our teachers. The teachers do not go away, it is only the students who leave in anger who lose their spiritual inheritance.

This talk with Gurudev made me think about those people who don’t understand what life is for and about, the people who equate success with money, that they will leave behind. They do not know what we now understand, that our Spiritual Inheritance is greater than any amount of money or possessions that could be accumulated. For our Spiritual Inheritance is the true, everlasting gold of the soul.

Namaste,

Chetana

December 1998: Blueprint for the New Year

Dear Lighthouse Members, Friends and Families,

Many Blessings of “Bliss” to all as we welcome in the New Year of 1999.

I’ve been meditating for over 24 years now, and each year since I began to meditate, there are two things I have done pretty faithfully. First of all, each year I reviewed the past year for what I felt I accomplished. Secondly, I decided what I wanted to accomplish during the upcoming New Year. Sometimes, including now, I have “carryovers” from past years. I have a habit of categorizing my highest priorities each year of what I want to accomplish. Sometimes it takes more than one year, so I have progressive “carryovers”.

The categories I have chosen don’t vary, though what’s in each one may vary from year to year. The categories I use to look back on and forward with are:

1. Spiritual
2. Mental/Emotional
3. Physical Body
4. Personal Environment
5. Work

These are my basic categories. Some years I might add miscellaneous categories such as finances, travel, or anything else that might come to my conscious mind at the time I am “creating” my New Year’s blueprint.

The more I grow to know myself the more clear I become about this. “When you know who you really are, you then know what you want and where you want to go in life.” And conversely, if you don’t know first “who” you really are, how can you ever know what you want and where you are really going? One can waste so much time, mental time, on external things, and still not be happy, because of not knowing who one really is.

For the new year my SPIRITUAL category has a lot of “carryovers,” needless to say. These include: being with Gurudev as much as possible; non-attachment; and freedom from all desires. When I list my spiritual accomplishments for the past year, I include things like learning new mantras, going to workshops or pilgrimages, and so forth. Some students have included astral travel, developing telepathy, getting Reiki training, etc.

The MENTAL category includes books I have read, problems I’ve solved and understanding I’ve gained. The EMOTIONAL category has carryovers for me, such as maintaining equilibrium and being in a state of Bliss. In years past I would focus on forgiveness, compassion, releasing anger and resentments, and facing many challenges and some lessons.

Since 1995 I have paid more attention to the PHYSICAL BODY category than I had in a long time. The PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT category has included redoing different rooms, getting vinyl siding on the house, and so on.

Then coming full circle back to the Spiritual is the Work category which includes what you want to do in your current work or needing to know more about yourself, to know what you really want to “be” when you grow up.

Sometimes during the early years as I was doing a “Blueprint for the coming year, I would get frustrated because at that time I didn’t realize how many carryovers I would have. Yet, at the end of each year I would see or feel new growth, and knew that I was growing towards what I wanted to “Be” or “Do” in life.

When I am through with all my categories, I ask for everything to be put in Divine Order. If I’ve not made my Blueprint the best it can be, I know it will be tailor-made for me in Divine Order.

Blessings of Love and Light in Divine Order to all of you for a wonderful New Year.

Namaste,

Chetana

June 1999: Mindfulness

Through our meditation practice, we have learned mindfulness, to pay attention to our thoughts, words and actions. From our thoughts come all of our words and actions. Since all that we say or do comes from our thoughts, they are there in our mind, whether we consciously want them or not. The positive thoughts we keep will be uplifting to us and others, and will show, manifest through our words and actions. The same is true of negative thoughts – they will also show and manifest through our words and actions. The person who does not try to change the negative thought patterns in his mind will end up being very miserable, and will want everyone to be in agreement with him. As in “misery loves company.”

People who become aware of their own thoughts through meditation will also become more aware of others’ thoughts, words and actions. Meditation works by bringing out the positive thinking, speaking and doing and letting go of the negative, which can pull you down. As you become more positive, you then draw more positive people to you and slowly, slowly the negative energy is left behind.

Meditation is, then, the inward step that must be taken. We can change habits without meditation; for example, giving up smoking or swearing or some other bad habit. But we cannot change the total personality into a positive, loving being without the stillness of meditation. Sometimes we may try, in a conscious way, to superimpose certain behavioral changes on our personality. However, when one superimposes a change, one must always be careful not to “slip”, because the superimposed personality can slip off like a cover on a bed, and expose the whole bed. To experience a true and natural change in the personality, you must meditate daily. Daily meditation permeates your consciousness with Love, Light and Divine Order, and as you become happier, your life is happier and eventually Bliss filled.

Through meditation we gain increased mindfulness, as time goes by. Mindfulness is necessary because it allows us to see the possible choices available to us in any situation. Through the purification process that happens during meditation our mind becomes more clear, we become more mindful of the choices we have. As we become more clear, we are better able to choose to respond to life in a positive way. Sometimes this clarity is just for an instant, but it is in that instant that we can make a positive choice. In this way we are purifying off the dross that covers the “gold” of the personality – who we really are.

It’s not so much what happens to us but how we choose to respond that creates our future reality. With meditation as a daily practice we naturally begin to respect all life, wanting to harm no being anywhere through our thoughts, words or actions, and thus we begin to have a life filled with happiness and bliss.

Namaste,

Chetana

December 1999: Resolutions for the New Millennium

Dear Students and Friends of the Lighthouse,

May many Blessings of Love, Light, and Divine Order be manifested with all of you as we begin the new millennium.

As the last year of the century is ending, let us be mindful to let go of the feelings and thoughts that have not been healthy for us. Look over the past year to see what you have learned, and give thanks for the blessings of growth you experienced in each challenge or each lesson learned. Look at what you are still holding onto and ask yourself, "do I really need this as I go into the year 2000?" We hold on to emotions, ideas, things and people sometimes out of habit. We need to look at what we are consciously holding onto and decide if it is something we need or not.

Towards the end of the year, take time to make your resolutions for the new year. Before we can do that, let us see what we are carrying into the new year from our past, and see if we want to carry it with us. Then think about your new year's resolutions without all of the old mental, emotional or physical baggage getting in the way. For instance, one cannot say for the new year, "I make a resolution to love everyone" while still being angry with a current or ex-lover, husband/wife, boss, friend, child, etc. The new year's resolution cannot work with old baggage. So look at your baggage, and make a resolution to release the baggage. Then make your other resolutions.

As I myself think about the year 2000, my greatest desire is that all people would live in love and peace, by focusing on how we are all alike, in needing love and respect, understanding and forgiveness, rather than focusing on how different we may be in our personal beliefs and lifestyles. By focusing on the differences it is too easy to fall into judgments and lose understanding, leaving no room for acceptance of those who are different from ourselves. Violence begins when we lose respect for each other. Love gives respect and reverence for all life. This is my most cherished desire and will be one of my personal resolutions for the new year, the new millennium.

In Love and Light,

Namaste,

Chetana

Spring 2000: Heart Empowerment

Many Blessings of Love, Light, Health, and Prosperity to all of you.

We are all love. How many times have we heard that statement? I, for one, have heard it many, many times in my life. It sounds good until we meet someone who doesn't embrace what we may believe in. Then we may not even "like" them, let alone see that they are love just like we are.

If we are really all love, then why are some people "more lovable", while others seem impossible to love?

If we are all love, then why isn't everyone recognized as love, no matter who they are?
If we are love, then why aren't we all expressing love and acting lovingly towards each other?

These are some of the questions we talk about in the Heart Empowerment class. In the first of four classes we look at reasons why some people experience and express love more than others.

We all know that there is a sun because we see it in the sky, we see the light from the sun, and we feel its warmth during the day. However, if we didn't see the sun for a day or a week, we would understand that the clouds have come between us and the sun, but we would still know that there is a sun.

If we can for a moment equate love as the sun, and "conditions" as the clouds, we can begin to understand how love is everyone and also how it is not always easy to see.

There are pre-existing conditions that we come into this lifetime with. During this lifetime we may work knowingly to remove conditions, or unknowingly we can create more conditions around who we really are – love.

People who have fewer conditions around the heart center will feel and be more loving and lovable. People with more conditions around their heart center will find it harder to feel and act on the love that they are. Some of the conditions are created from fears, insecurities, jealousies, ego, greed, hate. Each time we have a thought, or a word, or an action, that is unloving, we create conditions around our heart center. If this continues, the conditions become so thick, like the clouds covering the sun, that we cannot experience the love we are, and no one else can either.

In class, we are also working with understanding and removing the conditions that keep us from experiencing fully the love that we are. In removing the conditions around the heart we work with the heart center mantra meditation as our foundation. We also use other practices such as affirmations, vipassana, humor and play.

So, the next time you see someone who you may feel is not love, take some time to try to understand the conditions that may be covering their heart center. Send them light to see themselves clearly, and love to heal what has hurt them enough to create conditions around their heart.

Namaste,

Chetana

P.S. This was written without conscious knowledge of Gurudev's message.

August 2000: The Love that We Are

Many Blessings of Love, Light, Health and Prosperity to all of you.

During our daily meditation we reach that part of our being that knows who we are and what to do in order to live in a state of non violence (ahimsa) with ourselves and all other beings. *Truth is gained by going deep into meditation. As we gain greater understanding of the Truth, we slowly begin to change naturally in order to live to our fullest maximum potential.*

As we live and grow, we develop an understanding of ourselves by what we look like (big or little, short or tall, blonde, brunette, etc.) and by what we do. This helps us to define who we think we are. Many people keep on identifying with this outer image because they don't know any other way to live. When they do begin to seek a greater meaning to life and are blessed enough to seek the truth, they will eventually include daily meditation as a way to see and understand themselves and others beyond what they have identified with in the past.

Through meditation we slowly begin to see and feel the love that we are within ourselves and others. Also as we feel love for all, we move away from creating pain and violence towards ourselves and others. When we are truly love and loving, how can we hurt ourselves or other beings? So, slowly we become aware of being love, and since love is nonviolent we slowly begin to live in a natural state of nonviolence.

The "naturalness" state is an important one to understand because it is only through stopping and shedding those actions which created violence in the first place that we really experience the fullness of the love that we are. This is different than having someone say "Don't do this" or "Do this" and living this way whether you feel like it or not out of fear of going to hell. To do, because you are in touch with being Love, with being Light, with being Truth, you need no rules, no dogmas to tell you what to do and not to do. For the heart filled with love cannot do any violence to anyone. This kind of love is not experienced by someone who lives by rules and regulations.

So we begin naturally to watch our thoughts, negating thoughts of violence with "Na Hum" ("I am not that violent thought"). We begin naturally to watch our words and the power that words have in our environment. We begin to see how our environment can be affected by words of love or words of violence, and we move slowly away from violent thoughts and violent words that can hurt so many. WE then begin to become aware of our actions and we keep from doing acts of violence to ourselves and other beings because we feel the love that we are, and not because someone has told us not to think or talk or do things according to their rules and beliefs.

Until we reach the state of perfect love, we will sometimes knowingly or unknowingly hurt ourselves or someone or something by our spiritual unawareness. As we become more spiritually aware, we want to heal all whom we have hurt through our thoughts, words and

actions, not only in this lifetime but any time before. We learn to embrace asking for and giving forgiveness for those beings whom we have hurt and those who have hurt us. The heart that is searching to be just love does not have room to hold hurt and anger. So we become aware through meditation that to forgive is truly a divine state of love. Only by forgiving and asking for forgiveness can we experience that which we all look for in life, but only a few will find it – LOVE.

Thirty million Jains from all over the world will be holding Paryushana, Forgiveness Festival from August 26-September 3. They have this festival every year to cleanse, purify and forgive. If you would like to participate in Paryushana at the Jain Temple of Greater Detroit, call Prachi or Nirmala, or the Jain Temple in your area.

In conclusion, as we go on meditating and growing spiritually together, I would like to say to all of you “Miccha Mi Dukkadam” (Me-Cham-Me Do-Kah-Dum) which means, “If I have hurt you in any way at any time, please forgive me.”

Love and Light,

Chetana

October 2000: The Seasons of Life

Many Blessings of Health, Prosperity and Bliss to all of you.

One of the reasons I feel very fortunate to be living in Michigan is I get to experience the four seasons from year to year. Each season has its own beauty for us to experience. When I was younger (before meditation), I didn't take the time to see the Divine expressed in each season. After some years of meditating, I began to see each day of each season as a special gift from the Universe. With it being fall now, I find myself going for drives down streets and country roads just to be closer to the shimmering beauty of the leaves on the trees or as they fall gracefully down.

Each season is a preparation for the next one to come, while at the same time being fully present in the now of fall or summer, winter or spring. I also see life being divided into "seasons of time." We all experience spring, new life, when we are born. Then from the seeds planted in this lifetime or another we grow to fullness in our summer of desires and passions. Out of our fullness we harvest, in the fall, all that we have grown and matured and accomplished in our lives. In the winter of our lives we come to a time of letting go and preparing for transition. For just as surely as spring follows winter we also continue to come back to life again and again, until we reach enlightenment and liberation. I have seen winter as a time of going within, a time of retreat and transition, a time to prepare for the new life of spring.

The beauty of human communication is how we can express the same truths we know in many different ways. Scientists say that matter cannot be created or destroyed, but it can and does go through changes, transformations. I believe that we as healthy human beings keep changing and growing and going on to higher states of awareness and perfection. We are not destroyed in the process – only changed.

I am writing this in memory of all those souls who are now in the winter of their lives and are waiting for spring to begin again. I was inspired to write this for Christy Yenkel and her family and friends, and for all who have experienced a transition of someone they loved.

Until spring comes again.....

Namaste,

Chetana

Spring 2001: Our Consciousness Changes

Dear Lighthouse Students, Members and Friends,

MANY BLESSINGS OF HEALTH, PROSPERITY, AND BLISS TO ALL OF YOU

We can easily become confused by all of what we read and listen to from others, if we are not doing daily meditation. Without meditation to guide us to truth, we are influenced by others' perceptions of truth, and we never get to experience first hand, the truth within ourselves. Within you, within each one of you, lies the love, light and perfect truth that you are. The greatest journey one can take in a lifetime is to seek out the Divine Self. Understand that the Guru (remover of darkness) is within Self. An outer Guru or teacher can act as a catalyst for your inner Guru. However, outer Gurus cannot do your work for you, or remove your karmas. They can help you understand how to work to release karmas, but it is up to each individual to heal and dissolve his or her own karmas.

In order to know the Divine Self, one must work on removing the karmas (conditions) which cover the Divine Self. The karmas (conditions) which cover the Divine Self can ultimately change a person's perception of truth. If we never search for truth through meditation, we can be persuaded by someone else's perception of truth. I'm not saying to never listen to another's truth. What I am saying is to keep on searching for the perfect truth you need to experience within you. Each person's truth will be in accord with that person's level of consciousness (development of soul). It is important to hear another's truth with this understanding. I would like to give you what I feel is a beautiful example of this.

Many years ago when I met Gurudev Chitrabhanu, I was a meat eater. I told him I was, he listened, he didn't say how bad or wrong this was. Nor did he even mention the violence I was doing to the animals I had eaten, or the violence I was doing to myself. At that time my level of consciousness was clouded by violence, and I had no awareness or understanding that I was being violent. On the contrary, I didn't think I was a violent person in any way.

Slowly, slowly, being around Gurudev, hearing him lecture and receiving his Blessings, I began to find my Truth. Through my daily meditation and with Gurudev as a loving mentor and catalyst, I began to see parts of myself I didn't even realize I had, parts that fell in the category of being a violent person. I began to see that it was violent to eat meat. I began to look at animals, in their eyes, and see loving beings who want to live their lives as much as I want to live mine. I did not become a vegetarian because someone reprimanded me or because it's "healthier" not to eat meat. I became a vegetarian because the compassion and understanding, love and light from Gurudev and my daily practice of meditation changed my level of consciousness.

With this change in my consciousness I embraced nonviolence (Ahimsa) as a way of life, a way of life that includes being a vegetarian.

So each of us, on our inner journey to the truth, to the Divine Self, will experience our level of consciousness changing as we grow spiritually in the Light. Bless all of you on your journeys.

Namaste,

Chetana

September 11, 2001: God Bless the World

Dear Lighthouse Members and Friends,

God Bless Humanity and bless all of you with love, patience and tolerance.

“911” or September 11, 2001 will be remembered by Americans and everyone around the world. We who are alive now are living through one of the darkest times in the history of the United States. In generations to come it will be written about in our history books, just as Pearl Harbor was written about in 1941.

I was talking to my mother-in-law and she said she has cried three times over our country – once when Pearl Harbor was bombed, once when President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed, and for the third time when the hijacked suicide planes hit the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. I was only six months old at the time of Pearl Harbor but I do remember the shock, sadness and deep sorrow I felt when President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. And I am still filled with shock and disbelief and deep anguish and sorrow for the atrocities of September 11th. I have heard that the Taliban talks with many coded words and gestures, and I believe with my whole heart that September 11, 2001 was picked as the destruction date because we use 911 as our emergency number.

It is at times like this that I understand more deeply, the value of being on a spiritual path. When President Kennedy was shot and killed, I was not a meditator so I carried very different views of life. As I said I was shocked and saddened when I first heard about the president, then my sadness turned to anger, a very deep anger that I could not release at the time, nor did I seek to release it.

I started meditating in 1973, almost 30 years ago. During all those years because of meditation, I have not become stagnant in my thinking, in my views of the world. When September 11th came and the World Trade Center was destroyed, and the thousands of people who worked there were killed, and so many rescue workers who tried to save them were lost, I saw and felt the anguish that was experienced throughout the nation and the world.

But I also saw and felt the love, the courage, the reaching out to help that kept emerging all over the United States. Yesterday’s stranger became today’s friend. From detachment and intolerance came caring and love for others. The terrorist’s actions were supposed to separate and destroy us as a nation; instead, we as people have become more open to experience the love that we are and have always been.

Now it is very important not to let the love we are become divided by anger, fear, hate for the enemies of our country. There are just a few who have chosen ruthless, wicked actions, and so many of us who can grow together in love until the evil actions of misguided minds come to an end.

Love with non-violence in your heart, for as we condemn those with violent actions, we become as violent in our thoughts as they are in their actions, and then where does it end? Love with ahimsa in your thoughts, words, actions and reactions, and pray for all to see how violence hurts all people everywhere.

GOD BLESS AMERICA
PRAY FOR AMERICA
GOD BLESS HUMANITY
GOD BLESS THE WORLD
PRAY FOR THE WORLD

Namaste,

Chetana

Spring 2002: Interfaith Community

Dear Lighthouse Students and Friends,

Blessings of love and peace to all of you.

Many people are now willing to be open and accept that there are many pathways to the same Enlightened Realization. These pathways are called by many different names, and names are merely labels that help us to understand. However, understanding is understood from one's perceptions based on all previous experiences that one has had to date.

There are people who have had the vision of having "interfaith" communities as a coming together while remaining with one's own perception of truth. I was watching on TV a meeting of people of many faiths. I listened to the leaders of churches, synagogues and temples starting to state their beliefs from their backgrounds, and then others came back with their beliefs. It was not a sharing of beliefs but rather a competition – this caused separation in the meeting rather than a coming together. So how can we expect others to be tolerant when the "leaders" of different faiths take offense at each other's statements?

I personally feel that some of us are headed in the right direction of having an interfaith community. This is what we believe at the Lighthouse Center, this is our goal. One important idea to help us reach our goal is the Jain idea of "Relativity of Thinking". What this means is that each of us experiences the world each day through our own perception. Our perceptions come from our experiences and are colored and changed by them every day. Because each one of us is unique and each one of us has our own perceptions, relativity of thinking becomes very important as a way to be tolerant and compassionate.

An example of this came up in class recently. We did an exercise in perception that went like this: I gave a statement to everyone at the same time and asked them what it meant. The statement was: a man walked up to a woman he knew, told her he loved her and then turned away and laughed. Each person was asked to share their perception of what this meant. It turned out there were many different perceptions—one person thought the man laughed because he was shy, someone else thought the man was nervous and insecure, another thought he was playing a practical joke or was just mean and nasty. What is your perception?

Understanding that people have such different perceptions of the same thing is what relativity of thinking is all about. Having this understanding gives us greater tolerance and compassion for each other, especially when we don't agree, when our perceptions differ.

In order to really participate in a Interfaith Community I believe we need to look at being the most compassionate and understanding person we can be. In studying different faiths, I have found that some of the common threads that tie us all together include:

Having compassion for all
Love heals all
Having forgiveness for those you feel have hurt you
Asking for forgiveness when you have hurt someone knowingly or unknowingly
Being of service to others.

In my studies, I have found out that non-violence (Ahimsa) for any living being at any time is without saying very necessary to have in an Interfaith Community. I have found out that Jains have the strictest code of non-violence and Reverence for all Live, which to me fits beautifully into the development of an Interfaith Community. And Relativity of Thinking is also necessary – being able to see the differences in each other's choices, and still respect those choices. This is just as important as seeing and experiencing the “sameness” or “oneness” of all.

We need to start with ourselves first. You cannot change the world outside yourself, if you are not working at changing yourself into a more compassionate being.

Think about how Interfaith Communities can start growing and what we can do towards this Realization.

Namaste,

Chetana

Summer /Fall 2002: Be a Good Friend to Yourself

Dear Lighthouse members, families and friends,
Many Blessings for your continued growth into Bliss.

There have been many quotes and statements about friends. One statement I have given much thought to over the years is, "Would You like to be your own best friend?" Some people whom I have worked with have looked for a "perfect" friend, and have been sadly disappointed. For even when they found a friend, they also found out that the friend was not perfect like they had first thought. Sometimes they didn't want the person as a friend anymore.

Unfortunately, may keep looking for Bliss and perfection from others. I feel that often people are looking for what they want to be and do from others, instead of from themselves. In our search and as we grow, we find that our perceptions change, our ideas change, our experiences change. What once seemed perfect to us no longer does. Our views of perfection, the "perfect friend", the "perfect me" change, and our frameworks for perfection change too.

We are always working with two realities, whether we are aware of them or not. One reality never changes, through all o time, it always was, always is, always will be. This reality is a part o each and every person, every living being. The other reality is always changing; as we change, it changes. This is the reality we are born into, and live and die in as human beings. Our human personality is constantly perceiving, experiencing and changing with the changing reality of our earthly world.

When we spend time thinking good thoughts, speaking with thoughtfulness and compassion and doing good service for others, the human personality becomes closer to being liberated, Bliss-filled, Divine self of the never changing reality, where Bliss is. As we begin to live more, and love ourselves more, we stop looking for the perfect friend. We stop looking for love, bliss, perfection in someone outside ourselves, and come to embrace it within our own self. The more we can love our self exactly where we are on our personal journey, the more we can truly love others exactly where they are on their journeys. We learn to love our selves and others without judgment, without expectation, without attachment. A beautiful affirmation that can help us in this learning is "I accept myself exactly as I am as I work toward perfection in the Light".

Said every day after meditation, this affirmation helps bring our human personality closer to our Divine Self.

As we learn to look within ourselves more, the more we can consciously change through our choices. To see beyond what we know in our changing, earthly reality, we must be open to embrace the unchanging eternal reality through daily meditation. With meditation we go beyond the conscious mind, the subconscious mind, the unconscious mind to the changing, human personality to the ultimate, unchanging reality of the Divine.

So next time you wish you had a good friend, **be a good friend to yourself**. As you are good to yourself, you become a good friend to others, and others will become attracted to being a good friend to you.

Remember every day is a beginning as well as an ending. Think about this: what if everyone you met today was going to write something for your epitaph when you left the earth? Think about the last interaction you had with each person; think about what you said, how you said it and what they would have to say to others about you. Each day we are writing our own epitaphs through our interactions with others, as well as through all of our thoughts, words and actions. Let your epitaph include: “*She or he was a very good friend to all!*”

Namaste,

Chetana

Winter 2003: Celebrating Holidays. All Days

Dear Lighthouse members, families and friends,

May you be blessed with a peaceful mind, a loving heart and the knowledge that you do make a difference by just being you in Divine Order.

It's time to celebrate the Holidays again. Celebrations need to be expressed all the days we live and not just a few. Some people I have known don't enjoy the Holidays and don't enjoy celebrating any other days either. However, there are others who started to celebrate the Holidays, continue to do so, and now that celebration energy has moved into their daily lives. They are learning how to celebrate life every day, not just on the Holidays. It's a growth process for us to go through in order to spiritually grow up.

When I think about celebrating the Holidays, I begin to reminisce, about how we celebrated Christmas when I was growing up. I remember the special rituals we went through every year. My grandmother, who lived with my mother and me, would take a long time making potato and cheese pirogies. We would decorate the tree and go Christmas shopping. Every year I would always get my grandmother a pair of blue felt slippers from Sam's in downtown Detroit. Every year she would act surprised and pleased to get the slippers, and she would wear them until the next Christmas, when again she'd receive another pair of blue felt slippers.

We also had one other ritual of going downtown to Hudson's and riding up 13 floors on the escalator to that magical place, Santa Land, with toys, rides, cotton candy, and seeing Santa. Even after I knew certain "new" truths, we still continued our yearly ritual. My mother would start telling me that Santa wouldn't be bringing too much because he has so many children to take care of. I was always amazed that "he" got me more than a couple of presents—even socks and other articles of clothing were given to me from him!

All of these Holiday rituals were what made Christmas so special to me growing up. It is through such rituals that we all celebrate our particular holidays—whether Christmas, or Hanukah, Kwanzaa or Ramadan. Rituals give meaning to our lives and unite us through time; past, present and future. Doing the same things each year bonds families and communities together, and gives us a way to celebrate in good times and through bad times.

In our Lighthouse community we are very fortunate to have developed our own rituals for the Holidays. We begin with Thanksgiving Eve Meditation, giving thanks for all of our blessings. We celebrate Hanukah each year, and for Christmas we celebrate with the Children's Christmas Play and Party, and Christmas Eve Meditation. We have our annual Holiday message Party, and our New Year's Eve Meditation, through which we release all the negative vibrations from the current year and invite in the highest vibrations possible for the New Year, for ourselves and others.

Just as we celebrate special rituals on holidays, in the same way we can learn to celebrate, not only on holidays, but every day. If we can celebrate each day as we live it, we can create day by day, a life of living each day to the fullest. In order to celebrate each day we need to be aware of each day as it goes by.

Each day it is our thoughts, our words, our actions and reactions that will determine what we celebrate. What we say and think, what we feel and do creates our day. We can choose, through our awareness, to see the blessings, even in the difficult times, the challenges and lessons. And it is this awareness, nurtured through our daily meditations, that becomes like a ritual repeated each day.

Each day with awareness, we can celebrate our actions, our words, our choices for that day, and begin to build a connection day to day, of the life we are creating for ourselves.

So as we celebrate our special Holidays, let us begin to also celebrate our life each day, every day so that we can more and more live to our fullest potential.
In Divine order, love and light.

Namaste,

Chetana

Spring 2003: Realizations

Dear Lighthouse members, families and friends,

Blessings for a loving heart and a peaceful mind to be with you always.

One of the greatest gifts of wisdom that I have gained in this lifetime is to realize that I am ultimately responsible for being happy or sad, joyful or sorrowful, optimistic or pessimistic, loving or hating. Someone else or something else is not responsible for the choices I make that bring to me the consequences of my actions.

This wisdom lets me see that neither God or anyone else is trying to make my life miserable, when I am trying to be a “good” person. Through meditation, I started gaining the realization that it was me, myself and I who, through my choices in thoughts, words, and actions made myself happy or sad, optimistic or pessimistic, loving or hating.

Through meditation and realization I gained the knowledge that with every action there is a consequence and there is also how I respond to that consequence. If I choose to respond negatively, then I could expect some negativity to come to me. The more I meditated, the more I realized how important it is not only to watch my thoughts, but also to become very clear that I am the one who can and will make a decision, a “choice” of what I want to do with that thought. I can choose to seek out a positive outcome or become negatively involved with my thoughts, and then I will experience a negative outcome.

The second realization I had was the experience that there is “Power in the Spoken Word”. So I began to choose, for the most part, words that would flower with beauty rather than pierce like thorns. For what or whom we hurt will eventually in some way come back to “haunt us”. If they are hurtful words, we will be hurt; if they are loving words, love will also come to us as a response.

Thirdly, I gained understanding about my actions that any action did not just appear by itself. Somewhere in the recesses of my mind a “thought” triggered my actions. If it was a good thought it would lead to a good action. If, however, my thought was a bad thought, my action would follow through as bad. A further realization came in, and that was if I was aware of a negative thought, I could choose an action that would not be negative but positive, thus changing the circular consequences that had me trapped. I trapped myself in negativity and if I could do that, then I could also eventually free myself from the negative consequence. As I did this, a change began, and slowly I began to have a more Light and Love filled life.

I also learned that it depends on how many times I may have knowingly or unknowingly repeated an action, that it would be played out in my life in some way and at some day.

I realized that just as one meditation does not change all of who I am, so one good action does not change a pattern of negative actions, but it is a beginning. Each time I choose a positive action instead of a negative one, I am building a positive consequence, and a new pattern of positive actions that will little by little replace the negative pattern from the past. So in making positive choices I gradually free myself from the actions that made me unhappy.

Meditation makes all of this possible. I realized many years ago that meditation was and is the most important action for me to take to heal my Being. I also realized that I could work with affirmations daily, and they would be the seeds of future actions in the garden of my mind. Before meditation, I felt powerless over the circumstances in my life. Through meditation, however, I feel the power of being able to re-create my life with loving thoughts, loving words and loving actions.

Namaste,

Chetana

Biography

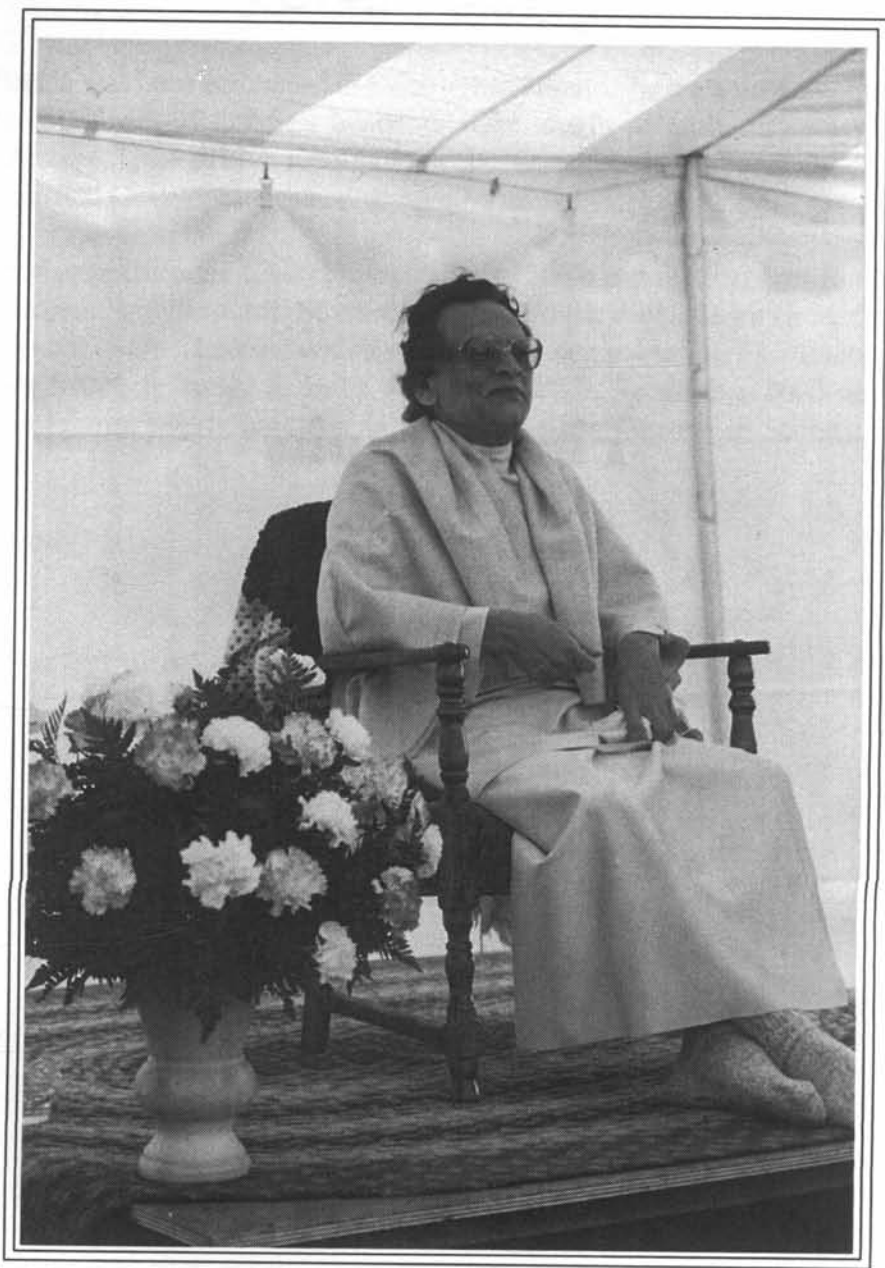
Chetana Catherine Florida

July 4, 1941 – April 2, 2003

Catherine Florida was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. She became a mantra meditator in 1972 after the death of her first husband. She taught metaphysics classes for “Do Something Different” in area high schools and colleges, and in 1979 founded the Lighthouse Center for Spiritual Development in Whitmore Lake.

She met Jain Master Gurudev Chitrabhanuji in the 1980’s and in 1991 was initiated as his first apostle atop the holy Jain Mt. Shatrunjaya in Palitana, India. It was here that she was given her spiritual name Chetana, which means pure awareness, pure consciousness. She completed her fifth pilgrimage to India with Gurudev in September 2002 and received there the International Vegetarian Award from the Bombay Vegetarian Society.

Photographs

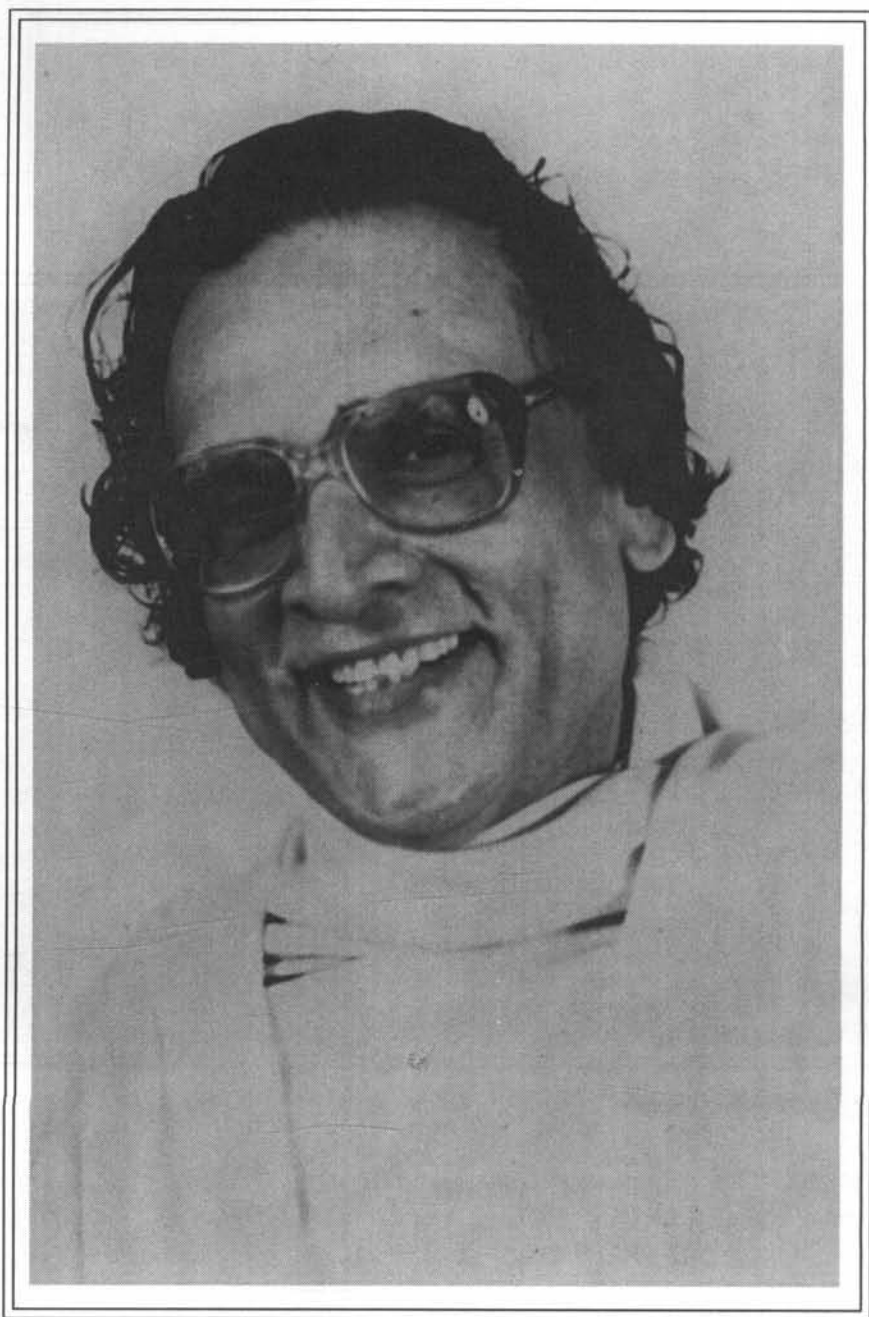


Chitrabhanuji's second visit to the Lighthouse Center, 1989



Photo Credit: Jyoti Betsy Thorne

Chetana, 1993







September 2002: Chetana receiving the International Vegetarian award in India



Photo Credit: Aum Terry Abrams

Chetana, Chitrabhanuji and Pramodaji Chitrabhanu



Photo Credit: Jyoti Betsy Thorne

March, 2003



Photo Credit: Aum Terry Abrams

Chitrabhanuji and Lighthouse members, Spring 2003

Messages from Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu

***“Through his love and guidance we have become more than we ever
thought we could be.”***

Chetana Catherine Florida

Spring 1991: Our Jaina Heritage: Transforming and Evolving

Friends. Without the living divinity within us, neither human being nor life would exist. Because of the divinity within us, we move, think, love, give and receive. Do not be misled by what you see in the world around you, the passing show with its violence, commercialism, greed for possessions, and lust for power. We are the conscious Life Energy, evolving as we transform ourselves, and this Jaina heritage is our wealth and greatness.

For this transformation into Self-Realization, we need meditation. In meditation, we experience and recognize our great heritage and divinity. The divinity within each of us is the Creative Force, which we realize. Each of us must commit ourselves to living as a source of love, light and creativity. Meditation takes us beyond mind, beyond words, beyond ego. In meditation, the confining shell of the ego is split. When the destructive and negative shell of the ego is cast off, our soul shines forth with dazzling brilliance.

When will the ego shatter? When we enter deep within the core of our being. The kernel of the coconut and its sweet milk can be had only when we break its outer shell. Self-centered love belongs to the ego, but love of all living beings belongs to the real Self. When we go beyond the ego, the essence emerges in freedom, sensing a larger capacity to experience life as it is.

Also, in meditation we realize that the glory of the earth includes almost limitless varieties of plants and trees, all of which start from tiny seeds. We share this richness of diversity; this divinity in many forms, each individually unique. The seed is nourished by the dark earth, which is broken up by earthworms, watered by rain, warmed by the sun, cooled by the gentle touch of the night. The seed splits its shell, and a form of life emerges which begins to expand and actualize its potential, for behind the maturation of the seed, there is a benign harmony in the cycle of its flowering and bearing fruit and its decay – only to grow again. The inter-relatedness of seed, earth, rain and sun, of people who eat the fruit and of all that lives on the earth is the inter-relatedness of one with all. Without this inter-relatedness, this harmony of the whole, we would not be here. We not only eat the fruit of the tree, we rest in its shade, and we also enjoy its beauty, by being the enjoyer and the enjoyed.

Two thousand and five hundred years ago, Mahavir said, “Since you receive so much more than any other form of life, it is inevitable that you should want to give more.” We not only have senses that open the whole expanse of the universe to us, but we also have articulate language, the capacity for abstract thinking, and the freedom to choose and to move ourselves in the forward direction. When we recognize the forward direction, we confront ourselves with: “Who am I?” Why am I here? What is the meaning of life?” Circumstances have changed throughout civilization and there is no clear verbal answer. If there were, we would have a beautiful statement and we would not have to keep searching. For the answer, there is no vocabulary, no verbal expression. We find it in the silence of meditation.

Friends, the universe wants something from us. We have our place in this cosmos. We are significant. Each day we are adding something to the world and shaping our future with our thoughts, our emotions, our words, and our actions. The same light that was in the enlightened masters and great teachers is in us. The same spark, the same flame is there, only they used it to their full capacity. Constantly, we need to keep in mind the immortal question of who we are, for at various stages of life our purpose may be different. At one stage it may be to grow alone; at another, it may be to raise a family. All levels and varieties of human effort and contributions are necessary to consume karmas and to work out vibrations: bearing children, raising them, letting them go, studying art, composing music; or perhaps deciding as Albert Schweitzer did, that music is not enough and going out to establish a hospital in Africa. Having learned who we are, we are ready to give all we feel by making our contribution to building the earth. Only we can decide on our focus. At each step we move onward and forward to evolving. But each of us is here to nurture the seed of divinity within ourselves and find the bliss of being part of the whole.

Feeling oneness with all life reveals two aspects in our consciousness: **Reverence for Life and Relativity in Thinking**. This means that we don't want to hurt anybody with words, thoughts or actions. We don't become fanatic to put down others' viewpoints. Even in thought we have the reverence for another's point of view. And the pure vibration of this amity brings our consciousness together and shows a feeling of oneness with life around us. We become the Master of Ourselves and we don't mar our life with negative vibrations of thoughts and words, but we build our future with our positive vibrations of thoughts and words, and in this way we liberate ourselves.

The four paramount insights for transforming and evolving which are given by Bhagwan Mahavira are:

1. **AMITY:MAITRI** God is the symbol of love. Love energy is God in action. The presence of love is the presence of God. Without amity, goodwill, there is no love. With any trace of fear, violence, hate, resentment, possessiveness, indifference, self-centeredness, love is polluted. The word "I" in English is written in capitals, but it is the word "WE" that should be written in capitals. And the WE should be as big as the universe. It should be a WE based on goodwill. Mahavira defined the requirements of amity in these words: "In happiness or suffering, in joy or grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self. We should therefore, refrain from inflicting upon others such injury as would appear undesirable upon us". Has this message led us to practice amity? In dealing with those who oppose us, our amity needs to be kindled so that conflicts can be resolved without violence. Differences in ideologies call for the humblest amity, so that they can be resolved by dialogue. Amity means peace and goodwill – for all the citizens of this planet. If any obstacle comes in the way, it is the intrusion of ego. Let it go. Let the flow of love and beauty wash it away. Know that THE STREAM OF AMITY will forever wash away the evil.

2. APPRECIATION: PRAMODA Appreciation begins with those nearest us. As we want appreciation, we give it. Children, in their efforts to grow, need appreciation. Husbands and wives, in their dedication to each other, need appreciation. Parents, even with their shortcomings, need appreciation. The mechanic who does an especially good job on our car deserves appreciation. We must learn to appreciate and show appreciation for the virtues and talents and efforts of all others. And our appreciation must be the kind that flows from the heart, not the flattery that falls easily from the lips. And when we meet a sincerely meritorious person whose life is fragrant with simplicity, we show appreciation by sharing our time and services for his good causes which promote well-being of all living beings.

Some unfortunate people, in the grip of the small ego, tend to deny another's progress and accomplishments. Especially if the talented ones are only a few steps ahead, the envious are prone to berate and disparage them. If someone sings better than one of them, he thinks, "Well, she sings, but she really has no rich tone in her voice." If someone dances better, he thinks, "Well this man dances but really has no grace. He jumps here and there like a monkey." If someone gives a donation, the jealous person thinks, "This person is generous only because he wishes to show off." If someone is being humble, the jealous one says, "He is hiding his ego behind a mask of humility." If someone is outspoken and forthright, the envious one calls him blunt and impolite. This is how envy and pettiness get in the way, although perhaps the envious are people who did not receive enough appreciation themselves when they were small. Ask yourself whether you have any of this envy. When we reach the larger Self, envy and competitiveness are gone. Appreciation implies that as the others have found their purpose in life, their cause or aim, we must find ours. If we can avoid the snare of inferiority, of putting ourselves down, we can avoid the snare of envy. Appreciation will bring us back to reverence and harmony.

3. COMPASSION: KARUNA Often we are so involved in ourselves and in our own affairs that we do not think of the suffering of other people, or of plants and animals. Not only a few saints and enlightened persons but also all of us must feel the pain of other living beings and try to help them. Tears are only the starting point of compassion! I say we must first care, and then care for, and then try to change the customs and conditions that give rise to such widespread suffering! If we have compassion, in today's world it will lead us to choose a simple lifestyle. We must think of those who not only enjoy none of the fruits of technology, but lack even food for themselves and their children. Our lack of concern contributes to their material deprivation. Have compassion for yourself also, but instead of blaming our misery on others, see what we may be doing. By hurting others, we hurt ourselves. By criticizing others, we criticize ourselves. By making others feel guilt, we make ourselves carry guilt. Calamities and disappointments, which are showered upon us, can be truly a means to test our purity and strength. Compassion cannot flood the soul until we understand and overcome indifference to the suffering around us and even to those unknown to us.

4. EQUANIMITY: MADYASTH Equanimity is perhaps the most difficult to obtain and maintain. If through our sincere efforts we acquire some vision and try to impart it to others and they refuse to heed us, how can we maintain our equilibrium? If we try to give someone a helping hand or some good piece of advice and offer of help is spurned, we may tend to feel rejected. We may feel helpless and react with anger or even, our hurt pride becomes vindictive. It is a subtle moment in life! Especially when our attempt entailed some time and effort. We may treat the ungrateful friend even worse than an enemy.

As parents, how often we, with the best of intentions, want to tell our children what to do, how to live their lives. At times, the children become rebellious and go against us. At that moment, however, we keep our balance. Learn the art of patience, of equanimity. As amity and equanimity grow, their glow will show on your face. Irritation begets irritation. Our irritation and rejection only lead them to build their opposition rather than to question themselves. We have to maintain our equilibrium not only with our rebellious children or with rebels against society, but also with those in power whom our own vision and our human rights demand that we oppose. Gandhi had shown this equanimity. Even though he was adamant in the fight against the British dominion, inwardly he was filled with amity for them. He told me “One day those who still rule over us will understand our position and we will achieve our freedom. So we must fight but with the weapon of love.”

Also, let us have equanimity for ourselves, our own progress, and our own battle against our inner enemies. We learn from the errors we are bound to commit. We learn that those who embrace violence have no right to expect anything but violence in return. This is the Karma of Action. It is up to us to stop the vicious circle. Only on the basis of the alchemy of equanimity can the base metal of evil be turned into the goodness of gold. With equanimity ATMA can be ascended to PARAMATMA: the small self can be transformed into the Higher Self.

June 1991: Love in the Flow of Life

FORM AND FORMLESS can be viewed as the world of conception and the world of perception. CONCEPTION is an outer world while PERCEPTION is an inner one and REALITY is found between these two.

When we live in the world of concepts, we deal only with outside forms. But when we have inner perception – when we throw the inner light on all the forms – the forms become meaningful. Without this light of perception the same forms become obstacles to our journey.

The main thing to learn from a teacher, a religion, or from meditation is to answer this question: “Am I throwing inner light on all the forms or am I being governed by them?” If you are only governed by them, life will hold nothing but pain and suffering, torture and conflict. The forms will appear to be in chaos and confusion, but we can see harmony in the forms only when we use our inner uniting force, the sense of perception.

This body is a form, a container. But we don't see that which is contained. What is that? We know that our hand is here and we want to lift it to there. Who gives the order to move this hand? It is the life force, the energy that gives animation to the hand. This is unseen. We have forgotten the REALITY WHICH IS FORMLESS because, in our ignorance, we have attributed REALITY to the symbols.

What is symbol? This body is a symbol. What is reality? The soul is a reality. Because we have not seen the soul, most people believe that the body is reality and the soul is fable. But when we go deep, we realize it is this body, which is the fable. It is here today, and gone tomorrow. But the soul continues, it only changes form.

The Enemy Inside

If we don't have inner perception, we create divisions, which separate us and cause unhappiness. In reality there is no unhappiness. The mental agony people suffer is from the fire of jealousy, of ego, of anger. It burns them inside; it is their colored thoughts!

Whenever you are angry, jealous, egotistical or depressed, don't run away from it. Stay with it. There is no need to take any temporary means, such as pills, drugs, cigarettes or alcohol to calm down or to run from it. **Stay and watch.** Ask “Why am I jealous? Who is making me jealous?” Nobody can compel you to be jealous. You are your own enemy. No outside enemy can punish you as severely as you do to yourself. Think of the damage you do to your brain, to your thinking, to your body, to your peace when you are in anger. If anyone else ever did such damage to you, you could sue him or her. But when you damage yourself, whom do you sue?

In the same way, don't be angry with another person because he doesn't know himself. Why should we be angry with a person who is slumbering? That person deserves our compassion. When we have inner perception, we see that this ego, this small ego of body or name, which is made of mental air, is our barrier. It comes between us. What have we to prove and to whom? Why give in to the ego? Perception opens the door to a new awareness.

A swan was paddling serenely across a pond when a crow approached and asked, "How many styles have you for walking and flying?"

"I have only one style," the swan replied.

"You have only one style! I have a hundred styles," said the crow mockingly.

"You can have a hundred styles, but you still remain a crow," the swan said as it gently glided away.

Different styles can't change a crow into something else. He cannot become a swan just because he knows different ways of walking and flying. It is better to have your own style, like the swan: to be yourself with your own ways of doing things.

Life is a flow. But if we live only in the ego's exterior world of styles, we don't live a natural life. We lose touch with the natural flow of life. We then try to live outside because our ego can't exist without creating styles. It is always comparing and competing and so we get no peace.

Flow of Peace and Love

In this world, we are here to evolve fully in peace. This human birth can be so peaceful and so full of blessings when we make the best of our days and nights. Meditation touches the core of our heart and helps free us from these tendencies of projected expectations from outside forms. Become natural and live in the flow of life. That is our meditation: Using our inner uniting force, the sense of inner perception, we get in touch with the REALITY which gives animation to all forms and lets us experience this wonderful flow of peace and love. In this light of awareness, we perceive REALITY as it is and live harmoniously in relation with both form and formless, without creating projected expectations.

Inner Reverence

I want to tell you: in each one of us, in each one of you, I see God. I do not see God just in temples, just in synagogues, just in statues, but also in each living being, representing the Divine Presence. You are human: you speak, you think, you work, you love, you share, you feel, you cry, you laugh, and you are everything. You are seeing in each person the presence of God, which we call **Namaste**. It is a Sanskrit word and "NAMAS" means "I

salute” and “TE” means “you”. You the personification of light! You the personification of love! You the personification of creativity! You, the personification of divinity! You – I bow to you! It is the most gracious salutation ever to be found. **Namaste** We bow not to form, but to the spark, which is trying to come up. This Namaste, this meditation, releases an opening in our consciousness to that what we call our business of life, our purpose of life. If we are influenced with this, we don’t see just a frame, but a living flame inside each person. So, just look into the eyes of any living being and you will see that flame inside, as there is in you. **Here, life meets life! This is Namaste!**

October 1991: God in You

When you take time to meditate, what you find is God in you. Each letter in God, G-O-D, represents a specific trait. First, you must experience that certain **Generating energy**, the “G” of God. That energy is not outside; it is within. **G is the generator**, the creator of electricity. Say, “This is in me. I am life. I am consciousness, I am sentient energy.” I am awareness but my awareness is clouded because of desire, of greed, of all kinds of ego-based ideas. What I have to do is uncover, I have to bring out the quality from inside. It is a diamond with its radiance within. As we go on polishing the diamond, the radiance comes out. But it is a rough diamond. What is required is the art of polishing. When we break our ego and go on polishing, we find the radiance: insight, intuition, and premonition. You get many, many insights and you will be surprised by your reservoir of knowledge. A reservoir of knowledge within!

The second essential is the “O” and the “O” of God is to **Organize**. Organize gradually, one by one, everything. Every day we have to organize. It should not be chaotic. There are so many things in the world and how many things are we going to collect? And even if we collect only one, we are going to keep them and if we keep them – from one day to another, one year to another – think of how much time will be consumed. All that time for material things? We don’t realize that if we are not there, somebody else is going to arrange our material things. When we realize that we are sentient energy, we use our time to bring well-being of living. We need some good food, some good apartment, some good transportation, and other necessities, but after that we need something more: we need to organize our life and this is the “O” of God. We can start from this day and say, “I want to organize my life and whatsoever is extra, I have to cut off and take out.” We go to a barber to get a haircut to look nice and where there are extra lengths, we have them cut off. By trimming and cutting our ways, we are depositing each day in our spiritual bank. A capacity to organize brings the greatest capacity to life. A person who has this capacity is really an executive. Any time a call can come, and he/she is ready.

The “G” is the generator: the “O” is the organizer and the third essential is very important: the “D” stands for **Delete**. We delete those things, which are not helpful, which are burdens. When we go for a haircut, we have the useless hair cut and we pay money for that. The barber takes your hair but still you pay, because it needs to be deleted. In the same way, every day what is not necessary, delete it before you rest your head on your pillow. “This is not useful! This is not needed!” We are like children collecting cars, stamp books: even if we are not using them, we keep them. We have to outgrow our childhood. So the third necessity is to **delete**. Delete those things, which are useless and destroy those things which are burdening you, *physical or mental*.

Around us there are accidents, there are diseases, and there are so many happenings. But calamities are not coming from nature; they are coming from our own uncontrolled greed and desire. That is what creates things! The basic principle I am talking about is not from

the scriptures, but from my own experience of how life is *affected*. Learn the art of deleting. Have a throw-away basket so that what you don't want let it go. Let it go, like a haircut. Any person who knows, uses, and applies these three lettered essentials of life knows what to do and what not to do from an inner voice. But because of greed, because of desire, because of ego, because of fanaticism, the inner voice is suppressed. When we take time, our meditation will lead us to become the best human being we can be. Now, make them your own, these three words from GOD: **Generate, Organize, Delete.**

March 1992: When Bindu Becomes Sindhu

The purpose of our learning the process of meditation is to make this bindu become sindhu. Bindu is a Sanskrit word meaning a small dot or drop, and sindhu means ocean. Gradually as we advance and grow in meditation, we can experience the bindu expanding into the sindhu, the drop becomes the entire ocean.

As long as we are conscious of our body and senses, we shall have fear of death and annihilation, of losing ourselves. A drop of water will evaporate quickly in the warmth of the sun. But when it merges with the mighty ocean, there is no more fear of evaporation. When we give up our smallness, we overcome fear and we can experience the ocean of consciousness.

Whenever we feel dismay or we cry, we know it must be over something ephemeral. Only ephemeral things can bring us sadness or grief; what is permanent and immortal can never bring us down. Sometimes in our ignorance we impose limitations on ourselves and then we may become victims of age, illness, sorrow, need, greed or depression. But really, we know we are on a sojourn and that all things will someday leave us. It is only a matter of time. Does it really matter if it is today, tomorrow, next week or ten years from now? And if our friend does not go, then it will be our time to leave. This awareness keeps you in balance and you don't feel a need to cry for anything.

June 1992: Life is Liberation

Dear Friends. When we meditate we ask: What is the purpose of being human? What do we accomplish by being human? What is the ultimate aim of being human? We can get an answer from examples as well as from our own experiences. All the great masters have given examples from their lives. They distanced themselves from their environment, from their conditioning, from the place where they were born. Their names were different, but for all the differences they had one thing in common: they were all seekers. They were trying to find their real self, their home, and their essence. The masters may be in this time or past times because time is eternal. We are only putting limitations on time, with the clock and with our own minds. Such limitations are all mentally made blocks that keep us from finding the answers from our experiences in life.

In the same way, we have made physical blocks of our flame, our spirit. We say, "She is woman; he is man; he is old; she is young" But the energy, the consciousness, the soul, the spirit is not old or young, he or she, that or this – it is a flame. The flame can be in the body of "he" or can be in the body of "she." He and she are made by forms. But the flame is not made by anybody. Flame was. Flame is. Flame will be. That is called life. How you look at life makes the difference to you. So, what we have to learn from meditation is how to look at life!

For some, life can be a tragedy, life can be a comedy, life can be a journey, and life can be liberation. Somewhere I read that life is tragedy for those who feel. Because the emotions are always mixed up, we go up and down like a yo-yo. Emotions swing up and down according to the moods, according to the environment, according to our interrelationship with others. We see life through the lens of emotions. And the emotions sometimes become thick, sometimes thin, sometimes transparent, and sometimes opaque. And the person loses the vision because of the lens. So, life is a tragedy for those who feel.

Life is a comedy for those who think, for minds have all kinds of crazy desires. We don't know what we want to be. Sometimes we want to be this, and sometimes we want to be that. We can't fulfill all our desires. So, it is good to take a break sometimes, to step back, to think, and to see the humor in our situations. So, if you think, life is a comedy.

I know one man in New York, a thinker, who was walking one evening near Central Park. It was late. A mugger came and held a gun to his head and said, "Give me your money or I'll blow you're brains out". The thinker answered, "I'm a philosopher and I live in New York. You know that living in New York is very difficult. You can live without brains, but not without money. So, you want to blow out my brains? It's all right. But I'm not going to give up all my money." In a split second, he saw that the situation was funny. He said "You want money? Let's be fair. I don't have a lot of money but I'll give you \$20. Then I'll feel safe and you will feel gain. But if you try to kill me, who knows, the cops may catch you and put you in prison. So, instead of having a good dinner, you'll be in prison. So be fair. Take this \$20 and go." He saw that life is a comedy and you have to play with it. *You have to learn to make it lighter.*

Don't make heavy with your emotions and don't make rules. Rules that the husband should do this, the wife should do this, the mother-in-law should do this, the father-in-law should do this, the daughter should do this. That way we slowly, slowly make our minds into fossils. We become rigid. And things don't work out the way we expect. We become jittery. We become angry. We become nasty. We become unhappy. And when we are alone with ourselves we ask, "Why did I become like that? It was not nice." So we feel bad also. Just be lighter sometimes. See life as a comedy. Take it as it is. It's funny. See the funny part in everything. Change your perception and don't make it so serious. Don't make everything into rules. And don't become so righteous. Too much righteousness will make you stiffer and stiffer. People are people, accept that and liberate yourself. **Instead of worrying about the potholes, celebrate your journey!**

The teachers who have got enlightenment, who have experienced their home, their essence, often went away for many years. What they were seeking was their origin. What they were. And going deeper, and deeper, and deeper, they realized themselves and found their origin, their root, their connection.

So when I read life is a comedy for those who think, I thought "There must be something extra." And I thought "Life is a journey for those who travel". It's a journey. We are all travelers. We don't follow the teacher's path, but our own path. We come to follow the path which leads to our home. We all have our own home. That happens when we are moving in the direction of liberation.

Life is a tragedy for those who emotionalize. And life is a comedy for those who think. Life is a journey for those who travel. Say, "I am a traveler. This is my journey. I will celebrate my journey with everyone, with all casts, all creeds, all sizes, all colors, all kind of peoples, all life." And, it is liberation. As we make our journeys and free ourselves from old habits, old pressures, old conditions, old stigmas, old words, and old programming, we liberate ourselves. So my friends, life is liberation. Freedom.

Fall 1992: Forgiveness Festival

The following are excerpts from Chitrabhanu's message of forgiveness presented August 19, 1992 to an audience at the Doral Hotel, New York City.

Today we are going to meditate on the celebration of forgiveness. Generally people think to forgive is difficult. One has to make a lot of effort to forgive somebody because it becomes part of your thinking and goes deep into the emotions. So forgiveness is considered very much religious. For the philosophy I teach and share – the philosophy of celebration – forgiveness is not a big religious act, it is a dance of life. If you forgive you enjoy your life. If you don't forgive you carry the load, you carry the burden, and you carry the heaviness or bitterness so you don't know what life is. Life is passing by and people are sad because of their heaviness. One man came and he said that he was not enjoying the vibrations of the people who are meditating. He was looking around and he said these people are relaxed, their jaws are not tight, their eyes are not staring, they are relaxing, and they are just sitting as they are, not trying to become anything else. And this man saw that I don't do that thing, I don't enjoy that thing, but the teacher had insight. The teacher knew the vibrations; he experienced the vibrations of the person. So just when he mentioned why are you carrying the sack of stones on your back? You are sitting in the chair, leave it there. So he started thinking. What is the sack of stones? Where are the stones? And then he thought, yes I do. I have the big stone of ego. I have the big stone of resentment to people. I have a kind of deception, pretension to prove to the world I have inside bitterness, and I also see the world everybody is enjoying and I feel heavy. One by one, he started seeing the stones he was carrying on his shoulders. And that is why he was not relaxing....

This philosophy tells you one thing – it is very clear. How can anybody love you if you always become something else to be with them? How can anybody love you for who you are, or for what you are, if you are continuously becoming something else to be with them? And we are always trying to become something else to be with somebody. To be with somebody we try to become something else and at the same time what we are demanding from the people is, why don't you love me for what I am? But we don't think how they can love us when continuously we are becoming something else to be with others. And you are not you. There must be something steady in you in order to receive or you become something else according to another's wishes or demands. It is very deep, continuously working in us and that is why we are not comfortable with ourselves or others. And in this discomfort we are not able to see exactly what the problem is and that we are projecting the problem outside. When you project the problem outside of yourself, what you need is an analyst because he explains your outside problem. Because he does not go in, you don't want to go in, both are playing outside again. It is a big business in America – lawyers, doctors, and analysts. In Asian countries you will not find so many analysts; millions of people don't have as much comfort as you have, but still they are not crazy. You don't find so many mental hospitals, nor so many asylums. In every country I see big hospitals and I ask who are the big executives, big educators, and big doctors. I ask how could they become

executives who have everything and still they have mental problems? What is a mental problem? A mental problem is creating the emotions and trying to find out the answer and magnifying the small thing with the magnifying glass and not seeing the size of the problem, and the size of the thing, and the size of the relation...and they go on magnifying...

Mahavir was the last prophet of Jainism in 599 BC. His teaching came from the realization of what was going on in nature. So this philosophy in a way is not coming from the books, not coming from the head, not coming from an individual. It is the philosophy of nature; it is the law of nature. Somebody experiences the law and that person articulates the law so we call him inventor. Newton invented – what did he invent? Gravity. But before he invented, gravitation was there. So he is not a manufacturer – he discovered. But still we give credit to Newton. Einstein invented a theory and in that theory he proved that energy can be turned into matter and that matter can be turned into energy, it is convertible. The theory of relativity is not a product of Einstein. He presented what was there already.

Television was not manufactured. It was the law – how the vibrations are working, how you can capture them. In the same way Mahavir did not manufacture anything. He experienced what was the law of life – why people are unhappy, why people are not enjoying the journey. They are well equipped, they have the language, they can express, they have the brain, they can reason, they have the emotions, they can communicate, they have five senses and each sense can enhance something good in the universe. So what one needs to know is that the person is not using them. He is misusing them. If you don't use properly, anything which is dormant, it misuses more. The rest wastes more than the usage. If you use it, at least it will sparkle, it will be polished, but if you don't use it, it rusts. The human talent is rusting, inside is corroding. So we have to see that this is our human life.

Every person has the wellspring born in her and in him. That we realize through meditation, through concentration, through teaching, through breathing, listening and gradually we erase the old words which have made us so helpless, dependent, weak and frightened. So here, these are the days, these eight days of the Forgiveness Festival, are specially meant for the people's awareness, for their realization, for their own good. These eight days are for people to be people, for individuals to be individuals. And these eight days are for you to give a gift to yourself because you have been so generous, you have given to everybody.

There was one girl who was coming to me and she was very unhappy. I say, "why are you unhappy"? She says "I have so much love but my boyfriend he is ungrateful, he does not know how to receive it. I want to give my love". I say "you have so much love, you want to give to him, a little portion of it, why you don't give to yourself, so at least you will not be unhappy, you will not cry, you will not be depressed. What you want to give, a little portion, at least you give to yourself. Because you want to make him happy, no?" Yes, if I give him love, he will be happy. I say, "so much love and such a good quality you have, give that to yourself, so at least you will be happy and you won't be here to come and ask the question." We are very generous; we want to give to everyone. We want to give free advice. We want to do everything, but we deprive ourselves. We hardly take time to be

with ourselves. If we are alone we feel uncomfortable.. So we call somebody, we invite somebody, we talk to somebody, because we have not learned to be with our self. One is not enjoying the solitude, but solitude is the beginning and solitude is the end whether we believe it or not.

There are people who want to give to you, the universe is there to give to you, but if we are limited, we are in fear to take it, how can we take it? So the person is not good in a relationship because of their own fear. Fear is reflecting in the relationship. And that fear you remove through awareness and understanding.

Sometimes guilt overcomes us. And a small mistake we have made becomes large. We start believing in our own mistake and say what a bad person we are. I did such a horrible thing. But the thing was not so horrible as you think. It was small, but because of telling yourself again and again it becomes horrible in your mind. Because the neurons go on building this energy. So what we believe becomes that which we are.

Our thinking must be simple. Deceit complicates the simplicity of thinking just simple thoughts. When you were watching Mahatma Gandhi, the best quality in him was the simplicity of life. Mahatma Gandhi would not miss prayer or meditation anytime. One day they came back from a trip at 2:00 and they were so tired, he went to sleep. At 3:00 he got up and started meditating. His secretary, was one of the most dedicated men you could find; he was so much one with Gandhi that when Gandhi got up, he got up, as though his sleep was aligned with him. He got up, and he said, you are tired. Gandhi said, "I can live without food, but **not** without my meditation or prayer. Because without food, I can live, body will be pure, but not without this purification of thought through meditation." My friends, that's the way he became Gandhi. At the physical level he was a bunch of bones. He was not a tall man, a handsome man. He was nothing. He was not even 100 pounds. Churchill (a very big man) mentioned he didn't want to meet him because Gandhi had some magic in his eyes. What was the magic? Magic of love, magic of truth. Mountbatten came, but Churchill said he hypnotizes you. Love hypnotizes, truth hypnotizes. Friendship is hypnotism, and I tell you, you **will** hypnotize anybody when you speak from your heart.

So now let us close our eyes and just visualize that you are in a form of a crystal body. Your body is a crystal. But we don't see the transparencies of the crystal because there is some dark liquid filling it. And we are trying in these eight days to take it out. So visualize that around your fingers and toes there are valves which you can open so the liquid can go out. Visualize the top of your head, and the liquid color which does not allow your crystal like personality to be transparent. You open the valves of your fingers, so this liquid is going out. It is sticky liquid of passion, of anger, of hate, of bad feeling, of guilt. It is a mixture. So now in your forehead you see that water has gone, so you see it is transparent. Now again you allow a little bit to go, drop by drop, so the liquid is going down. Your eyes are clear. You have clear vision. It is not colored with the dark liquid. It now has gone down. Now it is going down to your mouth, your words are perfect, your words are pure, your words are very, very positive because it is the transparent crystal quality shining. Now the

liquid has gone down from your voice box so you can see transparent voice box. The voice comes and touches everyone's heart and head. The words are love, the words are positive, the words are pleasant, the words are friendly. Now this liquid is going down and you see your chest. It is clean, so in your heart there is love, there is friendship. You love everyone, you love yourself. Because of this dark liquid you were not able to express and see the reservoir of love in you, but now it is clear, you can see.

Now you are allowing these valves to be open. The liquid is going to your arms and stomach and intestine, your thighs, and calves and toes and all this body is now transparent like a crystal. So what has gone is liquid of anger, liquid of vindictiveness, liquid of all the impurities. With the help of forgiveness we have cleaned our body, our mind, our senses, and when we are pure we feel pure. We are pure. We are the kingdom of heaven. We experience the heaven within us. We experience now in this transparent, crystal-like presence of our existence that all the good qualities which we were projecting outside are in us; but we could not see because of this dark mixture of liquid. It is gone. We see ourselves as a crystal self.

Winter 1993: Take the Challenge in Life

The following are excerpts from Chitrabhanu's message How to Understand Our Way of Living: October 19, 1991

If we meditate and ask what the purpose of being human is, we will be able to get the answer from experiences and from examples. Examples are there if you seek them, because all the great masters have given us examples from their lives. The names are different, but behind all the names they are all seekers. They are trying to find their origin, their home, their connection. How long it takes depends upon the person's previous life. All that we practice we have done. We cannot compare one person with another. We cannot say this person got such enlightenment in such a short time, and I did not get it. That person had worked in the past time, and is getting results sooner. For somebody who had not worked, the process takes a little longer. We cannot compare.

When we are alone with ourselves, we feel bad because we became nasty; something in our person does not like what we become in certain moments.

We become rigid and we say, why did I become like that? Change your perceptions and don't become all that serious, don't make everything have rules, and don't make everything all righteous. Too much righteousness will make you stiff. Just take it that people are people. We always expect this person should be like this or that, but we don't see that we ourselves are not able to change as we want to be. If it is hard to change ourselves, think how hard it is to change others. We can't change ourselves to what we want, but we are out to change others. And that is why I want to tell you in a spiritual group, if we are not watching this, sometimes we slowly build expectations. If we meet in a spiritual group to grow, to understand, and share the moment we have, relax and accept everyone as they are, the group will grow. But we build the spiritual background and then when somebody acts crazily, we say why are you acting like that, I didn't think you would act like that, because we are all spiritual. But we are all human beings, so accept that. And then you gain in the environment and liberate yourself and instead of worrying about the potholes, you celebrate the journey. It is a small time, very small span of life – 80 years at most 90 years. So many hours go into sleep, some to teacher, some in restroom, how many hours do we have? And we are making life unnecessarily heavy and unhappy?

We have come in a technological world – so everything is designed. Even the marriage partner is selected by computer. The human being made the computer – now the computers are making human beings, because we lost touch with self. On this journey, you tune to yourself. You come from the environment, and as long as you are with the teacher you fill up yourself completely with that and say I want to build a new perception and see life as it is. Life is a journey for those who travel it. We are all travelers. So make this journey very pleasant, it's a trip. We don't die – we change the places, we change the town, we change the clothes, but we are always travelers and travelers cannot afford to waste time quarreling with each other. Make this human trip as light as possible.

Attachment and Letting Go

Allow people to live. If somebody wants to live with you I say fine, if they want to go, I say goodbye. Don't cry, oh without you my life will be empty. No, without that fellow also you are happy. **It is your attachment that makes you unhappy.** If you let go of the attachment, you will not die. You will die if you emotionalize, then it becomes tragedy. And many people have made their life tragedy, because they don't know how to let go. Let go. Anything which does not want to stay with you, you know it is not meant for you. And why do you want to love that which does not love you? It is silly. If you love to go away from me, I love to go away from you. So let us have the same match. We have to do it. That you have to do with your children also. Because always we shift our attachment from one to another. When we were young we have the parents, then we grow with the wife, then we grow old and have the churches, and mosques and synagogues, then with the teachers, the grandchildren. And we can't live as individual souls, but we are souls. We have to do lovingly whatsoever we can do, but the people who have been with us, what they don't want, there is no need to impose anything on them. You offer your love, you offer your service, with the feeling of gratefulness, they have done something for you, and you do something for them. But they say no, not doing sometimes we are doing more for people. Sometimes in not doing, also we are doing. Because they don't need. And sometimes you are doing service by not doing because they don't desire now.

When you are in silence, you are in peace, and words of wisdom come and each word will become a trip to enlightenment. What the master found is that my soul is not different than the highest soul, the small sapling is not different than the big tree, only the big tree has grown big, the sapling is growing now. The seed that was in the big tree is in the sapling in the same way. So one is seeing the presence of God in oneself. It is not ego, it is not becoming something superior to others. It is realizing we are all nature. And you feel good the moment you get this insight that I am not different than the Father/Mother in Heaven, I am one with God. Each person should feel that – the highest, the noblest, the beautiful, and the permanent light, the divine presence. When we experience this from that day, our inferiority complex will break. Go on meditating and, you feel inseparable. And always you walk with the feeling of **incognito God**.

When you realize that I am that and when you drop the old things and don't identify with those things, from that moment you are enlightened. The old habits will come, but you go on working again and again and slowly they will fall apart. They always come to tempt you, to seduce you, to draw you back, they come. But we have to be in good company, good reading, good environment, good thinking, so slowly we get rid of them. I can create my heaven and say I am going to create my heaven. It will be a challenge. **Take the challenge in life.** And the challenge in your life, not the challenge from outside. You have not to win and be better than others, **you have to be better than yourself.** We don't go ahead of ourselves; we go ahead of our old conditions and our old personalities.

You will find: that you are holding the energy which can heal, because you created the wound which needs to be healed. You are both creator of illness and creator of healing. Because illness does not come unless you do something, either in eating, or in emotions, or in anger, in hate, in resentment, in bad feelings, holding inside something and not letting go. In that way we are invisibly inviting in disease. So if we invite in, we know how to heal also. The healing can be done by each individual. Each person has the healing power, as each flower seed has the inherent quality to blossom and be beautiful. If the seed can do, why not the human beings? We are not less than these beautiful flowers. The seed can bring out so many colors, so many beautiful shapes and so much tenderness, and so much strength, to break the ground and come out is not easy, because people bury the seed under the ground and they cover it with mud and the soul, but the seed says "I am going to break the ground and lift my head proud and come up." If this small, tiny seed can do that, can we not do it also? We can do it. The seeds have the particular challenge that we are buried under the ground, we have to break the ground. We have to take the challenge that we are buried under conditions, we have to break the conditions. And when we take this challenge, we do better than the flowers can do. This way we see that we have the power to heal, and when you believe in yourself to heal, then you take the steps that help you to heal.

June 1993: Life is a Lesson to be Learned

*The following are Excerpts for Gurudev's message "Awareness of the Meaning of Change",
June 16 1991*

You will solve a lot of your problems when you recognize what you are. Mainly people are confused about what they are – they don't know. We don't know if we are coming or going, most of us. But to know oneself is knowledge, and the clarity comes from your experience. So when you sit for a meditation you affirm that you are soul, you are energy. If you go on affirming it again and again, then you will start feeling your presence. When you feel your presence, no outside presence is going to influence you or invade your consciousness.

As long as we are at one in the universe, we do not attract bad karmas. We know to accept, have patience. And as we are living, all things don't happen. Even presidents or prime ministers are not able to fulfill everything they want to do. So you have to plan the life. When you know you are indestructible you have the frame. And when you have the frame, you have to know how to bend and how to stand. When the storm comes, the leaves and trees, which are supple, bend. When the storm goes, they are fine. So in life also, there are times we have to bend or get uprooted in the wind.

Today we take the message inside and make the philosophy to experience pain for gain and use it, accept it. Instead of fighting, try to remove it and prepare that new pain will not come because you are living in this way. So my friends, our main concentration today is that this life is a lesson to learn and anything happening in life leads to some new insight.

I was four when my mother died. At this time I did not know what death was so I asked an old friend why my mother was not here, and why did they take me away from her. He said, you mother has gone up, to live in the house of the moon. There is a big mansion. You can see the moon at night? There your mother has gone. But why, I say. He said she has gone to have a holiday – don't you wish your mother should also have some peaceful time? I say yes, so while I missed her I was feeling good that at least she was enjoying her holiday. Every night I would look up to the moon and the stars and I would imagine a big mansion and I fell in love with the moon and stars, and I started seeing so many stars and I started fantasizing so many things about the moon and stars, and how I could travel there. I started traveling in my dreams to the stars and moon. As I grew, I knew that mother had expired, but by then I was 9 or 10 and I could accept it and there was no trauma. From the pain, I gained.

When I was 13, my sister died. I was with my father when we got the news and I felt shock and pain. My first questions were why did she go, where did she go? I had to find out why she had gone so early and where did she go, and from that came a quest started to find out what is called death, where people go after they part. And slowly, this search led me to investigation. I was reading, I was thinking and in between I had so many experiences. When I was 19 I had graduated from college. At that time I had a friend in Calcutta and she

died. That was a big shock in my life and it made me think about life again from the foundation. I said now I am not going to indulge in the business and my father's money and all the comfort, because I see my mother is gone, my sister is gone and my best friend is gone – we had woven beautiful dreams together and then she was gone. And I asked what the value of wealth and prosperity is. We had a thriving business, but his wealth and position did not protect the three of them, so I told my father that I had no interest in his business and not to expect me to carry on the shop. I left home in search of myself to learn where people go after death. It was my personal quest. I was so lonely, so down, nothing mattered to me.

Ultimately I found one teacher who said that books did not contain my answer. He said, Books give you information, not transformation. You will not be happy with borrowed words. For your answer do three things. Observe silence as much as possible, practice simplicity as much as possible, and learn to live with few things, go into meditation. Always say who am I. And rediscover that you are indestructible. If you do, one day you will find your answers for yourself."

It took five years, as I was obsessed with death. One day I was walking in the wilderness and I saw the leaves falling, and from one tree I saw a sprout that was so tiny and gentle. Five years of practice took me to that moment. All of a sudden I saw that something is dying and something is growing. It disappears and appears. One leaf falls and another leaf sprouts. And one tiny seed has so much strength it breaks the ground and comes out. And that is me. I am that seed – it was such an ecstatic feeling. I saw life blossoming and bursting out, and I knew that I am the seed and I knew that my sister had sprouted and my mother was there. They had not gone anywhere, I just needed to connect with them.

The point is, we have to gain from pain. Pain is a part of life. If you don't have pain, how can you grow? If we know we can gain from pain, our whole trip as a human being will be very fruitful. To be fruitful, the answer is what I learned – accept life, live simply and meditate. With this we can make our journey meaningful and fruitful.

September 1993: Peace and Forgiveness

Days are for action:
Nights are for peace.
During the day we act, react and interact.
During the night we do Samadhi or peaceful meditation.

Those actions, reaction and interactions
We do during the day
Come at night in our dreams.
They come as emotions, as nightmares, as body vibrations.

We want the night to be for peace,
For the dreams of soul.
What are the dreams of soul?
Omniscience, Peace, Bliss, Perfection.

To have the dream of soul,
We erase certain vibrations of the day
Before they permeate our consciousness.
So, we have these thought and feelings:

I forgive all and let all forgive me.
I forgive not only in words;
I forgive in every crevice of my consciousness.
I feel no animosity, no vindictiveness, and no grudge
Against any living being in the universe.
I evoke the Siddhas,
The Perfect Souls to witness
This, my act of forgiveness.

When we forgive, we become one with the light of our soul. Without forgiveness, we are like a lamp whose inner flame cannot penetrate the fine particles of soot which smear the outer chimney. When we wash away these subtle grains of anger, resentment and hatred with forgiveness, then the radiant soul within shines forth its ray of joy and peace.

May 1994: Lord Mahavira's World of Brotherhood and Sisterhood

Jaina is a science of living. There is also the science of materialism but Jaina is a science which works on the Law of Nature. The teaching of Jaina is harmonious with the Laws of Nature and what is not harmonious is not Jaina. It is imperative for man to study these laws of Jainism in order to make life free from suffering, being healthy, happy and peaceful.

Peaceful living is possible only when love and understanding of the universe permeate our lives, for they produce the solutions to tension and hostility that divide man from man and nation from nation. And it is for the men of letters, the artists and the thinkers to recapture the dignity of man by providing the idea of Ahimsa and Reverence for Life, thus creating a new vision for a world society.

The contribution of Jaina to mankind in its progress of evolution, has been, will be and is

AHIMSA: NON VIOLENCE

ANEKANTAVADA: THE RELATIVITY OF THINKING

APARIGRAHA: NON-ACQUISITION

Only with **Ahimsa** can peace be stabilized, progress be ensured, and the way cleared for development and prosperity.

Anekantavada is the basis of appreciating and understanding others' viewpoints, which consequently leads to a life that respects and reveres everybody and all living beings.

The philosophy of **Aparigraha** is one of working with, rather than against nature, of thoughtful observations, rather than thoughtless action. This adds to harmony and becomes the base for ecological alternatives.

We can tap the power of our senses, mind, heart and soul by nourishing our body and senses with vegetarian food, enlightening our mind with creative ideas, enriching our heart with love and reverence for life, and illuminating our soul with wisdom and self-realization.

When man overcomes the negative vibrations of antagonism and greed, he achieves good health, both physical and psychological. When he overcomes his prejudices and narrow pre-conditionings, he achieves wisdom. When he sets aside dogmas and fanaticism, he achieves understanding. When he conquers his hostility and hate, he achieves love and amity. In this way, **Science has made The World a Neighborhood; the teachings of Lord Mahavira will make a world of Brotherhood and Sisterhood.**

August 1994: The Universal Mantra

Man is gifted with head, heart and hand, and the harmony among these three emanates nothing but love and peace. When there is no unity between them, there is divorce inside. One thinks one thing but the heart does another thing. Then there is conflict. How can one enjoy the richness of life in such conflict?

The trouble we have in life is because we like to have others live as we think, but we ourselves are not able to live as we think. We exempt ourselves from the practice. For example, see how parents relate to their children. They tell them, "Do as we say," but they are not ready to look in the mirror to see what they are doing themselves. They are becoming alcoholics as they tell their children not to drink.

Today we see much destructive thinking in young people because they did not receive loving vibrations from their parents. They have grown up in conflict so now they live in violence and war, exploitation and self-gratification. This is not life. Life is self-respect, love and understanding.

As long as people live as you think, you like them. Meditation goes the other way around. Meditation tells you not to judge but to understand and to think of what you are thinking.

It sounds selfish at first, but the result is benevolence for all mankind. Those who think for others appear generous and unselfish, but they are often a curse to society because they are not able to demonstrate their beliefs with the example of their lives. They do not put what they think into practice in their lives. This tendency tears them apart.

This frequently happens in our personal relations. Two people tell each other how to live and soon they start fighting. If you want peace in your home, share with your companion, "I have chosen to live in this way to practice these rules of conduct. What do you think? Please give me some feedback." Then the other person will be inspired by your living and will feel the harmonious vibrations of peace and will choose to do the same.

Meditation is not preaching, it is practicing. You are not talking, you are reaching a contemplative state, and you are experiencing what you were thinking. As you contemplate, thinking becomes living. It is like digestion. When you have good digestion, you receive nourishment and you feel energetic and healthy. But thinking without living creates emptiness inside and you go nowhere. Thinking begins corroding when it is not put into practice. I have seen many intellectuals who feel a hollowness, depression and tastelessness in life during their last days. They may have written books and become famous, but they lose interest and become tired and bored because of reading, writing and thinking instead of practicing.

Creating a New Aura

In meditation, thinking is sinking into living. That is what meditation is for. Positive thoughts go deep inside, settling into you, nourishing you. The inner experience was lost when people started only preaching and disconnected themselves from the contemplative life. Nowadays, we see much teaching and talking and less time for meditation and practice.

Parents took their son, a very sensitive child, to church one Sunday. They were there for an hour and a half and when they came out, the parents asked, "Did you enjoy the service?" The child replied, "The music was all right, but the commercial was too long." What we need is music inside. Silence and contemplation are music, living is music, and the mantra is music.

In the Eastern countries, when people have emotional problems, they use mantras to transform the emotions into something positive. They transcend darkness and use the emotions in another way. Heavy negative feelings are like garbage; they can become litter and create a hazardous mess, or you can use them as compost and they become a means for your growth. They become fertilizer for your inner garden. As fertilizer, they nourish life. Even science is touching some of the ancient teachings, the secrets and their meaning. In paintings, around the heads of all the great teachers you see a halo, a circle of light. This is an aura and it is not only a symbol, it is reality. Kirlian photography now has shown that each living thing in this world is emanating rays of energy. You can see it even in stones or plants. It is not a great mystery; it is a direct scientific observation. Each thing in this world has rays, an aura of energy.

This energy can be violent or loving, destructive or creative. It is manifested in many ways. The same electricity can be used for many machines and appliances. In the same way our energy is manifesting in many different ways, according to our state of meditation, observation, contemplation, and living. If you have negative energy which bothers you and makes you jittery and nervous, you can transform it and let the same energy help you to calm down and erase old conditions. You may have known these conditions through analysis, but knowing is not enough. To know an obstacle is one thing, but to transform it is another thing. Many people know that smoking is not good, but when the time comes to give it up they are helpless.

Once a thing becomes a habit, it is difficult to remove. It forms a groove. It is like a scratch on a piece of furniture. If you want to remove it, you have to do more than simply dust or polish the surface. You have to go a little deeper and take it off with sandpaper. Habits are like scratches on the beautiful furniture of our heart. You may try to dust them away, but they are not dustable.

Using a Mantra

When these habits have gone very deep, you need a new method to remove them. Here the mantra is like an eraser. It is a transformer for your energy. You are working again and

again until the scratch is removed. You create an electromagnetic field with the mantra. The mantra is a word that connects somewhere, it opens something. It is not an empty sound. The sound must have a deep meaning to transform.

One mantra may be fit for a person who is following a certain tradition, but what about another person who is not following that same tradition? Rama is a good mantra for a Hindu, but it will not be good for a Christian. And the name of Jesus may help a Christian, but it will not make a deep emotional connection for those who follow Judaism.

There is one mantra in the universe which is not associated with any particular form; instead it connects with energy itself. That mantra is Namō Arihantanum. Ari means inner weakness and hantanum means one who has overcome. Resounding this universal meaningful sound you take away all the limiting forms. One who follows Christianity can use this mantra and feel reverence for Jesus while also feeling a respect for all other masters. In the same way, those who follow Krishna may think of Krishna but not feel as though they are rejecting or excluding Mahavir or Moses or any other soul who has overcome his or her weakness. This is one mantra where no form is emphasized. The essence or energy of those masters who have overcome is experienced.

When you use Namō Arihantanum, you watch the aris – your troubles, shortcomings, and conditions. Hantanum means those who have overcome, who have brought an end to the fight, who have transformed all the enemies, who have created a state of no conflict. They are souls who have reached a no conflict state. They have no anger. Only when you feel anger can you fight or have conflict. The masters have no ego for they know who they are. Ego means you do not know yourself, so you need to tell others what you are. You need confirmation of your existence from outside. Most people are always busy trying to get someone to say “yes you are here.” They don’t know that they are here. For such people who are always seeking outside confirmation, the day when no one is there for them is a very miserable one. That is why these people do not like silence. No one is there to confirm their existence and they feel a vacuum; they are lost. But a person who knows him or herself says, “Here I am, whether anyone tells me or not”.

Entering the State of No Conflict

Namō Arihantanum is a mantra that excludes no one and includes all. When you do not exclude, there is no fight. Fighting starts when you include some names and delete others. But here, no specific name is given. You meet pure energy. The energy just is. It is like the sun. It just gives light. It excludes no one and it has nothing to hide.

When you are constantly meditating on that meaning, that feeling, that energy, that sound, you are creating a space around you. Electromagnetic energy surrounds you. You enter that state in which there is no conflict. In order to enter that space, you give up the conflict. Otherwise you cannot enter that space of positive energy.

Words are sounds, but the meaning is energy. You are reaching through the sound to the meaning and through the meaning to the energy. The word and its sound becomes a catalyst which helps to take you to that non conflict state. When that model is before you, you start believing that if it is possible for one, it is possible for all.

The world does not need critics, it needs models and examples. It does not need preachers, it needs practitioners. You live love, simplicity, calmness. It comes from your expressions and it radiates in your meetings. You become a model as you start living a simple life.

When you put yourself into that space, creating that positive field around you, the physical energy is also changed. The cells absorb that inner energy in you. That energy can be seen in action. Now many people know that treating plants with kindness and talking to them helps them to grow. The feelings and energy of tenderness and love are felt by the plant.

The mantra Namoh Arihantanum is a sound with deep meaning. Sounds have a deep impact on your thoughts and actions. Sweet soothing sounds are helpful to healing. When you say Namoh Arihantanum, you make a space where negative vibrations and conflict cannot enter. There is no room for negativity.

In order to bring thinking into living, create this pure energy around you. This will enable you to generate the electromagnetic field called aura. It is that same light which you see around those who live with compassion and reverence for life. The love inside is so powerful that it emanates outward. But we must go deep and experience this feeling of complete universal love. At first it will be only for a short time that you will be able to maintain this feeling. As you keep meditating, you will be able to expand the experience more and more.

Now let us tune to this positive loving energy and feel this field of peace around us.

Namaste,

Chitrabhanu

March 1996: The Beauty of Living with Peace through Non-violence

As a photograph has a two-way process; a negative and a positive, **non-violence** is also expressed in two aspects: to do and not to do, commission and omission. The first aspect is **karuna**: a commitment to loving compassion, a feeling of equality with all life. And the second is **ahimsa**: not to harm, not to kill. There is no room for violence (**himsa**) when we are filled with love. Love is understanding.

Basis of Violence

Violence starts with oneself. Being harmful, we first harm ourselves because the negative vibrations of hate, anger and resentment poison our sensitivities and our well-being. In this state, negative vibrations are being collected and stored in the brain. From the brain, these negative vibrations go in to the mind. Once the mind is permeated with these negativities, the mind is not capable to mind its business. Without discerning senses, these vibrations automatically enter our being. Here, even our consciousness is also tainted with violent, poisoning vibrations. So, the person is now possessed with it, and a possessed person is not able to listen to even his/her own voice. This process of movement from the brain to consciousness shows how we are conditioned and colored with negative habits and harm ourselves with violence. The person who is ready to change the habit of the mind, the tendency of the mind, has to feel **ahimsa, non-violence**.

These conditions can persist and when unchecked, a lifetime can pass. After many years of unchecked, non-vigilant lives, one becomes A-G-E-D with Anger, Greed, Ego, Deceit. These are also forms of violence. We have choices, and the consequences of non-attentive choices fossilize us and make us incapable of development. To make the right choice requires awareness of **ahimsa**.

Negatives in Comparisons

Without knowing the process of vigilance, we will, in ignorance, compare everything and everyone; and in so doing, we do not attend to the deeper meaning of life. For many, comparison is natural because the mind is trained to compare, but if we stop to think and probe deeper, truth may dawn upon us that each is different and unique. Even in twins, each is unique.

Why do religious groups fight? Because they also compare. By comparing, they concentrate on superficiality and not on the essence of the religion. The learning from a teacher can be true in its time but it also can be a learning opportunity at other times, if each generation interprets the words in the context of the time, space and culture that is present for them. **Karuna**, loving compassion, inspires us to transcend the comparative and competitive attitude of the mind.

Those who impose their beliefs on others, expecting them to accept their truth, are nurturing a subtle seed of violence which in time will grow into a tree of even more small seeds and then more trees as a vicious cycle of violence. And as long as one is other-oriented, one has given his remote control to someone else.

When walls of other-ness are dropped, we see the sacred beauty of life in ourselves and we see that sacred beauty in others. We do not see that person as a man or woman or a person from a certain sect or religion. All these obstacles are removed. Unless we see beyond barriers, there won't be peace in us or in the world. We may talk about peace but inside we go on creating separation. Some say, "My religion is the best; it is the only true religion. And, if you don't start to practice my religion, you will go to hell." Such dogmatism and bigotry is also a form of violence. When we practice **ahimsa**, we try to understand what others are saying, what they are conveying, what they are feeling. We listen beyond the words. We may not agree but we respect their right to say.

Ahimsa in Introspection

Ahimsa tends to be understood only as "Don't do" this or that to others, animals and living beings. This is one meaning but it is secondary. The first meaning is "Don't hurt yourself" with jealousy, hate or resentment.

Ahimsa is a subtle thing. It cannot be grasped unless we go deep into ourselves, and to achieve this, we meditate. There, we discover the sacred beauty of life. Until we have that experience, we may use the word "**ahimsa**" but it will only be lip service.

To practice **ahimsa**, one has to remove the veil of ignorance about oneself. One has to experience life within. That deep experience of life does not come from the outside, it dawns on the inside. And we are reminded that denial of Self (**atma**) is an invisible form of violence.

When **ahimsa** is practiced in a vision of inner perspective, we perceive the relevancy of all life in meaningful inter-relationships among all living beings, leading to understanding and **ahimsa**.

Ahimsa is another name for healthy human feelings. Just as in the sunlight, darkness cannot remain, so also anger, greed, ego and deceit cannot linger in a healthy human's feelings. Once we have the experience of this vision, we are committed to practice **ahimsa** in trinity of mind, word and action. In this new vigilance, we are awake and every night before we rest, we review our day and ask, "Did I harm myself? Did I in judging put down anyone? Have I contributed to human divisions: cultural, racial, intellectual, religious, physical, or others? Did I place one person above another? Did I allow my reticence to contribute to violence?"

Beauty of Ahimsa

Once we start practicing **ahimsa**, our life becomes an inspiration. Wherever we go, our eyes beam with compassion, our feelings vibrate with care, our words flow with love, and our actions speak Reverence for Life. People will be changed, not by our words but by what they see, hear and feel.

When we experience the sacred beauty of life, we experience peace. We inspire Peace. Then there will be peace. There will be peace.

September 1996: Now * Way * Goal: Exterior, Interior, Transcendental

There are three words: Now, Way, Goal. **NOW** means what is the condition of our soul right now? **WAY** means on what road or in what process do we find ourselves? **GOAL** means the ultimate resting place, a state of peace in which one feels *completion, perfection, and fulfillment*. In this state there is no fight, no movement, no journey, no desire to go anywhere because one has reached the ultimate fulfillment.

In the words of Bhagwan Mahavir, **NOW – WAY – GOAL ARE EXPRESSED AS bahiratman – antaratman – paramatman**. **Atman** means soul. The three adjectives used to describe soul are:

BAHIR – EXTERIOR

ANTAR – INTERIOR

PARAM – TRANSCENDENTAL

BAHIRATMAN describes our condition now. We are exterior souls. We are using our energy to get joy from the outside world through the senses. This we have to recognize. There is no need to pretend and say, “I am spiritual. I don’t look for pleasures which come from sense objects.” We may call ourselves spiritual, but still we are using energy on what to see, hear, speak, smell, eat, and touch. This engages our brain, which is connected with the senses. With the help of these senses, we are running the show of our day. The whole day we see how much we get from the world. That is our game. If you have satiated your senses, that day you are happy. If you don’t get enough from the senses, that day you feel a vacuum, a kind of sadness.

There are two religious approaches to stop the process of turning outward, to curb or reduce the desires and to turn the soul inward. One comes from the West, another from the East, in particular from Bhagwan Mahavira. Both agree that in order to evolve, sense desire must be reduced and soul must become **ANTARATMAN**.

The Western approach is this: You must fight against your desires and in order to fight, you have to call them dirty, sinful, and bad. The Eastern approach is to watch and meditate, see and understand. It is to see that the senses are not to be blamed. They are neutral.

When you understand these two approaches, you will see how through them, different feelings and attitudes towards the philosophy of the soul are built in our life. Our five senses are nothing but doors. They let the outer world in and the inner world out. Through them, we see, hear, create and function.

So, one approach is to blame the sense object in order to create disgust toward it. You use the eyes to see beauty, but you go on making it ugly with your blaming. Woman is a state in which some beauty is revealed but in order to bring yourself back from sense desire, you

start blaming woman as the cause of temptation. Eve was made the cause of Adam's fall. Birth is considered evil because it is born from desire, and desire is not good. So all of us are born from mistakes. As a result of this approach, you criticize everything; you leave the inner world out.

Life comes from inside feelings, from unity. But in this negative approach, there is no unity. Anything you do with two ends pulling you in opposite directions may give you temporary pleasure, but it does not give you life. You will see the day you are unhappy, you may eat good food, but it will not turn into health. You have burned it up in the oil of worry. The whole process is caught up in fight. A person who is fighting is not free. Always his hands are caught up. Whom are you fighting? Your left hand wants to win over your right hand. You become exhausted.

In the other approach, you do not fight. You don't make an effort to give up. You choose something better, you transcend.

ANTARATMAN (interior soul) means to find something better. When you find better, good is left behind. When you go to the best, better is left. What is the process of turning inward? To see that the same doors which take you out have the power to bring you in. You have not to make two doors: one to go out, and another to come in. It is a matter of changing your direction: facing this direction instead of that; turning inside instead of out.

BHAGWAN MAHAVIRA says, "Have **SAMYAK DARSHAN!** Watch! Don't fight!" Watch the nature of these senses. When you turn inside, you start using your senses to see your inside world. As you see beauty in the sky, you see radiance in meditation. As you hear music outside, so you hear the soundless sound and the inner music within. Your whole approach changes because you are not fighting. You not impatient either. You know, "it cannot be done overnight. Only I have to grow in my understanding". As you grow in your understanding, your outward approach becomes inward.

PARAMATMAN is the Goal. It is transcending both sides. There is no outside, no inside. It is "I am in myself. I am in my own light of awareness." The highest soul has reached its own state of peace. There is nothing to get, to win, or to achieve. If we keep our eyes on **PARAMATMAN**, our attachments, expectations and demands gradually fade away and we will feel that we are there without any fight or flight to experience the state of being which is **LIGHT, LOVE, and PEACE**. Otherwise, life will be competitive and a constant fight in which we live in turmoil and frustration.

When we change and turn the senses inside, we go from **BAHIRATMAN** to **ANTARATMAN**. Eventually all duality ceases. What is felt inside is inside unity, fulfillment: the transcendent state of **PARAMATMAN**.

September 1997: The Freedom of Choice

Dear Friends:

The philosophy of Jain Dharma does not build our life on the past but on the living present. To me, a good life is a healthy loving life. A good life is a creative life. It is that life where we come to the awareness that we can choose what we want to choose and make the choice to accept and let go of the dead past and live in the living present.

If we don't let go of the past, we cannot move forward. I am reminded of two friends in India who decided to cross the Ganges River by boat in Benares. They were drinking *bhang*, a stimulant and were feeling energetic because of intoxication and the beautiful full moon. They decided to row across the river to another town to get good food. The whole night they rowed and rowed. But when it was dawn, they saw people on the shore, who looked like the people from the night before. One of them said, "This place looks exactly like Benares." So, they stepped ashore and asked, "Where are we?" They were told that they were in Benares. "Benares? But how can that be? We have been rowing and rowing the whole night." Only then did they find out that in their intoxication they had forgotten to untie the rope from the jetty. The rope was over 200 feet long, so they had moved from here to there but had not gone anywhere. This sounds funny, but what about us? We want to move forward, but we don't untie ourselves from the anchoring past habits and beliefs. Whenever we talk, we talk about the past and go on playing the old worn-out record. Even in therapy for years, our mind roams in the empty rooms of past phantoms. Clinging to the past dogmas, we turn from a plum to a prune.

Mahavir said, "Don't go anywhere; go to your power within." Ask yourself: "Who am I and what is my power? How do I see myself? Why do I not do what I want to do? Why do I not choose the right things? Do I allow others to tell me what I can and cannot do?" Remind yourself that others are only projecting themselves onto you. What they say does not reflect you; it reflects them. If they deny certain things, they are not denying you; they are denying themselves. Their statements do not apply to you.

Several years ago, several students from the United States came to India with us and visited Shatrunjaya in Palitana. In this group there were two people who were trying to come to terms with their guilt. They were not happy with the past and had been going to various types of therapy for many, many years. I had known both of them for a long time, and now they traveled all the way to India to have some special time to study for self-awareness, for self-realization. They visited the mountains and caves where many people became enlightened. We climbed Mount Shatrunjaya, where a cluster of temples adorn the top of a holy mountain. On top of the highest of the temples, we had a special ceremonial meditation to let go of the past; to let go of the negative. Letting go of what had conditioned the mind.

Meditation is to free oneself from bitterness and sadness of past conditions and judgments. Because of our programmed beliefs, even religion, is used to separate one from another.

Many people have narrowed their life and placed themselves in a fold by thinking, “I am Muslim. I am Hindu. I am Jain. I am Jewish. I am Christian. They are not like me, they are all outsiders”. By belief, one has blocked and alienated oneself from mankind and living beings who are helping our existence in many ways, visibly and invisibly. Meditation helps to break the self-imposed limitations on oneself and to live liberated in a “uniting” universe.

Anyone who wants to free oneself from wrong belief, guilt, and negativity is free to choose the Jain method by saying this mantra: **Savva Pava Panasano**, which vibrates to liberate. Here **savva** means all; **pava** means guilt and negativity; and **panasano** means destroyed. All guilt and negativity of the past are destroyed. The next part of the mantra is: **mangalanam cha savvesim**. From that moment mangalanam benedictions and blessings start pouring on us from all directions. This is the greatest among all benedictions, all blessings. In this way one goes deep into oneself. Deep into the source. One creates a fire inside and incinerates all the negativities. One accepts oneself as gold, purified of all dross.

Of the two people I mentioned before, one came up out from the mantra meditation and said with joy “I am free! Free from the burden of the load of past negativities.” What she had not been able to do in twenty years happened spontaneously in that moment. Collecting all the junk of the past, collecting all the guilt of the past, she incinerated them, cleansed herself of them, and forgave herself. She did not need to go anywhere to be forgiven, to be saved. She said “I burned the negativity and threw the ashes away, and I came back to my clean self.” But the other person said, “How can you burn all your past and your mistakes, your guilt? You can’t. It is impossible.” It was true for her because she believed it to be possible. Her belief became a reality, a fact for her.

Often when we want to cling to our past, we can find arguments to support our condition. We are logical people – human beings are reasoning animals – and to make life miserable we find so many logical reasons. We pick up a book which was written by one person, who heard a second person quoting a third person, and then edited by a fourth person. We now take this as the real message and we say, “It is written! It is our original sin and it cannot be undone. We believe it. It is written that a savior is needed or else we risk damnation and will go to hell; we believe it”. But none of this is what the master said; it is what the interpreter said. A master is a person who does not insult human dignity. Do you think the master will say, “If you don’t embrace me, you will go to hell.” Such an idea cannot come from any master; it comes from the egotistical interpreter. The masters help you see beauty. They say “What I can do, you also can do...and more.” They give you their shoulders to climb up on to see more than they saw. All the masters have come to make us taller not smaller. They don’t want to see you shrink; they want to see you grow.

Real parents are those who expect their son or daughter to be better than they are. Parents aspire to see their children go one step farther than they went. The son or daughter draws inspiration from the parents. If a child makes mistakes, the parents do not put the child down but see it as a growing process and lack of experience. Experiencing the pain of

mistakes, the mind gains wisdom. To see the light of goodness behind the clouds of mistakes, we first have an eye to perceive goodness in oneself; only then can we see beauty everywhere.

Earlier I mentioned two people who were part of our meditation on letting go of guilt and negativity. One of them found many reasons to hold on to the past; the other willed it to be free and her seed blossomed into a smiling flower. You may think, "That does not happen," but with her it did. She let go of old thinking and discovered she was free. Such an experience brings inner peace. Not only she but anyone can recover from guilt by getting in touch with all pervading loving energy to discover one's pure nature. Believe in your freedom to let go of the past! Be free and open to let the blessings pour in. Go deep into yourself, experience yourself, and believe in yourself. This is an understanding that comes only from your introspection, from your experience, from your self-awareness, from your self-realization. Visit all the corners of your consciousness. See your strengths and erase your weaknesses. Accept yourself. Gradually build your self image. Feel your thoughts of "I am free and I choose to be happy. I choose to be peaceful; it is my nature." So let us release the past and have peace. Let us experience the presence of the divine energy which is within each of us.

Let us share a final universal blessing: "Let the whole universe be blessed. Let everyone be engaged in one another's well being. Let all the faults and mistakes of the past be effaced and vanish. Let everyone, everywhere; be healthy, happy, peaceful and blissful. Om Shanti. Peace."

Love and Blessings,

Chitrabhanu

October 1998: We Have the Potential to Become Master

Namaste! I bow to the beautiful soul in you! This is the teaching that I have learned and am practicing. I do not see you as just the name and the frame. I see you as pure sentient energy residing in this human form, and this energy is purifying and evolving from uni-sense to enlightenment, from aspirants to masters. We evolve through awareness, through getting in touch with people who have purified their lives, and through the practice of their insight. Not with preaching, not with reading, but with practice! And how much we practice depends upon how much understanding has dawned upon us.

Let me share some insights about our pure sentient energy, and about how we can experience it. We can go far because we are connected to the whole universe. Our evolution is a purifying process. If you go to a gold mine and take a rock, the rock has gold in it. It looks like a piece of stone, but it is a sparkling stone. A gold miner knows there is gold hidden in that rock, so he takes the rock and purifies it by acid, chemicals and fire. Slowly, the gold particles are separated from the dross. As the purifying process continues, the rock becomes 14-karat gold. If you continue purifying, then you have 16-, 18, 20-karat gold which is so soft that you can bend it even with a touch. It is a metal and yet it feels very tender. Why? Because it is 24-karat gold! There is now no rigidity or stiffness.

Purifying

As human beings, we begin our purifying process by searching for something nobler. Of all the life forms, humans are the only beings who can change themselves by asking themselves, "Who am I?" Even at this elementary level, human life is more developed than that of animals. Horses are powerful, and elephants are strong. But neither asks the question "Who am I?". Even as small children, we tend to ask, "WHY?" And when anything happens, our consciousness asks, "What should I do?" We do not decide blindly if we do not understand or not sure, we ask ourselves again and again. We explore. Life is to explore. Through our questioning we begin to get some insights of our real Self. Through introspection we separate grain from husk -- soul from matter, from desires.

As we know ourselves better, we are able to affirm, "I am consciousness. I am soul. Freedom is my essence. There is a deep spiritual quest in me which is guiding me and giving me upward thrust". At this stage we no longer think of ourselves as sinners. We take out the smearing element of guilt. A person with a feeling of guilt will pray but will continue feeling guilty and hurting oneself, and a person who hurts oneself is likely to hurt others. But a person who is happy will give you pleasantness. A thorn will pinch because it is sharp, and a flower will give fragrance because it is tender and peaceful. We cannot give anything but what we are. And if anybody gives us pain, that person also must have pain; so, we need to have compassion. We should not blame the person and put her or him down. We go to help because we are life-feeling, sentient beings. But we will not be able to understand somebody else's pain as long as we go on harping on our own pain.

So, we continue slowly and very gradually purifying ourselves till our heart becomes a shrine, where love resides. Sometimes when negativity influences us, just watch without feeling guilty about it. Just let it go. Un-cleanliness is seen because there is a lot of dirt around. There are particles of dirt moving everywhere. Even with closed windows your apartment will become dirty and you have to keep cleaning. Every day we have to clean. Somebody asked me, "How long do I have to practice meditation?" and I said "As long as you live." If you want to live, you have to clean. Meditation is a cleaning process. Every day, take a few minutes to process. Every day, take a few minutes to clean. Take a good bath. The physical bath is for the body. Meditation, the spiritual bath is for the heart, the mind, and the psyche.

As we continue our development, we learn to give up many things. We become like fragrance-giving flowers who do not have attachments to what they have. They do not collect; instead they share. Then we become aware and objective. We reach a height, and from there we touch divinity. For a moment we feel we are with ourselves. And when we are with ourselves, we are with the higher self. Before we reach this height, we learn to deal with the four main binding and polluting elements: anger, ego, deceit, and greed.

Negative Emotions

Anger

Anger is to be mad. Anger is one letter closer to danger. Anger comes because our desires are not fulfilled. We get angry because we had an expectation. So when an expectation is not fulfilled, it turns into frustration and that frustration gives birth to ugly anger. But if we do not have any expectations, then we do not get angry. But when we build expectations, we become angry with ourselves and with others. And when we are angry, we lose our peace. So, to understand the cause of anger, we ought to look into our desires and expectations.

Ego

We also need to understand our ego. What is ego? It is good to be recognized, to receive certificates, to get trophies – they give a boost of some kind. But if we go on collecting certificates and collecting trophies, there is no end to it. We put the trophies on the shelf, and we still have to live with ourselves. Instead of depending on the trophies, titles, approvals, and favors for our importance, we have to learn to appreciate what we have and what we receive and say, "Thank You." We learn to appreciate the time others spent thinking of us, their feeling toward us, and their love and appreciating. When we appreciate their appreciation, we need no shelves to store any objects. Instead, we cherish the feelings being the gift, store them in our hearts, and let them become part of our lives.

Deceit

Another polluting element is deceit. People complain that others do not love them, but often the root of the problem is that they are not being themselves. If we become something else to be with others, how can they know who we are, and how can they love us for who we are? They can only love who we are if they can see what we really are. People love nature and children because they are natural and not deceitful. In the same way, older people can be natural.

Greed

The art of life is to reduce the complexity into simplicity. Once we leave deceit behind, our greed will also diminish. Then whatever we have, we share. And when we share, things come to us. It is like a cornucopia. You go on giving things and things keep on coming. That is why we sing "From you I receive, to you I give." We have to enjoy every moment with no regrets. If you lose something, do not say to yourself, "How stupid I was!" Do not blame yourself. It was probably meant to happen. Things come and things go. When we were born, we were born with nothing, not even clothes. But there was already milk in our mother's breast. If you live with your spirit, things always come. When we are generous, our greed is gone, we feel contented. Life is beautiful and we get up in the morning and bless ourselves. And whatever we deserve, it will come because we have opened the doors so that the light of blessings can come. At this stage we have to be careful not to hold resentment toward anybody, not even one person. When we close the door on somebody, in reality we close it to everybody. Our hate toward one person will permeate our feelings toward other people, including ourselves. And when we close the door, good things will stop coming. So the teaching is: we have to love. That is how life becomes a cornucopia filled with amity.

A Clean State

If we continue our work to overcome these four negative emotions, and to forgive and love our adversaries, ultimately we become enlightened. We become Siddhas. This state is the purest form. This is like basking in the warmth of the sun: you feel warmth, you feel purified like 24 karat gold, you feel loving energy, and this will bring a connection between the self and the higher self. But first of all, we have to start where we are. Then we can grow from there. We must believe in ourselves. We tell ourselves, "Yes, I am a seeker. I am not a bad person. I may have done bad things because I did not know any better. I was brought up in my culture and in my family, and I was taught in that way. Or, I kept the wrong company. Or, I was not aware, and bad things happened." Now is the time to untie ourselves from the past. Our future is a clean slate. Self-realization is self-confidence and believing in the higher Self. And by practicing these insights we evolve from uni-sense to enlightenment, from aspirants to Siddhas.

June 1999: What is Health?

The word *health* traces its roots to the words *heal*, *hale* and finally *whole*. Good health means to be whole. Wholeness encompasses both the body and the mind. Thus, the common definition of health, which is an absence of disease, is only a partial definition of wholeness. Wholeness signifies both absence of the negative as well as presence of the positive. The experience of this wholeness emanates from harmony, peace and reverence for life. The source of happiness comes from our external and internal environments. External peace is the result of enriched social surroundings and sincere communication, while internal harmony comes purely from within. But it is **meditation** that puts us in touch with ourselves and helps us to realize our inner power and our inner strength to bring about harmony, peace, and wholeness. With the awareness of meditation, one can get rid of unhealthy and cloudy inner and outer visions.

In meditation as we become aware of our intrinsic qualities, we start to experience life in new ways with peace, creativity, beauty and poise. And these have the power to bring health as well as the power to cure ourselves. All we have to do is get in touch with our inner Self and realize it through meditation.

Anekantavada

Observing our nonviolent thoughts during meditation increases our perception of peace and love, paving the way to maintain equanimity in daily life, even if others disagree with us. To resist violence, we practice the principles of *Anekantavada: relativity of thinking*: we consider that each person, each individual, each object, each point of view has multiple dimensions. When we are open to accept the differences, we remain positive and nonviolent to others.

These differences are an outcome of several factors and assume different forms. Our perceptions are selective and limited, depending upon our conditioning. We all have an origin: a well-defined physical and ethnic characteristic, and a chemical makeup. We grow in a set of socio-cultural environments and acquire our belief and habit system. All these make us unique and different from each other. Even identical twins are different.

The belief system, therefore, guides our thoughts and actions. A belief is difficult to change. If we want to change, we must review the belief system and actively challenge it until it reflects the multiplicity of all situations. Most often, what we believe becomes our reality. Our mind is a powerful instrument and we can utilize it to change ourselves rather than obsessing to change others. In reality, it is the belief that makes us happy or unhappy. If we want to be happy, we must accept ourselves with all our weaknesses and differences. We also need to accept others with all their limitations and unique attributes.

Consider: *But I am not okay. They are not okay. But it is okay.* When we recognize this concept, we have truly accepted the principle of *Anekantavada*. We have accepted the fact that everything, every object, every person has various angles and points of views. It is our perception of the situation that determines our thought and action.

Often we do not comprehend all aspects of a certain situation. For instance, we are angry at someone for hurting us, it is difficult to see beyond our anger and explore where and what is the cause of the hurt. This inquiry, however, if undertaken leads us beyond our backyard into the openness and plurality of the situation. The acceptance and understanding of this openness is *Anekantavada*.

Thus, when meditating with *Anekantavada*, we realize the true nature of the world we live in. We grow closer to the truth.

Liberation from Clinging

Meditation helps us to clean the avenue to our inner Self by avoiding clinging to such beliefs that cause disharmony and pain. Clinging to our beliefs, our narrow self, our perceptions, our opinions, each causes pain and unhappiness. Liberation from clinging makes us happy. Remember, only happy people make others happy. Therefore, in order to be happy, avoid clinging and accept others and yourself. Accept the fact that every thing, every person, every object has multiple dimensions.

Change your beliefs and perceptions to discover truth and adapt to changing requirements. There is nothing absolutely right or wrong, good or bad. Everything is relative to its time, place and person.

The best way to achieve harmony, peace, happiness, and thus health and wholeness, is to accept yourself and others; avoid clinging, meditate, and feel the inside gentleness. Feel within you your peace-loving nature. Follow nonviolence, and recognize *Anekantavada* and the quest for goodness that is inherent and glowing within all of us like a flame.

March 2000: The Miracle is You

Once a priest from the Western world went to the East and met a Master of meditation. This priest was eloquent in English as well as in Oriental languages. When he went to see the master, he told him that he would like to read some passages from the Sermon on the Mount, in order to make the Master aware of the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The Master was very happy to listen, so the priest started translating. Then on the Master's face there came a glow, in his eyes there were tears. His whole being was thrilled with joy. The priest was very happy because he thought he was able to impress the Master and convert him. But when the priest said "I hope you enjoyed the words of Jesus," the Master said, "Jesus? These must be the words of Buddha, and I thought you had translated his words into Japanese. In your country you must be calling him Jesus, but he is the same -- Jesus is Buddha, Buddha is Jesus. They are the same words; there is no difference."

The experience, the truth, whether it comes from the word of Jesus or the word of Buddha or the mouth of Mahvira or Moses or you or me, what difference does it make? The main thing is the wisdom, the sweetness of the honey. If you cling to the name and fight for it, you forget the message. This is what often happens; the person who uncovers becomes more important than what is uncovered.

Truth has always existed, before Mahavira, before Buddha, before Christ, or Rama. Do you think truth was born with these Masters? If somebody opens the curtains at noon, you see the sun for the first time. But before the curtain was removed the sun was there. Instead of basking under the sun, do you cling to the person who removed the curtain? We have a good feeling for this person; we say, "Thank you," but we care for the light, the warmth.

Who is a Master?

If we are not aware, our whole life passes without experiencing the warmth of this sun, the self. Life goes by only reciting the names and we forget that they were masters because they uncovered something which was covered: Love, Joy and Peace. To be a master does not mean to be the master over you. A master is one who masters one's own senses and mind. When the senses are overcome with desires, they obscure the self, the light, and the mind clings to words and forms. Jargon becomes more important than the self, so they never catch a glimpse of that true self.

When the rays of the truth penetrate, you are not the same person. Your sorrow is over. What is called Mastership is to overcome sorrow. Sorrow is created by your mind. In reality, there is no sorrow. You create sorrow when you cling to a thing; when things don't happen as you want, you become sad. You want something and you do not get it, so you are disappointed and you make your face long and you cry. But if you say, "I am contented, I am happy with what I already have!" Then where is the sorrow?

We must know the cause of our pain. We think we are going to get happiness by possessing somebody or something. But as soon as we cling, we have sown the seeds of sorrow. Only

when we are empty we want something from someone else. But that person is not going to give us what we want because he or she does not have it.

Once a man was going to the market to sell ghee, which is butter that has been purified in liquid form. The man filled his pot with water and put a little warm ghee on the top. When ghee is put on water it hardens, so it appeared that the pot was completely filled with ghee. Along the way, he met a man who said, "What is in this pot of yours?" "It is ghee for sale," replied the man. "Let me see," said the second. He looked in and saw the whole pot filled with ghee. So he said, "How would you like to make a bargain? I have two bracelets which are made of gold. I can give you the bracelets if you give me the ghee." The first man said, "Very good", knowing the pot was full of water. But the other man had brass bracelets with only a little glitter of gold. So he thought, "This is not such a bad business to have so much ghee for some bracelets of brass."

So they were both very happy. But when they reached home, they both discovered that they had played a trick on each other. Sometimes two empty people think that they have made a good bargain. They meet once or twice and think "Oh, I have something good here," because the partner is handsome or wealthy. But when they discover the emptiness after two or three months, they say "Oh my God! Now how can I get rid of him?" Or "What is the way out from here?" Really it is difficult for us to understand, but if we don't understand, it will become more difficult for us to remove the pain.

Masters are those souls who master their own mind. They don't want to master the people or collect followers. They know the futility of the ego. In ego, you create something and then you suffer. You don't know when the mind of the disciple is going to turn crazy, and then you have to please him until you can correct the craziness. It is a headache! To be free from this headache, detachment is the answer.

The Nature of the Mind

The mind can turn against anything; it has a habit to revolt against what it does not understand. It attacks and in that way it thinks it can save itself. If it does not strike, it feels it will not save itself. To save face it uses a device to strike out at what it does not grasp or cannot conquer. Sometimes when the mind does not understand the teacher or Master, it strikes out against him also. It happens to all the teachers in one way or another from time to time. So the wise man wants to conquer his mind and his senses and that is all. He says, "Those who are ready, let them understand. Those who are not ready, let them learn through suffering." Suffering becomes their master. They gain from pain.

There are some people who are not happy unless they become unhappy. They find some reason to have a discussion and create a fight, and they spoil their evening instead of sitting in silence, having peace and seeing beauty. That is why, if you are going away for the weekend with friends and you want to have a very pleasant time, better take some time for silence. Then you will enjoy nature. Otherwise you might come home with fighting, quarreling and disputing moods.

August 2000: Peace and Forgiveness

When we forgive, we become one with the light of our soul. Without forgiveness, we are like a lamp whose inner flame cannot penetrate the fine particles of soot which smear the outer chimney. When we wash away these subtle grains of anger, resentment and hatred with forgiveness, then the radiant soul within shines forth its ray of joy and peace.

October 2000: Purpose of Life

Today we are meditating on what is the purpose of human life and how we fulfill that purpose. People involve themselves in many activities, read countless books, and work in varied directions to explore what is the searcher's ultimate aim of this human life.

Man is at the stage of evolution. Man is capable to attain excellence. To be human is to be capable of self-awareness; now, from here, where do we go? There are two directions: one is ascendance to Higher Self or descent to lower form. From here we must either ascend or descend. We can neither stop, nor stay in the center of the road. Let us say your car stalls in the middle of the highway. The policeman comes and either pulls you over to the side or tows the car away. No one would allow you to leave your car in the middle of the highway blocking the traffic. So you must go either forward or backward, one or the other. In life, people go either on the animal level or on the divine ascent. We meet here for one purpose and that is to know our potential and our freedom to choose what we want to choose.

Realize Our True Self

After *Mahavira* had attained enlightenment, his disciple bowed down to him and asked "Sir, what is the purpose of all our human affairs?" *Mahavira* answered, "To realize our true Self -- as the tree is in a seed so is God in you."

He meditated for twelve and a half years and the fruit of his meditation was to "realize the true Self and that life is God." In his meditation he realized that whatever perfection he was searching for was already in him. When we realize this, even though it is very difficult it is not impossible to experience, to fulfill and to express it. You must ask yourself, "Do I see Life as God or sin?" If you see other things and not true Self, then nothing is fulfilled because anything other than God is transient.

Until now, day and night, we have been trying to get ephemeral things, forgetting the permanent. Once when I was a child, I was with my father and I caught sight of a beautiful toy camel. I started crying that I wanted this camel. My father asked, "Why do you want to spend so much money?" "I want it," I said. "I am not going to come with you unless" Ultimately, my father bought that camel. One day, about ten years later, we were talking together and I threw the camel away. "Now you are throwing it away," my father said, "But once you were crying for this camel." At that time it was my need to have the camel. In youth we need certain things, but when we are mature, the need changes. All these needs are relevant to a certain stage. But there is something which is not transient, but is permanent. In order to realize God -- *Paramatma* -- in life, we have first to distinguish between the permanent and the transient.

For this we will need to use those gifts which are inherent to us. An aware person can use his/her gifts for this upliftment. However, if he/she is unaware or has no guide, or keeps the wrong company, then the gifts may take him/her down instead. Watch what happens to a rich man's son. If he keeps the wrong company, then his friends, the society he travels with

will spoil his life. His money will take him down. But, if he has good guidance, with his money and time, he can lift himself and others as well. In the same way you are blessed with your senses, a beautiful reasoning mind, and the enthusiasm to seek the truth. These are all gifts. You are well equipped; nothing is lacking in you. Whatever you need is stored in your laboratory. You have to just discover it. When an astronaut goes to the moon, everything is arranged for him in the spaceship. You are like the spaceship. Everything you need is there; you only have to know where it is. Don't doubt yourself. Don't say, "Nothing is in me." Why do we have so much faith in a spaceship and so little in ourselves? Life has provided us with everything we need. So we go with faith in ourselves – not in anything outside.

Guidance

If you have this kind of confidence, then all you need is a guide; someone who can point out that whatever you need is within you. Sometimes we make mistakes and need someone to help us. Once I came upon my great uncle who was exhausting himself searching the whole house for something. I asked him what he was looking for. He answered, "my glasses". I said, "They are on your forehead!" "Oh," he said, "I forgot". In life also you need someone to point towards the thing for which you are searching, to remind you that what you seek is within.

Without the proper guidance, we might misuse our gifts and channel our energies downward. To focus our energy upward, it is essential to find a positive, enlightened, and sincere guide, someone without the smallest trace of negativity, one who does not believe in anything destructive. His/her affirmative thinking, balanced life and experience, help his/her friends move in a positive direction. When we get that kind of guidance, we are very fortunate. It is easy to follow any teacher but very difficult to find a Master – a guide or *guru* who is enlightened. When we find one, we are truly a blessed disciple, because there is no fear of failing or losing track. The master will always lift the student up again, help him/her to rethink, to come to the right thinking. This is important because the thought process that we use is an instrument for transcending. You see; you behave, you live according to your thought. You need positive thinking for what you want to become. Thought is not a cause for being, but it is instrumental to becoming.

Meditation

Many people say there is no need to think. They are confused – rather, there are two phases to thinking. When you are in deep meditation, you leave your thoughts on the surface; but when you return to the surface, you use the energy and power of meditation to enlighten your thought. You throw a light on that thought so the thought will shine.

You might have noticed on the highway a kind of paint which reflects the light of the headlights of passing cars. It is not actually light; it has no power of its own. It simply receives and reflects light. Our thoughts are like paint. They don't have their own light but they need light. When you throw light on them, they reflect, they shine, they become bright. But when there is not light, they are in a guideless position.

Meditation is a kind of power or light. Used properly, there is nothing you cannot touch, nothing you cannot solve. Meditation is a very precise way of using your thought to solve the problems of daily life. Without it, your thoughts will become fantasy or will jump from one subject to another. Like Hamlet, you will be unable to come to a decision. Many people pass their whole life in the process of "to be, or not to be" and before they decide, their time is over. But through meditation, your thoughts will become stronger and stronger and you will have confidence in yourself. You need this confidence. If a surgeon is trembling while he is operating, he will kill the patient. If he has confidence in his ability, his hand does not tremble, and he ultimately helps the patient. With confidence, the artist can draw a straight line in a single stroke. If a singer has fear in his breath, there will be no music. A spiritual man, who harbors fear, negativity and uncertainty, will be unable to reach his highest potential. So you need confidence and to obtain this confidence, you must use your own energy for meditation.

Spring 2001: Understanding the Spirit of Communication

The subject selected for today is understanding the spirit of communication. Communication? With whom? These are the questions. The word communication is used in the commercial world often but communication first starts with our own Self; next, with people around us; and then with the world-at-large. But if we don't have communication with those who are around us, how can we have communication with the world-at-large? So first of all we must have communication with our own Self and to have this we need understanding.

It is in our meditation that we say "**BE** in order **TO KNOW** what one is" "Then **KNOW** what one is to be in order to know and **KNOW** in order **TO BE** what one knows."

But in order to know, one has to know **WHAT ONE IS**. Who am I? Who is conducting the business and all the activities from morning to evening? I am doing so many things and yet who is **That I?** From the insight of **TO BE** dawns the knowledge what one really is. This is an inner communication. To see this, one has to take time to be quiet, take time for introspection, and see who is at the center. This insight is very essential for communication. A person who does not have this communication with one's Self cannot have communication with anyone anywhere.

We have a vast media of communications but there is really no communication and that is why there is war; there is strife; there are misunderstandings, quarrels, fights, butchering. The havoc which mankind has created is beyond imagination. With so much education, so much knowledge, so much information, and so much material comfort, what has man made of himself? Is there peace? Is there security? Is there love? Is there brotherhood? There are holy principles in holy books but do they build understanding and friendship or goodwill among differing groups? Who has these questions? The person who takes time to think, to take the first step **TO BE** in order **TO KNOW** what one is.

To Know in Order to Be

Then the second level will come: **TO KNOW** in order **TO BE** what one knows. When we sit and have introspection, in that moment we get a glimpse. Otherwise, the neurons of our mind are occupied with so many material things that we don't have peace to see what this rat race is for. Money is controlling; matter is controlling. And in this material pursuit, we don't use our natural gifts of thinking; introspection, observations, perception and recognition of why I am here and what I can do. In our world, there is a lot of suffering, pain, violence as well as wars because we do not have time **TO BE** and **TO KNOW**.

Don't you see, in India now, there are so many temples, so many gurus, swamis and so many rituals all over the country? In every nook and corner, there are all kinds of prayers

and recitation -- but is there really brotherly feeling? Is there really communication? Why not?

Bernard Shaw mentioned appropriately, "Beware of those whose God is in heaven!" Because we have all our gods either in the past or in the heavens, we don't see the divinity in people. Because our attention is outside and in the distance, we don't see what is very close to us; we don't get a proper perspective. To read a letter, we must have a proper distance and the light must have a proper distance and the light must dance between eyes and letter. This is true with people also. To have a perspective and to perceive, we need psychological space so love can dance amidst us.

In our meditation, our introspection, our observation, we see that people have the same quality we are seeking outside. There are many who give a lot of money to charity in return for a name, but are they ready to give help to their servant? If the servant's wife is sick or his child is suffering, are they generous? Why? Because we don't have this understanding to see the light in the people around us, near us. So, the first thing to have is communication, or as I say, understanding the spirit of communication. **UNDERSTAND!!** But we have to understand, first of all our own Self.

Understanding Our Self

When one takes time to question one's Self, "Who am I? What is me? Why do I have all kinds of doubts, fears and anxiety? Why do I not see the light within me and why don't I have courage? What is missing in me? Why do I run after gods or statues, or temples to see God outside? Why do I not see that spark of Godhood in me?" The moment one consults with one's Self, has communication with Self, the spark will sparkle. Once the spark is seen, you are above fear, above doubt and alienation. You don't go outside to see gods; you are light. You are God. God is light. Why do people go out? Because something is disturbing them. Inside there is lack of love, lack of good will, there is greed, jealousy, competition or hatred. And they don't want to see that. But can we not convert our own heart into a temple through meditation? The moment one sees divine spark and creativity, one changes one's own self.

Some people live for years together as though they are living in an inn or a hotel. In the morning they get up and rush out; in the evening they come home, eat and are glued to the TV set and this has separated us the most. Husbands and wives come home from the office and in front of the crazy box they sit and go on watching. There is no communication. They go on watching serial after serial. It is creating so many pictures, fantasies and figures in our minds that we lose having any rapport between heart and heart, mind and mind, person and person. How many people are there who have good communication with their own family members and who in the evening or in the morning at least sincerely say "Thank you, my dear." If we appreciate, if we give some credit and lovingly care and share, then they get some inspiration. But we take them for granted. That is why slowly, slowly our

love diminishes, the spirit of communication is lacking, even though in the beginning great joy brought them together.

Today, this is not just a talk, not just an intellectual discussion; today we must see how we can bring the spirit of communication with our Self, with our family members and then with the world at large. A person who cannot have love for himself, do you think he has love for the world at large? Or for anybody? A beggar, a pauper cannot give to anybody. The person who has is able to give to others. If we don't have love for our own Self, then how can we give love to somebody else?

Here we are considering what kind of communication do we have in our life. Is it only for money, for wealth, for ornament, for house, for prestige, for popularity? Or, is there communication between person and person?

My friends, the communication starts with one's Self. We commune. We build friendship. We talk to our Self. The spirit of communication needs nurturing. The first thing is **TO BE** and this is the key of communication; **BE TO KNOW** what one is and **KNOW** what one is, **TO BE**. When we come to our Self, the spark sparkles, we have understanding and the spirit of communication.

Fall 2001: Pray for Peace and Understanding

September 11 has been a tragic day, not only for America but for the whole world because such a savage violence diminishes all of mankind. The death of innocent people is a cause for grief, and even for anger in some. But this is truly a time for prayer. We often pray for our selfish and greedy needs. But such prayers are never fulfilled because our greed tends to be endless and satisfaction always eludes us. True prayers always are selfless in essence, and it is time for such prayer at this moment. We need to pray first and foremost for the peace and comfort of those bereaved and overcome by loss. But we also need to pray for calm and tranquility within. It is such calm that can bring clarity if we are to go beyond numbness, shock and even senseless anger that tempts us to revenge and retribution.

We need prayer. Prayer brings introspection. We need to introspect over the violence that begets violence. How do we break the senseless cycle of destruction that we are caught in? Are we capable of restraint, can we check the triumphalism rhetoric that satisfies our ego and love of power? We need to reflect and do so deeply on the causes that provoke such anger, and lead to such unspeakable tragedy. Have we of the “civilized” world fueled the hatred that has caused such catastrophes? Is resentment bred by insensitivity and thoughtlessness? Can we only demonize some Other? Are the demons of our own making? If so, we need to confront the demons within and conquer them. Only such self-conquest can make for abiding peace.

America has held as sacred the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The events of September 11 represent an attack on these rights. The best guarantee of these rights would be to ensure them globally. We need to pray so that we remain sensitive to Universal aspirations. It is those who feel anger over denial and discrimination who express themselves with such wanton acts. Let us then pray that we can feel the suffering of the helpless and the poor. Let us pray for the blessing of the less blessed.

If this tragedy leads to more distrust and suspicion, we will have ensured the ultimate victory of the terrorists. The only answer to distrust and suspicion is understanding. Let us pray for that. Revenge is natural to some, but it is inhumane and barbaric. Gandhi rightly warned us “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind”. Blindness and myopia we need to avoid and pray for understanding and illumination. Let us pray for such understanding and for peace that abides. It is only Ahimsa and reverence for life that are an answer to this troubled world. Let us pray that we overcome hatred and malice and bring amity and concord into our lives. Let us start every new day cherishing our blessings. We resolve to see good around us, to hope for a bright future. Let us think of peace, let us feel love, and let us practice compassion. Let us look forward to each day imagining and contemplating in a positive way for health, happiness and harmony.

Spring 2002: Our Place in the Universe: Part I

Unless we realize our place in the universe, we will not be able to relate to ourselves. Unless we can relate to ourselves, we will not be able to relate to others. If we do not see beyond the “I” built from body, name, ego, emotions, then we cannot come to an experience of ourselves.

Through the process of meditation, we are reaching the real “I”. Reaching there we get a sense of forever-existence which is what we mean by immortality. It is feeling our living feeling. As long as we lack that experience, so long our life has no solid foundation.

The theme of meditation is this: to reach that root where fear does not exist and where vibrant life is always felt. This is called relating to ourselves.

Through this experience we realize that “I was, I am, and I will be”. Realizing this, we become aware of the process of evolution. Darwin’s theory was based on a physical level. Ours is founded on a spiritual level. Thus we see that before reaching human-hood, the individual soul evolves from one level to another. With each progressive level it adds one sense.

Living beings with only a single sense are found in the mineral and vegetable kingdoms. Their only sense is the sense of touch. Certain insects and crawling creatures such as worms have two senses; they have the sense of taste as well as the sense of touch. The third sense to be added is the sense of smell in such insects as ants. Four-sensed beings such as bees have added the sense of sight. Fifth is the sense of hearing, which characterizes five-sensed animals.

Who Am I?

Step by step we go upwards in evolution from mineral to man, first to primitive man, intellectual man, and lastly, aware man. We start with “I am” and then ask “Who am I?” It is man’s first real step in evolution. This is the line of demarcation between human consciousness and animal consciousness.

We are here to see why we are here. We are here to see our place in the universe. We don’t say “I am here to eat, procreate, grow old and die.” That is not the answer. They may be steps to evolution, but they are not the end of the journey. The few years we have can be profitably invested or wantonly wasted.

Thus “Who am I?” is a dynamic question. It reveals the power of man to actualize his sixth sense, his power of thought. If you go on working on that question, it will explode. It will bring meaning to you. The question will lead you further and further.

Though your progress may not be so obvious, you are digging deep down in the subconscious mind, and little by little you are reducing unpleasant vibrations and adding right vibrations to living life.

We see that life does not come from matter but life animates matter. At the same time, matter helps life to evolve, fulfill, and express itself. As milk gives color to water and water surrenders to milk and they become one, so matter and soul are so close that it is difficult to distinguish where one is and where the other is. So we see oneness.

According to this philosophy, matter and soul have been together from beginning-less time. In subhuman forms of life, matter dominates, weighing down soul energy like mud holding down a naturally buoyant gourd. With human consciousness, matter and soul live side by side in partnership.

As man becomes increasingly aware of his intrinsic quality and of his capacity for spiritual growth and freedom, soul becomes master, using matter in creative ways rather than allowing matter to dominate. When soul ascends to its natural state, it is buoyant like an empty gourd, using body for a purpose: to carry conscious energy to fruition and fulfillment.

Matter and Soul

Now let us experience the dynamic interrelationship between matter and soul in our interrelationship with the universe. To pass even one day in any form, from the least to the greatest, we must have universal help. The whole universe is helping us survive and *we have the capacity to transform and transmute anything we receive from the universe into life*. Air becomes breath, food becomes blood and cells to build our existence.

From one single cell, our relationship with the universe started. When we realize that without universal help we could not have evolved nor could we live a single day, something in us lets go and melts. Our relationship with the universe becomes flowing and natural. We stop withholding ourselves. We no longer do things to get thanks or praise. We do not act out of obligation. Rather, we act out of genuine feeling of sharing with harmony.

We flow in a reciprocal way with the universe as we see each microcosm receiving from all others help and support and communication: "*Parasparo Upagraho Jivanam*" – Giving each other mutual help we cause each other to grow. This aphorism of the ancient *Tattvartha Sutra* expresses beautifully our place in the universe and our relationship with others. It helps us appreciate the innumerable hands helping us to live and grow, both materially and spiritually. It invites us to see that where there is giving, there is receiving. Where there is receiving, there is giving, and where these two are, there is growth.

As we receive, we give of ourselves in return, naturally, without motive. How? First by knowing our self and then by building a bridge between ourself and all the selves. By meditating and asking: "What do I really need? How much do I need?"

First find out what pleases you, what is your unique dream, with what you will be happy and then extend that to the world. Say to yourself: "I need a few comforts, a place to rest my head, a little nourishing food, congenial communication, sweet smiles, warm feelings". Then ask: "Do I share with the world what I have and what I need for myself?"

Do we want peace? Happiness? Freedom? Non-interference? Then what we want for ourselves, why do we not give to others? In this way, we can see ourselves flowing with the vast interrelationships of the universe. The realization will come that no one can say: "I am independent so I don't care for the world." No one is either dependent or independent, but all are interdependent in a spiritually evolving world.

Summer/Fall 2002: Our Place in the Universe: Part II:

Our Vibrations

Now let us understand our interdependence on a vibration level. Our capacity to transmute matter to energy and energy to matter is experienced through vibrations every moment of our life. Just as food turns into energy in your body, so positive vibrations which you meet in a person radiant with positivism change into a pleasant feeling in your awareness.

When you meet someone sunk in inertia, you begin to feel tired and energy-less as well. You think that the fatigue is in you, but most likely you picked up vibrations from a person who is not vibrant with light and life.

When we realize the importance of vibrations, we see why some people are speeding up the process of evolution and why others are remaining stagnant. Vibrations can accelerate your growth or they can hold you back. So you must ask yourself: "Do I constantly take in undesirable vibrations? Let me see what I am doing to allow them to influence me." With awareness, you stop becoming a victim of negative vibrations when you stop becoming a victim of your own unaware mind.

So you investigate your life and your work. Is your work giving you life or are you exhausted by it? Is your life helping you to expand your experience or are you working for "bread and butter" only? Are you living happily or are you pushing yourself, using up extra energy on survival and stimulation?

To stimulate themselves, some people go on taking such drugs as nicotine, caffeine, pep pills thinking that it gives them energy. They are not to be blamed. To keep up with life they have to take stimulants or else they feel helpless and exhausted. Each of us must go deep and see if these tendencies are in us. If you are not receiving those vibrant vibrations which you need, realize that it is time to make a change in your life.

Making a Change

How can we make a change in our life?

First, we see the connection between ourselves and the universe: what we receive and what we give. Secondly, we put an end to hating and blaming. We accept responsibility for our own actions. Thirdly, we realize that there is no sin. We accept our own actions without clinging to guilt. We erase them with laser-like awareness in order to live in the present as a living presence. We take our life into our own hands and experience its infinitely creative possibilities.

The first step then is to see how the universe works in harmony of cause and effect. It works precisely. There are no mistakes. Like the sun whose rise and fall is exact, like the

ocean ever in ebb and flow, like the season's movement the universe is accurate. What appears to us as accidental has some cause behind it. It is not a creation of a whim or a fancy. It is a law. It has its law. We grow what we sow. We get what we give. It echoes what we speak.

What we have to understand is that for countless life-times this living sentient self-energy went on evolving, taking on and letting off different kinds of matter, as a process of life, without awareness. *Then there came a time when it started taking on matter of awareness.* At that time we started deciding our form, our intelligence, our condition, our every characteristic.

The procedure is this: in a state of repulsion or attraction, we send our vibrations which are either negative or positive, and we are reborn in such a way as to experience those same vibrations we sent out previously. We receive from the universe on the level of our awareness or consciousness. If we have sent our negative-violent vibrations in thought, speech, or action to someone else, we will experience that pain which we have caused. If we have sent our positive vibrations, we receive them back in a kind of echo.

Vibrational Echo & Karmas

The vibration echo comes back and draws to us particles of matter which create a structure or shell-like form around the *soul*. These particles we call *karmas*.

The vibrations we sent may be from lifetimes ago, from years ago, or from yesterday, but having sent them they have started working on us. Because of those vibrational echoes, there are karmic effects on relationships.

In the living present lies our challenge, our work or hope for spiritual growth. There are ties which are already formed with our own past vibrations; these we can work with - fulfilling them, undoing them, bringing them to completion.

In what way is the present living? How is it that we can say that everything is possible in the present? Because *karmas built by living life have the capacity to be evaporated or transmuted by living vibrations*. You can use positive living vibrations to extinguish the smoldering embers of old negative ones. You can upgrade your present life by erasing your past with responsible, kind vibrations.

This we experience in our meditation. It is not an intellectual experience.

Vibrations must be experienced, not explained. For example, as soon as a mother conceives, she starts feeling love. Parents are ready to part with their fortune for a new-born stranger. Seeing someone, you are ready to die for that person. Meeting someone in an airport, you become in a matter of minutes closer to that friend than you are even to members of your own family. Why? What is that which brings together and what is that which separates? It

is vibrations. The heart knows. “The heart has reasons which reason cannot define”, Pascal said. Human beings are not logs floating in a river, meeting and parting. Because of the limitations of the mind, we may not notice the connection. And yet there is something which joins, which brings sweetness or bitterness to relationships.

A Heart Connection

When your heart is longing for something, it chooses; it vibrates in response. Becoming aware of your heart’s desire you acknowledge your dream. You discover your mission. So listen to your heart. Listening to your inner voice, you grow.

In India, there was a family whose son married a girl he met while studying in America. When he brought her back to India, his family started judging from looks, height, outer appearance. And they criticized him saying: “What have you selected? What kind of girl is this?”

The son only answered: “To see her you must have my eyes. Without my eyes you cannot see her.” The old parents did not understand. Once they met me and asked: “What does he mean – we have to have his eyes? Is there something wrong with our eyes? Don’t we have the same eyes?”

It is a question of connection of vibration. Something joins together. As long as that heart connection is there, people grow. They tolerate each other’s shortcomings. They come together in a positive karmic relationship – not to bind and possess, but to free, fulfill and uplift. In this way, karmas are seen as a process and a path to growth. Taking the hand of a friend, a partner, a teacher, a child, each other, we grow.

Winter 2003:

Our Place in the Universe: Part III Our Karmas, Our Quest

A person who always helps somebody out of compassion and love acquires pleasure producing karmas. Wherever that person takes birth, pleasure from all sides comes to him or her. Such a person is invited and received with joy.

On the other hand, someone who goes on hating and hurting people, someone who does not build understanding relationships with living beings builds pain-producing or bliss-obscuring karmas. Wherever he goes, people feel a kind of repulsion for him. Now the person may be doing the best he can for mankind, but because in the past he did not care for anyone or share what he had with others, now people do not give him a good reception.

In addition, a person who not only harms but who takes life irreverently, such as a man who goes fishing, hunting, torturing, receives not only pain-producing karmas but also age-determining karmas. Such results come because he has caused pain to living beings. Longevity comes to him or her who lets others live in peace.

If you are born with a beautiful bodily form and make fun of someone who has not received physical beauty, the pain you create in that person's life with words, gestures, jokes, laughter, or disgust is an invitation to vibrations for deformities which bring physical-making karmas.

If you observe yourself and find a physical lack, then you can tell yourself: "Somewhere I have made fun of somebody. At that time I was not aware of what I was doing. Because of ignorance I went on causing pain to somebody. What I have now is the result of a feeling, gesture, vibration which I sent and which became concretized".

You were born to certain parents. Why? It shows some previous vibrations. You have chosen them or they have chosen you. Depending on the previous relationship, it will be a superior or inferior heredity, caused by what are called heredity-determining karmas. If the previous bond was painful, then you have come to cancel or undo the wrong, or you have come to allow the parents to experience and erase their past vibrations.

Deeds, Dreams, Motives

Most important is to know your deeds, dreams and motives. That is the clay which you use to compose your life. It is on the basis of our unique idea, speech, action that you select a family, that family whose genes will permit you to express your best dream. Therein lies your unique temperament, nature, character, growth pattern. That is why in the whole of the universe you will not find a single carbon copy of yourself.

The closer in touch you are with your dream, the closer you come to living your approach to life and to making your dream come true. For example, those souls who for a long period of time, in at least three or four births, deeply cherish a feeling to lift all living beings from pain, suffering, and violence become so engulfed with that longing that each cell of their consciousness is permeated by it. They are swimming in the dream of saving and helping living beings. Because of their compassionate vibrations of amity, gradually their whole consciousness becomes scented with feelings of helping all. Now there are no longer any heavy karmas binding them. Their positive vibrations take them to parents who are healthy and magnanimous. The mother who carries this child is superb, positive. Each cell of the body of this child is so vibrant with magnetic power that when people come into his or her presence they are lifted. In this birth, this soul receives a golden voice, a command over words, pleasing aroma in order to actualize one dream: to free all beings from suffering by bringing them to the path of Enlightenment.

Nothing in the world is impossible for mankind. Whatever miracle we see in the field of medicine, architecture, invention, is the result of human consciousness and power. Whatever spiritual growth we experience, comes from our longing to grow and to help others to grow.

What happens to many people is that their mental habits get in their way and take away the positive effect of their meditation. The newfound bliss, courage, zeal, and awareness are covered up again. So what is needed is constant realization and faith in oneself. Say to yourself, if someone can do it, why not I?

I Can Do It

Realize that the "I" that was there in the amoeba as an unconscious or subconscious individuality has reached the state of "I" can do it. "I cannot do it" is a conditioned feeling built by society and outside influences. To break that conditioning, swim against the current and work on "I can do it; I am capable of doing and undoing; I can erase those old vibrations which are collected and stored up from the past." Analyzing them, you are cancelling them. Knowing which vibrations are coming in your way is dismissing them.

Who is compelling you to carry those vibrations which you do not want? No one but you. You have not removed them because you have not exerted your energy to remove them. When you realize "Who am I?" and "I can do it", you are working with dynamic power. You stop all blaming and start taking some responsibility for yourself. You know the art of using living positive vibrations to scatter old negative ones.

Try writing down anything which bothers you, anything which you do not want, in a proper sentence on a blackboard in your mind. Then write down the positive things you do want on a whiteboard. Start erasing the blackboard items one by one, and then place your full attention on what you want. Using this method of visualizing, you will be able to change the focus of your consciousness completely.

When you are clear about what you want, you will not be tempted by that which you do not need.
When you know yourself, you will know your quest.
When you know your quest, you will know others' quests.

Spring 2003: What is the Philosophy and Practice of Reverence for all Life?

More than twenty-five hundred (2500) years ago, Mahavira made a simple yet profound statement based on the absorption of Ahimsa – Non-violence – into the fabric of his consciousness. He realized, “All life is just like me. I want to live. So do all souls, all living beings. The instinct of self-preservation is universal. Every animate being clings to life and fears death. Each of us wants to be free from pain. So let me carry out all of my activities with great care so as not to be harmful to any living being.”

The philosophy of Non-Violence is a living practice. More than refraining from violence, it is a deep *Reverence for All Life*. We come to realize that our life force is precious and that we are here to respect and reveal its innate wisdom. It is a process of taking care of both our inner being and the material envelope in which it dwells. Like a mother nurturing the development of her child, we do what is healthful and helpful for our spiritual growth.

Most of us are not used to treating ourselves with gentleness and love. It requires a conscious decision. The practice of *Reverence for All life* begins with a decision to not take any hurtful influence into our body or mind. This is called *samvara*, stoppage, or stepping apart from the rat race, discontinuing pain-creating habits, and re-evaluating one's thought and practices in life.

Observation and Self-Inquiry

The automatic and mechanical aspects of living cease to rule us when we activate our faculty of observation and self-inquiry. We take time to notice the universal law of cause and effect and how it is functioning as a precise computer in our lives. There is a real connection between the vibrations we send out and the pain or pleasure we receive. When we radiate loving-kindness, joy, and friendliness, it multiplies and comes back to us.

Violent thoughts are as real as the tangible world. They too, return to us. When anger, jealousy, or unfulfilled ambitions goad us, the one whom we damage first is our own self. This is equally true of harsh, slanderous, or critical speech. It works like a matchstick; before it ignites something else, it burns its own mouth.

Through practice of self-respect, we recognize that our peace is the most precious thing in the world. Before hating, judging, or treating anyone as an inferior, we check ourselves. Before buying or using any we product, we ask “By my action, am I causing any living being to pay a price in pain? Directly or indirectly, am I causing a life to be lost?”

We take the help of meditation to know and remember what we really are. In our natural state, our soul is nothing but love, energy, peace and bliss. Gradually we glide to a peak of realization and joy, exclaiming, “I am life! I am a living conscious energy! I feel my life force moving in all my limbs and awakening all my cells with awareness!”

At the heart of the experience of self-reverence, we realize that the same energy which is pulsating in us is also vibrating in all living beings. When this awareness dawns, we see

through a new set of eyes. We feel an uninterrupted connection from our innermost being to the soul force alive in all.

With Awareness, Negativity Falls Away

From the moment this awareness becomes a part of our daily life, we find that traits and habits which used to limit us fall away naturally. We are no longer able to invite pain and disease to our bodies or to other bodies. At the same time, it becomes imperative for our well-being and continued evolution to forgive, drop, and forget those painful vibrations we may still be carrying in our mind. With courage, compassion and non-violence, we can remove them. It is a gradual process. If we realize that the hurts and scars from the past came to us by our own invitation, we can stop focusing on blaming and retribution. Once we take responsibility for our own pain, we can transcend it. We can see its purpose- to act as compost, breaking open the harsh outer shell of our heart and helping the soft flower of compassion and kindness to blossom.

In this way, the trials of life become fuel for our growth, and we come closer to our goal of Self Realization. As an instrument tuning itself to the right key, we tune ourselves to *Reverence for All Life*. By doing everything we can to minimize violence and pain in life, we enjoy living with a cleansed consciousness and a light heart.

How can we live in this world without taking life and causing violence? In Jain philosophy, the answer lies in taking care to minimize the harm one does and to direct one's actions with the intention to revere life. This requires vigilance, awareness of motives, and fearlessness to live in tune with nature's laws.

Moving with Intention

Intention is what counts. Living in reverence means not condoning or consenting to any form of violence, even if someone else is willing to be the active perpetrator. It also means trying to stop it once it has begun.

Because of Mahavira's gentle influence, many kings abolished in their lands slavery, the caste system, degradation of women, hunting, butchering and sacrificing of animals, and many people were inspired to live in *Ahimsa* and Non-Violence.

With regard to war, Mahavira said, "Killing is killing irrespective of the cast, country or religion." The concept of war-killing is the result of ego and greed, camouflaged in blind beliefs and fanatic religious backgrounds. And why are Jains exempted from being drafted in war in the USA since 1971? Simply, we have brought awareness that the Jains are incapable of killing human beings because they cannot even kill a chicken or a goat. To kill a human being is impossible for Jains. One has to be immune to killing. Jains serve the wounded, moved by compassion. They serve the sick and injured back to health.

April 2003: Chetana is Soaring

We all know that she was the incarnation of love and light. In her you could see three loves – the love of Jesus, the compassion of Buddha, and the reverence for life and ahimsa of Mahavir. She was beyond walls and she had transcended walls. Ten thousand years ago in the Sanskrit language there is a stanza: the soul departs from the body just as we discard old clothes and wear new clothes. In the same way when our mission is complete, our karmas are burned and when the heart is purified with love, peace, sisterhood and brotherhood and we see life in everything then the soul, the spirit departs from the body. That is why we see the mission she has completed. It is not the years by which we count the life, it is the achievement, the purification, sharing and caring and daring to break the walls. This is the purpose of life and Chetana has completed her mission.

When she met me she was not ready to give up smoking. She said, “I can do anything but this one thing I cannot do.” So I said, “Then you cannot come to that holy place Shatrunjaya until you overcome your weakness.”

But she wanted to be on that mountain Shatrunjaya and she worked and one day she said, “All right I am ready”. It is courage, inner courage and strength to give up addiction and habits. I have seen many, many spiritual people but they are slaves to their habits. But Chetana was not a slave to the habit. She gave up many things to become vegetarian, she gave up fish and foods which are staple foods but she was able to do it. And she reached that state where she started thinking that nobody should not starve. So recently, last year, she started to feed the hungry and at the Lighthouse Center they started collecting money from people. She gave up one meal a day.

And this time when she was honored by the International Vegetarian Society Reverence for Life, all the people admired her; they saw that a person who is born in the western world has deeper meaning of eastern teaching where all the eastern teachers come – Buddha, Mahavir, Jesus and Moses all came from the east. Moses and everything. No one was born here, they all came from the east and she was representing that teaching here in the west.

So in reality, in our teaching, what we practice in her departure is a celebration. As your son or daughter goes to India or England for higher study you miss him, you miss her, but you feel that my son or my daughter will have a higher education, he or she will be upgrading. Life is a departure. The moment we are born the meter starts, as a parking meter does when you put in the coin.

So departure is not something new, it is from the moment we are born, from that moment the time is starting to come to the end. So the end is in the beginning. And that is the one thing we have to understand. We miss her, we feel a kind of sorrow, sometimes the tears roll down on our cheeks, but at the same time we see her riding and flying on the wings of light and love and peace. It was difficult for her to carry on the mission because her body

was worn out. In Udaipur I talked to her and said, "If your heart is a little bit weak so you gradually take some herb and meditate". And it worked, but there comes a time, time has its own time and neither you nor anybody can do anything when that time comes.

She decided to take the operation on her heart and when she asked the doctor, somebody told me, would this pin prick cause pain, she was not ready to take the pain of the needle. The doctor told her she would not notice it, she would be asleep. In reality she would go on; there was a contentment and peace. Consciously she did not know, but sub-consciously she knew that it is time to fly in peace. No torture, no pain, not taking all kinds of injections continuously. Sometimes the life becomes so miserable, one lives long but the life is not worth living. She lived a full life and departed with that peace that I will be all right...and she is all right.

And really what we have to see, is that when you see the invisible, then you can accomplish the impossible. In life, anybody who wants to accomplish the impossible has to see the invisible. So when you see the body she has taken the juice out of it and she is soaring on the light. As you have an orange you squeeze and drink the juice and the rest of it you give to the earth. The peels and everything you don't eat, you just drink the juice and the peels go in the compost. In the same way we have the same thing today. We have not come to mourn, we have come to take some message to our heart because we all are travelers. We all are pilgrims. Nobody is permanent here. After 100 years nobody will be here. We all will be somewhere else. So we are all moving, but our stay on the earth should be such that we don't hurt anybody. Take everybody's blessings. She had collected blessings and all of you when you were speaking, your feelings were coming out because she shared her blessing and you want to bless her, so it is mutual...From you I take, to you I give. We are all sharing.

So life should be sharing and the great poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a poem, which I have loved since my childhood. It is called Psalm of Life. He writes, "Tell me not in mournful numbers life is but an empty dream; for the soul is dead that slumbers and things are not what they seem." The things, which we see, are not there. "Life is real and life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal. Dust thou are and dust returneth was not spoken of the soul." It is about the body, about this matter, about the four elements which compose this body: earth, water, fire and air. These elements merge into the earth but dust thou art, dust returneth was not spoken of the soul. The goal is Divine, the goal is God, and the goal is feeling the presence of God within each part of you.

So today we are here to see a soul who has soared on the wings of light and love, leaving the body; and so all us for a moment be composed and feel love and make some commitment in the memory of Chetana. That my life now I will live a life of love. I will help not to hurt, I will give...not grab and if we make some other commitments, we will be able to give up our addiction which is making us slaves.

When I initiated Chetana, Chetana means light, which makes this body alive, like electricity. The light bulb is dead but electricity makes the light shine. This body is alive because of that light. The light goes and the body is lying here. She is the same Chetana so that Chetana means light which animated this body and each sense we are speaking of is full of love, words full of love, touch full of healing compassion and heart full of well being for all beings. That Chetana is not gone, that Chetana is with you and with me and with all of us. And that feeling with that strength you are with me. Someday we cry and we forget. But don't cry. Somebody would say I would die for my Jesus, I say no, Jesus does not want you to die, but rather to live for him.

I got up at 3:00 am and I was sitting in the plane and there was no way the plane would take off. The pilot said "I don't know when we will take off." And many people got out and I said, "No, I will stay and I am here." It is Chetana, it is Chetana. And so many friends, she has collected so many friends. Can you see we come alone in this world crying but living we collect so many friends and she is witnessing the example of so many people who came just to pay homage. One person can collect as many friends as one likes. Can we not collect friends rather than foes? That is the question. If she could collect so many friends, so can we.

When she met me I know nobody was there, none of them, but she practiced, she grew, she changed, she shared and collected so many friends- and so can we. Say "I will collect friends not foes" and not limit myself by any walls. Go beyond walls.

If somebody is Christian that is fine, but brings non-violence and not just in words but in life. Your food should be blessed with the blessings not with somebody's suffering. If somebody is a Jew, somebody is a Hindu, somebody is a Buddhist that is fine –because changing religion does not make any change. It is changing your attitude, your limitations you are transcending.

So this is the whole teaching: remember Chetana has not gone, Chetana has given Chetana – she has animated your heart, your feeling as she animated her body, she animated many hearts. With this we know she has not died, but she has transcended. For the same way you can see her eyes you can see her face but the aliveness is moving toward the divine, toward God, toward heaven, so please for a minute...you see how on the wings of light and love she is flying and soaring higher and higher and that is the real Chetana. You have to visualize her ascending, ascending and reaching the top of the universe on the ceiling of the universe you see the light. Chetana is light you see her on top of the universe. Now you see the invisible, you can accomplish any impossible thing in your life. Now you have the strength to see the soul, so you have the strength to move with the soul.

Om Peace, peace, peace.

Om Shanti, shanti, shanti – Peace

Namaste to you all.

Biography

Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji

In 1970 Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu became the first Jain Master in 2,500 years to leave India and come to the West. The Jaina philosophy is one of India's most ancient schools of thought. For the many Jains in both East and West who have benefited from the teaching, it is an eternal philosophy of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Reverence for all life.

"Jain", Gurudev explains, "is not a religion or an identity, but has its roots in the Sanskrit verb 'Ji', meaning 'to conquer'." This conquest is very much the result of a personal spiritual struggle against our enemies of anger, jealousy, ego, and greed.

A "Jina" is one of those enlightened beings who has conquered these inner enemies and thus has seen through the negative clouds which obstruct our natural state of enlightenment.

In the West, Gurudev has spoken at many colleges and universities including Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Cornell and has worked with many church groups, drug addiction centers and international-minded groups. He was the first to address the United Nations on Ahimsa and has served as founder-president of World Fellowship of Religions in America. He has many books in print in India and in the West. They include: *Meditations on the Seven Energy Centers*, *The Psychology of Enlightenment*, *The Dynamics of Jain Meditation*, and *the Twelve Facets of Reality*.

Jain temples all over the world regard Gurudev as their spiritual advisor. He is the founder of the Jain Meditation International Center in New York City, and he gives weekly talks in Manhattan. He is also the spiritual advisor to the Lighthouse Center, Inc. in Whitmore Lake, Michigan.

“Journey to Enlightenment On the Wings of Light and Love” is a compilation of spiritual messages from Jain Master Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu and his first apostle Chetana Catherine Florida to their students at the Lighthouse Center in Whitmore Lake, Michigan. Ranging from practical approaches to growing up spiritually to theoretical discussions of the Jain teachings of Ahimsa and Reverence for all Life, these messages were treasured by the Lighthouse students reading them, and will be inspiring to all seekers on a spiritual path. Compiled in remembrance of Chetana, whose journey was on the wings of light and love.

www.lighthousecenterinc.org
LIGHTHOUSE CENTER, INC.
P.O. BOX 645 WHITMORE LAKE, MI 48189
TEL# 734-449-0611



ISBN 978-1-4392-0186-2



9 781439 201862

90000 >



Cover Photo: Liza Cheuk May Chan