

Mission with a vision
Swami Chinmayananda

(Gurudev gave this talk during Chinmaya Mission's 10th Anniversary celebrations)

We are assembling here for the Tenth Anniversary Celebration of the Chinmaya Mission under a very sad shadow – under the shadow of the demise of two mighty missionaries of this country. We are alone like orphans. Swami Sivananda who was working very hard and who made a mark in this era is no more. So was Swami Ramdas of Kanhangad, who had indeed made a temple of sadhana in his own ashram. They are no more with us. In this sad gloomy darkness in the spiritual kingdom of the country, when we look around, we are almost left alone without anyone to lead us to light. There are pundits and mahatmas I am not saying that there are not. They are not doing it in the sense of 'missionary work.' In our own times Sivananda and Ramdas did such might work. We do not find now any institution wherein 'seekers' can get personal or individual attention.

Need of the hour

In this condition, it is all the more incumbent upon us to stand together, and in our total strength which these mighty masters themselves could individually give to the country.

Missionary

A missionary should not be misunderstood as a "visionary." 'Mission' and 'vision' in life are two totally different things. A missionary must have a vision, Admitted. But a visionary need not necessarily be a missionary. A visionary is a dreamer; he cannot stop dreaming, getting wonderful ideas and new programs every moment. But the missionary's job is not merely to visualize the possibilities, but he is one, who having visualized a single program or an idea, discovers in himself the right type of energy and integrity and puts forth all his energy in that direction until he executes and brings into the world that particular vision of his.

But, at the same time, over enthusiasm is a curse to the missionary. It is not possible for any one single solitary individual to do all the work in a nation or a community, or a society. All works are done by the "creator," from whom all activities flow (*yatah pravritir bhootaanam*). You and I are all His agents; we have been appointed for certain particular work and if we can do it truly and dedicatedly, that itself is the greatest of all sadhanas.

The nature of missionary work

Spiritual development is a silent process. All of a sudden nothing would happen. We cannot immediately demonstrate the fact of spiritual development as a scientist can do, in this field of work. You will not be praised. You won't find your work in the front page of the last page of a newspaper. You will be cursed and beaten, but the missionary is one who, the more he gets the kicks, the more he serves.

It's not the numbers

You cannot claim greatness for yourselves in your numbers, nor can you derive satisfaction from the number of years you have survived. Years add glory only to archaeological pieces. Your accounts of money collected and spent will not be a measure of your progress. Each one has to look within oneself and assess one's own progress and development.

Now what is required is a lot of tapascharya. To do tapas is not an easy joke. It requires great heroism. Even in the rishi days, how many disciples do you think were there? For a rishi,

perhaps one in his lifetime! You are talking about a small state in the country. Now there are so many people. That is a great progress. There is nothing to feel disappointed. Ours is not a political party to go about vote-catching. It is not social work or a community project that we are doing. How many bhagavatars are there in the country? How many Sanskrit scholars are there? How many Sir C.V. Ramans are there in this country? They cannot be many. Only a few will come up. What we want is the chestiest thing. Diamonds are many, but the real ones are rarely to be found, and it is those that we are counting.

We are trying to pan out of the society those distinct few who constitute the true membership of the Chinmaya Mission, and it is through them, from them and along with them that the entire society is to improve and be glorified. You must see how far you have become an institution yourself. We must always be dealing with these ideas, think in terms of these ideas and through study classes get these ideas again and again revived. Slowly bring it into the conversation and just leave it at that and then again discuss them. Others will not accept your ideas unless you are also improving day by day. If they are seeing you improve internally, they will begin asking you, 'How have you totally changed?' Then give them further ideas. Don't flood them out. Give your ideas in cups and not in tubs; people are not elephants!

Let us not think in terms of membership. It is only that the various other institutions are Universities and may claim greatness for themselves in numbers and for preserving themselves. Artifacts alone gather value because of the number of years they survived. A brass vessel of the 15th century, at that time might have been spittoon, gains value only because it survived all these years. If you are also saying that Chinmaya Mission survived ten years, it becomes an archaeological piece. Don't calculate the number of years. The Anniversary is not important.
Real Report

"What have you earned in these ten years? Have you progressed or not? How far have you progressed? This way, to take an estimate generally, must be the idea of an annual report and a statement of account, not the amount of money collected the various items on which it was spent, etc. The economics behind it apart, which is also necessary, what is to be considered at the moment, should be how far you and I have first of all improved us in these years.

In five years, an ordinary Narendra becomes a Vivekananda. Have you at least become a viveki, a discriminating individual? He did not get all the information you have got in five years; and yet, because he used to live what he knew and struggled hard to realize it, because he had the heroism and refused to come down and identify himself with his body, mind and intellect, he became Vivekananda. He was a king of men (Narendra). Even Vivekananda was not as great a missionary as Ramakrishna was. Ramakrishna created a Vivekananda.

How many of you have proved yourself to be better men? This is the thing to be considered at this moment. It is not merely to be considered in terms of what we did and what we did not do. It is not to regret that we have come. It is to enable us to take an estimate of ourselves and see how far we have progressed. This can be understood by reflecting over how you were living before and how or where you would have landed had you continued in the very same direction. There afterwards watching what direction you have changed, and if you have changed, how far you have progressed, congratulate yourself and prostrate onto Narayana. In this way you should grow. There is no hurry in improving the world. The world will be improved if you are improving. The world cannot improve if you are not improving. You may spend some energy,

some perspiration, but at the end of it, you will have to die away in this world with no happiness for anyone.

Look within yourself and see how much you have progressed and that development is the progress of the Mission. A true missionary is one who must be living every word he is talking. When we look within, we will find how we are. To lift ourselves up to the ideal is the work of the Mission. There will be no topic for you to talk except the topics of Vedanta. Unless you thus talk constantly, your conviction will not grow. When you thus begin doing this work, you will be condemned by the nearest man. If that condemnation does not come, you are living in a dead society. The more honest you are the more will be the criticism. But the criticism does not matter. A missionary must be a dynamic conveyor of his convictions. You must be able to live up to it, in spite of conducive and non-conducive environments. Such missionaries will be less in number, please and they will also not be appreciated. This is also good. Or else you will develop vanity. Do it as Narayanarpita. As best as we can, we are trying to surrender ourselves to HIS WILL. In this attitude, let us work on.

Everyone thinks: "The world is bad; I am not bad." Let us first of all understand that there must be some weakness in us, and as one of the programmes for our own self development, let us try to speak about it and discuss these things with others.

Chinmaya Mission is not to look into the world outside for understanding how far it has progressed, nor is it going to look into the men it has. Each of us is trying to individually grow within himself.

Some think that the Mission must not only have vision but it should also preach. You are soaked with the idea of proselytization of men. You think in terms of how far we have done this outside and not inside. It is not for that sort of work that we have started this Mission. We are trying to improve ourselves and when we have improved our vision of the world, the world will be improved. It is with this idea that we have been starting "Mission Centers" all over the country.

Green room men

Ours is a silent, quiet, behind-the-screen activity. Our work is the work of the green room and not of the main stage. Actors act on the stage and the applauses are for them, but not for those in the green rooms who without even proper ventilation work against time and amidst the confusion of hundreds of dresses and make-up equipment. Similarly, our members work in the green room, "making up" the character and position of our country. And those mighty men who give a new turn of thought, men who come on to the platform – the politicians, the economists and the scientists – will get all the glory. But we will be just silent workers from behind. Everywhere, it is the same. Culture works from behind. It never expresses itself out. It does not even claim success.

In ten years time, even to create in the heart of the country a reverence and adoration for the idea of "cultural values" is itself something very great, because for centuries these ideas have been taken away from our minds. Not only have they been taken away from our minds, but by a well conceived and silent education system, our children have been perverted to consider our culture as grotesque. This is where we were ten years ago (before we got that Arthi palace where the first yagna was held). In those days, we would not even get a place to talk. Even temples refused. At last, we got the Arthi palace only because that landlord was Muscleman and was kind enough to spare it. He said the building was not worth living in and therefore asked us to use the front portion. That is indeed a progress.

Enthusiasm is there everywhere now. It has very much improved during the last three or four years. Though it is ten years now, it took six years even for the promoters of this Mission to realize the glory of it. Really speaking, true enthusiasm has emerged out thus. Even in the cities where we thought there was no hope, there is great enthusiasm. In Bombay this has caught on like wild fire. Groups are increasing in number. All of them are very honest and serious. Madras Mission has the glory of being the father of the Mission in as much as you started it here. All other Mission centers came afterwards.

The degree of tranquility and the depth of serenity gained by an individual day by day should be measured as the Mission's progress, not how many branches etc. Though as an organization we certainly want numbers, the real progress is within. If only we give some attention to it, we can win it. It is not your fault if you are not able to do it now. With Narayana smriti, act on. A constant awareness of a greater reality in and through our activities is necessary. Even though the mind has agitation and the intellect it's throbbing, behind it all a substratum of peace and tranquility that never ends afterwards must be found. Each individual must be aware of himself. It is your duty to see that your mind is perfectly tranquil. Try to measure the progress in yourselves and not in any other way. In that way, in these ten years there is very good progress and if we keep it up, the next tenth anniversary will be a spectacular moment in the spiritual renaissance of the nation.

Everything depends on you ultimately.