A Meeting With Swami Tejomayananda Ji



Introduction

Swami Tejomayananda Ji, affectionately known as Guru ji, is the first successor of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda Ji and one of the most respected spiritual teachers of Vedanta. Through his simplicity, humility, and profound wisdom, he has inspired thousands of seekers across the world to lead a life rooted in values, self-discovery, and inner peace. His ability to explain the timeless teachings of the scriptures in a practical and relatable manner has made him a beloved guide for people of all ages.

Born on 30 June 1950 in Madhya Pradesh as Sudhakar Kaitwade, Guru ji displayed a deep spiritual inclination from a young age. While pursuing his Master's degree in Physics, he became increasingly inspired by the writings of Swami Vivekananda and developed a strong desire to understand the deeper purpose of life. His spiritual journey took a decisive turn when he attended a Bhagavad Gita discourse by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda Ji. Deeply moved by Gurudev's teachings, he chose to leave his academic path and joined the residential Vedanta Course at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai, at the age of twenty.

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After completing the course in 1975, Guruji dedicated himself to teaching Vedanta and serving Chinmaya Mission in various capacities. In 1983, he embraced the path of renunciation and was initiated into sannyasa, receiving the name Swami Tejomayananda. He later served as a teacher at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya and also led Chinmaya Mission activities in San Jose, USA, where he continued to spread the message of Vedanta with clarity and compassion.

Following the Mahasamadhi of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda Ji in 1993, Swami Tejomayananda Ji was chosen to lead Chinmaya Mission Worldwide. He accepted this responsibility with remarkable humility, expressing, "I am not in Swami ji's shoes; I am at his feet." Under his leadership for over two decades, the Mission expanded its global presence, established new centres, and strengthened its educational, spiritual, and service initiatives. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to spirituality and society, he was honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2016.

Guru ji is widely admired for his gentle nature, approachable personality, and ability to make profound spiritual concepts easy to understand. Fluent in English, Hindi, Marathi, and Sanskrit, he is also a gifted poet and composer whose devotional songs continue to inspire seekers. Always smiling, compassionate, and welcoming, Guru ji embodies the values he teaches. His life is a shining example of devotion, humility, and selfless service, making him a true spiritual guide and an enduring source of inspiration for people across the world.



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An Interaction With Guru Ji

The interaction began with Guru ji inviting the entire volunteer team to share about the work of Let's Make A Difference. He encouraged the volunteers to speak about how this movement works and how it has brought change in their lives. Guru ji said that he wanted to listen to these experiences directly from the volunteers, in their own words and from different voices.

After listening to the volunteers' experiences and reflections.

Guru ji began by saying that we cannot change the whole world. He shared that there was a time when he believed that by giving speeches he could change the world. But later he realized that even changing oneself is such a difficult task, so how can we expect to change everyone else? Therefore, our first effort should be to bring about change within ourselves. If that change

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inspires or influences someone around us, that is wonderful. If it does not, then we should accept that as well.

To explain this, Guru ji shared a humorous story. In a factory, the workers used to sit together during their lunch break. One worker would excitedly open his lunch box every day, hoping to see something different. But every day, he found the same sandwich. One of his colleagues finally said, "Why don't you tell your wife or your mother to prepare something different?" The man replied, "There is no one. I make it myself."

Guru ji explained that the man himself prepared the same sandwich every day, yet expected something different to come out of the lunch box. In the same way, we often keep doing the same things but expect different results. That is why it is said, "Always do what you always did, and you will always get what you always got." If there is no change in our thoughts or actions, there will be no change in our lives. People make New Year resolutions every year, but if those resolutions even last for nine days, it is considered a great achievement. After that, they slowly disappear.

Guru ji then pointed out that we keep wishing each other "Happy Birthday" and "Happy New Year," but no one tells us how to actually make them happy. He recalled a humorous incident involving Gurudev in America. People would casually wish each other, "Have a nice day," even when everything around them was still in complete disorder. Simply saying the words does not create happiness; our thoughts and actions must also change.

He then asked a very important question: "Where should this change begin?"

Guru ji said that the first thing to understand is that no one can live someone else's life. "I cannot live your life, and you cannot live mine." Therefore, each one of us must take responsibility for our own life. We can certainly help and support one another, but only when the other person is willing to accept that help.

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To explain this, Guru ji narrated another humorous incident. A young boy came home and proudly told his father, "Today I did a very good deed. I helped an old lady cross the road." His father happily replied, "She must have been very happy." The boy answered, "No, she didn't want to cross the road. She had already crossed it."

Through this example, Guru ji explained that helping someone without understanding whether they actually need or want that help can create problems instead of solving them.

He then said that another important truth is that every person ultimately listens to and follows only their own mind. Even when people seek advice from others, they often hope that the other person will simply agree with what they already want to do. Since we all follow our own mind in the end, our effort should be to make our mind pure. Guru ji quoted the prayer, "May noble thoughts arise in my mind." He explained that the six mantras of the Yajurveda emphasize the importance of keeping the mind pure because it is the mind that guides our actions. Today, many people speak about listening to the "voice of the soul," but Guru ji remarked that most often it is not the voice of the soul at all, it is simply the voice of the ego.

Guru ji then referred to the Ramayana. When Lord Rama was told that instead of becoming king he would have to go into forest exile, did he go around asking everyone what he should do? Did he ask Sage Vashishtha? Did Sita ji ask anyone? Did Lakshman ask anyone? No. Their minds were so pure and clear that they did not need to seek advice. However, Guruji explained that if our own mind is not that pure or clear, then we should seek guidance from someone whose intellect is pure and selfless.

He further explained that such a person should not only be intelligent but should also be selfless and genuinely concerned for our well-being. Only then can their guidance truly help us.

Summing up his message, Guru ji repeated that no one can live another person's life, so each of us must take charge of our own life. We should help and support others whenever they genuinely want our help, but forcing advice on someone is of no use. In fact, Guru ji humorously remarked

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that one easy way to turn a friend into an enemy is to keep giving them advice that they never asked for.

Since we ultimately follow our own mind, Guru ji once again emphasized the importance of keeping the mind pure. If there is still confusion or doubt, then like Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, we should not hesitate to ask someone who has true wisdom, just as Arjuna approached Lord Krishna for guidance.

Finally, Guru ji warmly addressed the team and said that they were fortunate to have a person like Viral. He remarked that people who think selflessly for the welfare of everyone are truly "viral" in the original sense of the word that is, they are very rare. Such selfless work requires dedication and devotion over many years.

Guru ji concluded by expressing his happiness at meeting everyone. He mentioned how he had observed everyone's enthusiasm, including waking up early in the morning and participating sincerely in the activities. He ended by saying that they would meet again.

Before concluding the Conversation, Mr. Viral Mazumdar shared a light-hearted incident. He said, "Yesterday morning, four children were having breakfast at my table. I asked them, 'How has the conference been? Today is the last day, and you all will be leaving tomorrow morning. Is there anything I can do for you?'"

He shared that instead of asking for anything serious, all of them replied together, "Sir, please treat us to pani-puri tonight, along with ragda pattice and bhel-puri."

Mr. Viral smiled and said that he could not say anything at that moment. Later, when tea was served, there was bhel, and during dinner, pani-puri and ragda pattice were also served.

Concluding the incident, he remarked, "When God decides, He always provides."

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Responding to Mr. Viral's incident, Guru ji smiled and said, "If they wanted God, they also received God. Perhaps this is how it happens. When a sincere resolve arises, it eventually finds its way and gets fulfilled."

Guru ji then referred to Swami Vivekananda's teaching. He said that even if a yogi lives alone in the Himalayas, unknown to the world, if he gives rise to a powerful thought, that thought never dies. Even after the yogi leaves the body, those thoughts continue to travel and influence people. Such powerful thoughts spread far and inspire others to follow the path shown by that yogi.



Sharing lighter moments with Swami Tejomayananda Ji

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