

An Australian Newsletter

for students and disciples of Sri Chinmoy  
"Oneness-Heart"

also had a article in 1986 which gave some more details related to the swim: excerpt below:

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"Adhiratha"

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*Divine Charioteer, carrying earth-aspiration to the Supreme.*

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as of 1986 - A disciple of Sri Chinmoy for over 13 years, ultra marathoner  
Channel between England and France Swimmer,  
for the 40th Anniversary of the U.N.

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An Interview

Adhiratha has been a dear friend to the Australasians for a long time. Last year through the grace of the Supreme and months of hard training, he swam across the channel between England and France. He felt the effort was best summed up by the following prayer of Sri Chinmoy, our Guru..

My Absolute Lord Supreme  
My outer success entirely depends  
on Your Eye's Compassion Flower.  
My inner progress breathlessly depends  
on Your heart's Satisfaction fragrance  
- by Sri Chinmoy, from: My Lord, I Pray To You, Agni Press, 1994

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**Question:** Could start by telling us how it all happened, how you met Sri Chinmoy, what got you interested in the "inner life"

**Adhiratha:** After college I got interested through reading books on meditation and trying Hatha Yoga (physical exercises). I started playing the flute... I didn't know how to play any music, But I just started playing (what we called "toot-a-ling": making random sounds and short patterns - torture I am sure for any real musicians nearby)". I wanted to cool down a bit and be more calm and music seemed something to explore..

Then someone showed me an record album of John McLaughlin's. JM was a disciple of Sri Chinmoy. Previously, another person had told me my flute music had a similar feel to what was on the album. I liked the JM music.Sri Chinmoy's picture was on that Album, but the meditative state he appeared to be in it seemed so .. beyond my comprehension or what I wanted to get into.. For someone like JM to be about our age and to have that sort of teacher .. just moved my mind.

**Looking back, I realize things moved very quickly after seeing that picture of Sri Chinmoy.**

I came to New York once or twice a year because I grew up here and may parents were here... but I was not into coming back to this city..Some friends and I were saving money to buy a farm in Ohio where we then lived. Then some other friends who I had met a few years before in Ohio had been now teaching in NY and came back for visit to Dayton, Ohio.They said that there were many groups in New York practising meditation or various approaches to spirituality. They invited me to come back east to visit with them. They had alsos heard about Sri Chinmoy and some said he was a very high teacher, at least the most advanced in the West right now and one made very fast progress with him. I don't think they had met him yet but may have heard a radio interview. So I said "well we have to at least see this guy.": So I came back east. I thought just to visit.. That was thirteen years ago...

**Q: And when you first Saw Sri Chinmoy?**

**A:** It was at a public meditation, I couldn't understand what he was saying because of the poor quality of the sound system and his accent. But when he started meditating, there was absolutely no doubt in my mind that he was meditating deeply and that he was totally into this. Every other teacher I had gone to see (and there were a few), I always had little doubts .. But when I saw Sri Chinmoy he was the first teacher that I had met that I was absolutely sure was further into it than I ever wanted to be...

It just seemed too far out side my experience or imagination ... I said this is Wild..

There was no mistaking his simplicity and purity and intensity, I understood that this was his whole life. I somehow just knew when I saw him meditating that he had made a life-time commitment to this ,, that there was no half way for him.

I thought it was very impressive. Nice, but not for me! It seemed if you were studying with him you would be like a monk and that was not for me. But I still would go to the public meditations he would lead once a week in Manhattan.

Well, I also continued to go to a lot of other spiritual related groups...

Then I shaved my beard and cut my long hair - which I had not done for years. Not because I wanted to be Sri Chinmoy's disciple, but because I felt I may be too attached to them.

It is a bit of a long story , but to make it shorter: I went to a weekend thing with some other group. and after a few functions I became very confused - my mind was just spinning around...It happened that they had a few of Sri Chinmoy's books there. I opened one book and read a page and I felt so peaceful and centered.

The second day it happened again and so I said: i can't stand it .. It but it must be what I am supposed to do ( see more details of my process over the 6 weeks elsewhere: - <http://adhiratha.srichinmoycentre.org/section-vi-actively-seeking-return-ny>).

Basically my mind didn't want to request to be anybody's "disciple". But my heart was stronger with the feeling that if I wanted to make real sustainable, significant progress in this lifetime "this is what you gotta do".

**Q: The year was 1973, very early in Sri Chinmoy's outer manifestation; what was it like to be around then and how does it differ from now?**

**A:** It's funny, eventually it feels like you can be as close to Sri Chinmoy, our Guru , inwardly as you want to be. But for the first period, It was somewhat confusing to me. i have to say... It is probably the same for many new disciples. There seemed to be so much going on., we used to talk about this fact: we would see Sri Chinmoy very rarely, only on our meditation night.. Unless you saw him by chance somewhere like on the block in the neighborhood. Then everyone would be talking about it..when we saw him beyond our meditation night it would be really incredible and many would get a meditation night rush of good energy in the middle of the day...

I remember talking to one of the other guys I was working with and someone said: Who knows maybe one day we would see Guru every day . And we almost couldn't really believe it to be a possibility.. that we might actually see our Guru everyday.

And now in these days he is at the tennis court almost every day.. And any of his admirers or disciples if they are in the area and if they want to really aspire and get a glimpse of their Guru, he is there. He has just made himself so available.

**Q. How do you relate to Sri Chinmoy now? Now that you have been his disciple for a while and have become close to him? How do you see your relationship?**

**A:** Over the years, since my mind has become convinced that when Sri Chinmoy says something, it's obviously the correct thing even if my mind can't actually see that way to accept it. In a bit, it usually accepts that he sees further ahead and knows better, It doesn't necessarily come to this conclusion automatically and spontaneously all the time. But since I have been with Sri Chinmoy for awhile now I have seen some of his track record and can use that in dealing with my more critical mind on these things It has had to register enough outer experiences (after the fact) of Sri Chinmoy being right . So at least now it just shuts up and remains quiet or at least "suspends judgement" until more of the situation can be observed. So even if my suspicious and critical mind can't immediately agree, at least it keeps quiet most of the time, observes and lets it come to pass, .i.e the actual reality unfolds in "the fulness of time".

**Q: So the problems that sometimes happen in the beginning with the mind and everything related are lessened...?**

**A:** Well they don't go totally away, now they are a different level of problem. It was a bit like reading Sri Chinmoy's books. There weren't that many books at first. But to understand what Sri Chinmoy actually meant in certain sections, I had to read passages over and over. Every time he said "Aspiration" I had to read it over and over because I couldn't figure out what he meant in the context I would see it. I knew I didn't know what he meant. And yet I knew it was important. So I would just read it over and over. I just remember reading certain things like "inner mounting flame",, it was all too much. I couldn't hold onto it in my mind. the concept was too much. I would grasp a piece of it and the "Pow" it was gone...You would have it for a minute ad the it would go away (laughter). You would say "Yeah that's aspiration, it's sort like ambition.no..that's not it."pow" and it would be gone. (more laughter)

And then slowly, from being with Sri Chinmoy and seeing how he acted and how he encouraged examples of what felt like "aspiration" . What he meant somehow inwardly you begin to "know" and You know that You know. some would say it becomes "intuitively obvious".. -

It's now gone on to other ideas and phrases that I don't quite understand, Like: the "Compassion-Eye of God" or "God's Compassion-Flood". I can't quite grasp those ideas, at this time. But now I know from experience that someday from being around Sri Chinmoy and his writings I will come to understand this too.

Form sitting with those concepts, I will eventually have a similar tpe of understanding that I now have for "Aspiration". For me now the word is so inspiring... so very real and part of the day to day world.. this idea.This "inner -mounting flame". Once you totally grasp it, even if someone just says it, it now makes sense to the mind too. "Aspiration" - yeah I know what that is. I feel it.

**Q: Is there anything that you have done over the years to try and help this integration or more complete understanding of those concepts?**

**A:** Well, I get little glimpses of these concepts, those I sense are important, by repeating them over and over. But I think the most important thing is to really "want" to more fully understand the deep meaning of the concept. When Sri Chinmoy gives us a message for the month, and I try to say it over and over, for example, while I am swimming, it definitely becomes more real, and I feel I am getting something very solid.

**Q: How does your work at the United Nations, fit in with your life?**

**A:** I work for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and I hold a professional post (permanent contract) with responsibility for supervising others in a work unit..

I am also involved with the meditation group at the UN called :Sri Chinmoy: the Peace Meditation at the United Nations. I serve as one of the Programme Coordinators. Which means I help with details for special programmes that are in addition to the twice weekly meditation services for the UN community facilitated by the group.

I feel **Sri Chinmoy is there to inspire people. He refers to the U.N. as the Heart-Home of the World-Body**" and it is a place that has a wonderful goal.

He has pointed out many times that many places don't have that sort of goal, and we should be grateful to be able to work for a place that at least has a good goal. The U.N. in many cases is still a far cry from manifesting its goal.... But just because it has established a goal and is willing to work for it . we can't blame it because it hasn't accomplished it yet.

I think Sri Chinmoy's weightlifting is a perfect example of that. He sets goals, he tries 200, 300 times and he keeps going...The U.N. is the same story. That is what I believe Sri Chinmoy is telling us. Never give up. Keep working selflessly and to believe in the "Supreme" and this good goal.. It will eventually happen, it has to....

**Q: What sort of programmes are held as part of the meditation group's activities?**

**A:** We do things for "Human Rights Day", the "Peace Walks" ( where delegates and staff from many countries come and walk around the UN Garden in relay fashion carrying a symbolic UN Charter - while thinking about the inner significance of the United Nations and Peace). We celebrate UN anniversaries and many sorts of events that reflect on or bring attention to some other special day to day activities in the UN community. For example 1985, is the 40th anniversary since founding of the U.N.

This is probably one of the most important functions of the meditation group, other than creating an atmosphere where people can come and meditate and personally develop.. To help them carry the load of their own work and be inspired..

Some of these special programmes in support of the UN's highest goals have also sometimes been in cooperation with similar activities around the world taking place at the same time.

Many of the centers associated with Sri Chinmoy all over the world join in having similar supportive activities.. For Example the anniversary of the UN Day in October or signing of the UN Charter in June are celebrated by many centres with some sort of special activity many years. I know that in Melbourne and other cities in Australia over the years, they have been very successful in reminding people and spreading the message of the U.N Agencies and it's importance to people around the world.

**Q: What about a newer pursuit in your life, your ultra-swimming and last year, the English Channel. Has a whole new horizon opened up for you?,**

**A:** Well the swimming is really great, because I could have never imagined doing it to the level it took me. It was something special, a big improvement over what I had done previously..Then in April 1985, Sri Chinmoy said that some of his disciples could succeed in swimming across the English Channel. Previously one of his students who was very fast swimmer had tried. But he hadn't developed experience with the cold water and was not successful. At that time, I was very inspired that he even tried it, even though he hadn't made it.

And then Sri Chinmoy said at big function in Queens for his students: "who else will try" Now you have to remember the one who had tried and failed had been a college swimmer and was considered the fastest of all Sri Chinmoy's students and disciples around the world.

And I remembered my first triathlon, not too many years before, For the swim part I had to use every stroke I knew just to keep going: the side stroke, the breast stroke even the doggy paddle - just to finish that 1 mile swim, So for me to think about the 20+ mile channel swim was too far out of my capacity. But from time to time, I had been swimming with some of the guys in NY and we had been upping our millage over the years.

But slowly as my mind got used to the idea of swimming longer, it inspired me to do more and more. And though I didn't tell Sri Chinmoy or put my name down to swim the channel. I sort of secretly thought that I

would prepare and see how I progressed. As time went on, I saw that I was training just as hard as the guys that did have their names on the list of those intending to attempt the channel swim.

I started getting a little more confident. But then we had what we later called "Milford Massacre" because we went to try to swim, in cold water. 18 miles at Milford Connecticut. . A couple of weeks before quite a few of us had completed 12 or 13 miles in warm water, but this was totally different. We started, it was cold and windy but soon we got cramps in different parts of our bodies and everything went wrong. The furthest anyone got was 6 miles and that was me.. It was just a Total Wipe out because we done the 12 plus and we thought we were on board, but like three weeks later we tried this. It was such a bad experience, it just totally blew our confidence away.

Then Sri Chinmoy spoke to us as he had never suggested that we swim in cold water for the 18 miles. We had also used wintergreen oil for the failed attempt, that did not really protect us from the cold but we learned later has the opposite effect - it brings heat to the surface but results in cooling your core temperature. It seemed if we still wanted to attempt it we should try in warm water first... So some of us went to try again the 18 miles, this time in warm water and three of us succeeded.

Around the same time, some of the guys became interested in doing a relay crossing of the channel that year instead of a solo swim . and the next day **Sri Chinmoy talked to us about the relay across the channel. Number of the guys who had been training were very interested in doing the relay. But for some reason I wasn't inspired by it.** I knew I had gotten seasick in a small boat ( even though I had previously went around the world on a merchant ship). I was concerned that I could ruin everyone else's attempt if I did get very sea sick in the small craft.

So I sent a message to Sri Chinmoy explaining about that, but I also said that if the rest of the team was counting on me to be one of the 6 relay swimmers, I didn't want to leave them out in the cold, if they couldn't find a 6th person. But I preferred to attempt a solo crossing. I requested his advice on this.

I received a message back that I should not worry about the others or the relay, they would find someone else. He had no objection to my going to attempt the solo swim . On the one hand now I was free, I didn't have to worry about the others and Sri Chinmoy had no objection to the solo. But I was thinking "has no objection" and my mind was a bit concerned.

I went and I meditated and I got a really good feeling. I felt the best I had since I started thinking about the relay or the solo . The idea of a solo attempt was scary but less scary then the relay for some reason. So I started to train really, really hard and I was putting in the miles. Our friend, Ashrita asked me how I was doing. I shared that I was going out everyday and on the weekends swimming 5, 6, 8 hours at a session. I said to Ashrita that I was feeling very good but I also from time to time was bothering me that Sri Chinmoy said "he had no objection" to me doing this solo. I was thinking maybe it was too much of my ego in trying to do this. But not as much about self- transcendence.

Then a day or two later, Sri Chinmoy inquired of Ashrita, how was I doing . He had a chance to mention the hesitation I had from the "no objection" message. Sri Chinmoy said "No, NO tell him I will be extremely, extremely proud and happy... **From then on it was clear sailing...**(Lots of laughter.)

When I got that message back, it was confirming the inner assurance Sri Chinmoy had been giving me. Like when I had been tired or not in a particular inspired consciousness my mind would come and say "just said he didn't object" so if you want to be a fool go ahead.. (Laughter).. To get that message was the outer assurance as well as the inner.

Then there was nothing to hold me back it was "Zoooom" again .

And just before I left for Dover, England Sri Chinmoy asked me many questions about what I was planing to do. But the last thing he said was "Do it"..( Laughter laughter) that was all just "DO IT"..

**Q: He talked to you about the cold and all that. What was a major problem in swimming the**

**channel?**

**A:** well I had over trained the distance so that was not a problem. But we were coming from training in 72 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degree centigrade) water temperature in New York and going to around 52 F (12 C) in Dover England. I knew I could keep going from the running and biking marathons, the triathlons and all those other experiences.

**But when your stroke rate slows down that is when its life threatening.** If you go too slow you can start shaking and you lose focus and even consciousness. But they'll pull you out before you are totally gone (or should). And if you don't stop until that point, you know you're probably make it.

The distance is boring but who cares, eventually everything is boring. You sing sweet songs or whatever but you can't let up.. Thing is, no mater the distance you've got to keep your focus and joy there.

The joy of conquering your mind but not torturing your body. It is a fine line I have to keep learning this over and over: of be courageous and fighting your mind when its boring and it looks scary, but its not really worrying about sharks (it is too cold for them in the channel) ,

I trained in worse conditions than I was in when I swim in the channel because I trained with the jellyfish in Long Island and in really rough water. Except for the cold water, there was nothing the training didn't cover. But nothing in my training was consistently as cold as the channel.

Another thing was that the greatest distance that had been completed until that year by Sri Chinmoy's students was 2 hours, So I figured that if I only was able to do 3 or 4 hours, then the next one from our team would do 6 hours and eventually one of us would make the successful crossing. One other team member, Vasanti from Europe, the day before i attempted had made the crossing, but I didn't know that. And I also heard that a couple of really good swimmers had to be pulled out of the water after 12 hours and did not make it.

So they were the some of the mental or other hurdles I had to cross. During the actual swim, The first came at two hours, then the six hours. When I'm at 12. It was like home free in a way because 12 hours was respectable..I still wanted to make it all the way across and I wasn't letting up. But I did not know what was still ahead or how the body would react during the additional hours. But it was such a boost to say "okay let's take it in"..And then when I got there..(sigh) .

**Q: What was your time:**

**A:** 14 hours 51 minutes.

**Q: What happened when you got there.**

**A:** Well the Dinghy ( a small row boat they have on the escort vehicle) was beside me. And once that happens you know you must be getting close because it is becoming too shallow for the escort boat to get closer. But you don't think about too much -- just concentrating on keep swimming.. very narrow focus or ability to take in much more mentally at this point.

The cliffs of the French coast seemed so far away, for so long. It seemed when first saw them hours before, that they must be about 12 feet high. Later on we realized they were actually 200 feet high, But when you are still far away they seem much shorter from the (house or road) lights at the top of the cliffs tha we could make out..

It was the first time for my handlers, so they weren't sure how far away we were either. Though the ships captain and his crew of course knew from past experience. It was night by now and it seemed that we were going in for those last few hours, but not getting there. The cliffs just got bigger and bigger. When we finally did get to the shore we were just specks against those big cliffs. We only realised fully what happened when we discussed it later after the swim.

It was night and towards the end the escort boat was shining a beam of light on to the cliffs I desperately

hoped there was a beach there because sometimes you can land where there's no beach and have to get above the water level. So I have to go in and try to find a place .My whole prayer at that time when I was coming in was" "God please let there be a beach, please let there be a beach". Then I saw the water breaking on what I thought was the shore but I really couldn't tell. I said to the dinghy are we close. are we close?. And they said "try and stand up, try and stand up". And when I did I was like waist high in the water.. Laughter.

But then the waves came and they were knocking me down. There were rocks on the bottom. It would have been easier to swim the last few meters to shore. But I did not know what to do. And at that point I didn't want to do anything wrong. I remembered that when you get that far, you could still do something wrong like touch the boat or something. And then you would blow it... Laughs.

So I said "what do I do". They are saying just go to shore. And I am thinking do I swim. Am I allowed to walk. I don't have any mind left. I have been going for almost 15 hours saying to myself "swim, swim, swim. You idiot, don't think about it, swim." So I sort of staggered into the shore.

When I got there my helper, and good friend Sanatan, was saying, "come on, come on" pointing back out to the escort boat and sea.. And he was coming to hug me. I said "no, No. I got to get 3 feet above the shore line. 3.feet Above". And he saying "that's enough. That's enough . You have made it". And I'm saying "just let me get 5 feet more to make sure" ... Laughter.

I keep running up the sand and he ran up behind me and grabbed me . You should note that' Sanatan was with me for many days before I tried it . While I was training in England. And oor most of the time he refused to go anywhere near the water. He said "why should I get cold ..you're doing this" .

But when I got there, He ran in with all of his clothes on. He had just jumped out of the Dinghy , as it came to shore near me. He was screaming ecstatically:. "Guru (Sri Chinmoy).. Will be so happy. I can't believe it. I can't believe it you did it. This is incredible. You did it. You did it." He was just going wild, which you don't see very often with my friend Sanatan.

It began when I had first stood up in the water and he was in the dinghy, Sanatan was yelling "he is standing, he is standing. I can't believe it".

So eventually I got back to the escort boat. And they wrap me up in what seemed like 15 sets of clothes. Then put me in a mummy sleeping bag and set me on deck for the ride back (I didn't want to go below deck because I knew you can get more sea sick down below).

From time to time, One of the crew, my helpers or the pilot would ask me how I was feeling on the way back. And I would simply say "fine". I was happy just to be smiling there quietly. I didn't know what to say. None of It had really sunk in. I didn't really even feel like anything. Really, just peaceful and sort of blissful. For so long I wanted to do this thing ....

Then for weeks afterwards, I'd wake up in the middle of the night thinking I was swimming the channel. Or thinking I was still training for it and had a couple of days left... and slowly I would realize.

The whole experience was just incredible and I am grateful.