

H. H. Sri Swami Premanandaji Maharaj



H. H. Sri Swami Premanandaji Maharaj attained Mahasamadhi at 10:30am on Thursday, February 5, 2004 at Sri Swami Sivanandaji's Ashram in Rishikesh, India.

Sri Swami Premanandaji Maharaj was a great devotee of Swami Sivananda, entering the Ashram of Swami Sivananda in 1957 where he spent many years looking after the branches of the Divine Life Society at Headquarters. Later on he fell ill and relocated to Rajasthan where he started a Centre of the Divine Life Society. This nucleus of Sri Gurudev's work in Rajasthan spread to the Punjab where Swami Premananda became renowned for his discourses on the Ramacharita Manas of Sri Tulsidas. Devotees came to hear his spiritual messages and benefit from his healing touch, open heart and kindness. Swami Premanandaji returned to the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh after some time and spent his final years serving in the Ashram.



Swami Vishnu-devananda in Bronze

In June 2003 Jean-Pierre Busque created a beautiful bronze sculpture of Swami Vishnu-devananda which is now located next to Swami Sivananda's statue at the Sivananda Ashram in Val Morin. The piece reflects the kindness, simplicity, sensitivity, abundance, strength and internal peace that emanated from Swami

Vishnu-devananda and is a powerful focal point for the practice of meditation. Copies of the bronze have already been installed in the Nassau and New York Ashrams. Any Centre or Ashram interested in procuring a reproduction of the sculpture should contact HQ for further information.



TRIBUTE TO MAURICE BLANCHETTE

from Swami Mahadevananda

Maurice Blanchette, one of the long-time karma yogis of the organization, passed away in the month of December while he was serving as staff at our Ashram in Paradise Island.

Maurice was ever an inspiration to all staff members in the organization, living true to Swamiji's teachings of Do It Now. You never needed to ask him a second time to do anything. There were no other words from him other than "ok, no problem". There was no work that he did not know and there was no ego to say that he knew everything. His day started before sunrise and ended late at night. He always kept himself busy, never using his age as an excuse to avoid working. He had the strength of Hanuman when he worked on a project whether alone or with other people. We never heard him complain. He was such a humble soul. Unless the director asked him to execute a project he would not proceed, but once he had approval he would not go to bed until it was completed. He was so humble and so simple in his actions. We miss his beautiful smile and he will ever stay in our lives. He will remain for ever as a shining example for all of us. May his soul rest in peace.

"Happiness comes when the individual merges in God," were the last words that Swami Sivananda dictated before his Mahasamadhi, (the physical death of a sage). "I am the body," is ignorance. "I am pure Consciousness," is wisdom. This is the core teaching of Swami Sivananda and all the yoga masters from time immemorial.

We have chosen the universal vedantic theme of vairagya, the attitude of "dispassion" or "detachment", for this issue of **YogaLife**. In these materialistic times of compulsive consumption and social alienation, a little understanding of vairagya can serve not only to regain individual health and peace of mind, but provide a treasure of practical, philosophical wisdom needed to develop the self-discipline to heal our abused planet. *Vairagya* is an essential yoga discipline to empower practitioners to find the happiness and balance necessary for profound spiritual transformation—letting go of old, unhealthy perceptions and habits to open the way to spiritual potential.

The article, *Happiness is Within* is a condensation of Swami Sivananda's classic book, *How to Get Vairagya*. We have also included the rousing preface to the Master's recently re-released book, *The Moral and Spiritual Regeneration of the World*. This book explores the need for detachment from the modern life of material consumerism as a basis for peace. Swami Vishnu-devananda carried on the Master's vision of world transformation into action in his many Peace Missions. Detachment is a major theme in *Conquest of Death*, a transcribed lecture by Swami Vishnu-devananda playfully examining the impermanence of the drama of worldly life. Danièle Laberge's *Message from Gaia* offers the compassionate voice of Mother Earth asking her children to expand their vision to see themselves as part of Her planetary body, and to prepare for change. In *When We Speak of Flowers*, Danièle shares from her experience as a biodynamic gardener, lessons from the energy of flowers to help with spiritual transformation. Swami Durgananda has offered a timely article on detachment with practical instructions for our modern yoga practitioners. To round out our examination of vairagya, Swami Swaroopananda has written a new, very accessible overview of Indian philosophy emphasizing the vedantic vision of freedom and unity.

We are also featuring in this issue a tribute to Swami Chaityananda, a dear gurubhai of Swami Vishnu-devananda, who left his physical body last September. He was a great teacher of Sanskrit and jnana yoga. Not only do we have an excerpt of his teachings from his recently published autobiography, as well as tributes from each of the six Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Acharyas, but we also catch a glimpse of his last days from Shankara Chaitanya, a western disciple.

We have included two articles on the more physical aspects of Yoga. First we have instructions for the practice of Mula Bandha, a selection from Dr. David Coulter's classic, *The Anatomy of Hatha Yoga*. Swami Sivadasananda has written a new article on the all-round health benefits of asana and pranayama, entitled, *In Tune with the Elements*.

Finally, we have reviews of three new releases from the Sivananda Yoga Centers. First, we have some selections from a new book of poetry from Swami Sitaramananda; reflections on yoga from Swamiji's cave in Gangotri, in the Himalaya. Also included is a review of a new chanting CD from the European acharyas, and a Meditation CD by Swami Srinivasananda.