

A view of the 17th Annual

Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



Everything In Life We Have To Share

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

25 June 2013

This is a shortened version of the article, please visit the website for the full version

Sometimes precious moments take place here at the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race that continually prove again and again just how divine humanity can be. And just how much more can be achieved through oneness instead of competition.

Sarvagata says, "I don't want to have a blister. And this morning I felt something — so I wanted to prevent it as much as possible." Earlier he had mentioned to Atmavir that he was concerned about his foot. None of the runners has much time to

spare, particularly in those hectic minutes before the start. Yet, just the same, Atmavir came over and gave Sarvagata a special jar of cream and showed him how to use it. Sarvagata says of Atmavir, "he was very kind and brought me the cream." He adds, "We do that here. If you have something more than you need



Atmavir, Sarvagata and Ashprihanal



The runners at the starting line at 6 a.m. on Day 10.
A moment's pause before 18 hours of continuous movement.

— or if there is something that you need
— then it is no problem to share."

Often, heartfelt, wondrous events take place on this Race Course and happen so spontaneously that unless you are right there you probably wouldn't even notice. The runners themselves certainly don't often talk about the little jewels of kindness. The gentle triumph of joy over suffering. How hearts united with sincere oneness can together create a collective strength that can accomplish what is unquestionably impossible.

*Even before we think
Of begging goodness
To share anything,
Goodness comes to share its breath
With us.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 4"

Day 10

Atmavir Rides Again

By Sahishnu, 25 June 2013 (evening)

www.3100.ws/blog

Atmavir Spacil of the Czech Republic increased his lead over the rest of the field with a fine 70.24 miles today, his seventh result over seventy miles since the race started on June 16. In all, nine of the dozen runners made it past the 60 mile barrier again. This was a more impressive revelation when one considers that the temps topped 93°F for much of the afternoon. The top five men are all averaging over 65 miles a day so far. A light sprinkle was the only rain to reach the race, even at 11:35 p.m. We are almost at 1/5 of the race completed with much more still to go.



Asprihanal says of yesterday, "I felt really, really good." In fact, he had run more miles than he had run on any day except his first day. Contrary to his statement of "it was nothing really special"—it was, indeed, a very exceptional 74 miles. He adds, "I am still feeling good." As Asprihanal says this, he is lightly running in an almost skipping-like movement.

Ashrihanal says that in previous races he would have specific goals for his daily mileage but he hasn't done that yet this year. "I have just been waiting for my body to get stronger and making sure I don't get any problems. It is a long race." He admits, "I wasn't in good shape when I came into the race — I wasn't bad either. Anyway, now everything is good."

Adhiratha tries to come and run along the Race Course most days, "for the inspiration," he says. "It is amazing to see what they do. With the heat yesterday? And yet they still put on the miles." I ask him how this is possible. "That is the question. You see the ones who have been here the longest sometimes smiling the most."

Just then Sarvagata goes by and Adhiratha notices how much he is really smiling. "Look at that smile on Sarvagata. And they start out the day like this. The amazing thing is that they keep smiling and doing it. When they have a tough day they don't talk about it too much. They just keep going."

Adhiratha has over the past year gone through a very real health concern. He seemed to have begun exercising almost from the moment he could stand on his feet. "There doesn't seem to be an alternative. If you don't, the mind takes over." He says even when he was sick in bed that "if I could [exercise] my upper body, I would." Speaking of the inspiration he gets from visiting the Race, Adhiratha says it "is something that is just incalculable. You come out and see the runners. You feel that you are giving something to them and they are giving something to you."

Sarvagata tells me "I now believe that by smiling you can get rid of the hard consequences of an injury. Yesterday I tried to stay happy and it helped a lot. I ended up my day happy and without shin splints. Which is very nice."



Adhiratha, a self-transcender himself. He has swum the English Channel.

Question: *Is giving as important as achieving?*

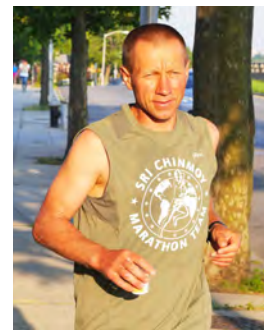
Sri Chinmoy: *When we follow the spiritual life, we come to realise that we never give anything to a third party; the giver and the receiver are the same person. God is in everybody. This moment God is playing the role of the giver inside me, and the next moment He is playing the role of the receiver inside you. Then it is reversed. It is like taking from the left hand and giving to the right hand. Again, God the giver cannot be happy unless God the receiver takes what is offered. When the father gives something to the child, if the child does not take it, the father will feel sad. But when the child takes and is happy, the father is also happy. So it is reciprocal happiness, in which the giver and the taker are of equal importance.*

If you are playing a masterpiece and the audience is not receptive, then you are very sad. Only if the audience is very, very attentive and receiving joy from your playing will you also get tremendous joy. So the joy has to be mutual. Everything in life we have to share. What you have, you have to share with me. What I have, I have to share with you. Otherwise, there is no happiness.

— excerpt from "Sri Chinmoy Answers, Part 10" (Agni Press, 1999)



Baladev



Vasu



Nidhuri greets Gopi (held by Rupantar)



Niraha scoring the runners laps

Days 1-10 ...

please see <http://3100.srichinmoyraces.org/3100-results-2013> for official daily statistics

Runner (alphabetical by first name)	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Runners per day average (Days 1-10)
Ananda-Lahari Zuscin	62.56	126.77	187.69	248.06	309.52	370.99	431.36	491.72	545.51	600.39	60.0
Ashprihanal Aalto	74.64	125.68	193.73	256.29	328.18	399.53	473.07	536.18	610.27	676.12	67.6
Atmavir Spacil	75.19	147.63	217.87	289.22	356.72	426.97	497.76	565.81	634.96	705.21	70.5
Baladev Saraz	73.54	137.2	197.57	258.48	317.21	377.57	428.06	484.59	541.67	602.03	60.2
Nidhruvi Zimmerman	69.15	129.52	189.88	250.8	311.17	373.73	435.2	497.21	557.58	615.75	61.6
Pranjal Milovnik	76.28	128.97	191.53	257.39	318.85	382.51	445.08	509.84	574.04	639.35	69.9
Sarah Barnett	66.95	124.58	184.95	247.51	302.94	360.01	420.93	481.85	542.76	597.64	59.8
Sarvagata Ukrainskyi	68.05	132.26	193.73	260.13	322.15	388.55	458.25	527.95	589.96	651.97	65.2
Sopan Tsekov	70.8	132.81	194.82	256.84	318.85	380.87	442.88	503.80	565.81	627.83	62.8
Surasa Mairer	68.6	134.46	198.12	261.78	323.24	384.71	446.72	508.76	569.11	630.02	63.0
Vasu Duzhiy	79.03	149.27	217.87	289.77	353.98	423.67	493.37	558.13	619.6	682.16	68.2
Yuri Trostenyuk	72.44	140.49	207.45	273.3	335.87	398.98	465.38	528.49	592.7	655.27	65.5

Total mileage for the 12 runners in ten days: 7,683.74

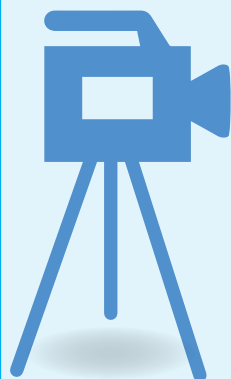
- Day's top mileage, men
- Day's top mileage, women



Some books on the 3,100 Mile Race

Eat To Run. Holistic Nutrition for the Ultra-Marathon Runner | Kindle Edition
Stutisheel Oleg Lebedev (Author)
Amazon.com or <http://us.srichinmoyraces.org/blog/stutisheel-book>

Running Beyond the Marathon: Insights Into the Longest Footrace in the World | Kindle Edition
Grahak Cunningham (Author)
Amazon.com or grahakcunningham.com



Some videos on the 3,100 Mile Race

TODAY | August 11, 2011 | 3,100 mile race... around one city block
<http://www.today.com/video/today/44104498>

Nine 9 Today Show | Published on Feb 24, 2013 | Ultra Runner and Australian motivational speaker Grahak Cunningham Channel
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex8Bb0V9cis>
also on www.grahakcunningham.com

Powerpoint presentation | Uploaded on Mar 25, 2011 | 3100 Mile Race Presentation from three time Participant Purna-Samarpan Querhammer
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDDtIKjV1M>

On the <http://3100.srichinmoyraces.org/>

- "Spirit of a Runner" a film by Jessie Beers-Altman follows 13-time finisher Suprabha Beckjord as she aims to complete the 2008 edition of the race
- Rupantar's short daily "on the scene" videos from the Race

Utpal has quite a few great videos of the Race, check these out:

- "I Simply Do" | 2011
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJXOz58GevA>
- "Never Give Up" | 2009
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmylEg-5cUg>

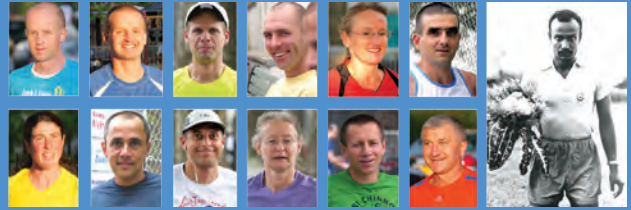
Scenes around the course ...



A view of the

17th Annual

Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



Just Surrender

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

26 June 2013

This is a shortened version of the article, please visit the website for the full version

This morning, at the starting line of this eleventh day of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race, Surasa informed everyone that it was Nidhruvi's birthday. So, instead of rushing off at their own usual pace, all twelve runners walked soulfully together with her towards an ever brightening dawn sky. For a short distance, perhaps no more than 100 meters, they clearly showed just how much a unique family they all really

are. Together they sang the birthday song for her with a delightful mixture of voices, some sweet and some perhaps searching hard to find the note, but still singing with oneness and affection for this wondrous runner from Austria.

It was a surprise to Nidhruvi that all the runners would honour her on her birthday in this way. "It was kind of touching."

Nidhruvi, with so much more running yet to come in this Race, tells me she does not have any expectations. Right now, on her soul's day — which is what Sri Chinmoy would often refer to birthdays as, to signify the soul's promise to God made on the day of our birth — she is doing just the thing that she

loves to do best. "It is so quiet inside me, that I could start crying immediately."

*An unconditional surrender
Is just one farther stride
To Heaven.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 6"
(Agni Press, 1998)

For Nidhruvi, yesterday was not the kind of day that would normally bring a smile and yet she was still able to find one just the same. It was a tough day for this great runner, who has run so well for decades now. Now, 48, she is also defying most ideas of just what a runner can still do at her age. She says, "Yesterday I had some little problems with the Achilles and I was so grateful that I could still run. I just surrendered. I thought, 'I am not going to push. Just stay peaceful and calm.' It helped me so much, just to accept it the way it is."



An birthday song and sincere oneness for Nidhruvi

Day 11

Eight for Eleven

By Sahishnu, 26 June 2013 (evening)

www.3100.ws/blog

Day 11 extracted its share of joy and chagrin from the dangerous dozen, but as the story continues the heat of the last few days is still a factor. Eight people made it past 60 miles, led by Ashprihanal Aalto with 70.24 miles. He was closely followed by leader Atmavir Spacil, whose effort netted him one less lap but a lead still well protected. Surasa Mairer still leads the ladies by 12 miles over her friend Nidhruvi Zimmerman, who, incidentally observed her birthday with a 60 mile day as well. Sarah Barnett continues the late evening blitz to reach 60 with very good straightway speed. The group fitness is good, but individually people are still not there yet. Soon the automatic button might appear, where effort translates into more miles with fewer setbacks or injuries. Soon.....



Surasa, Nidhruvi and Silvy — they say with joy, “we are the Vienna girls”



A delicious raw food cake and balloons for Nidhruvi



Vera with a special rose



Pipasa shares some joy



Sarah getting stronger every day



Pranjal



Vasu with Laika



Vasu running with Yuri

In a field along the 3,100 Mile Race Course Vasu picks some leaves that he puts on his feet to treat blisters. He had a serious blister problem last year and says, “I must be careful with my feet. A little bit has started in the same place.” He says he puts on Aloe cream, plus the leaves and tapes his feet every day and is trying to run slower and steadier than last year to avoid the blister problems. Vasu adds, “I hope, but it is all grace.”



A stamp honours 1957's Laika

Vasu notes that in general the hot, humid weather is not a problem for him but that the hot surface of the sidewalk does make it easier to get blisters.

Vasu says, “Last year was different than this year. Last year I was in better shape. I was stronger. I ran faster the first three or four days.” In his first entry into the 3,100 Mile Race, Vasu astonished everyone by running 82+ miles the first two days of last year’s Race. He says, “But at the end of the third day I had a blister. So this year I am trying to run a little slower and steadier.”

For much of the morning Vasu runs with his friend Yuri. Vasu says of one of

< 30 >

this year’s first-timers, “I think Yuri is more wise than I was. He has started slowly and steadily. Every day he has become stronger and stronger. But he also can be surprised by this race.” Vasu says he believes that it is through overcoming problems that each runner here can make “progress”. With a gentle laugh he adds, “But we don’t need to [look for] difficulties.”

I ask Vasu if anything special has occurred for him this year in the Race and he tells me about a place along the Course where Pratibha has planted a flower garden — there, he says, many times he strongly feels the presence of his late spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy.

Continuing down the block, we pass a man with a large beagle and Vasu asks me to take a picture with him and the dog. He tells me the dog’s name is Laika. He says that it is the same name as the Russian dog who was the first living creature to enter space in 1957.

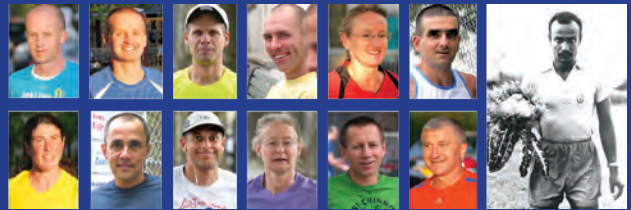
*You are not thinking at all.
Therefore, you are not moving.
He is thinking too much.
Therefore, he is moving backward.
I am thinking neither too little
Nor too much.
I am just surrendering myself
To my Inner Pilot.
Therefore, the human in me is succeeding
And the divine in me is progressing.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
“Ten Thousand Flower-Flames, Part 71”
(Agni Press, 1983)

A view of the

17th Annual

Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



Everything Is New

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

27 June 2013

This is a shortened version of the article, please visit the website for the full version

Sometime late this morning Yuri Trostenyuk will run past the 731 mile mark. It is possible that he might not even be aware when this special

moment takes place. Certainly the counter who is carefully writing down all his lap times may not understand its significance. Yet whether it is celebrated, or recognized, or simply sweeps by in the great cavalcade of attained mileage, today a 49-year old Ukrainian runner will have passed one of the great milestones of his running career.

In the great scheme of things it has been his dream just to be here participating in the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race. He has undertaken a great pilgrimage just to make it to the starting line. He has trained long and hard to be fit and ready. He has competed at similar but shorter events to understand just how to focus, how to pace, and how to tolerate pain and fatigue like few mortals ever have had to endure.

In a Ten Day Race more than a year ago Yuri ran 731 miles and then got to sit beside the track and

marvel at what he had accomplished. Today, when he passes 731 miles his journey will, in some ways, have just begun — for still before him are many more thousands of miles yet to be run.

When I ask Yuri what it means to him to transcend his previous best distance, he says, "It seems like I will go beyond. It is newness. Newness of feelings. Newness of life. Everything is new. Newness of joy."

At the start of the race in 2007 Sri Chinmoy spontaneously composed a poem about his beloved 3,100 Mile Race. The runners were standing in front of Sri Chinmoy and at first he was meditating silently and powerfully, then began to speak these words: "Longest self giving journey. Heaven's brightest smile. Earth's proudest embrace. God's Newest Victory Discovery." Sri Chinmoy later set these words to music.

This Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race, like many of the spiritually significant and illumining things that Sri Chinmoy created in his lifetime, are sometimes difficult to fully comprehend. We may never know why he did

Day 12

Not Easy Doing This

By Sahishnu, 27 June 2013 (evening)

www.3100.ws/blog

On a day mixed with injuries to several runners, flights of sticky heat and cooling thunderstorms, and an athlete oblivious to all that stuff, the race continued on. Ashprihanal Aalto was going great guns until about 9:00 pm when the first thunderstorm hit. He managed to call it a day an hour and a quarter later with 70 miles in hand, and the feeling he could go for much more. Leader Atmavir Spacil danced through the raindrops for 65.8 miles before calling it quits. Pranjal Milovnik slogged on until just before midnight with 65.3 miles, solidly in fifth place and looking upwardly mobile for the time being. I knew he was feeling pretty good when we put out some fresh baked blueberry pie and he quipped, "Ah, finally some real health food." The race is just starting to take shape. Can't wait to see how it unfolds. Every year is different, so hang on folks. It is bound to be entertaining if nothing else. And a shout-out to all the folks who brought extra food, goodies and snacks. We love you and so do the runners.



Sri Chinmoy in 2007



Yuri at this same spot in 2013 just shortly after day 12 begins



Yuri's smile delights many during the run, but he can also put on his "warrior" mode



Sarvadhara, visiting for a few days, rides a bike behind her brother Sarvagata.

some of the things he did — such as creating this Race — and what their impact will be on this world of ours in the future. You can analyse those words he spoke at that moment and perhaps get tangled up trying to understand exactly what he meant by them. Analysis can take you some distance forward but our hearts are more likely to more easily embrace and accept their significance.

For me, the easiest way to understand anything about this Race is to simply to run beside Yuri this morning and listen to his words and allow myself to be swept up by his boundless enthusiasm.

Yuri tells me, through a translator, that "everything surprises me" about the Race. He is now into his twelfth day here and says, "This race is very deep inside me."

I tell him that there are many times when he looks like a little boy. He says, "In the depths of our heart there is a little child. When we feel [the child] inside our heart, then everybody can see us looking like that child." When I tell him that at other times he looks like a warrior. Yuri says, "Deep inside we feel peace and light and many other divine qualities. But in this Race, I sometimes feel almost as though I am like one of the 300 Spartans. Just 300 soldiers stopped the entire Persian army at Thermopylae. Very often I feel that the twelve runners here are stopping a sea of ignorance and they are going forward to stop it." He adds, "that the ignorance is not just inside me but also in the world as well — bad qualities such as jealousy, aggressiveness and pride. But we also have divine qualities, such as kindness,

goodness, oneness and joy. We know that Sri Chinmoy's realization, his dream about peace and harmony, will one day take place all over the world."

Yuri says he feels glad that he is able to keep a close connection with friends and family in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. "I feel a very deep connection and support with them. When I pray, I feel a connection not only with my native town. For many years I have prayed and meditated in the morning about this track. I felt love, peace, and joy from all the people in the USA, and New York. Now when I feel New York and its people and I feel a very deep support from this country and its people." He adds, "In the inner world there is only connection and oneness."

Yuri tells me that he was "very fortunate to have seen Sri Chinmoy in person five times". He tells me of an experience of his when he came to New York in 2008, after Sri Chinmoy left this earth in 2007. "A year earlier Sri Chinmoy offered his love and prasad at [his house]. Now when we came back there to get prasad there was a big photo of Sri Chinmoy. I saw Sri Chinmoy's shoes, a towel and other things nearby. Then I felt this powerful energy inside me that was very loving. At this I started to cry."

"At this moment it began to rain. I thought, 'this is fine, now nobody will see my tears.' Then suddenly inside my heart I heard a voice. It said to me, 'why do you cry?' I felt strongly that this was Sri Chinmoy's voice speaking to me. I also felt his smile and his answer was, 'I have not left. I am always for you in

your heart. Stop crying and smile please.' Sri Chinmoy's presence is always with me now in my heart and as time passes it only increases. So now I try and fulfill his request to smile. I live and smile."

Sarvadhara, Sarvagata's sister is here for only a day and a half. This is the third time that she has been able to visit the race. I wonder if she ever gets concerned about her brother. "I don't worry. I think everything is under a special protection here. Everything will be alright. Everything is a life experience."

Neither is she concerned with the mileage numbers beside Sarvagata's name. Of the numbers, she says, "I don't think it is very important. The thing that is important is to be here."

Sarvadhara translates this blog and other information about the Race for her friends in the Oneness Dream Boat Shore. But she says that it is impossible to describe what is happening here. "If you have never been here and enter into the full consciousness of the race it is impossible."

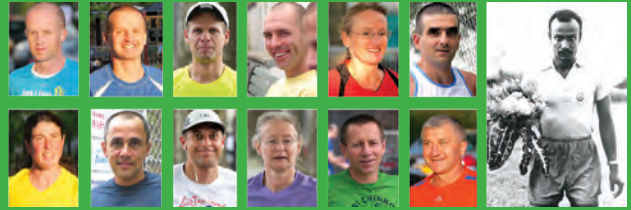
*I shall give you a chance
If you will take a chance.
I shall give you a new life
If you will take a new life.*

*I shall give you everything you need,
But it is you who have to take it from me.
In your cheerful acceptance-light
Is your life's perfection-manifestation.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
"Transcendence-Perfection" (Agni Press, 1975)

A view of the 17th Annual

Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



Keep Moving

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

28 June 2013

This is a shortened version of the article, please visit the website for the full version

"Sri Chinmoy tried to inspire us in many ways, and this was one of them." Sopan has just read the prayer that Sri Chinmoy composed on this day in 2006. I ask him why he thinks Sri Chinmoy wrote these sweet offerings for the runners each day that summer and then on through the entire race in 2007. Sopan tells me, "He showed his appreciation to the runners in this way, and inspired us to keep moving."

This amazing young Bulgarian runner has demonstrated a daily mileage consistency like no one else on the course this year. With almost clock-like precision, in ten out of the last twelve days Sopan has run precisely 113 laps each of those days. Sometime late this afternoon he will have completed 800 miles. Then, sometime close to midnight, Sopan will call it a day (hopefully with 113 more laps neatly marked on his clipboard), pack up his belongings and head back to his room. He will pedal his bike through the dark streets towards a room where he will spend a handful of quiet — hopefully restful — hours.

He wrote in his daily blog the other day, "Felt like blessing after a difficult humid day. Finally I can catch up a little on sleep as I have been going regularly to bed kind of late." He, like all the runners, deserve blessings.

Who can really imagine just how hard it is each day being here and doing

what these runners do? Then try and grasp-hold the reality that this same routine will replicate itself again and again — for many more miles and many more weeks yet to come. The lives of the runners here are almost always in constant movement. Sopan and all the others see in this great journey a goal which will not let them stop or rest fully until they complete the very final step of their 3,100 miles.

Speaking of last evening, Sopan tells me, "Honestly I wanted to finish at 11:30 p.m., but the rain was a little bit distracting so I finished at 11:45 p.m. When you run in the rain you are slower, you have to take an umbrella. You can not keep a good pace. But it is okay." He says that for about one full lap it was raining very heavily.

Sopan describes that, for him, keeping track of his laps is very important for him to race well. "The thing is, you work so hard all day for every single lap. Then by, let's say 7

Day 13

It Gets Easier, Right?

By Sahishnu, 28 June 2013 (evening)

www.3100.ws/blog

Thirteen days in, the even dozen keep going— weather or no weather. They do not hesitate, they just go. It is inspiring. This race is difficult enough without expectations from others, whether friend or foe. Yet they toe the line, day after day. We tell people 'they actually get stronger.' Do they really? Or is it just Grace or fate, or good genes? Might be for a first-timer. But for someone coming back, year after year, to do this race again takes even more courage than the first time. So all props to the Delirious Dozen, who defy all odds and do it again and again. While we are at it, Atmavir Spacil ran 69.14 miles to garner day honors and extend his lead to 35 miles. Seven of the twelve broke sixty, so the race struck back at those who thought it was a pushover. Good luck to all multi-day runners around the world. Remember to toe the line and embrace the challenge.



A counter, near the mileage board on the morning of the 13th Day, plays the flute for the runners



photo by Bhashwar 1979



Surasa runs past a group of early-morning singers.

Sri Chinmoy in one of the many marathons he ran in 1975.

Sopan first ran this Race in 2004 at age 24, he now 32 and has completed this Race twice

"The spiritual life is not like the ordinary life. In the ordinary life, if you have come to a particular point and do not want to go further, you can just stay there. But in the spiritual life, if you have come to a point and then do not continue ahead, you cannot remain where you are; ignorance will pull you back. In the ordinary life, if you have come five steps, you can stay there for three months and then, if you want to continue your journey, you can. But in the spiritual life, if after taking five steps you wait for five days, immediately you will be pulled back to your starting point, because ignorance is only one step behind you all the time waiting to grab you. In the spiritual life, my child, you always have to be on the move.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "The Ambition-Deer" (Agni Press, 1974)

p.m. in my case, I want to have a certain number of laps. So that at the end of the day I can have a good day [of milage] and keep to my schedule." He adds, what to most of us, is extremely understandable, "But sometimes you are tired and cannot run" the mileage you want to achieve. I suggest to Sopan that he has had a lot of "good days" and he replies simply and with a gentle laugh that "it is all grace".

"The way it works is that, in the beginning, I really wanted to create a habit — both physically and mentally. Once you have a habit, the body gets

used to it, to a certain number of miles. Then it remembers. It then becomes easier for the body and then it doesn't get stressed. When you have a certain number of miles every day, and it doesn't change, the body gets used to it. Also mentally it becomes easier. Because you know you have so many laps to do and you have done it many times. It becomes like clockwork. Exactly. So it becomes a little easier."

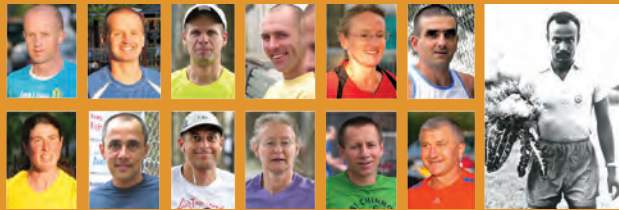
Of the end of each day of racing, Sopan tells me, "It is always a relief to go home." He rides a bike to the home he rests in for the night and while it is only

a little more than five blocks away, he laughs and tells me that he has to make a slight detour along the way, "I cannot bicycle up this one little hill, after a long day of running."

*Move forward!
God's Compassion-Eye
And God's Affection-Heart
Are beckoning you.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
"My Christmas-New Year-Vacation
Aspiration-Prayers, Part 25"
(Agni Press, 2003)

A view of the 17th Annual



Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race

Every Morning I Sing and Pray

By Utpal
<http://perfectionjourney.org>
29 June 2013

This is a shortened version of the article, please visit the website for the full version

This morning Ananda-Lahari is walking along the Course of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race. He is not moving in the frenzied or agitated manner of power-walkers or restless pedestrians in a frantic Manhattan-rush to catch a train. It is almost as though he is gliding. His footsteps are absolutely silent. At the same time he exudes such an aura of calm and tranquility that



Photo by Abakash, 2005

Sri Chinmoy, in 2005, giving a concert to the runners

there seems almost a complete disconnect between him and the incredibly difficult thing that he is doing here.

Walking beside him I cannot not but be aware of how light and ethereal Ananda-Lahari's physical presence actually is. I sometimes imagine that he is so other-worldly and blends so seamlessly into this world, that if I did not know better I could easily imagine him disappearing before my eyes. Like he could simply become a glowing presence endlessly orbiting the Course on some inner pathway that yet can still be connected to the hard physical reality of the race.

Together we do a graceful yet consistent walk of the loop, not fast, not slow, but unerringly on track. I point out all the

little things that have quickly captured my attention. The man practicing Tai Chi in the infield, a lady across the street trying to manage a pack of 4 small white dogs, the traffic at a peculiar standstill for a Saturday below us on the Grand Central. None of which has any interest to him at all. He tells me "Sometimes I do pay attention if it is on my way. But I am just trying to concentrate on my running and not to look on the sides so much."

I have observed Ananda-Lahari now for eight straight years at the 3,100 Mile Race. His connection with the Race is deep and strong — and after so many years it is almost impossible to imagine him not being here. Always moving with his unique combination of gentleness and yet real strength and courage as well. Our lap together will take about 10 minutes to make the full hard-rolling circuit of the course. Something he has done now so many times, and for so many years, that it is difficult to calculate the number.

But numbers are not overly important to this sweet Slovak soul. Nor does

Day 14

Looking At Four Figures

By Sahishnu, 29 June 2013 (evening)
www.3100.ws/blog

After two weeks of sun and fun around the famous block known as 'The 3100' Atmavir Spacil leads the group, just 36 laps shy of 1,000 miles. He should be joined later today (Sunday) by Ashprihanal Aalto and Vasu Duzhiy as the race moves into its third week. Surasa Mairer, the 54 year-old wunderkind (she is always smiling and laughing like a young child) has moved into seventh overall with a nice 32 mile cushion so far. It was deceptively hot Saturday afternoon but all of the warriors seemed to cope at least. Eight of 12 made it past 60 miles, so fitness is starting to arrive almost on schedule. The last three nights have been moderate to cool, so the wise have taken advantage of near optimum conditions. Plus in some respect, 1,000 (miles) seems like a nice fat number to have on the board. More later...

the weather, the scenery or any of the countless distractions of the physical world that dance, tumble and otherwise demand the attention of most of us. Ananda-Lahari's journey here appears to be focused purely on an inner destination.

To my eye, he resembles, more than anything else, a contemplative monk endlessly traversing the countryside searching for enlightenment. He just happens to be wearing shorts and running shoes and his path is a unrelenting concrete block in suburban New York.

While my mind spins out one question after another about the 'whats?', 'whys?' and 'wherefores?' of his gentle presence here, he inevitably has the simple answer for it all and simply says "Every morning I sing and pray."

*Beautiful I am
When I pray and sing
With the morning stars.
Peaceful I am
When I meditate and sing
With the evening stars.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Heaven's Ecstasy-Flames" (Agni Press, 1994)

"Ideal. The temperature is just perfect. It is not hot, it is not cold, there is no wind and there are clouds. Also it seems that it is not so humid. So, pretty good." It is possible that Ananda-Lahari complains, but I have rarely heard him express much if any criticism of just about anything. Last night we did a couple of laps together here and it was very muggy, and on the verge of raining. "For me it was okay because I was walking. The weather is not so important then as when you are running."

When I mention how quiet his footsteps are, he jokes by scuffing his feet for a moment. "I don't wear out so many shoes." Ananda-Lahari adds, "There are times when you can run softly, lightly, and silently. But sometimes you can't move your legs and only shuffle."

As we moved along, we sang some of Sri Chinmoy's songs. Ananda-Lahari says that it is by singing his spiritual

Each day is started with a collective moment of meditation and many runners focus on conscious aspiration throughout the day.



master's music, and reciting his prayers, poems and aphorisms that gives him joy here. "I really like it." When I ask him if he can do it all day long he says "no" and then laughs. "But I do like to do it as much as possible. I like it when it comes to my mind and I want to do it — and, then, I am doing it.

Ananda-Lahari says "Sometimes the mind is just wandering and then it comes to the point when I want to sing something or I want to pray. Or maybe it is just concentrating on my breathing or my heart. I love it, and I am very grateful for it." He then tells me the two poems that he enjoyed reciting last night:

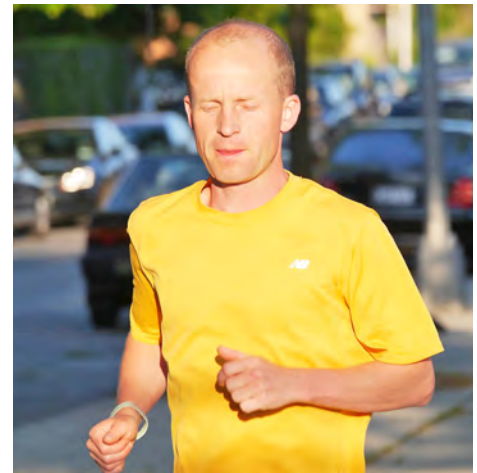
*Be always
As happy as possible —
This is the only thing
That God wants from you.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 50" (Agni Press, 2009)

*At last I have pleased my Lord Supreme,
But I wish to please Him more,
Infinitely more.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Twenty-Five Aspiration-Flames" (Agni Press, 1994)

Ananda-Lahari says that he and Ashprihanal ran together last night for awhile and that these two poems came up. He adds that their conversation ranged from God-realization to shin-splints. He says that the conversation between the runners covers a wide



Ananda-Lahari

spectrum. "Sometimes it is spirituality and sometimes it is about what is happening in the Race. And also some joking."

We pass the spot where, in earlier years, Sri Chinmoy quite often gave a concert in the afternoon. Ananda-Lahari says incredulously, "We were having a concert, just two meters away, on the Course where we ran. It was very, very special. Quite often I imagine that Sri Chinmoy is sitting there and playing some instrument. Or sometimes he was doing some exercises there. These are very special moments."

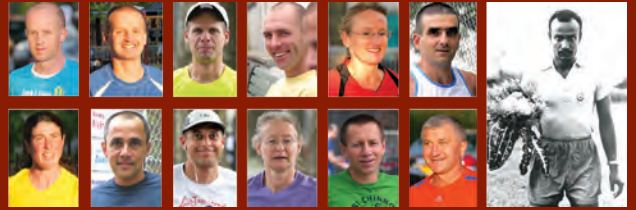
*When I pray and meditate,
When I soulfully sing
And even when I devotedly run,
I am following promise-roads
Taking me to my soul's eternal Home.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Twenty-Seven Thousand Aspiration-Plants, Part 57" (Agni Press, 1984)

A view of the

17th Annual

Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



The Inner and the Outer

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

30 June 2013

This is a shortened version of the article, please visit the website for the full version

41-year old Pranjal Milovnik has completed the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race now seven times and seems comfortably on his way to doing so an eighth time. He says, "This Race is always about finding the balance between the inner and outer world. The outer world here is always very, very hard. The running is hard. Inwardly you have to find the energy that will allow you to continue. When you start to reach the limits of your physical body your mind starts to slow down, and it is like entering into meditation. It is like entering into another world. It is then that you start to realize many things about yourself. You find many things inside you which are otherwise much harder to find."

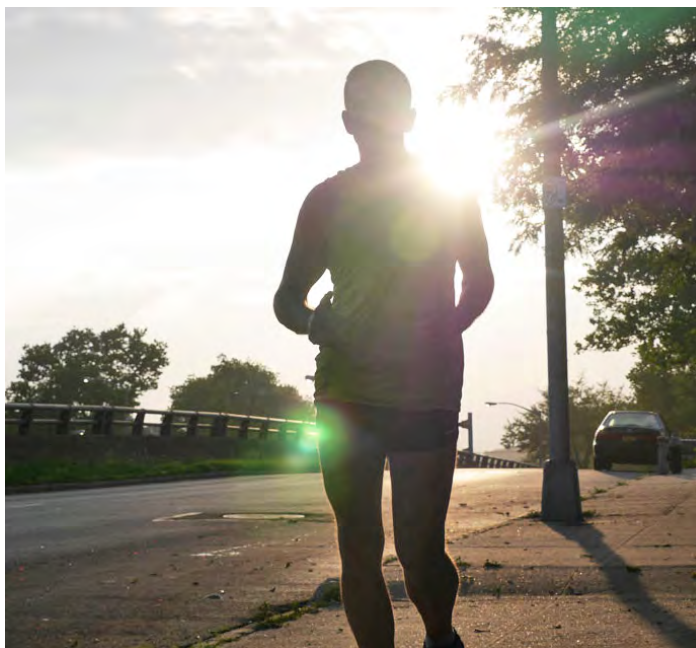
When Pranjal describes the grueling experience he had in his first 3,100 Mile Race I find it hard to imagine why he came back. But he has, and he now runs this Race twelve days faster than when he first completed it. When asked if it is important to improve

his results, Pranjal inevitably responds this is something he doesn't concern himself about.

This dispassionate approach that Pranjal seems to have for his outer achievement is far from indifference. He, like all the other runners, definitely want to complete the journey here as swiftly as possible. But clearly, the most important thing for Pranjal is simply to always do his best — to leave nothing behind at the end of each day and to commit all that he has and is into this extraordinary adventure.

Pranjal — who is often the first to arrive each morning and is usually the last to leave each night — there appears to be no fragment or molecule of life force that he doesn't offer up here each day.

While we can easily measure his outer progress each day by watching the numbers continuously expand beside his name on the mileage board, it is not for us to measure all the inner victories



A runner at dawn on Day 15

that Pranjal has fought and won, and all the precious jewels of discovery that he has uncovered within the secret chambers of his being. These, of course, are for him alone to enjoy.

Day 15

Getting Through Barriers

By Sahishnu, 30 June 2013 (evening)
www.3100.ws/blog

Today, heavy rains and thunderstorms stayed away from the Race for the most part. First and second place, Atmavir Spacil and Ashprihanal Aalto each ran 70.24 miles to garner day mileage honors. The day's tally ended with three men going past the 1,000 mile mark and seven overall went through 60 miles or more. This was the seventh time for Atmavir and the 12th time for Ashprihanal. Vasu Duzhiy reached the milestone for the second time in his running life. Sarvagata Ukrainskyi has started to show better form after sustaining a leg injury. He chipped in with 65.8 miles. Eight of the 12 runners are still on pace to finish in 52 days. It is not too late for the lower four to move along and make up the deficit. But every day that a runner dips below 59.618 miles is not a good result unless they are coming off injury or can sustain a faster pace when healthy. In the meantime, we shall wait and see.

Atmavir Spacil:

1,000 miles= 14 days+04:26:52

Ashprihanal Aalto:

1,000 miles= 14 days+14:53:59

Vasu Duzhiy:

1,000 miles = 14 days+17:25:31

Question: What is the spiritual significance of balance?

Sri Chinmoy: In the spiritual life balance is of paramount importance. When the result of an action elevates our consciousness, we feel that we are running towards our destined Goal. When our inner mounting cry takes us to the loftiest heights, our whole being becomes a sea of delight. But when we don't have outer success, it doesn't mean that we are not running toward the Highest. Sometimes defeat is a blessing in disguise. Defeat can be a reality which is secretly preparing us to run the fastest. When undivine thoughts fill our mind, we have to know that they are like passing clouds which will soon disappear. Then our soul will again come to the fore. If we have perfect balance and do not become sad or depressed, at that time we make the fastest progress. We need equanimity of mind in order to make the heart receptive. We need perfect balance in order to achieve real satisfaction.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Flame Waves, Part 12" (Agni Press, 1978)



Pranjal



Eklanta

Sometimes soccer is played here but on Sundays it is always baseball. "I don't really understand this sport. We don't play this in Europe. I think it is very interesting and I think it is very hard to play this." There are many other sports going on most of the day around the Course. Surasa doesn't feel distracted by any of it and instead calls the activity "dynamic".

Also along the Course is a children's playground. Surasa is joyful about this spot and says, "I like these little kids, they are so nice — the really small kids." At this moment a little boy, who can't be more than five years old, is happily running through the water sprinkler while his mother watches.

Surasa speaks about one of the three women runners, "I admire Sarah very, very much doing this Race without a helper. We [Nidhruvi and I] are so well cared for by our helpers. Each break they are doing our feet and anything else that we need. If you don't have this help, then you have to do it all by yourself. Like taping your feet, these things are difficult by yourself and, of course, you lose a lot of time. So, it is great to have helpers. I am



Amayik, Antara-Prabhat and Pedro perform for the runners

always very, very grateful that my helpers are eager and willing to come."

Eklanta came from Europe for a few days to help at the Race and says he has every year since it began. He is a highly regarded expert in many different forms of natural medical treatment.

Eklanta treats all kinds of athletes but talks about the uniqueness of the athletes here and says they need, "Endurance and determination — and all kinds of qualities. So there are few people who are participating." Physically, these runners have the "usual problems that long-distance runners have." He mentions "muscle problems, bone misalignment, shin splints, blisters. It depends on the athlete." But what is especially needed here is a strong "mental attitude" and the ability to "go with your heart." He adds, "Meditation helps with this — to integrate everything."

Of the special atmosphere of the Race, Eklanta says, "Sri Chinmoy initiated this Race and his consciousness remains here." He adds the benefits of this Race is "not only for the runners — it is for everybody." And that all who participate here in anyway "get special grace from above. If you are open for it, then you realize it."

*There should be a balance
Between the inner life
And the outer life.
If not, life fails to succeed.*

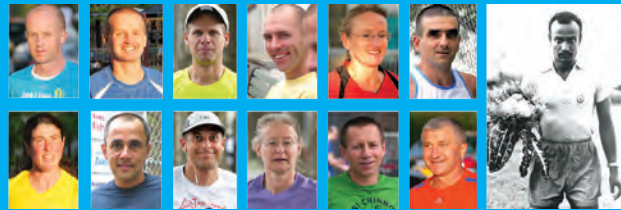
— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 25"



Surasa gets a drink from her helper, Vasavi

Surasa seems to be cheerful every day and also her mileage is incredibly consistent. Yesterday she ran 112 laps. I am curious if she notices any or all of the many activities going on around the Course on this very busy Sunday. "Yes, I notice it. I like to look at this field, because it is very interesting, this sport [they are playing]." She is referring to the large artificial baseball field which takes up the biggest portion within the perimeter of the Course.

A view of the 17th Annual



Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race

Fulfilling Food of Oneness

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

1 July 2013

This is a shortened version of the article, please visit the website for the full version

"This is my tenth year and I love it. For me, this is the best time of the year. It is a very sacred event for me and I just love everything about the Race." Nirjharini is at the helm of one of the most exclusive food establishments in New York — the kitchen for the Self-Transcendence 3,100

Mile Race. It is a job that involves incredibly long hours, relentless preparation of countless meals and snacks, and a exotic clientele whose very specific needs are not like those of any other diner on the planet.

The twelve 3,100 Mile Race runners very lives and well-being depend upon what Nirjharini — and her equally dedicated crew — do in a tiny kitchen in Queens. It is a hive of activity for much of a very long day that creeps well into the depths of night. Delightful, ever-changing aromas continually waft out into the nearby flower garden — fragrances that only begin to hint at the flavor and energy that seems to imbue every morsel.

The meals, snacks and drinks are regularly packed up and shipped over to the Race five blocks away. Always arriving piping hot or soothingly cool to cater to the runners as their needs, wishes and wants evolve throughout the day. The remarkable 3,100 Mile Run athletes always seem to be nibbling, sipping or chewing on something tasty that came from this very special temple of food.

One could say that the kitchen is perhaps the most superbly catered take-out establishment you could find anywhere. Yet, all this effort, care and love that goes into this preparation of food is wholly devoted to only twelve individuals — twelve continuously hungry individuals. Nirjharini says, "We try and supply a lot of food constantly." There is a belief that

the runners burn up around 10,000 calories a day. Without question, Nirjharini and her crew will make sure no runner ever goes hungry. She describes how on cooler days they have more of an appetite. "Food disappears much faster. On hot days it is much more difficult for them."

*A soulful smile
Is the nourishing food
Of love.
A fruitful cry
Is the fulfilling food
Of oneness.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
"Twenty-Seven Thousand Aspiration-
Plants, Part 113"

Day 16

Three Makes Six

By Sahishnu, 1 July 2013 (evening)

www.3100.ws/blog

On a rainy, humid, sticky day in NY three runners moved past an unmarked boundary in their brains. A thousand miles: an afterthought. A brief pause for some, ecstasy for others. But surpass it they did with twice as many more to go and then some. Yuri Trostenyuk was the first thru 1000 today, his first time ever to eclipse the kilo. He was later joined by Pranjal Milovnik and Sarvagata Ukrainsky, the veteran duo fighting for fifth place supremacy. Ashprihanal Aalto led the day with 71.34 miles, followed closely by Atmavir Spacil (70.24). In all seven warriors made it past 60 miles
Yuri Trostenyuk:

1,000 miles = 15 days+08:50:19

Pranjal Milovnik

1,000 miles = 15 days+11:00:53

Sarvagata Ukrainskyi:

1,000 miles = 15 days+13:01:28



Sri Chinmoy making his disciples prasad



Part of the cheerful cooking team



The chart with all the runners special needs. Before the Race begins each runner what they can and cannot eat.



Sarah

Before coming to the race Sarah had visited a renowned Ayurvedic doctor who is also known for his intuition. Sarah tells me that the doctor said, "You know, you have had this injury for three months, so why are you here? You know this is longer than a marathon?" Sarah says, "I said yes. But I just want to have faith that something will happen. That I will be able to cover at least some distance. Then he [the doctor] went silent for a moment and then he said, 'I think your injury will disappear in the race.'" Then Sarah laughs and says, "Then he gave me some tablets and that was it." She adds the unique experience, "was quite nice."

I mention to Sarah that earlier in the Race she appeared to have two very hard days. She laughs and adds, "And yesterday, too, wasn't so great." She talks about a revelation that she has had with regard to her experience, "I think when you are attempting something big like this, things might not always go as you

planned. You have these down times and you just really want to reach the goal — which, I think to everyone here, is to be able to run the 3100 miles — the whole distance. But maybe God has a different plan. Maybe it is not this year that you reach it. Maybe it might be some time in the future." Sarah adds, "Nature's time is so much slower in some ways. We want everything done instantly — and we want to run huge miles every day. It just doesn't work like that sometimes. It is also accepting yourself as you are. Not having to be great or a superstar or world champion. Because maybe that is not the plan for our life. So I just try to be happy with what is happening."

Previous to this Race, the longest Sarah has run is ten days and completed 1,120 km (nearly 700 miles). As of this morning, she has been running now for 16 days — five days longer than she has ever done — and has completed 879 miles. She says, "Yeah, I have to be

Gratitude is the food of faith.
Faith is the food of love.
Love is the food of peace.
Peace is the food of God.

— Sri Chinmoy, *Ten Thousand Flower-Flames, Part 32*, Agni Press, 1982



The food team is seven people strong. Nirjharini says, "It is a fantastic, fantastic, crew." Here are a few comments from some of them:

Nirjharini: "I get so much inspiration from what they [the runners] are doing. It helps me

for my own aspiration and inspiration."

Irina: "I thought it was time to think of somebody other than myself. I am happy to be here the whole summer. I got an inspiration to clean the whole track. It took me two days to accomplish. It fulfills me that I can make them [the runners] happy. I am happy when they are happy."

Tejini: "To see the runners every day and feed them — I get so much inspiration. When I heard there were three girls running, I felt that I just had to be here. I really want to try and support them and bring my own aspiration to the fore. It is such a beautiful environment. I really love it here."

Petra: "It is my first time and I just love it. I want to give everything I can to the runners, for they are just incredible."

Tanuja: "It was a really strong feeling that built up inside of me [to come and help]. So I thought, 'I have to try and get the free time and come.' And it worked."

grateful for those little things that you kind of forget. Know that you are still doing more than you have before."

Sarah tells me, "Lots of beautiful little things are happening throughout the day. Last night, really late, for some reason there was a little 3-year old girl just on the path in front of me. And I was so tired. She just ran up to me with her arms open, so we gave each other a little hug. I didn't know where she had come from and I looked around and her parents were just there smiling. They thought it was really cute that she ran over. So, little things like this happen when you least expect it." As she is telling me this someone runs by and gives a sign of encouragement, "see, there are nice people everywhere."

Nonetheless, Sarah admits, with a bit of a laugh, "it is not easy running around a concrete loop all day. This is still not easy for me. I hope it gets a little bit easier."