Perfection Runner

By Utpal
http://perfectionjourney.org
27 July 2013 (morning)

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

Sarvagata says that in a previous edition of this Race, “I was observing all the different qualities that the runners represent. If we combine all those qualities we get a perfect runner, with all the divine qualities that we need in the spiritual life.”

As he tells me this it is still the very early hours of an almost perfect day. There is a fresh breeze from the west is drifting coolly across the Course of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race. The sun is rising up full, bright and promising and it, for today at least, will not burn and abuse the twelve runners who have lived under its hot gaze for so many days.

Sarvagata has spent the previous two summers here running this Race, and is now into his 42nd day of his third time. Yesterday, might have been the worst day he has ever had on this Race Course. He finished the day with just 87 laps and saw the tall Slovak, Pranjal, shuffle past him and take over his fourth place position. Something that probably neither of these two noticed nor cared much about.

When you compare Sarvagata’s mileage this year to last year it is nearly 200 miles less. Yet as we talk, his face is bathed in the soft, golden light of dawn and it is clear that he is happy with what he has and also where he is. He is at peace and content with all that life has given to him.

I feel it is so easy to forget what is really happening in this Self-Transcendence Race. You see the runners, you listen to them and they tell you — from their hearts — their experiences here. Each expressing their unique vision of the Race and when this is all collected it seems to describe a world that is completely different than the one the rest of humanity is stumbling around in.

For Sarvagata, a “bad” day and a “good” day seems have equal value — because no matter how many miles he collects, what he really wants is to grow stronger within. His real destination is to simply get closer to his inner Source. He is running, he is praying, he is asking God to lead him only there.

Describing those different qualities the runners of this Race represent, Sarvagata says are, “speed, consistency, soulfulness, wisdom — everything that we need in our spiritual life. This is so incredible. All of them together complete the perfect painting. We can’t take...
any of them away without breaking the whole picture."

"I was begging the Supreme to have all those qualities in myself. It is probably not possible without experiencing them. So [during] this Race I noticed that I experienced all those qualities. I noticed that I was even copying the running styles of the different runners. It was incredible."

Ananda-Lahari is directly in front of us as we are running. I ask Sarvagata how he thinks it is possible for this fellow-runner of his to remain so cheerful despite all the ups and downs he has had. Sarvagata quickly corrects me, "First of all, I would like to say that, for Ananda-Lahari, there are no such things as ups and downs. What I see is the highest height. I see a spiritual man walking along the road. It doesn't matter what kind of speed we see. Because the actual speed of his inner progress we don't know."

If you want to be a perfection-runner,
Then start at the aspiration-start
And run along the progress-road
To the realisation-finish.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
"Twenty-Seven Thousand Aspiration-Plants, Part 118" (Agni Press, 1988)

Sarovagata tells me, "Today is a perfect morning. I am so happy. And yesterday was a perfect day. Nevertheless, I had the lowest mileage that I ever had. I really enjoyed yesterday. I strongly felt that it was the Supreme's Will expressed. It was the Supreme's Grace that I did it exactly like that. Not more and not less."

He adds, "I was on my feet all the time. Maybe in previous years I would have cursed myself, that I was lazy, or something like that."

"Yesterday I strongly felt that all the energy we have is borrowed. It is all given. If it is given, you use it. And if it is not, then you have to accept it. You can pray for it or humbly wait for it. You can't be disappointed — because it is not actually yours."

"Like Sarah said one day: the ego of those who walk in the Race is so small." He says, "If I myself didn't walk for three days in a row, then I wouldn't accept it — I wouldn't realize it. So, I am so happy that I had this experience." Of this inability to run, Sarvagata says, "I don't have any pain. I don't have any injury that causes this. I just feel empty in terms of energy. I feel great, but I can't run. It is amazing. It could be funny, but it is an uplifting experience. Now I don't have to worry about anything in my life, because I know that it is all given. If you are given something then you use it. If not, then so what? It is not your fault. It is not anybody's fault."

With complete openness and humility, Sarvagata says, "Now I don't have to have expectations from other people, from supplements, from food, from the helpers. It is just God's Will. I wish I could keep it with my everyday life. In my life after the Race — after today, after this moment. But is so easy to forget it. But at least I had a glimpse of it. I am very happy."

The inner runner
Is always trying to offer
Inspiration and aspiration
To the outer runner.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
"Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 16" (Agni Press, 1999)
Live Inside Your Heart

By Utpal
http://perfectionjourney.org
28 July 2013 (morning)

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

“It is such a long race, but when you are nearing the finish you start to savor every moment because you know it is coming to an end.” After 42 days of running Sarah has completed 2,100 miles. It was not the distance she had hoped for at the beginning — yet, she has continued on and now has run for more days and for a longer distance than she has ever done before.

For several weeks now, the possibility of completing the full distance in the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race drew further and further away from her. Many other athletes, when faced with this discouraging scenario, would have simply opted out — packed their bags and headed off to warm showers and soft beds.

There are times when we see such powerful and illuminating qualities in someone that we can be both surprised and inspired by them. In this Race, Sarah has amply demonstrated an incredible strength, resilience, perseverance and bravery — strong inner qualities that aren’t immediately evident if you were to take just a quick glance and see her kind and gentle nature.

Just finding her way through her long-standing foot injury showed that Sarah has an incredible grit and determination. For many of us, our greatest adversary is dealing with our own doubts and disappointments. How well she has fared in this regard is evident by the fact that she is happy and still out there on the Course.

I mention to Sarah that she now she has just ten days more — a time she has confronted many times in the Spring races in Flushing Meadow. She says, “Ten days is still a long time.” Then adds, “The mind is our biggest enemy. This place could be a playground the whole time if you chose to see it that way, in the best consciousness. It is like our every day life. Sometimes we get down, and we think, why do we have to do this? I think the mind has a lot to do with it.”

Sarah says she is focusing on “each day at a time now. The foot injury feels like I am managing it — for the first time in a long time. It is not giving me a lot of trouble, so I hope to run a little better. I really feel like I want to enjoy each lap. I feel like there is a change right now. People have got through the extremely hard times. But who knows what’s ahead?”

As she contemplates the final moments of the 3,100 Mile Race, she
says, “Really, I think I am going to miss it. I never thought I would say that, but when I go home to my regular life, I am going to remember that this is a kind of spiritual world here. It is a mini world. Everyone you speak to has a slightly different perspective on life. I am really going to miss that.”

Why do you live inside your body
To become a puppet of your foe, fear?
Why do you live inside your mind
To become a puppet of your foe, doubt?
Live inside your heart
To become an admirer of your true friend,
Your soul.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
“Ten Thousand Flower-Flames, Part 48”
(Agni Press, 1982)

There are quite a few people who go to great lengths to serve the Race in the best way they can. Jowan has been taking pictures since 2006. He is one of the main photographers along with Prabhakar and Arpan.

Last night Jowan was here for four hours trying to get time-lapse pictures of the stars. Of continuing to come regularly to the Race, he says, “I am trying to keep a high standard. I try and do now what I did at the very beginning. I am inspired by the runners and I want to honor what they are doing.”

INSIDE OUR HEARTS
I shall not die, but live.
Where?
Inside your heart.
I shall not speak, but listen.
Where?
Inside my heart.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
“Transcendence-Perfection”
(Agni Press, 1975)
The Divine Journey Never Ends

By Utpal
http://perfectionjourney.org
29 July 2013 (morning)

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

Surasa tells me, “Today I am feeling a little bit tired. But it is okay.”

If you ever want to take a real look at somebody with a calm, steady mood and temperament then spend some time with Surasa. Add to those qualities her extraordinary ability to remain cheerful and positive even when confronting a monumental physical, mental and emotional challenge — one that most of us would never even consider, let alone attempt, even once in our lifetimes. What Surasa has taken on is not one of those mythical, but one very real battle. And this 55-year old champion from Vienna is enduring it, not for the first time — but for the third time.

Surasa says, “I have some blisters, yaaah, my dear friends. But they are not so bad.” She is not complaining, merely stating the facts. “I think I didn’t sleep enough.”

There are some runners, who when looking at the daily schedule of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race, might just think that the time the Course shuts down between midnight and 6 a.m. would offer all the rest and comfort an exhausted body would need — just enough to then be able to get up and face another day. It doesn’t.

That cruel mistress, Time, often makes false promises of relaxation but they never come true, certainly not during this Race. Surasa, like all the runners, tried to snatch a handful of hours of sleep last night. What she probably ended up with was not more than a miserly three grim hours.

Who knows how much sleep is really enough? How much is enough on an ordinary day, when the sole tasks confronting you are a few hours of work or school? How much do you need to run 60 miles? No, excuse me, 3,100 miles in 52 days?

There could be some good, practical science which might be able to accurately predict a lot of things about this Race. It could calculate and map out the optimum amount of training and experience; introduce a proper course of nutrition; tell what should be done in preparation of the feet; how and how often to stretch. Technical details that might make a lot of sense on paper but are as useful to Surasa now as being invited out for a coffee and a strudel at a cafe in Vienna.

Day 44

Two Is A Crowd

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

On a deceptively warm afternoon of an otherwise pleasant summer day, the group of twelve runners continued on towards their goals of destiny. Vasu Duzhiy crept within 3.85 miles (7 laps) of the lead with a very strong 64.7 miles. Ashrihanal Aalto ran 62.01 miles to remain solid in third place. Panjal Milovnik remains ever-steady in fourth. Sarvagata Ukraniskyi rebounded off a poor day before to hold fifth, while the ever steady Surasa Mairer dazzled again with 60.9 and her fastest 2,700 mile split. Eight days remain and should yield eight finishers and twelve happy souls as the racers move towards their invisible finish line. Beach days beckon......

Sarvagata Ukraniskyi:
2,700 miles = 43 days+09:11:01
Surasa Mairer:
2,700 miles = 43 days+17:41:31

Sri Chinmoy in Puerto Rico
The only thing that counts now is the 470 miles ahead of her and that she simply continues running as best she can. Her entire focus is on the Course. All the forces, and all the qualities she has within — be it her tiredness, her pain, her strength and her dedication — are mixing, moving and manifesting in and through her as a runner and who she is becoming as a spiritual seeker.

Yesterday Surasa felt her mileage was “not so good” (it was, in fact, a very respectable 109 laps which equals 59.82 miles). “I spent too much time with the doctor and couldn’t do my mileage. In the late afternoon I was a little bit dizzy, I couldn’t do too many miles.” She says, “But it is okay. I am quite happy with this mileage. If I can do this until the end, then I will finish fine.” She adds, “My goal is ‘slowly and steadily’. Not to overdo it. And I can run quite good until the end.”

We talk about the support Surasa receives from overseas. She says, “It is always nice to hear from your friends. You see that they are thinking of you, and it is so touching. When they are writing ‘we are thinking of you and praying for you’. It touches me always very deeply.”

The divine journey never ends.
Each ending is the preparation for a greater and more fulfilling beginning.
— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “Colour Kingdom” (Agni Press, 1974)

Pranjal says, “It is always part of the Race. The lack of sleep and exhaustion accumulates towards the end of the Race. Your body is only functioning on two levels. Either you are running or you are sleeping. Nothing in between. Either you are running or when you sit down, you immediately fall asleep. Day by day it is harder to stay awake.” Pranjal completed 113 laps yesterday (62.01 miles).

Sarvagata managed just 32.93 miles yesterday. Still, we know he is finding something positive and encouraging from his experience in the Race. But, of course, nobody would like to see him struggle this way for another 426 miles.

A journey to no end
Was my animal life’s destruction-journey.

A journey to no end
Is my human life’s desire-journey.

A journey to no end
Shall be my divine life’s aspiration-journey.

A journey to no end
Shall be my God-life’s manifestation-journey.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “Europe-Blossoms” (Agni Press, 1974)
I remember once hearing my Dad say that he was too old to change. I don’t remember now whether it was something in particular troubling him or if it was simply life in general vexing him, in the way it exhausts most of us mortals. At the time I thought he was incorrect — but I was not going to be the one to tell him so. When our troubles mount up sometimes finding a solution often feels like adding another problem to the already considerable pile.

Sri Chinmoy’s philosophy has everything to do with change and transformation. The very phrase “self-transcendence” cannot be separated from the very core of what everyone involved in the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race is trying to accomplish. Admittedly, as someone who is now getting closer to the age when my father said those words, I know how easy it is to resist the great divine forces that really want to lift us up to our own perfection. The first step, surely, has to be to just release and let go of the things that do not illumine and inspire us. Not always easy.

A changed man
Is a changed world.
A changed world
Is a changed God.
A changed God
Is a changed Dream.
A changed Dream
Is a changed Silence.

At the 3,100 Mile Race nothing is static. Now, as the Race is drawing quickly to its conclusion, one can sense a gathering surge of even more energy and movement. Like a great, powerful tide that sweeps through and carries everyone involved in the Race to some new destination.

Physical bodies have managed, over the past 40-plus days and thousands of miles, to find amazing ways to adapt to this physically impossible task — and also to the mental and emotional burdens as well.

Despite everything thrown at them, you can see clearly how each runner has pushed to their absolute limits and then beyond — adapting, changing and dealing with the problems, even if there seemed to be no easy solution. Clearly, the Supreme did not bring us into this world to be stopped dead in our tracks. Change only appears to be painful and impossible if we don’t honestly and soulfully try.
If you sleeplessly aspire,
You will not remain a prisoner
Of the failure-past.
— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
“Twenty-Seven Thousand Aspiration-Plants, Part 130”
(Agni Press, 1990)

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This morning Vasu starts the day just four miles behind Atmavir (who did not have a good mileage day yesterday). I ask Vasu what this new situation means to him. He tells me, “Many people have inspired me to run faster. But I think I can do only what I can do. Yesterday I got a letter from home and they told me that they were inspired to see that I was in the top three. They were very happy. But I think I need to only do my best. It is only God’s Will who will be first and second and who will finish.”

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Baladev wrote a poem yesterday:
Who am I? Peace.
Who am I? I am a light.
Who am I? I am joy.
Who am I? I am happiness.
Who am I? I am faith.
Who am I? I am forgiveness.
Who am I? I am harmony.
Who am I? I am love.
Who am I? I am a light blue bird flying in the infinite sky forever……..(Baladev)

I ask him where his poems come from. “Everything exists. I only say this.”

He says that he feels that each new passing day simply becomes better and more fulfilling. “It is a very nice feeling. Because when you feel this, it is like problems don’t exist. Because everything feels like you are part and parcel of a river going on its way. Nobody can stop this river because this river is very strong. It is a very natural feeling. I think everyone has this feeling sometimes. I hope so.”

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With the decreasing humidity, many runners are having good mileage days. Yesterday, Sarah ran 57.42 miles — her best in over 30 days. Sopan also had a great day yesterday, running 101 laps (55.43 miles). He has 2,511 miles but sees that his plan-B goal of finishing the 52 days with 3,000 miles will also probably be out of reach. He and Ashprihanal address this issue in a short skit that they perform for the singers that came this morning:

**Sopan:** I have this huge mental blister. It really hurts me.

**Ashprihanal:** I know. You have pushed really hard for 3,100 miles through all those painful blisters. And if you complete the distance, people sing your name song and there is this big party with cake. You don’t get this if you don’t finish. But remember, we value inner progress much more than outer success. But if your mental blister is the problem my hand is the answer.

At this, Ashprihanal smacks Sopan’s hat-covered head and water comes shooting out. A hidden-water balloon has provided the surprising special effects. And for the next several minutes the shocked singing group is in hysterics as Sopan and Ashprihanal happily run off on their way.

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Atmavir has had an exceptional race this year and has been in the lead for the past ten days, but he is currently having problems and is walking. He ran 92 laps yesterday (50.49 miles) and Vasu passes him for the lead.

Vasu comes with some awesome strength this year (he is 180 miles ahead of his mileage last year) and also has a very strong and willing helper in Nicolay. His most important strength, however, is of an inner nature. Vasu tells me how he views this Race: “If we offer it to Guru, he can run in and through us … and make miracles.”

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Atmavir

Atmavir

Surasa

Vasu with helper, Nicolay

Bipin, one of the Race Directors, checks in with Ashprihanal

Ashprihanal helps Sopan out with his “mental blister”

Atmavir

Surasa

Vasu with helper, Nicolay

Bipin, one of the Race Directors, checks in with Ashprihanal

Ashprihanal helps Sopan out with his “mental blister”

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Change! Change!
If not, you will suffer.

Change! Change!
You will prosper.

Brave, brave the old!
If not, you will die.

Brave, brave the new!
You will fly.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
“The Dance Of Life, Part 12”
(Agni Press, 1973)
By Utpal
http://perfectionjourney.org
31 July 2013 (morning)

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

This morning, Sopan set off on the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Course just as he has done for the past 45 days. For the last few weeks, watching his first few laps is a painful sight. He is — at that time of day, at least — by far the slowest of the twelve runners and what he does in those early laps is not what most of us would call running or even walking. There is probably a more accurate physiological term, but to me it could best be described as a hobble.

As his shoes scrape along the sidewalk you can hear him shuffling along from some distance away. There are a few reasons for his current condition including blisters, pain and fatigue. But perhaps the easiest way to understand his early morning hobble is by looking at the mileage board. Those numbers next to his name — 2,562 miles — are the reason for both his suffering and his joy.

Of course, there have been days on the Course when every little bit of Sopan was working smoothly rhythmically and superbly. He regularly ran over 60 miles a day for the first two weeks, accumulating those all so important miles in case problems should arise and, then, they did — with a vengeance.

Yet he says he is happy to be here. And, fortunately, as the morning progresses he becomes more limber and does move along well. And clearly his intention is to stay out here as long as he can, doing his best and simply see where all that effort and sacrifice takes him.

For Sopan, this year’s Race is far from a failure. Instead, he feels that he has made a truly significant breakthrough and found an answer to a long-standing muscular and skeletal problem that has kept him out of the Race for a few years. Not too many days ago Sopan said, “Every time I have a good day, I thank God and try to stay humble.”

Today is special for Sopan in several ways, for it was on this day seven years earlier, in 2006, that he finished the 3,100 Mile Race in 50 days and 13 hours. It was a glorious achievement for this young man from Bulgaria. In what was also a great surprise to him, Sri Chinmoy was there for his finish. Just a couple of hours earlier another runner finished as well. So, on that very special occasion, Sri Chinmoy gave them not only their spiritual names but also composed songs in their honor. Sopan’s name means stairway to the highest.

Day 46

Clear But Cloudy

By Sahishnu, 31 July 2013 (evening)
www.3100.ws/blog

On a cloudy, hazy, not too hot but sticky day, Vasu Duzhiy all but cemented an insurmountable lead with a 72.9 mile total. His lead is nearly 20 miles over Atmavir Spacil as the race heads to a conclusion. His mileage today was his best since Day 1. Vasu will probably finish in the noon hour on Friday, barring any health issues or acts of God. In the meantime Surasa Maier had second best total with 63.6 miles and is within three laps of fifth place. More later…

Vasu Duzhiy:
3,000 miles = 45 days+16:55:52
As we near that same spot where it all happened Sopan says, “there is a lot of history here.”

Your body-history
You do not know.
Your vital history
You have forgotten.
Your mind-history
Disheartens you.
Your heart-history
Inspires you.
Your soul-history
Satisfies you.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “Europe-Blossoms” (Agni Press, 1974)

Shortly before going home last night Nidhruvi completed 2,700 miles. She tells me, “It was so beautiful. Very special. Yesterday I had such a good day. A fast day. I did many more laps than usual.” She adds, “My 2,700 miles was at lap 107 and I did 113 laps yesterday. All special numbers.”

At her current pace, she will complete the 3,100 miles sometime next Tuesday — on the final day of the Race. Nidhruvi says, “I hope so very much. I am looking forward to it, like anything. I am already imagining it in my head and heart to see the 3,100 mark and cross over it. Just do it. It is just my dream and, hopefully, Guru’s dream too.”

Suras also had a great day with 114 laps and she now has 2,763 miles, putting her in sixth place overall and top for the women.

Pranjal ran 62.01 miles yesterday despite saying that he was “slow” in the morning and in the afternoon “but in the evening I was able to pick up the pace.”

Ashprihal ran 58.72 miles yesterday and is continuing to regain his strength. This morning, he ran for a short time with Atmavir who, despite having a rough day two days, ran 110 laps (60.37 miles) yesterday and has just 177 miles to go.

In the meanwhile, something quite extraordinary seems to have happened to Vasu yesterday. He ran 130 laps (71.34 miles) yesterday and now has just 170 miles to go. He is more than 200 miles ahead of his pace last year.

With self-transcendence in the air another runner is running on the Course this morning (in the opposite direction as the twelve runners). It is Tejini’s birthday and she says, “Last year, I did 25 km for my 25th birthday. This year, I became 26 so usually it would be 26 km” but says she is “still recovering a little bit from the [Self-Transcendence] Six Day Race. So I was thinking of doing 13 laps.” This is her third time she has come to New York for the 3,100 Mile Race and is helping the cooks and in other ways.

Several years ago when she came to New York to celebrate her birthday she watched Ashprihanal finishing the Race. Tejini says, “The finishes are so amazing. I had tears. I felt so much oneness. It was so beautiful, beautiful. I immediately fell in love with the Race.”

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “You And I Are God” (Agni Press, 1979)
When you see what Vasu accomplished on Day 46 of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race yesterday you have to wonder how it was possible. He says simply, “I was inspired to run faster.” For all outer appearances he appeared to be doing exactly what he has done now since the beginning. But, in fact, he did something astonishing that only the clipboards can show. He ran 133 laps yesterday (72.99 miles). A mileage that is only surpassed by his first day on the Race Course — 45 days ago.

Obviously, Vasu’s appreciation of the finish line is no longer an ethereal concept floating in some distant realm of his imagination. Instead, it is very real and very close. He started the day yesterday with just 170 more miles to go and will finish on Friday [2 August]. Astonishingly, after already running 3,000 miles he found a new gear, a new strength and most definitely more inspiration.

But no matter how I try to explain them to Vasu he doesn’t understand. Then it becomes my turn to comprehend: Vasu doesn’t grasp these words, these hypothetical concepts, because within his vision and within his experience he has already surrendered himself entirely. It is not for him to decide anything. He is so immersed within the great flow of this Race that he need do nothing more then what he has been doing since the beginning: doing his best every moment of every day. And now he will simply arrive, at just the right time, at the finish line.

Vasu says, “Your goal and Guru come to you. You just have to be happy and be grateful — for everything.”

He adds, “I don’t feel as though I am pushing harder. I am just trying to be happy.”

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 18” (Agni Press, 2000)

Yesterday, Surasa ran 63.66 miles — the second best mileage of the day (behind Vasu). I ask Surasa how it was...
she was able to complete those 116 laps yesterday. She says, “I also don’t understand. The power came — and when the power comes, you cannot resist.” She adds, “It was just flying. Effortless.”

I ask if it was the weather or something else. Surasa says, “Something else. The power came within and it was so strong. You just have a feeling of flying. I was so grateful to have the feeling. I can run for eternity. It was so wonderful. You feel nothing. You are just flying around. When you are in this flow it is just wonderful.”

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This morning Sopan and Ashprihanal perform another skit for the singers who came this morning. Ashprihanal explains that they were too tired to practice and so even though they arrive in costume masks they simply hand the handwritten script to them and ask them to read it.

It reads:

Ashprihanal: Did you hear about the Enthusiasm-Awakeners performance yesterday?
Sopan: About their premier at the Royal Edison Hall?*
Ashprihanal: Yes, they sang for the first time ever a Bengali song**. And it was a great success. And today, they are doing the skit.
Sopan: That is real self-transcendence.
Ashprihanal: Do you know who takes care of all Bengali instruments?
Sopan: No. Who?
Ashprihanal: A baby sitar!
Sopan: Why did it take so long for the singers to get home last night?
Ashprihanal: They were off key!
The End.

Writing these skits take time and energy away from Ashprihanal and Sopan’s primary focus — completing mileage — but gives everyone joy.

This morning Ashprihanal is also enjoying telling Pranjal the story of how he got his laundry back today and it had not been cleaned. He jokes that it looked so clean and neat that whoever was supposed to wash must of thought it had already been done.

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Vasu has been collecting stories of people’s personal experiences with Sri Chinmoy. He tells me that someone told him yesterday, that whenever Sri Chinmoy gave concerts he would plant a seed within the hearts of those in the audience. Seeds that would eventually grow and blossom one day, in a way that would bring inspiration into the life of that person. It so happens that the prayer that Sri Chinmoy wrote (in 2006) for this day for the 3,100 Mile Race is:

A God-faith-seed
Becomes slowly
But unmistakably
A God-treasure-tree.

—Sri Chinmoy
August 1st, 2006
Our Victory

By Utpal
http://perfectionjourney.org
2 August 2013

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

It is still early in the morning of Day 48 and in about four hours Vasu will complete his long journey at the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race. It will be his second finish in the event — he completed the distance in the 2012 edition of the Race. But, for me anyway, watching Vasu this year was almost like seeing a completely different person. He was stronger, faster and simply delightful to watch — and to run occasionally with.

Of his experience at the race, Vasu says, “I would like to offer my gratitude to Sri Chinmoy and to everybody.

Day 48

Vasu Duzhiy Wins 3,100 Mile Race

By Sahishnu, 2 August 2013 (afternoon)
www.3100.ws/blog

Vasu Duzhiy, 47, from St. Petersburg, Russia won the Seventeenth Annual Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race today, finishing the 5,649 laps in 47 days +05:39:00. The race started on June 16th with 12 runners circumnavigating a 0.5488 mile (883 meters) loop in the neighborhood. Mr Duzhiy averaged 65.6 miles per day (105.6 km). He was trailing by over 20 miles with only seven days of running left but made a charge that included four days over 70 miles out of the last six. The whole field had been reeling from a second heat wave lasting seven days in the middle of July. Vasu ran four days faster than his first-time finish of last year (51 days+10 hours). Tonight Atmavir Spacil will finish late in the evening which will be his seventh completion of the longest footrace and his highest placing ever. Stay tuned….

Part Two:

Atmavir the Great

By Sahishnu, 2 August 2013 (evening)
www.3100.ws/blog

Atmavir Spacil from the Czech Republic finished second in the 3,100 Mile Race in a time of 47 days+16:24:52. This was the seventh time in a row that Atmavir completed the 3100. He averaged 65.01 miles per day (104.63 km). He is still ranked seventh all-time for 3100 miles (45 days,three hours). A large throng attended both finishes of the first and second place men, capping a busy day full of sun and clouds. Ashprihanal will probably finish on Sunday morning, as well as Pranjal Milovnik in the late afternoon. It has been an interesting race, with six finishers still to come. Good luck to all ultra runners.
Everybody who organizes the race and who serves the race. I would also like to offer gratitude to all those who not only do something here physically but also those who even think about it — and want to become better people.”

Vasu’s attitude throughout the race was always positive, cheerful and incredibly humble.

Vasu says, “I tried to do my best last year and I tried to do my best this year. Last year I needed more patience and this year I had more happiness. It helped me so much. Last year and this year both were very good for me.”

I ask him about his helper, Nicolay. Vasu says, “He was the big difference between last year and this year. He helped me so much. He did many things for me from the morning until the evening. I am very grateful to Nicolay for his help. I do not think that this is my victory — but our victory. This is our victory and Guru’s victory.”

I joke with Nicolay that in a few hours he will be out of a job. He says ‘no’ — he will continue to work with Yuri.

* * *

That evening, Atmavir completed 3,100 miles for the seventh consecutive summer. He says, “Somewhere in the middle of the race, I felt as though I had fulfilled my task here. I am not coming back next year, but maybe in the future. I am very grateful, because I love you all here.”

His battles with the elements over all those summers and all the other countless difficulties have shown just how courageous and determined Atmavir really is. Just to enter this incomprehensible event is astonishing: to finish seven times is miraculous.

Sahishnu says, “Finishing in second place in the 3,100 Mile Race for 2013, in a time of 47 days, 16 hours, 24 minutes. Which is an average of 65.015 or 104.6 km a day. This is his seventh finish in a row. From the Marathon Team, and all the helpers: congratulations, Atmavir, on a job well done.”

His is a long and incredible journey that very few have ever accomplished before. His accumulative mileage on this Race Course over the seven years adds up to 21,700 miles — a distance that would nearly allow him to circle the globe.

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Great Finnish

By Utpal
http://perfectionjourney.org
3 August 2013

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

Yesterday saw two finishers who completed the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race. The remaining ten runners arrive at the starting line this morning. I ask Nidhruvi about the finishes yesterday. She says, “I was crying the whole time. Even when I was running, I was crying. For me, the special thing is when they run with the flag. When I see them from afar running with the flag, coming into the camp and then crossing the line. This is so moving for me. It is such a beautiful feeling I cannot describe.”

As I run along with Nidhruvi, Surasa is just behind us and gradually catches up to us. I suggest that Surasa is either speeding up or Nidhruvi is slowing down. Nidhruvi tells me, “No, we are kind of the same. Either she is in front — or I am. It doesn’t matter. She finishes one day earlier. I have to do one and half days more.” We joke that Surasa will be having strudel and a coffee while Nidhruvi will still be running. Nidhruvi says, “Actually we have to stop drinking coffee. I have never drunk so much coffee as here. But it really helps to stay awake, and I am very, very sleepy. Surasa is much stronger in the sleeping part. She sleeps much less than me, and is still so strong. I never see her staggering around like a drunk like me when I am tired.” Surasa laughs and says, “But I am feeling it in the late afternoon. No, no, you are not behind me.”


When Ashprihanal arrives at the race, he steps onto the edge of the curb and stretches his calves, just as does every day here. He is directly in front of the mileage board as he does this. I see that he is looking at the mileage he still has left to do and, speaking to no one in particular, he says, “the old Ashprihanal could do that”. Ashprihanal has completed 3,034.86 miles and has 65 miles or 119 more laps to go. A number he had not met in more than three weeks. In my mind, the person I was looking at was just a slightly diminished version, of one of the greatest multi-day runners of all time, Ashprihanal. One who was incredibly talented, certainly still capable of majestic flying around the Course, and

Ashprihanal finishing the 3,100 Mile Race for the twelfth time
probably the guy who would not finish until sometime the next day. I was wrong.

Late in the afternoon I phone the Race to see how Ashprihanal is doing. I learned the shocking news that he was flying around the Course, just like the “old Ashprihanal”. And he — on his twelfth time running this distance — was going to pull off one of those little miracles that often seem to occur here.

I am reminded of what happened with another great Finnish runner, Lasse Viren, who fell while running in the 10,000 metre race at the 1972 Olympic games but then got up and not only won the race but set a world record in the process.

I catch up with Ashprihanal in the late-afternoon and he tells me, “I have been having a problem with my back, my hip and my knee. And I have been able to do 60 miles on only a few days. That is not my normal self. Normally 60 miles is very easy for me. My standard is more like 70.” But, he says, “Today the problem is totally gone. So today I could do 70. I am definitely going to finish, no problem. I would have been moving if my body had worked.” I ask him why he thinks his body is suddenly working again. “Just Guru’s grace. That is what happened. I didn’t go to any doctors or anything like that.” He adds that he experienced, “a lot of joy yesterday. Two great finishers. And today was very nice running with Suprabha.”

I am going to run again. That is my plan, but maybe I take a year off. This Race has been mentally good for me. I have been happy. Two years ago after the Race I was physically and mentally exhausted. I really needed a year off. This year I am not. I am even physically okay. Yesterday I would have said that physically I am not okay. I am very happy that whatever the problem was went away. Everything is good now.”

Your business is to begin. God’s business is to finish.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “Flame-Goal” (Agni Press, 1973)

Just after Ashprihanal crosses the finish line Sahishnu announces, “Ladies and gentlemen, this is another extraordinary event in the annals of the 3,100 mile history. Because Ashprihanal has now completed the Race twelve times. Finishing in what most people would die for: a time of 48 days, 16 hours, and 14 minutes. Which is an average of 63.68 miles a day or 102.94 km a day. He is the second fastest all-time and seven-time winner of the Race. This year finishing third. Congratulations from the Marathon Team and all the helpers. You are the best. Guru once said of him, ‘running 700 miles is like drinking water’. He is Finland’s treasure and our joy, Ashprihanal.”
Pranjal has 31 miles to go today to reach his ninth straight 3,100 miles in the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race.

Pretty exciting stuff, but for now Pranjal is struggling with drowsiness. He tells me, "In the morning I am always sleepy. The morning is not for running it is for sleeping." He is clearly exhausted and yet he never ever stops moving along the Course.

In this, his ninth turn in this Race, he contemplates his slower time this year. "I don't know, my legs are not so strong. In the beginning I did have a bad stomach for one day — the rest was okay. But I am just slower." He adds, "My blisters were not as bad as I used to have. Even the weather wasn't bad this year. There was this stretch of seven days when we had very hot weather, plus a few days over 30°C (86°F) — but the rest were just nice."

We talk about the videoblog Pranjal has been doing for the past two years. This year, for the first time, the Slovakian has been recording it in English. I have found it to be a great way to get some of his unique insights into the race. He says, "It helps me after a day of running to just take my mind somewhere else. To focus on something else. I like computers and I like to sit there and work with this video. It doesn't take that much time."

I ask him about emptying the mind. "I just try and push away all the distractions. I just try and stay focused on running. I sometimes do not even look at the people who are cheering me. I don't talk very much to people. I found out that if you give attention to people, you are giving your energy also. It is not much, but it is always a little bit. Just a drop of energy. This way I just try and focus my energy on my running. I know sometime people think that I am ignoring them, but for me it is really important to stay focused on running. It is not even something that I consciously believe. It is just part of me."

About his motivation he speaks of Sri Chinmoy's guiding force and says, "I feel that God gave me the capacity to..."
do this Race, so I have to use this capacity. I feel it is my duty to be here.” He adds that, for him, he doesn’t question whether or not he will return to run, “It is not that I am thinking about ‘maybe’ being here, it just happens that, ‘I will be here’ is much easier.”

Pranjal says that the 3,100 Mile Race “is part of my life. I am working at home and I am here. Here is more fulfilling. I am really alive here because it is totally intense. You cannot experience this intensity in normal life. In my first races I found that it was very hard to get back to normal life. Because you experience something so intense for two months. After that, everything is just boring. Not interesting. Nothing can fulfill you. It is really, really hard to get back to this normal life.”

His solution to do this he says, “is like turning the page. This is like one side of life, this race. You turn the page and you come back to your life before. Then you can bring something from that page — from this race — to your regular life. But you have to be really focused on that normal life. Even this focus you have during the race you can use in your normal life. Especially in the spiritual life you can use it.”

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Sahishnu announces, “Ladies and gentlemen, our fourth finisher, Pranjal, has finished for the ninth straight time. He is ranked twelfth in the world. This year he ran 49 days, 7 hours, and 57 minutes. Which is 62.8 miles per day or 101.3 km a day. This man is unflappable. Nothing bothers him. He has such clear vision. He loves this race. He epitomizes self-transcendence. When he came here his first year it took him 59 days to finish the race, and his best is 47 days. Even this year with the heat wave he was strong throughout. From the Marathon Team and all the helpers a huge thank you.”

From start to finish, I run
Only to be close to God.
— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 48”
Something Good

By Utpal
http://perfectionjourney.org
5 August 2013

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

“I don’t know what happened. I had no wings — I was not flying. It was running, really running.” Yesterday, on her last full day on the Course of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race, Surasa ran an incredible 120 laps (65.85 miles). An amount she has not achieved since way back on the second day of the Race. “When I heard “92 laps” and I was looking at the clock and I thought, ‘Oh my God, I am one hour ahead’. It was so easy. The only thing I did different was I didn’t take as long of breaks. I took shorter breaks: two breaks of 25 minutes.”

In just a few hours from now she will finish her final 20 miles. A distance that, for most runners, is still a pretty serious task. Yet watching at her smooth rhythmic style she makes this extreme sport somehow look effortless — as if she were somehow specially designed from the inside out just to do this. True, she got into multi-day running almost by accident, and yet in her lengthy career she has managed to accomplish a record of achievements that is just a little bit beyond extraordinary.

Day 51

Surasa Shines, As Does Sarvagata

By Sahishnu, 5 August 2013 (evening)
www.3100.ws/blog

Fifty-four year old Surasa Mairer of Vienna, Austria finished first lady and fifth overall today in the penultimate day of the race. She became the oldest runner to ever complete 3,100 miles and bettered her own previous finish by over three days. She averaged 61.74 miles per day (99.37 km) and moved into the realm of earlier finishers getting under the original 51 day standard. Her time still ranks 24th out of 34 all-time finishers (3,100 miles = 50 days+04:57:24).

Almost nine hours later Sarvagata Ukrainskyi of Berdansk, Ukraine finished his third straight 3,100 Mile Race, in 50 days+14:33:11. There are two runners left who will reach the coveted goal of ‘Finisher’ in tomorrow’s final day. Go Runners!!!
This humble, soft-spoken lady from Vienna has world records in distances from 1,000 km up to 1,300 miles. Perhaps even more amazing is that she has never once been beaten in any multi-day race she has run. In a few hours she will not only set her own personal best here at 55-years old she will also be the oldest runner to ever finish the race.

In our world where athletes dance across the playing field when ever they score, Surasa is a reminder to us all that greatness does not have to be demonstrated by fist pumps and loud screams in front of the goal. Quietly doing your best and focusing on the true goal within is also something to be celebrated and admired. To understand why she does this so, so difficult thing she says, “Sri Chinmoy inspires me most to do it. I see it as an opportunity to finally do something good. This is satisfying. It makes you happy when you know you are doing the right thing.”

At Surasa’s finish, Sahishnu says, “Surasa finishes in fifth place in a field of twelve. This is her second finish. She moves up in the ranking from 29 to 24th place. As of now 32 people have finished 123 times. She finishes 3,100 miles in 50 days, 4 hours, and 57 minutes. Which is 61.47 miles per day or 99.37 km per day. She becomes the oldest finisher in the history of the race.”

At every moment
God is expecting something good,
And not great,
From you.

Sri Chinmoy, Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 35, Agni Press, 2004

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Sarvagata will also finish this evening. He has to do 56 miles but he only managed 48 miles yesterday so it will not be easy.

“I have no idea what I am going to do.” Sarvagata’s race has been, for whatever reason, one of the most inconsistent perhaps on record. Yet from his perspective it is all a natural and necessary experience. At the beginning of the day he really doesn’t know if he will be able to finish the race today.

“This race was so unpredictable for me. I could never say that tomorrow I will run this or that. Or even today. Or even next lap. It gives you peace when you don’t know what is going to happen.” I suggest that an unstructured existence is the last thing that most people could cope with.

Sarvagata says, “It is not that I don’t have any schedule. Because there is a schedule in the race. You have to come at 6 a.m. and you have to leave by midnight. From one side you have a schedule and from the other side you are not attached to it. I wouldn’t say it was ‘uncertainty’. I would say it is really certain. There is Somebody out there taking care of me and He knows better what I need. So, it is like you have a mother and a father who take care of you. You don’t have to worry. Why would I?”

“It is easy to say this here on the Course. I would really love to remember this after the race. I really want to remember it.”
Sarvagata tells me that he had “a nice surprise this morning. I found 40 dollars. Yesterday I was worrying a little bit about money. Now I have proof that it also will be taken care of. I mean, I always have the proof — all the time and every day — I just have to recognize it.”

“I am still a human being. It is still hard to define which is your mind and which is your heart. I try not to think about it. But here at the race you have a golden opportunity sometimes to see where you are.”

“Once I had an experience. A really nice one. I had no control of my body whatsoever. No control at all. I felt as though I was just a small dot in the middle of my head. This is all that I was aware of in my being. The body was just moving... That is why I love this race. Sometimes you have those spiritual experiences. Which you know could happen because you have read a lot of books — you know it in theory. But here, you can have proof. You can actually experience it.” He adds, “I doubt that I could have this opportunity somewhere else with this same intensity. But I shouldn’t. My dream is that this race spreads throughout my life. I don’t want to live before the race and after the race. I want to live all the time in this. I will. Definitely.”

Several hours later Sahishnu announces to the crowd gathered, “Sarvagata finished in sixth place. His third finish in a row. In a time of 50 days, 14 hours, and 33 minutes. Which is an average of 61.26 miles a day or 98.58 km a day. He is still the fifth fastest of all time. His best being 45 days.”

I am a chosen instrument
Of my Lord Supreme
Not because I have done
Something great for Him,
Not because I shall do
Something good for Him,
But because He wants to do
Something divinely great
And supremely good
In and through me.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from “Twenty-Seven Thousand Aspiration-Plants, Part 1” (Agni Press, 1983)
Heroes of the Road ...  
52 days of giving their all

Who is the winner?
Not he who wins,
but he who has established his
cheerful oneness with the result,
which is an experience
in the form of failure or success,
a journey forward
or a journey backward.

Who is the winner?
Not he who wins the race,
but he who loves to run
sleeplessly and breathlessly
with God the supreme Runner.

Who is the winner?
Not he whose glory we sing,
but he who embodies
God’s Compassion-Light
in abundant measure.

Who is the winner?
Not he who has acquired
tremendous name and fame
and amassed a big fortune,
but he who requires only
one thing: God-satisfaction
in God’s own way.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from
“Everest Aspiration Part 3”
(Agni Press, 1977)
At the finish of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race, Yuri tells the crowd, “Thank you everybody for being here. This race wasn’t easy at all for me. I had some really difficult times. The doctors didn’t know what to do with me and they were deciding at one time if I could even continue the race or not. But then Aparajita appears and he started to sing Sri Chinmoy’s songs to me. And they went straight into my heart. And from there a feeling of devotion, joy, and happiness started to come from within me, and it flooded my entire being completely. It was then that I understood that everything in my life was going to be really good. Now here I am happy and joyful. Standing right in front of you. Thank you Sri Chinmoy, thank you Supreme.”

51 days and a few hours ago, Yuri Trostenyuk started off on a long difficult quest to reach this little spot of concrete upon which he now stands. The fact that it is exactly the same spot he started on so long ago is one of life’s great cosmic ironies — that one endures so much and ends up right back where you started. That said, for Yuri — and also for Nidhruvi, who will arrive at this finish-line in just a few hours more — there is no sense of futility or meaninglessness. It is true that nothing outwardly has changed around them. But anyone who...
enters this Race does not come here for what they see, but rather for what they become — for their true goal exists only in heartfelt depths of their own beings. And this is why they have taken their lives on the great and impossible 3,100 mile journey.

It is an epic trek, one that has changed and transformed them in ways they have yet to completely to be aware of and understand. Their self-transcendence will gradually reveal itself, just as it has for all who have made this Race the center of their lives for the past 17 summers. For these chosen few, have not only taken part in what has to be the most difficult sport of all time, but as well been simultaneously part of a divine inner pilgrimage. One in which there is never failure. The accurate measurements of time and distance are not ultimately at all what this race is all about. The suffering, the pain, the fatigue, the mental conflicts, and all the other foibles and failures of humanity are all here, but are also irrelevant. Self-transcendence is to reveal only who and what we are within. To bring us back the unmeasurable distance to our own glowing divinity within.

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I spoke a few days ago with Yuri and this is what he said at that time. “When I saw all the others finish, I was in heaven. I have never felt this kind of happiness before. I felt complete oneness with the runners. I felt as though it was me finishing. All the joy that those finishing runners felt, I felt it within myself as well. When Vasu and Atmavir finished, the kind of energy I felt also entered into me.”

Yuri continues and says, “Yesterday, after Ashprihanal’s finish, there was a kind of tranquility that entered into me. Which allowed me to feel oneness with everyone around and also the peace that was within them.” Yuri adds, “All the runners have special unique qualities and I could distinctively feel them. This is wonderful. It is getting better and better.”

When asked about his own finish, Yuri said, “This is a feeling I have within my own heart and it is one that is getting stronger and stronger as the finish line approaches.” He said that despite all his difficulties he never worried about reaching the finishline. “I always felt the Supreme’s Love and Concern. And when I was experiencing the difficult moments, my mind couldn’t understand it. My heart could already see the finish, but my mind couldn’t believe why these things were happening to me, at that particular moment.”

“Right now I am living in my own heart, which is a place that is very beautiful. It is very nice, and I feel a lot of joy. I never had this kind of feeling before. I am reveling in this feeling at this very moment and I am very happy.”

“Now I understand why runners are coming over and over again, year after year to do this race. This is very beautiful, and this is very powerful, and this is very inspiring.”

To all those in Oneness Dream Boat Shore. “I would like to thank them for the enormous, enormous, enormous support that I feel from them. This support that they were offering to me was as powerful as the mighty ocean. During my difficult moments, this support was really propping me up, and was supplying me with energy.”

“The hearts of those disciples supporting me I feel it throbbing within my own heart. My gratitude to those disciples has no bounds. I feel that these disciples were running with me, and this joy and gratitude that I am experiencing now I am offering it all back to them. Thanks to them so much.”

Sahishnu says at Yuri’s finish: “In his first finish I would have to say that this man smiled more times and waved more hands of joy than any runner in the history of this race. He is a quiet and unassuming man. He is a plumber with two kids and a wife back in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. But this was his dream to be here.”
My Lord Supreme wants me
To run
Straight towards Him.

Sri Chinmoy, Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 32, Agni Press, 2003

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Speaking of the prayer Sri Chinmoy wrote (in 2006) for August 6th:
"Come what may, I shall run and end my Pilgrim-Journey at my Lord's Feet."

Nidhruvi says, "It is definitely meant for me. Today is the last day of the Race and I am going to finish. I got this challenge last night before I went home with my knee — and this morning I get this prayer. So I think that everything has to go all right."

Talking about her knee, she says "I had an old injury there. It is the ligaments. Before I went home it started. I thought, what was this? It got really swollen." She says that she stopped ten minutes early, just before midnight in order to try and look after it. "To let it rest. I thought, 'okay, another big challenge.' The race is not over yet. I thought I must have another special task to perform — or whatever it is."

"Whatever this means there is nothing that can hold me back to reach the goal. I know in the inner world that it is done. Guru has done it already. It is written. I just have to have faith and believe that everything is going to be all right. It is Guru's victory."

Nidhruvi continues, "I really want to have a nice day and be happy. And not let this little unpleasant friend bother me. I am like that: I can't give up, even when I wanted to. At the beginning of the race, after two weeks, I got this muscle inflammation — I was brand new in this race, and it was so huge. This wave of fear came over me. I was thinking, 'my God, my dream is shattering.' I was thinking what will happen? To go on? Will I not be able to finish it? Then I learned to surrender and let my dream go. Whatever the Supreme wants is right and not what I want or expect. So, there was a moment when I had this first injury that I thought 'What shall I do? Should I go home? Should I change my flight?'. This moment came also — but just once, then I cast it aside and said 'NO!'"

Of her experience in this Race, Nidhruvi says that it "is something very special and unique here. It is not only about running, it is much, much more about the inner world. This was my big experience when I had to walk for two-and-a-half days. Now I am on my last day. So even if these are forces, or my own ignorance, or the ignorance of the world. I must not care. I must feel that I am embraced by my Master and just stay happy."

Nidhruvi continues and says, "I can see that in life that you must always go on. Never lose hope. Go on, go on and never, ever give up. It doesn't matter what happens to you. Never give up your dreams. You can dream and then you can try and realize them. But in the end, you always have to surrender — because you never know what God's Plans are."

The path of the heart
Is not only straight
But also vast,
Very vast.

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 22" (Agni Press, 2001)