

# A view of the

17th Annual



# Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race

## Running and Smiling

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

16 July 2013 (morning)

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

"They are very surprised that we are running and smiling." Vasu is telling me this morning about a newspaper, from his home near St. Petersburg that is regularly printing pictures and stories about the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race taking place here in New York. He tells me that the readers are also encouraged to check out a Russian language version of this blog. Which, they are told, "if you read it you will be inspired."

Vasu says that the paper is calling the 3100 Mile Race a sporting event — but they admit to their readers that they can't even begin to understand how the runners are able to do it. Indeed, for everyone it is nearly impossible to comprehend what is happening here by simply looking at the daily result sheets. And no matter how you view or calculate all the statistics and numbers they really can't tell you much about what is going on here.

When you look at Vasu's picture (see next page) you cannot help but take note that he is clearly a man at peace with himself — and, yes, he has a smile too. But then mentally try and add to this radiant face of his the additional knowledge that in about six hours time he will pass the 2,000 mile mark. With this simple fact, our ability to understand who he really is and what he is accomplishing here on this block in Queens evaporates into thin air.

As someone who has run marathons and longer events, I personally know something about struggling and suffering to reach a finish line. I have felt the satisfaction of a number of hours of hard effort and then the immediate relief of crossing a finishline — and, then, it is all over. In this Race, there is also a finishline but it is one so remote and so distant it is almost inconceivable.

For Vasu, who has crossed this line once before (in 2012) and now it is "just" 1,000 miles away. It is not an invisible or

imaginary thing that calls out to him — it is one he has constantly been aware of for the past 30 days. Vasu will undoubtedly arrive there successfully, not by being lost in his body's struggles nor deterred by the mental suffering of his mind — he is experienced enough to realize that he will only transcend himself only by surrendering to the divine within himself.

I once asked him Vasu what his strategy was here at the 3,100 Mile Race. He replied, "I have no plan. My soul has a plan."

*Run, run, in the inner world run, run!  
God's Lightning-Smiles have already begun.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "My God-Hunger-Cry Part 1" (Agni Press, 2009)

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Sri Chinmoy at a track event in Puerto Rico

## Day 31

### Heat's On

By Sahishnu, 16 July 2013 (evening)  
[www.3100.ws/blog](http://www.3100.ws/blog)

On a sweltering, sticky day with little cloud cover and temps in the mid-nineties, five runners made it past sixty miles, the lowest total of the race this year. With at least three more hot ones to come, the group is being thoroughly tested. Atmavir Spacil seemed to have solved the heat puzzle for at least today by leading with 66.4 miles. Next best was Vasu Duzhiy with 63.6 and Nidhruvi Zimmerman with 62.0 miles. Two more men made it past 2,000 miles....

Vasu Duzhiy:

2,000 miles = 30 days+08:51:16

Sarvagata Ukrainskyi:

2,000 miles= 30 days+15:42:55

Photo by Kedar



*Pranjal goes by the mileage board mid-morning of Day 31*



*The runners will try anything to beat the heat*



*Vasu: smiling and running*



*A special headband?*



*Daulot (in orange) visits from Seattle for his birthday and receives good cheer from friends Vajra and Jagadhata*

Vasu tells me about a unique method the runners are exploring to try and deal with the extreme weather, "Yesterday was a little bit hot. Dr. Kumar [an Aryurvedic doctor] told us to take onions. You just take it in your hand or put in your pocket and run."

Vasu continues and says Dr. Kumar also suggested a different method of treating blisters, he suggested putting some grass along with rosewater into the bottom of the socks of those having foot problems. Vasu says with delight, "I was so happy. My skin became better. After five or ten laps of using [this method] my skin became better, much, much better." Vasu tells me he isn't using this right now and that he will use it only when it gets really hot.

Yesterday Ashprihanal teased Vasu about the "special power band" that Vasu wears from time to time. Vasu laughs and jokes that it is special because "it makes my mind silent."

Yesterday Vasu completed 118 laps here. He is now 140 miles ahead of his pace from last year. He says the main

quality he learned and worked upon last year was "patience". He adds, "And this time, I hope, is happiness."

He is also very interested in hearing about the personal experiences that others have had with Sri Chinmoy. Vasu says he feels tremendously inspired and identifies closely with the stories. He heard one story from someone who quite frequently drove one of the buses that the group used to have. The man told Vasu that sometimes Sri Chinmoy used to sit in the seat directly behind the driver. Vasu asked this person if it was okay to feel oneness with this person's experience of driving the bus with Sri Chinmoy in it. Vasu says, "For the next few days I was not running. I was just a bus driver. I felt so much happiness and joy inside of me."

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Pranjal says, "Yesterday we had a tough day because of the weather. In the morning it was very hot and also very humid. But this is just part of the race. You cannot do anything with this, it belongs to the race. It would be nice

to not have it like this — to run it in the Spring or in the Autumn, but there again there could be problems. It could get cold. But this race is so long the weather is changing all the time." Despite the intense heat Pranjal maintains amazing consistency in the laps he runs every day.

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*Question: How can our outer smile help our running?*

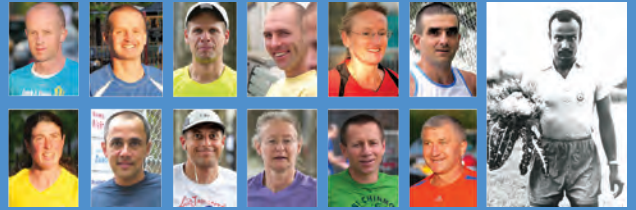
*Sri Chinmoy: Your outer smile can help your running considerably. When you smile, you disarm your opponent. Take running, for the time being, as your opponent. While you are fighting or struggling with your enemy, which is running, if you give a smile, naturally your enemy will lose some of its strength. So play a trick on your enemy by smiling. This may sound absurd, but I assure you it is true. Just think of the running world as an enemy and weaken the strength of this enemy by giving a smile.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "The Outer Running And The Inner Running" (Agni Press, 1974)



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# Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



## God's Job

By Utpal  
<http://perfectionjourney.org>  
17 July 2013 (morning)

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

"It is so far that you can't even think about it — it is, like, three weeks. If you start to think about it now, it will kill you. I am only thinking about today." I had just asked Pranjal if he is able to think about the finishline now that he

is approaching the 2,000 mile mark.

The tone of his answer was no surprise. During the nine years that Pranjal has run the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race, I've never been surprised by his words — what he does with his feet is another matter. His relentless drive and determination never ceases to astonish me. He makes jokes about all kinds of things but when you watch him closely, you see something else. You realize just how much he puts into his unrelenting effort here each day, each lap and each step. It expresses much more than he could possibly say.

Later this afternoon, in the very pit of another hot dank New York afternoon, Pranjal will indeed cross the 2/3-mark and, without stopping, continue on with what he has been doing every day for the past 31.

With 21 days of running time left in this edition of the 3,100 Mile Race, it becomes much easier to calculate which runners will complete the total mileage while a few others will simply run out of time in trying to make it to the finish line.

For those who love this Race we might indulge in the thought of taking over God's job here (as if He, for some reason, would relinquish it for the next few weeks). We indulge in the thoughts of altering the weather; vanishing injuries and pain; and all tiredness and fatigue would be a thing of the past.



*Sri Chinmoy at the start of a race in 1981.*

Of course, we assume we could surpass the Supreme's decisions on a few, very specific, matters. We think that maybe, this time, the Cosmic Plan is actually a mistake. That, on this occasion perhaps, the Lord of the Universe is being distracted by wars or other events in far-off lands. The folly of this is that — should any of us actually acquire this power and we altered what is happening here — we would be making the worst possible mistake. The fact is, the subtle transformations that happen to each runner here is most certainly beyond our grasp and understanding.

And any of us trying to analyze how this Cosmic Plan will play out is a fool's errand. And asking for God's job even more so. As Pranjal correctly said — all we have is today.

*Do not plan your life in advance.  
It is not fair to take away God's job.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from  
"To-Morrow's Dawn"  
(Agni Press, 1982)

## Day 32

### On It Goes

By Sahishnu, 17 July 2013 (evening)  
[www.3100.ws/blog](http://www.3100.ws/blog)

Day four of Heat Wave II produced high temps, intense sun, few breezes and a little cloud covering late. The field paid the price for just being out on the course, but stalwarts they are. Six of the twelve made it to sixty miles, led again by Sarvagata Ukrainskyi and his 68.05. Atmavir Spacil has climbed to within 18 miles of first place, after being down by 52 just three days ago. That is how this race can turn — a couple bad days and the other runners make up big ground. But with 850 more miles to go and the end of the heat wave in sight, anything can happen. And probably will. Meanwhile the Austrian ladies are smashing out the miles, oblivious to heat so far and making all the right choices. They both touched 62.01 miles with smiles on their faces and miles in the bank. With twenty more days to go the race is picking up momentum. Stay tuned, as there seems to be some fireworks coming when the weather changes. Today the temps hit 96°F, with more to come.



Ananda-Lahari, followed by Yuri, Vasu and Sarvagata



Sarvagata



Pranjal



Sarah



Atmavir



Ashprihanal



Nidhruvi

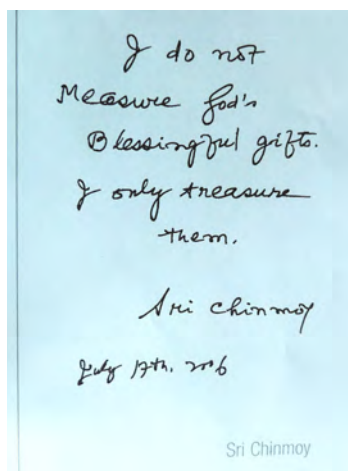
This morning is clearly a struggle for Ashprihanal. Not to see him flying around the Course as he usually does is difficult for everyone to witness.

Yesterday he developed a problem with his knee. It is still too early to know just how serious it is. Dr. Kumar is coming today and Ashprihanal is anxious to hear what he has to say about it.

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Ananda-Lahari is always cheerful and seems to find meaning in each step he takes here. He says, "I have the feeling I should start running but, still, it doesn't work. I am not able to really describe what is going on. I have energy but it seems to me that everything goes to the ground. But today Dr. Kumar is coming and I think today he will be the instrument that will help me to start running."

He says, "I feel much better than yesterday." He laughs and adds, "I already ran 3 meters. There is still hope."



The Daily Prayer

Pranjal was telling me earlier in the Race that he was happy that his shoes were lasting six days. "But now that I have a blister I have changed my style and somehow my shoes now only last four days."

Pranjal takes only one 15-minute "sleeping" break a day at 3pm. He jokes, "I am too slow to take more breaks. I am one of the slowest on the track, actually." He adds, "In my first race, I started with three breaks. Then I had to cut it to two

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and then, in the end, to one break. Because I was just too slow."

Every night, Pranjal records a video-blog and he talks about all the runners who share the track with him. I ask him what he thinks about those who are not going to finish. "In this Race, I think, it doesn't matter that you finish. The thing is that you are here and you are doing your best. It doesn't matter if it is 50 miles or 70 miles. Sometimes you have a bad year and you can't make it. It doesn't matter as long as you do your best. That is what counts."

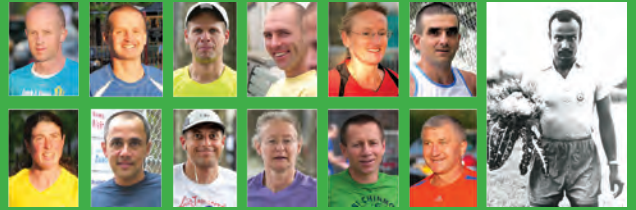
*You want to change the world.  
Do you not realise  
That you are taking away God's job?  
What has He done  
To deserve this kind of punishment  
from you?*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from  
"Ten Thousand Flower-Flames, Part 34"  
(Agni Press, 1982)



# A view of the 17th Annual

# Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



## In My Heart Already

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

18 July 2013 (morning)

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

When Yuri ran up to the mileage board his eyes were bright with gratitude. He had actually hoped to have completed his last four laps the previous night but the weather conditions yesterday were horrific (and, unfortunately, will continue on this way for several days to come).

He says, "It is a very serious number." The number Yuri Trostenyuk is referring to is 2,000 miles. He has been aiming towards this number now for the past 16 days since he reached 1,000 miles. If all goes well he will be able to rack up another 1,000 miles in an additional 16 days. Then all that will remain in front of him will be that last little bump of 100 miles.

Unless you are the most experienced of ultra-runners these distances

simply cannot be comprehended. Certainly for even an average marathon runner there is no way of putting his accomplishment into perspective.

Out of curiosity I wondered if Yuri had set off from his home in Vinnitsa, 32 days ago, instead of running around the block here, just how far would he have been able to travel. I am not sure if he speaks too many foreign languages but he would have needed quite a few before he completed the full 2,000 miles west of his home in the Ukraine. Because if he ran in that direction he would have just about made it to Madrid, Spain (see image, next page). Google Maps say that by car, that journey should take about 34 hours (they don't say how many days it would realistically take to drive that many hours).

*Anything that I want to find  
Is already there  
In the depths of my heart.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees, Part 39"  
(Agni Press, 2004)



*The sky this morning*



*Sri Chinmoy in cooler times (1981)*

## Day 33

### Tightening Up

By Sahishnu, 18 July 2013 (evening)

[www.3100.ws/blog](http://www.3100.ws/blog)

The fifth straight day of heat Wave II raged on with 98°F in much of the location occupied by the 3100 mile race. Only three made it past 60+ miles, and we were fortunate to have many doctors, nurses and specialists keep close watch on the runners 12. Sarvagata Ukrainskyi continued his assault on the field with a 66.4 mile day. Nidhruvi Zimmerman and Surasa Mairer also nicked the 60 mile plateau with 60.9. Caution has been the keyword here, since dehydration and heat stroke are formidable foes and serious issues the runners face when the Mercury nears 100°F. We all pray for everyone to get through this weather tunnel. Stay healthy my friends.

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Yesterday a large box of goodies arrived at the Race. Sarah says, "Somebody from Iceland kindly donated some vitamins and supplements." [Pranava is the most likely bestower of this generosity.] "It was so much appreciated by me because I have no idea what I am supposed to be taking." Sarah laughs as she says this. "It was really nice. It was such a hot day and everyone was feeling so low. Then suddenly we got this big box of presents. You know these things happen quite regularly. It helps to give you a little lift."

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"I have had a problem the last few days. It is heat related."



Yuri bows to a number that is "very serious"

Sopan is looking pretty good today. Like everyone he suffered with the weather the last few days. He says, "I could not push myself harder for some reason, which is not normal for me. I lose energy and cannot eat well. My energy crashed completely." Dr. Kumar came by and recommended that Sopan and a few others drink a simple concoction of water, lemon, salt, and sugar. "He said drink it every 15 minutes all day long. I can feel it immediately when I drink it. It definitely got my energy up."

Before I leave for the morning Sopan is clearly more energetic. Last year on day 18 after 1,000 miles his injuries forced him to leave the Race. Now as he starts day 33 he has over 1,800 miles beside his name. He says that he hasn't felt this good since when he ran here in 2006. "It is good to be back. I haven't been here in a long time."

#### I SHALL NEVER BE DISTRESSED

*I have already instilled peace in my heart;  
Therefore  
I shall never be distressed.  
To You I have already offered  
The flower of my heart's expression.*

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

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Pranjal says, "It is very hard on the body when you have so many days of over 30° (86°F). It takes too much energy. Many people are just in survival mode. You can't push because it is too hard to

go any faster. This is why many people are just doing the necessary." He asks people to keep their fingers crossed. But the forecast says the weather won't break until Sunday.

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Someone points out that today is Nelson Mandela International Day (as well as his 95th birthday) and people around the world are encouraged to provide 67 minutes of community service in honour of Mandela's 67 years of public service. The overarching objective of Mandela Day is to inspire individuals to take action to help change the world for the better, and in doing so build a global movement for good. Ultimately, it seeks to empower communities everywhere. "Take Action; Inspire Change; Make Every Day a Mandela Day."

Sri Chinmoy met with President Mandela on a number of occasions and said of him:

*"South Africa sleeplessly needs the fragrance of your heart for its liberation and peace, and the whole world soulfully needs the garden of your life for its inspiration and bliss."*

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2,000 miles from Yuri's home going west



At the start Rupantar asks everyone to be extra cautious today



Sri Chinmoy with Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel (Mandela's wife)

Sri Chinmoy also composed several songs in Nelson Mandela's honour, two of which:

*A PERFECT JUSTICE-VOICE  
Nelson Mandela, torture-sufferer supreme,  
High Heaven's Smile  
and earth's solace-dream.  
Your heart has won the  
world's admiration-choice.  
Within, without, a perfect justice-voice.*

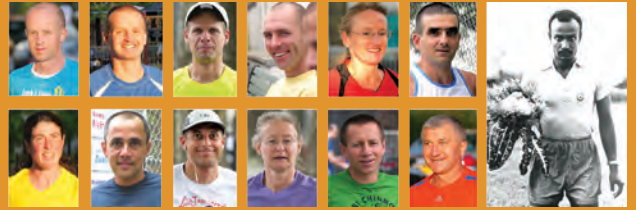
*LONG WALK TO FREEDOM  
Long walk to freedom,  
long walk to freedom  
To be a child of oneness-kingdom.  
Long walk to freedom, long, long, long:  
Our proudest victory's sweetest song.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from  
"Sri Chinmoy With Four African Peace-Immortals" (Agni Press, 1996)



# A view of the 17th Annual

# Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race



## All Souls Struggle

By Utpal

<http://perfectionjourney.org>

19 July 2013 (morning)

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

Swami Paramesha Ananda ran 14 laps this morning with the runners and is now ready to carry on with the rest of his day. He says, "If you rely on the mind and the physical you will start getting weak. You have to go to the higher conscious level."

His advice is correct in every way. For all spiritual seekers the goal is to always find the highest path when confronted by either joy or adversity. But on a practical level no one here is God-realized — at least not yet.

The Swami says, "I do the Guru mantra [a traditional Sanskrit mantra].

The Guru is so powerful because he manifests himself from consciousness. He meets you halfway. Because his body is really a manifestation of consciousness. So if you are able to connect to his body that automatically puts you into a higher consciousness."

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It gets hotter and hotter with each passing hour this morning as the dawn breaks and the immense brilliance of the sun spills across the city. The relentless weight of the humidity presses down on everyone. It has been like this every day now for a week and any kind of relief in the weather is still days away.

A splash of water or a bag of ice are little remedies that work for just a moment: a flash of relief

and then the struggle continues. A struggle for which there is no end in sight for the runners of the Self-Transcendence 3,100 Mile Race for at least 18 more days.

*All souls*

*Struggle and struggle and struggle  
Inside the body-cage,  
But eventually they bring victory  
To their Lord Supreme.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from "My Christmas-New Year-Vacation Aspiration-Prayers, Part 57" (Agni Press,

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The past few days have been tough on Ashprihanal — perhaps tougher than he has ever seen during any of the previous years he has run in the 3,100 Mile Race.

## Day 34

### How Long Can This Go On?

By Sahishnu, 19 July 2013 (evening)

[www.3100.ws/blog](http://www.3100.ws/blog)

The Heat wave stood its ground for the sixth straight day, daring the runners of courage to step over its boundaries and face debilitation. With temps approaching 100°F and nary a breeze, nature forced everyone to back off or hurt real bad. Surprisingly, Nidhravi Zimmerman topped the list with 60.9 miles and was followed closely by Surasa Mairer, who reached 60.3 miles. The closest any man could come was 57.07 miles by Atmavir Spacil, who edged into first overall. The runners will gain some respite late Saturday as thunderstorms are expected to change things for the next two weeks to clear and cooler. The damage has been done, but eight are still on pace to finish within 52 days. The ever-changing face of the race from the outside only reflects the inner conflicts that runners endure to finish this thing. But run they must, and run they shall. Keep cool if you can.

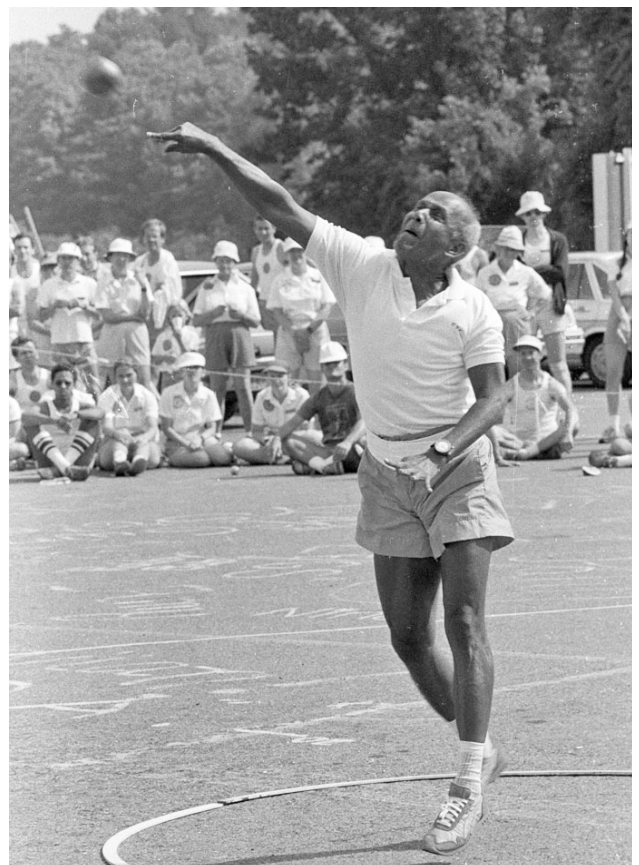


Photo by Bhaskar

Sri Chinmoy at the "Sports Day" track and field events in 1982



*Jagadhata blows a conch at the start every day*



*Rupantar arrives with ice at 5:50 a.m.— the supply will have to be replenished often through the day*



*Kausal is a doctor who arrived at the Race yesterday. He speaks with Yuri and will keep close watch on everyone*

There is a bandage on Ashprihanal's left wrist indicating he recently received an I.V. to get his fluid levels back up. He is weak, but fine and is not in any physical danger. He will keep walking today, just as he did yesterday. He continues, at least in part, because he is searching — as everyone here is — for peace, joy, and satisfaction. Transcendence is not bestowed upon those who have not given their all. It is painful for those of us who have seen Ashprihanal "flying" around the Course here over the many years to have this level of struggle. And he has still 1,000 miles more to go.

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Swamiji says that it is not easy running on days like this. "But once you start and get into the rhythm, you might slow down or you might move faster, but it is a rhythm. A mental rhythm. Then the mental rhythm changes over to a higher conscious rhythm. It is that higher conscious that will combat the heat." He says that when you allow yourself to be in the higher conscious, "it negates all physical suffering, and mental anguish. Then you are able to proceed and to continue and continue."

He continues saying, "You go to your source of strength which is patience, fortitude, and endurance. Our greatest asset is self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-respect. Then our greatest friends, are energy, enthusiasm, and perseverance. So when you bring these elements into it. These are divine inspirational words. When you bring these into the picture, then you are above the mundane existence. This Race is above that."

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*Surasa tries a new hat*

Surasa ran 111 laps yesterday and seems superbly adapted to the horrible hot weather. "In the morning I am very good. Until 11 a.m. I run good miles, and also in the evening. During the day the mileage is okay — but not quite as good."

She is wearing a broad brimmed hat. "I will try it today and see if it works. I got it yesterday in the evening and I thought it would be very good. It is very light. But you can see that there are holes in it and the sun can come through, so I think that maybe it does not give me enough protection."

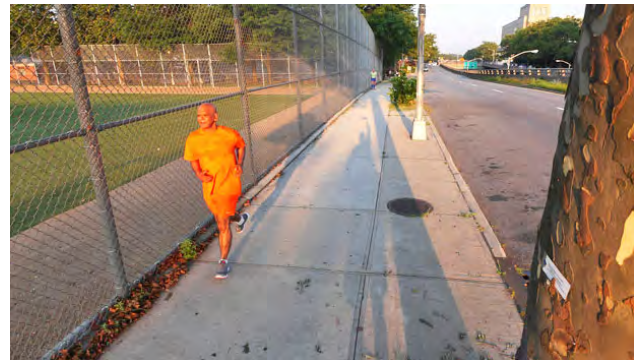
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Yuri's heat-related condition became very serious yesterday. He was checked out by a nurse last night and given an I.V.

He wants to keep running but Rupantar, the race director, has asked him to only walk easily today until his condition improves. This is a totally new experience for Yuri, but he takes this request cheerfully and seriously.

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I talk with Nidhruvi about the troubles that some are having here now and she reminds me of her own difficulties that



*The Swami running along the Race Course*



*Nidhruvi*

weren't that long ago but now seem ancient to her. For a brief while, when she was really suffering, she thought everything was lost. But that was many days ago (and in this environment days feel like lifetimes). She did 111 laps yesterday.

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Sarvagata says that he is doing some new things this year. "I am wearing a hat and also using sandalwood powder on my skin and also some peppermint oil." He seems to be able to adapt to the heat like no other runner here. He ran a phenomenal 121 laps. He says, "It seems like I am getting stronger. I am overcoming some problems in my body and in my mind." He laughs and adds, "Now I am ready to face the next ones. Interesting. I am enjoying it all."

*I am struggling and struggling  
To free my life  
From my mind-entanglements,  
And I am sure my victory is certain.*

— Sri Chinmoy, excerpt from  
"Seventy-Seven Thousand Service-Trees,  
Part 2" (Agni Press, 1998)