

Monday - Cultural evening, P.S. 86

7:30 p.m. 5 Oct. 1987

Performances of songs included:

Sankar - (written especially for him by Guru)

Janaganamana

Chants from the Vedas: Guru Brahma, Asato Ma, Hiranmayena,

Vasangsi

Yada Yada Hi (from the Gita)

Bande Mataram

Bharat Dulal

He Partha Sarthi

Jatri

Bangladesh National Anthem

Two of Guru's plays were performed:

"Lord Gauranga: Love Incarnate"

"The Baby Krishna and His Foster Mother, Jachoda"

After receiving the garland from Guru, Sankar said, "He is wonderful!"
Sankar folded his hands in meditation during much of the evening.

The children all lined up on stage, assisted by Samarpana and displayed cards with letters on each, which read: 'Swagatam Sankar (welcome Sankar)'.
After reading the message, Sankar said, "It is very moving!"

5 October 1987

PROGRAMME TO HONOUR MANI SANKAR MUKHERJI

PS 86, Jamaica, New York

WELCOME BY SRI CHINMOY

Today's programme -- cultural, devotional and spiritual --
I am offering to the great soul Sankar, Bengal's unparalleled author
and novelist.

I am extremely happy to have him here with us, and my heart
is all gratitude to him for the most powerful, most soulful and most
blessingful article that he wrote about me.

REMARKS BY MANI SANKAR MUKHERJI

My brothers and my sisters, I wish I had taken the opportunity to talk to you at the very beginning because then I think I had a clear mind. But I was taken by the garden path. I didn't realise what was waiting for me, and honestly I'm not in a mood or in a position to talk to you now.

I was born and raised very near the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission. I went to a school run by one of the devotees of that institution. It was one of my childhood dreams to be near people who are deeply involved in spiritual pursuits. In fact, when I was in school, I was told that an opportunity would soon be coming. The school choir would go and sing in the classes to be held inside the Belur Math.

I joined the group. But after some time it was found that one person was slipping out and was carrying a bad tune. As ill luck would have it, I was the culprit. So the school teacher decided that I was not fit enough to go with the choir. I started weeping, and then they found a compromise. They said that they would give me additional responsibility. I went there to look after the shoes of the devotees. In those days in the Belur Math it was very difficult. It was not as easy as living in the schools here. A token had to be given, and I was solely in charge of looking after the shoes of the people who went inside to listen to learned speeches. I did the job so well that for the next ten years I was only looking after shoes. I knew what sizes the devotees had. I knew who preferred what, various designs. So during the first decade I went through that experience.

But my education remained incomplete. I never had the opportunity to come very close to people who are spiritually advanced. So when I grew up, it was my dream, wherever I would go, I would be a very clever person and try to sit at the feet of people who have realised God or who have had high spiritual experiences.

It was in this pursuit that last year when I came to this land I suddenly heard about the great Guru Sri Chinmoy. I first looked at him

with suspicious eyes, but I thought, "Let me come and talk to him." I came with a doubtful mind, but I went back a deep believer. When I went back to my home, I told my people that I had at last found someone who was born in my country and had won the hearts of many people in this wonderful land. Nobody believed me, that such a man could live somewhere in New York, about whom they had not heard much. It was my wonderful good luck that I was one of the very first persons to bring that message to my own people.

But when I was paying my respects to Sri Chinmoy, I was really enriching myself. I thought that the little boy who had looked after the shoes for so many years, had at last found someone who allowed him to sit near him while the prayer was going on.

Here I am again. I don't know -- it must be God's Will. I never imagined that I would come back again to this wonderful land, and within 13 months I would have the opportunity of meeting Sri Chinmoy again. I had come here to pay my respects, but here I find that you have done something which I do not deserve. This is what is known in the income tax department in my country as unearned income. This is very bad. You must earn your income. But greedy as I am, I am unable to return it to Sri Chinmoy. I won't be able to do it. So I am putting it in an advance account. I hope one day, through my own small efforts, I will be able to repay a part of the love and affection which all of you have bestowed upon me today.

Brothers and sisters, this has been a truly wonderful experience for me, almost like a pilgrimage. Long ago Columbus went out for the discovery of India and unknowingly discovered this wonderful land where you all are. I am just the opposite. I went out to discover America, and here in New York I have rediscovered my own land, India.

Thank you very much for the wonderful experience that you have given me today. I will carry it back in my heart, and I hope one day I will be living up to your expectations. And to Sri Chinmoy I offer my deep gratitude and my namaskar. May God give you all the strength that you deserve.

Let me tell you how fortunate you all are that you have such a man living with you. Thank you very much.

5 October 1987 - page 4

Let me also say that there are two types of authors. In India we say there are the spider type and the weaver type. The spider type creates his own thread and weaves also. This is what Sri Chinmoy is doing. And I am the weaver type. I go to the market to buy thread. Whenever I can get good silk thread, then I weave better.

So don't ever compare mine with the type of original thought that Sri Chinmoy can produce. But sometimes we use the thread for building something else. So I go back again a rich man with a lot of material to weave. Thank you very much.