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Bringing true values to Kearny

Swami Adhyatmananda at the Hindu Community Center

By Celeste Regal

Inside a small box of a building on Schuyler Avenue in Kearny is the most magnificent Hindu Temple. It is not so much that the architecture is superb but the altar of the various God's from Lord Ganesh, the elephant deity, to Hanuman, the monkey deity is stunning and wonderful to behold. The building is behind Seabra's and used to be the Boys Club until in 1990 it was bought by the devotees at a Garfield Center that had outgrown it's size. More than all



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YOGA AS A WAY OF LIFE – Swami Adhyatmananda, above, during discourses at the Hindu Community Center on Schuyler Avenue in Kearny. He came from the Sivananda Ashram in Ahmedabad in India, touring 27 American cities.

the fascinating programs that the Hindu Community Center holds was the yoga shibir with special spiritual discourses on July 3 to July 10 led by a well-known yoga master, Swami Adhyatmananda, who is the president of Sivananda Ashram in Ahmedabad, India. Ahmedabad is the largest city of Gujarat, near the western coast of the continent up toward the southern portion of Pakistan. Over 500 people from all walks of life come every day to practice yoga.

So much for locations. Swamiji, as he is respectfully known, is an ordinary man who has mastered extraordinary skills and discipline. He moves around the world with the greatest

of ease, more like a young butterfly than a 65-year-old man. He is kind, generous, extremely articulate and has a good sense of humor. I spent an hour talking with him and his special graces made my day much more worth living. It's true when they say words cannot describe him.

Swamiji's journey started on May 30 and ends September 18. He has toured 27 American cities. He went to the Canada, UK, Scotland and Germany and looked as unflustered as if he had just taken a short walk through the park.

In New Jersey, he started at Toms River and now Swamiji is on his way to Washington, D.C. When asked about the popularity of yoga he said, "people flock."

His spiritual teacher was Swami Sivananda who he said was a medical doctor with a practice in America. "He was a great yogi and a realized saint. How you are seeing me – he has seen the Lord Krishna," Swamiji said. [adsys::ad:instory]

Krishna, a popular Hindu deity of Bliss came like a power to Swami Sivananda and he started pouring out his knowledge and allowed him to publish 310 books "by his own hand."

Swami Adhyatmananda talked about the styles of Swami Sivananda Yoga: Karma Yoga, one of action; Bhakti Yoga, one of devotion; Jana Yoga, one of knowledge; Kundalini Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, ones of meditation and many more that deal with the mind, its mysteries and control.

In the fast-paced world where every other person is on anti-depression medicine, hooked on distractions like music, television, movies, we never seem to come to any calm conclusions. People are still looking for escape or answers. I would point to the outrageous popularity of the Harry Potter series and Dan brown's books, especially, the DaVinci Code.



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But where is the end to a search that is outside the self?

Swamiji teaches Sivananda Yoga, which is a traditional, very fundamental yoga that does not diminish from the purity of the yoga teachings. His voice is like gentle lullaby that instead of putting you to sleep, gently jars to awake. I can testify to that, dear readers.

“Because, unfortunately, to making yoga popular around the globe it has been mixed out with acrobatics. Acrobatics is good health wise but it is all hip and trunk (of the body,)” he said. “It has nothing to do with your endocrine glands, ductless glands, or not to touch to the soul even.”

The yoga that he teaches is a physical exercise but it controls and regulates the breathing known as the science of pranajama – the art of breathing control, in this tradition.

“The regular practice of pranajama controls the senses. In controlling the senses you control the mind. By controlling the mind, you control the intellect and then if you are still regular in the practice of yoga, pranajama and meditation, you can go intellectual,” he said softly. “Yoga is a way of life.”

It is a science of harmony, mutual love, mutual affection, mutual reverence, “and today the world needs each individual in their daily life, the practice of yoga.”

“In case we want to bring global peace, yoga can be a greatest instrument which can be proved without spending any coin. It’s cheapest, it’s surest, it’s safest, it’s quickest, it’s easiest, and surest remedy for the peace of the mind,” said the most convincing teacher. “The total cause of the global tension is the individual ego. Yoga opens the understanding of human existence and human love.”

Swamiji made a point that there is no differentiation between social, economic, religious, color, culture, and gender. In fact, at the beginning of the yoga practice, all of the God’s of all the faiths of the world were called upon. In yoga, no one is left out, no matter who they are. And as the practice of yoga is regularly continued, Swamiji says that you become “a citizen of no particular place.”

If we look around us, the world is torn apart by ego, by differentiation, prejudice, little cruelties and monstrous ones over things as insignificant but destructive as borders, land, money, hate, greed. Our material successes come and go, we hold on to things that bring us sickness. We have all seen it and know it.

“Yoga is like a vast sky, which can envelope everyone, those who want peace and harmony,” he said.

These words are not mere poetics but reaching these goals can be a tall order in a world that is mostly at war with itself – from the classroom to the workplace. We are human and must work very hard to attain these precious kinds of goals. But with full range of the yoga teachings, one can start.

Swamiji is not talking about physical happiness or comfort but the happiness of the soul.

“Each activity of the yogi should bring him to the unfailing eternal beauty of the soul. That is the real sense and high value of the yoga,” he said.

Giving back and inspiring others

Swami Adhyatmananda is known as the “Guru of Blood Donations” in India. He has given blood over 117 times during the year. While in America, the latest numbers of donors is 4.5 percent of the entire population, in his city Ahmedabad, there were 3.5 percent of donors. At the Ashram, they organized 230 blood donation camps in one year, with 69,540 donors throughout his country.

He encourages trees planted wherever he goes, not wanting the traditional cut flowers because they die and are taken away from others to see and appreciate. A tree planted in his honor by a motel owner in Bloomfield is now 40 feet tall.

As always, there is never enough space to tell the entire story but I would like to thank Hindu Community Administrator Bharat Trivedi, for inviting me. Thanks to Suresh Patel and Dejal Shah for bringing Swamiji to Kearny, and also Hema Shah, principal of the Community Center School for their incredible hospitality.

And thank you Swamiji for changing my heart and for having Amitbhai Shastri for the extraordinary blessing in the temple.

Hindu Community Center has many activities on Sunday and all are invited. For more

information call the temple office at 201-997-5556 or see their Web site at <http://www.hindumandirnj.org/main.htm>.

To learn more about Swami Adhyatmananda and the Sivananda Ashram see the Web site at <http://www.divyajivan.org/>.

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