

## Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī's Last Will

We have just completed an inspiring four-day conference on the Life, Mission, and Teachings of H.H. Śrī Swāmī Chidānandajī Maharāj, followed yesterday by his first Puṇya Tithi Ārādhana. As we sit here this morning, it is exactly one year to the hour, by the lunar calendar, since Worshipful Swāmiji's body was immersed in the Gangā according to the strict instructions that he laid down about eight or nine years ago.

In some ways we might say that we all summarize our life, mission, and teachings in any last will or instructions we might prepare. From this point of view, the strict instructions that Pūjya Swāmījī laid down are very revealing and instructive for us from at least two points of view.

The first is the way that he wanted us to treat his body and the name Chidānanda. He didn't want his body to be treated in any way different than any ordinary monk of Śivānanda Āśram, and he gave strict instructions that the name Chidānanda was not to be chanted by anyone present. The only notification of his passing was to be in the following month's Divine Life magazine. Neither DLS branches nor devotees were to be informed in any other way.

Of course, this latter instruction inevitably was not followed, but it emphasizes the way he looked at Swāmī Chidānanda, and it was an invitation to us to see him the same way. He was not the body or the name, he was Immortal Self compared to which the body and name have no importance.

However, who he was indwells all these names and forms, and so he wanted the Brāhmins to be fed according to tradition. Then, on a large scale, he wanted children and poor beggars to be fed. He also wanted leprosy patients as well as cows, dogs, cats, monkeys, birds, and ants to be fed with earnestness and sincerity. He added, "This is pleasing to the Lord Almighty, our creator." He also wanted fruit and *prasād* to be sent to the local police. All taxi and three-wheeler drivers were to be given *prasād* both consumable and, in addition, *prasād* usable for a longer duration.

Therefore it appears that he was letting us know that what he was so transcends the body and name that they have no real significance, but also,

who he really was was vitally interested in all these names and forms of seeming others, especially those who are normally overlooked by society.

His instructions, like his life, mission, and teachings, are a call to us to follow his way—to know that we are not the body and mind, but that who we really are cares very deeply about all these names and forms, especially the disadvantaged.