

# **The Art of Running**

## **Spirituality, Aesthetics and Sports in Sri Chinmoy's Literature**

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# **The Art of Running**

## **Spirituality, Aesthetics and Sports in Sri Chinmoy's Literature**

### **1. Introduction.**

The following paper deals with the genre of sports literature. It offers a study of the most significant works that the philosopher, poet, sportsman and spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy has written in this field.

The present analysis of Sri Chinmoy's writings on sports, particularly on running, will firstly be based on a cultural, historical and philosophical contextualisation of the works. This contextualisation will show how Sri Chinmoy's writings are rooted in a strong Hindu spiritual background, and how they embody a multi-faceted discipline which encompasses spiritual (yogic), philosophical, aesthetic, artistic and practical values, and which acknowledges the magnificence of human life and aspires towards its gradual and integral perfection.

The analysis will further show how Sri Chinmoy's writings have great validity within our contemporary Western culture and way of life, as they propose answers to acute modern cultural problems. It will be seen how the author's proposals share an astounding affinity with the answers to the same problems proposed by Western post-structuralist schools of thought that use play-theory as an important element of their discourse.

Being a study on sports literature, this paper also aspires to show how not only the literature but also the sports that inspire the literature can be equally experienced at spiritual, philosophical, aesthetic and artistic (poetic) levels.

## 2. Sri Chinmoy and the Hindu Tradition.

“Sri Chinmoy is a distinguished representative of modern Hinduism. By virtue of upbringing, study, lifelong training in meditative disciplines, and personal commitment, he is able to transmit with authenticity the essence of his spiritual heritage. He is an exemplar of the Hindu renaissance of the last 150 years, and as a Bengali, he comes from the matrix of that renaissance. Among his predecessors in the Bengal tradition are such figures as Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Sri Chinmoy’s writings thus elaborate themes which are age-long in Indian tradition, and include reflections on scriptures such as the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, and retellings of traditional stories. At the same time, they do not constitute a simple transmission of received ideas, since Sri Chinmoy has taken from tradition what he sees as most valuable for modernity, and reworked and expanded it in the light of his personal experience and insight into contemporary realities”<sup>1</sup>.

Sri Chinmoy’s multifarious activities in the fields of philosophy, poetry, art, music and sports are all to find their source in the spiritual life. This approach to spirituality originates in the search and manifestation of the Divinity in human life, two concepts which are also known as God-realisation and God-manifestation.

Sri Chinmoy’s approach is based on a modern spiritual philosophy which embodies the quintessence of the Vedic wisdom, the wisdom that was to give life to the most ancient scriptures in the library of spiritually awakened humanity, namely, the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are the core of India’s fertile millennial spiritual tradition and the *Upanishads*, also known as *Vedanta*, represent a compendium of the former. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* share many of the fundamental and most significant spiritual precepts contained in the *Bhagavad Gita* (“*The Song of Lord Krishna*”), the third most important spiritual scripture of India<sup>2</sup>.

One of the most significant differences between the spiritual approach of the Vedic masters of old and that of modern masters like Sri Aurobindo and Sri Chinmoy, is the role that the physical plane has within the realisation and manifestation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Kusumita Priscila Pedersen. Department of Religious Studies, Brown University. In: Jharna Kala, p.32.

<sup>2</sup> For further reference see Sri Chinmoy’s *The Three Branches of India’s Life-Tree (Commentaries on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita)* and Sri Aurobindo’s *The Secret of the Veda, The Upanishads, The Bhagavad Gita and Essays on the Gita*.

Divine in human life. In the past, an unsurmountable division was considered to separate the spiritual and the physical existence, due to which the acceptance of the spiritual life would mean a renunciation of the physical life, and viceversa. In Sri Chinmoy's own words:

“Previously spirit and matter were separated. Matter was one thing and spirit was another. Spirit wouldn't touch matter; matter wouldn't touch spirit (...) The spiritual Masters of the hoary past thought the inner life and the outer life could not go together. In India some of them think this even today. Our spiritual Masters, in order to realise God, used to live in the Himalayan caves or in one solitary room for 20, 30 or 40 years. They were afraid of entering into society. They said that the outer life could never be transformed because they felt that inner inspiration or aspiration did not function in the outer | life. But my Beloved Supreme – who is my Lord, who is your Lord, who is everybody's Lord – feels that if we neglect the body, the outer life, then how are we going to be perfect in every aspect of life and how are we going to manifest Him?”<sup>3</sup>

Of great importance within Sri Chinmoy's ideology is the concept of the perfection of human life, as posed in the previous quote. Sri Chinmoy's understanding of spirituality is that of the total acceptance of life, with the equal development of the body, the vital, the intellectual, the psychic, and the spiritual aspects of the human being<sup>4</sup>.

Frequent metaphors used by Sri Chinmoy in order to establish a symbology of correspondence between the inner and the outer life are those of the temple being the human body, and the shrine being the human soul. The temple needs to be kept in a proper state in order to maintain the shrine in good condition, and the shrine must be visited regularly so that the temple will be a true house of God. This symbology implies that as progress in the inner life depends mainly on prayer and meditation, the development of the outer or physical life depends mainly on exercise and fitness, of which Sri Chinmoy gives particular importance to running. In his writings, two basic

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<sup>3</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Aspiration-Body Illumination-Soul* (pp.1-3)

<sup>4</sup> In Sri Chinmoy's spiritual philosophy, these are considered to be the five basic constituents of the human being, namely the body (physical existence), the vital (related to the emotions and the life energy), the mind (the intellectual being), the psychic (the intuitional faculties related to the heart centre or fifth chakra), and the spiritual (the existence of the individual soul manifested in a human body). It is worth mentioning that Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy also regards these 5 planes as the basic constituents of the human life. For further references see Sri Chinmoy: *Beyond Within – A Philosophy for the Inner Life* and Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

metaphors of the relationship between the spiritual and the physical (sports) life are to be found: that of running as a metaphor for the spiritual life, where a parallel is drawn between the athlete striving to improve his performance and the seeker striving to go beyond his own limitations in his eternal journey toward spiritual development; and that of the flower with all its petals fully blossomed:

“If I want to appreciate a flower, I will appreciate the flower if all the petals are properly blossomed. If one petal is not properly formed, it will be difficult for me to appreciate the whole flower. The physical is also like a flower. If everything blossoms petal by petal, then I appreciate that flower more than other flowers.”

“Physical fitness is of paramount importance in our case. When we practise sports, we are fighting against lethargy or, let us say, ignorance (...) Body, vital, mind, heart and soul all have a specific role, and we don't want to neglect any of them. Therefore, I advise my students to run in the outer life. The inner run and the outer run must go together. It is like two complementary souls.”<sup>5</sup>

These and other metaphors, as well as more general aspects of Sri Chinmoy's literary output in the field of sports, shall be dealt with in more detail in the seventh chapter of the present study. It is now appropriate to examine how Sri Chinmoy's ancient spiritual and philosophical Hindu background shares a significant affinity with more modern and westernised concepts related to play-theory and sports.

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<sup>5</sup> Jharna-Kala, pp. 21-22.

### **3. *Lila*: The World-Game.**

As an authentic representative of the Vedic lore, Sri Chinmoy includes in his ideology a key concept within the Vedic vision of life, namely, the concept of *Lila*. *Lila* is the Cosmic Game through which the Brahman, the One or Universal Soul, expresses Itself in myriad and even contradictory forms: Its Eternity through temporality, Its Infinity through the finite, Its Unity through multiplicity, the Formless through the form. As Sri Chinmoy explains: “God was One. He wanted to be Many. Why? He felt the necessity of enjoying himself divinely and supremely in infinite forms”<sup>6</sup>.

A central and apparently paradoxical issue within the idea of God’s Cosmic Game or *Lila* is the creation of infinite and limited forms, particularly human individuals, who in essence come from the Divine, the Infinite and Unlimited. Thus man’s game consists, from the spiritual point of view, in looking for and aspiring to find and unite with his Source, his own veiled Divinity. To reach the Divine implies reaching a state of integral perfection after overcoming the presence of adverse or hostile forces that tend to keep man bound to his own ignorance and limitations such as fear, doubt, insecurity, impurity, jealousy and anxiety. This game’s goal lies in what Sri Chinmoy calls the ever-transcending Beyond, and its purpose is to

“(…) make us conscious channels of God the Supreme Musician for the transformation of human darkness into divine Light, human imperfection into divine Perfection, human possibilities into divine Inevitabilities, and human dreams into divine Realities.”<sup>7</sup>

Man’s perfect Perfection depends on a total transformation, the perfection of the five constituent elements of human life –physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual–. Sri Chinmoy believes that sports can greatly aid man in achieving this integral transformation and the ulterior successful accomplishment of the life-game.

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<sup>6</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *The Upanishads*, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *The Vedas*, p. 16.

Regarding the similarity between the life-game and the sports-games, Sri Chinmoy comments the following:

“Life and sports cannot be separated; they are one. As a matter of fact, life itself is a game. This game can be played extremely well, provided the player develops consciously or unconsciously the capacity to invoke the transcendental energy which is always manifested in action. In the life-game, each soul is running consciously or unconsciously toward the goal of inner perfection.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *The Outer Running and the Inner Running*, p. 13.



#### 4. Philosophical background: Play-Theory and Western Post-Structuralist Schools of Thought.

At this point of the research, it is useful to establish a parallel between the ancient Hindu concept of *Lila* or World-Game and more modern and westernised concepts of play, namely, play-theory. In order to understand to a fuller extent the birth and development of play-theory, analysed in the sixth chapter of the present paper, it is convenient to understand what this concept denotes and to retrace the historical development of Western society and the schools of thought that have had a greater impact on it during the last two centuries.

In opposition to Structuralism<sup>9</sup>, Post-structuralist theories and philosophic trends such as Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction and Jean Francois Lyotard's Postmodernism starkly denounce the crisis of Western contemporary thought<sup>10</sup>. Roughly understood, Post-structuralist thinkers believe that the Modernist project born with the Renaissance and developed to its fullest with the scientific advancement and industrial well-fare of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries has ended up in the atrocities of two world wars, an over-materialistic attitude towards life, an individual loss of identity, an alienation of the human being, besides countless other problems at social and economic levels.

Post-structuralism exhorts Structuralist schools of thought characterised by a logocentric<sup>11</sup> urge for imposing schemes and structures and prescribing mental limits

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<sup>9</sup> Structuralism is an intellectual movement, based on the theories that the French thinkers Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes started to pose in the 1950's. This school of thought believes that the phenomena through which we perceive and interpret the world can't be understood in isolation but need to be placed within a larger context or *structure* on which meanings or significances can be thus be imposed. For more references see Barry, pp. 39-60.

<sup>10</sup> See Barry, pp. 61-79 & 81-94, Brooker, pp. 56-58 & 176-177, and Cashmore & Rojek, pp. 119-121 & 327-329.

<sup>11</sup> *Logocentrism* is a key term introduced by Derrida into the world of Western philosophy in the mid 1960's. Derrida and other Post-structuralist and Post-modern philosophers have used the term to denounce the rigidity of the Structuralist project and the Western mind's tendency to centre and fix meanings of principles and concepts such as essence, existence, substance, subject, transcendability, consciousness, God, and man, among others. For further reference, see Brooker, p. 56, or Derrida's *La structure, le sign et le jeu dans le discours de les Sciences Humaines* (1966).

to existence, to recognise their own folly: it is out of reach for the reasoning mind to give a merely mental explanation, an order or rigid structure to the totality of existence. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and parallel to the zenith of the Western crisis, European thinkers have sought for new ways to interpret existence, which are less limited by the over-intellectualised mind. Two of the main influences noticeable within anti-logocentric Western schools of thought are that of Indian spirituality and spiritual philosophy on one hand, and play-theory on the other. Surprisingly, this latter closely resembles the idea of the world-game as understood with the concept of *Lila*.<sup>12</sup>

One of Derrida's most effective weapons in his critique of logocentrism is precisely the concept of play, *le jeu du monde*, "the game of the world," as it is seen in his essay "La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines" ("Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"). Derrida's words remind us that all our mental structures and believes are no more that the result of an arbitrary foundation, the establishment of the rules of a game –the life-game– where no absolute mental truths can be proved to exist:

“Le centre n’est pas le centre. Le concept de structure centrée – bien qu’il représente la cohérence elle même, la condition de l’*epistémè* comme philosophie ou comme science – est contradictoirement cohérent. Et comme toujours, la cohérence dans la contradiction exprime la force d’un désir. Le concept de structure centrée est en effet le concept d’un jeu *fondé*, constitué depuis une immobilité fondatrice et une certitude rassurante, elle même soustraite au jeu. Depuis cette certitude, l’angoisse puet être maîtrisée, qui naît toujours d’une certaine manière d’être impliqué dans le jeu, d’être pris au jeu, d’être comme être d’entrée de jeu dans le jeu.”

“Dès lors on a dû sans doute commencer à penser qu’il n’y avait pas de centre, que le centre ne puovait être pensé dans la forme d’un étant-présent, que le centre n’avait pas de lieu naturel, qu’il n’était pas un lieu fixe mais une fonction, une sorte de non-lieu dans lequel se jouaient à l’infini des substitutions de signe. C’est alors le moment où le langage envahit le camp problématique universel; c’est alor le

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<sup>12</sup> Worthy of mentioning here are some of the European and Western intellectuals who have most vehemently acknowledged the value of Eastern thought, such as Max Müller, Arthur Schopenhauer, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Hermann Hesse, Henri Foucault, Aldous Huxley, Octavio Paz and Jorge Luis Borges in th 20<sup>th</sup> century.

moment où, en l'absence de centre ou d'origine, tout devient discours – à condition de s'entendre sur ce mot – c'est-à-dire système dans lequel le signifié central, originaire ou transcendantal, n'est jamais absolument présent hors d'un système de différences. L'absence de signifié transcendantal étend à l'infini le champ et le jeu de la signification.”<sup>13</sup>

Play-theory has in fact been a key concept in and has had great impact on the development of Western thought since the 18th century. In his book *Sport and the Spirit of Play in Contemporary American Fiction*, Christian Messenger traces historically the way in which various philosophers and thinkers of modern times have recurred to play-theory in order to propose explanations to human nature and existence in accordance to concepts such as language, beauty, freedom, and society:

”From Kant and Schiller in the eighteenth century down through Nietzsche and Heidegger, to Gadamer, Marcuse, Derrida, and Jameson in our time, concepts of play have been central and vital to the articulation of the individual subject's freedom as well as to that subject's ability to perceive beauty and to create it in language. Play has provided us with images, symbolic activity, joyful “purposeless” production, a safe harbor, a boundary space, a disguise, a vertigo, an existential errand, a structure, a freedom, a choice. Play is a powerful hermeneutic device in contemporary Western metaphysics and in musings on the death of that metaphysics. It is provocative when positioned between terms such as the sensual and the ethical, rite and myth, content and form, and the material and the spiritual”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Derrida, pp. 410-411. English translation taken from Macksey and Donato ed., 1972, p. 249: “The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure – although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the *épistémé* as philosophy or science – is contradictorily coherent. And, as always, coherence in contradiction expresses the force of a desire. The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a freeplay based on a fundamental ground, a freeplay which is constituted upon a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of the freeplay. With this certitude anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, of being caught by the game, of being as it were from the very beginning at stake in the game.

“From then on it was probably necessary to begin to think that there was no center, that the center had no natural locus, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This moment was that in which language invaded the universal problematic; that in which, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word – that is to say, when everything became a system where the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification *ad infinitum*.”

<sup>14</sup> Messenger, p. 11.

Highly worth noticing in this previous passage is the great amount of associations between various aspects of human existence that can be established through the concept of play: language, beauty, freedom, images, symbols, production, structure, choice, rite and myth, the sensual and the ethical, the material and the spiritual. Play is an element that seems to permeate a huge range of human endeavours, and even their totality, as thinkers such as Friedrich Schlegel and Johan Huizinga believe.

Huizinga's conclusion in his book *Homo Ludens* doesn't differ much from Schlegel's when the latter says: "All the sacred games of art are only remote imitations of the infinite play of the world, the eternally self-creating work of art."<sup>15</sup> Huizinga's conclusion is more radical as he extrapolates the reach of play and the play-instinct to all human endeavours; he affirms:

"We find no reason to abandon the notion of play as a distinct and highly important factor in the world's life and doings. For many years the conviction has grown upon me that civilization arises and unfolds in and as play."

"In culture we find play as a given magnitude existing before culture itself existed, accompanying it and pervading it from the earliest beginnings right up to the phase of civilization we are now living in. We find play present everywhere as a well-defined quality of action."<sup>16</sup>

Huizinga's study traces the play-element as being the root of all manifestations of civilization, including language, rites and rituals, religion, art, and aesthetics. Life in its entirety is a game.

In opposition to over-intellectual and logocentric attitudes towards existence, one of the most important achievements of play-theory is its capacity to answer fundamental and even ontological questions from a more flexible, expansive, encompassing and humane perspective. Paraphrasing Messenger, play-theory helps

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<sup>15</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, quoted by Higgs, p. 149.

<sup>16</sup> Huizinga, pp. 17 & 22.

find a way of thinking which is strong but flexible at the same time, and which is capable of reaching out to other non-intellectual experiences that provide knowledge such as the physical and the moral, in which ideas of beauty, unity, sublimation, and spiritualization find resonance: “Play is that figure of figures for the athlete, the novelist, the philosopher, the critic.”<sup>17</sup> This attitude is astoundingly akin to what Sri Chinmoy calls perfect Perfection, or the integral perfection and divinisation of human life.

It is precisely the understanding of the human being in its totality and the search for the unity of the different elements of human existence that is one of the issues which most strongly calls for the aid of play-theory. Messenger refers to this issue as a nostalgia for unity and completeness, and identifies it among the most prominent characteristics in Friedrich Schiller’s theories, which Messenger deems as crucial in the development of play-theory since the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

“If Schiller’s play is potentially revolutionary, it is also nostalgic, evoking at one and the same time the return to an original plenitude before the dissociative split into sense versus reason or matter versus spirit and the impossibility of such a return. Play reconstitutes the broken unity of the sensual and the moral in what Schiller would have called a “state of nature.” Such nostalgia for the completeness of content and form is real and powerful, as it works on any writer’s synthesizing imagination or on any artist or thinker’s quest for truth. This concept of a broken pattern and play’s tentative or provisional healing of it occurs again and again in play-theory.”<sup>18</sup>

Schiller gives a considerable emphasis to the inherent nature of play and to concepts such as *Stofftrieb* (“Sense Drive”), *Spieltrieb* (“Play Drive”), and *Formtrieb* (“Form Drive”), through which he intended to posit the unitary correlation between Sensuousness/Matter/Content (*Stofftrieb*), Aesthetics/Beauty/Freedom (*Spieltrieb*), and Reason/Ethics/Spirit (*Formtrieb*). However, the main issue in Schiller’s *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen (Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man)* is the role that the aesthetic and the beautiful play in the complete formation of the

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<sup>17</sup> Messenger, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Messenger, p. 5.

human being and the achievement of freedom, as for the author the realm of the aesthetic and the beautiful was a reflection of human essence. As Messenger points out, one of the main shortcomings in Schiller's theory was a surcharge of idealism, and over-theorizing that marginalized this highly aesthetic approach to play-theory and left it as a lofty ideal of German Classicism. Nevertheless, it was vital for the birth and overall development of play-theory, especially for the birth of the desire to strive towards the highest human ideals through a method that could encompass the totality of man. And, as it shall be seen, this aesthetic and unitary zeal has once again started to be recognised as a fundamental element in the relationship between play-theory and sports literature. It is likewise one of the pillars in Sri Chinmoy's work.

## 5. Logocentrism and Sports Literature.

It is now time to enter into the proper field of sports literature and expose in a more literary and analytical way its fundamental traits. Sports literature is based on the correlation between two specific areas, namely verbal language (literature, also extendable to the world of films) and physical movement (sports), and can be perceived as existing in three main forms:

- a. Journalism (basic sports writing, interviews, articles, reports, essays, which are ephemeral, short-lived, and time-bound);
- b. History and Sociology (as the history of sports and sportclubs, sports sociology and sports management, and biographies and autobiographies); and
- c. Creative sports literature (poetry, fiction, drama, and films about or involving sports).<sup>19</sup>

In their essay “See Spot Run: Movement as an Object of Textual Analysis”, facing the rigidities of a predominantly logocentric approach to the research of and literature on bodily movement, Markula and Denison tackle the problems of finding a fully adequate verbal means of expression, capable of transmitting all the wisdom and knowledge that movement (whether it be dance, running, or sports in general) offer the human being for the complete understanding of its nature:

“Although our kinesthetic sense may not be used in the same way as language –to communicate– it does provide us with knowledge. However, the problem is that we have difficulties demonstrating or sharing this knowledge through language or writing. As a result, movement is not recognized as valuable knowledge. How should we, then, present this knowledge? This is a very puzzling question, and we as researchers trained in the Western tradition find it very difficult to provide an answer to it. To tackle this question would mean challenging the entire notion of research as written communication.”<sup>20</sup>

One of the main points of debate in their paper is the incapability of a logocentric, rationalistic scholarly discourse to channel the full range of experiences

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<sup>19</sup> Prof. D’Arcy, Julian M. Lecture at the University of Iceland on “British and American Sports literature”, January 13, 2003. See also Umphlett, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Markula and Denison, p. 426.

acquired and communicable with the integral faculties of the human being, particularly through bodily expression, and the fact that although such intellectual and theoretical rigor has legitimized the study of and the writing about physical activity, it has likewise marginalized the body by privileging the mind and has deepened the dualism between body and mind. Markula and Denison's paper concludes not with a categorical proposal of how to solve this problem, but with a sum-up of their purpose and the validity of their questioning a logocentric approach towards movement and bodily knowledge:

“We have aimed to demonstrate how our Western notions of research rely on binary, hierarchical oppositions. We aim to challenge this premise as a construction that privileges the conceptualization of certain kinds of research, which at preset excludes the incorporated body. We feel, like numerous other researchers, that the moving body constitutes an important part of our understanding of what is meant to be human. Therefore, it is necessary to continually deconstruct the influence that binaries have on us.”<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to notice that although it is possible to classify Markula and Denison's paper under a type of sports literature, namely sociological sports literature or research, the authors focus on corporeal motion par-se and do not address the expressive capacities that creative sports literature (fiction, drama, poetry) could convey to the bodily movement in its communicative aims. In other words, if the main shortcoming of the logocentric writings on bodily movement is the lack of a fuller expressiveness to recreate the language of the body, it would not be farfetched to conjure that a less rationalistic verbal language, a more aesthetic, artistic and poetic language, a language which could itself embody the life, the power, the ecstasy, the joy of bodily movement and expression, would bridge the gulf between body and mind in this case: namely, the language of creative sports literature. It shall further be seen how Sri Chinmoy's approach to sports and his literary output in this field precisely bridge these gaps and encompass a fertile and variegated array of aspects that help constitute the fulfilling and joyous totality of human life.



## 6. Play-theory and Creative Sports Literature.

At this point we encounter a place of correspondence between the answers that a spiritual approach as that of Sri Chinmoy's, and an intellectual approach as that of Post-structuralism and play-theory, propose to fundamental questions of human existence that logocentric thought has been unable to respond to: the search of the contemporary man for a fuller and more complete understanding of his own existence, an understanding that encompasses and integrates all the ranges of his actions and endeavours, whether physical, vital, intellectual, psychic or spiritual. Creative sports literature, with its physical and vital sources and its aesthetic, artistic, fictional, poetic, and spiritual resources, is such a means. The following chapters will show how in a purposeful and fully conscious attitude, Sri Chinmoy's writings on sports posit such an integration of faculties.

Wiley Lee Umphlett's words regarding the capacity, drive and force that creative and particularly poetic sports literature have in fully conveying the communicational aims of bodily expression are highly eloquent; he recurs to citing and paraphrasing other authors to support his views:

“As poet David Evans has said, “Poets are word athletes [and] the poems they make are word performances,” which is especially true of poetry inspired by athletics. Thus Evan concludes that sports poetry can “remind us that the | body has its own language, its own wisdom.” It is this “athletic” quality of contemporary sports poetry, Johnson intimates, that can sensitize the reader to the complexities of the human condition as can no other creative mode.”<sup>22</sup>

Umphlett rounds up the capacity that the whole genre of sports literature has in channeling the human bodily means of wisdom and knowledge and thus its capacity in leading towards a fuller understanding of human nature. He not only points out the adequacy of creative sports literature in exploring athletic endeavour as a complementary side of human experience, but also of the other types of literature, namely supplemental sports literature. According to Umphlett, this latter

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<sup>21</sup> Markula and Denison, p. 429.

“illuminates this relationship by helping one understand (criticism), appreciate (philosophy), humanize (history, autobiography, and biography), and discern (special studies) the subtle issues as well as the larger question of sporting experience that the creative literature raises or merely suggests).”<sup>23</sup>

Authors like W.L. Umphlett and Robert Higgs are emphatic in explicating the close connection between play and sports and in affirming that, since its origins and through all the ramifications that have since developed, sports literature shares with the athletic disciplines that have inspired it an essential and innermost desire to help the human being –both individually and socially– attain a fuller understanding of his nature and a greater development of his entire capacities, not only on a physical plane, but also at spiritual, psychological, social, and, not surprisingly, aesthetic levels. These high goals and the influence that play-theory has had in clearing up the way for sports literature are beautifully exposed by Higgs in the following way:

“In all these views there is a common theme, the desire for a better world, a creative world in which suffering will no longer dominate. There is a unified call almost for a genuine understanding of the self and nature, an assumption or belief that when human beings really know themselves and the world they will find that the essence of being is play, which of course means fair play and equality. It can even be said that play theorists in all disciplines want in some ways to return to Eden. All point to barriers that seem secondary or artificial – Derrida (and even Einstein) to language, Miller and Neale to sin, and Hearn to social classes. In Eden there were no words, no sin, and no economic order. There was, however, play (...).”<sup>24</sup>

Inherent to what Higgs refers to as a “return to Eden” is a very meaningful range of values and experiences that derive from play. These values and experiences include those of Joy, Delight, Ecstasy; Freedom, Light, Peace; Force, Strength, Power; Rhythm, Harmony, Beauty; and Knowledge, Wisdom and Truth, all of them as a result of the individual’s self-search, the search for his highest self. These are all values which Sri Chinmoy recurrently addresses in his works. However, before entering into the arena of Sri Chinmoy’s writings, it is useful to see how different theorists and authors have conceived the relationship between play and sports and

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<sup>22</sup> Umphlett, pp. 16-17.

<sup>23</sup> Umphlett, p. 17.

examine up to what extent the above mentioned values are also to be found in athletic disciplines and the literature they have inspired. This is of great importance as in the course of history sports, although inherently being an extension of the play drive, have acquired different values than those attached to the mere concept of play. For our modern life-style has in many cases, due to various social and economic reasons, influenced and even distorted the purity and the diaphanous search for the Edenic that lie so profoundly in the bosom of play.

Parallel to the “Edenic” concept of literature addressed above, Higgs posits the existence of yet another side of the play drive which he calls the “agonic”. Higgs explains:

“[The Edenic aspect of play is] simple, free, nonegalitarian, and non competitive, which many bright minds thoroughly endorse and which is applauded by all. There is, however, a less conspicuous side of play-theory, an agonic side, a competitive or scorekeeping aspect that is analogous to the idea of contests (agon) that lies at the heart of the sports literature tradition. Sports imply competition and, of course, prizes and rules, and wherever there are prizes and rules there are questions of performance (excellence or *arete*) and behavior (ethics). This is not to say that play is not concerned with these matters. But so often in the idea of what is normally called play, emphasis is placed upon communion instead of individual struggle or achievement – or failure. To paraphrase Herman Melville, in no world but a fallen one could sports exist; play, on the other hand, existed in the unfallen one and the fallen, though it keeps reminding over and over that its true home is prelapsarian Eden (...). Play emphasizes pleasure and being; sports meaning and becoming.”<sup>25</sup>

Under the light of the “agonic” principle, and at a considerable distance from the “Edenic” concept of play, sports can be conceived as a more mentally organised type of play with a more specifically communal or social value. This social character of sports empowers even more the “agonic” drive of man, that is, the desire of competing and of achieving not only a certain type of joy, freedom, simplicity, innocence, delight or progress, but even some sort of superiority or supremacy above others in a specific field of action. Therefore, as Higgs explains, the “Edenic”

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<sup>24</sup> Higgs, p. 146.

<sup>25</sup> Higgs, p. 148.

attainment of joy and innocence essential of play has been somehow transfigured. Messenger goes further in analysing the case of competition in sports of a professional nature, particularly in our modern materialistic and capitalistic culture, where a network of productive and consumptive relations affect the pure original play drive towards the natural and the delightful. Not surprisingly, this competitive nature has become such an ingrained element of athletic disciplines that it reflects in the sports literature which is inclined towards the more agonistic side of sports and its social manifestations<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> See Messenger, p. 11. Messenger argues that modern capitalistic values are one of the main reasons for which a play-theory such as Schiller's, plentiful in artistic and aesthetic values, has inevitably lost validity in our present world.

## 7. Sri Chinmoy's Writings on Sports.

Sri Chinmoy's sports literature includes poetry (also in the form of songs), essays, homage-books dedicated to remarkable sportsmen, philosophical comments, and insights into the world of sports presented in the form of questions and answers.<sup>27</sup> Sri Chinmoy is not only a prolific author but also a vigorous sportsman and enthusiast, and a spiritual leader whose teachings are founded on a solid spiritual philosophy of life. In his sports literature he therefore regularly expounds the value, both athletic and spiritual –and at other levels as well, as it shall be seen–, that qualities such as simplicity, purity, humility, innocence, peace, joy, light, and delight have in human life.

Two other pillar aspects of Sri Chinmoy's ideology which find full expression in his writings on sports are those of *self-transcendence* and *oneness*. Through *self-transcendence* the athlete aspires to compete against his own self, to do his best and surpass his previous personal achievements rather than to excel over his peers. The athlete that experiences *oneness* has the capacity to identify himself with other participants and develop a feeling of unity in which all athletes are simultaneously moving towards the goal and inspiring each other mutually to reach this goal. Therefore, both self-transcendence and oneness are attitudes that make of the athletic endeavour much more than a mere competitive act, rather a collective and even spiritual experience in which the personal success and growth of all participants and the sheer joy implied in the act of participating become the main motivations for the athlete, instead of mere competitiveness or economic reasons –as is usually the case with professional sports–.

“In the outer life, we are all the time trying to transcend ourselves (...) While we are running, our aim is to make progress. Progress is our goal – not success, as such.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Some titles worthy of being mentioned are the anthology *The Outer Running and the Inner Running* (poetry, essays, questions and answers); *Run and Smile, Smile and Run* (answers to questions of renowned marathon runners) *Run and Become, Become and Run* (essays and anecdotes of the running world); *Aspiration-Body, Illumination-Soul* and *Soul-Illumination-Shrine, Body-Preparation-Temple* (these two on weight-lifting and body-building, including questions and answers); *Meditative Reflections on Peace for the Athlete* (poems, aphorisms and meditations); and homages for remarkable sportsmen such as Carl Lewis, Emil Zatopek, Bill Pearl and Muhammad Ali.

<sup>28</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Jharna-Kala*, p. 21.

“Because of the feeling of separativity in the mind, we may get fleeting satisfaction when we defeat others (...) But perhaps quite a few times during practice we have | had more illuminating and more fulfilling satisfaction, for practice carries the message of oneness and self-transcendence, whereas competition carries the message of division and supremacy.”<sup>29</sup>

The case of professional sports has a place of its own in the athletic world and in Sri Chinmoy’s writings as well. Professional athletes are most of the time motivated by a desire of triumph and even by more base desires related to economic wealth and recognition. Sri Chinmoy comments the following:

“There is a possibility that a professional will pay more attention to money-power, name and fame, whereas the amateur only practises out of a desire for self-improvement or a love of the sport. To some extent he has freed himself from greed for money or fame or success, which is a heavy load to carry on one’s shoulders (...) While practising, the amateur needs to concentrate only on self-transcendence and self-improvement, which give him tremendous joy. But the professional is obliged to think of contests and competitions if he wants to be successful [and he] may not keep in mind the supreme necessity of progress.”<sup>30</sup>

Sri Chinmoy’s attitude in this respect finds close resonance with what Messenger considers about the world of professional sports. Messenger explains his views through the figure of the “sports hero” who above all seeks the “origins of physical delight” and the most diaphanous elements of sports before they are distorted by a network of social, professional and capitalistic structures in which the athletic primeval nature is lost. As Messenger comments, that search for the primal and delightful origins of play holds within itself an aspiration to “play beyond limits” which reminds of Sri Chinmoy’s concept of self-transcendence:

“The sports hero or player often desires the “play back to,” the desire merely to feel his or her body as a smooth-running whole or to “get back to” the elements of sport before it was taken over in his or her life by patriarchs, coaches, fans, leagues, and schedules. Players wish to “play back to” the origins of their physical delight. Just as often, they

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<sup>29</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Run and Smile – Smile and Run*, pp. 2-3 & 40.

<sup>30</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Soul-Illumination-Shrine, Body-Preparation-Temple*, p. 3.

wish to “play beyond” limits, get beyond self and the body’s limitations to do what has never before been achieved.”<sup>31</sup>

As stated before, Sri Chinmoy’s writings on sports are eloquent spokesmen of the author’s integral philosophy of life, in which all the elements that constitute the human nature have each their place as individual entities and as part of a bigger unity. Sri Chinmoy’s philosophy of life is of a spiritual nature, and therefore the values for which he advocates are above all spiritual. At the same time, Sri Chinmoy states that spirituality, being the Source of all existence and being the essence human nature, is able to encompass all other fields of human endeavour. This is the reason for which his philosophy, and in this particular case his writings on sports, encompass and integrate fields as varied but inwardly as related as yoga, spiritual philosophy, aesthetics, literature, poetry, music, art, and sports itself, not only as a theoretical subject, but as a discipline to be practiced, benefited from, and appreciated. Likewise, Sri Chinmoy is emphatic in stating that in order to obtain the highest benefits in the integral blossoming of human potentiality, the practice of running and physical exercise should be done in the right attitude, that is to say, not with competitive egoistic goals, but with the ever-expanding goals of oneness and self-transcendence, satisfaction and perfection. These themes shall be further expounded in the following chapters.

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<sup>31</sup> Messenger, p. 18.

## 7.1. Running, Yoga, and Spiritual Philosophy.

Sri Chinmoy is a spiritual teacher of yogic nature. His teachings strive for the perfection of human life and the attainment of oneness with God the Creator and the revelation of the innermost truths of existence: “Yoga reveals the supreme secret: man is the God of tomorrow and God is the man of today.”<sup>32</sup> Man attains his perfect perfection, that is integrally, when he recognises and consciously propels the development of all the components of his existence, both inner and outer, spiritual and physical: the body, the vital, the mind, the heart and the soul.

One of the most recurrent metaphors that Sri Chinmoy uses as a parallel between the inner and the outer life is that of the runner, especially the marathon runner, who in the inner world is running along the path of Eternity towards his spiritual development –competing against imperfection, ignorance and hostile forces such as fear, doubt, anxiety, depression, worry, jealousy, insecurity, hesitation, and despair–, and in the outer world is running to attain progress, overcome his limitations and transcend his own previous achievements:

“Try to be a runner,  
and try all the time to surpass  
and go beyond all that is bothering you  
and standing in your way.  
Be a real runner so that ignorance,  
limitations and imperfections  
will all drop far behind you in the race.”<sup>33</sup>

This twofold run, inner and outer, is evidently of both a spiritual and earthly nature, where the earthly existence includes physical, vital, and mental components. Moreover, this double running is of a reciprocal essence insofar as the spiritual running supports and strengthens the physical running, and viceversa. Sri Chinmoy beautifully expresses this idea in a poem which he has also set to music, “Run and Become”:

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<sup>32</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Yoga and the Spiritual Life*, p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Meditative Reflections on Peace for the Athlete*, p. 22.



“Run and become.  
Become and run.  
Run to succeed in the outer world.  
Become to proceed in the inner world.”<sup>34</sup>

Besides its value as an instrument for maintaining physical fitness and health, Sri Chinmoy emphasises other aspects of a more psychological and spiritual nature which sports, and especially running, help to develop. Through running, man can access and experience states of consciousness that include and at the same transcend the merely physical and mental and merge into spiritual, psychic and mystic dimensions.

On a physical level, running not only keeps the body fit and healthy, but can also show man the unlimited nature of his capacities. As Sri Chinmoy explains, the physical, being an extension of the Source Divine, should be able to reach an unlimited capacity which at the moment is veiled by the rigid conceptions of the mind:

“The physical also has unlimited capacity, in a sense. It has the ability to establish a free access to the Source, the Unlimited Energy. But the physical is not getting the opportunity to establish this free access because of the mind. The mind is putting, let us say unconsciously, pressure on the physical. It is not allowing the physical to be in tune with the heart or with its | inner existence, and it keeps the physical always apart from its totality.”<sup>35</sup>

Sri Chinmoy advocates for a more intimate relationship and understanding between body and mind in which both will be able to achieve the maximum of their capacities, their improvement and perfection. On a psychological level, physical activity has the ability to help the mind and the emotions in various ways, for instance in clarifying and simplifying our thoughts, in purifying our vital desires, and in offering joy, innocent happiness and satisfaction:

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<sup>34</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *The Inner Running and the Outer Running*, p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Jharna-Kala*, pp. 21-22.

“While practising, you are consciously working to transcend your capacities. At that time, you are listening to the message of the ever-transcending Beyond, and this message itself is complete satisfaction. But when you compete against others, you are more concerned with victory than with self-transcendence (...) When you practise, you and your aspiration, you and your dedication, you and your eagerness to increase your capacities work together for your improvement and perfection. And from improvement and perfection, you are bound to get abiding satisfaction.”<sup>36</sup>

The Olympic Games and the World Masters Games, as embodiments of the human athletic spirit and its highest ideals, are invaluable for their capacity to offer mankind joy, happiness, fulfillment and love. Alluding to the play-nature of these games and the innocent, child-like qualities they inspire, Sri Chinmoy has said the following:

“The Olympics are an unprecedented, auspicious, glorious and precious Greece-vision. This vision is nothing other than world-happiness. Happiness is love bubbling forth into the newness and fulness of true life, illumining life and fulfilling life.”

“The World Masters Games will become very popular in terms of bringing real joy to mankind. In the Olympics, each individual is trying to get a gold medal. But the real meaning behind the gold medal is joy (...) We are here at the Masters Games to make ourselves feel that we are children – God’s children. For it is only children who have higher goals and make progress.”<sup>37</sup>

Psychologically and spiritually, running helps the athlete to clarify and simplify his mind, to purify his vital desires, and at the same time to establish values such as love, oneness, and goodwill, as well as simplicity, sincerity, humility, which are of paramount importance for attaining superb performances both in the inner and the outer race:

“When we are competing with ourselves, we know that we have to purify our inner existence in order to improve. When it is a matter of self-transcendence, we have to depend on our inner purity, inner love, vastness and oneness with the rest of the world. We try to develop

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<sup>36</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Run and Smile, Smile and Run*, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *The Inner Running and the Outer Running*, p. 23 & pp. 162-163.

universal goodwill, whereas, while competing with others, we may not have those feelings. At that time, we may see others as rivals, we are on the border of enmity with them.”<sup>38</sup>

From a strictly spiritual perspective, running has also the capacity to offer the athlete with invaluable tools of growth and self-discovery that can cross the threshold of mystical experiences, as the discovery of higher states of consciousness and of higher, spiritual sources of force and energy. As Sri Chinmoy explains, the runner, particularly the long-distance runner, when focusing all his attention on his discipline, is in a position to free his mind from uncomely distractions. This intense concentration is the first step towards transcending normal mental boundaries and establishing a meditative and contemplative consciousness of a highly spiritual nature:

“I wish to say that running has its own inner value. While you run, each breath that you take is connected with a higher reality. While you are jogging, if you are in a good consciousness, your breath is being blessed by a higher inner breath (...) If you are in a good consciousness while you are running, each breath will connect you with a higher, deeper, inner reality (...) If you want to get the benefit of a higher force or higher reality for your physical body, then running is absolutely necessary. I am not saying that you have to run the fastest. Even while jogging, you can feel that you have two breaths. One is a higher breath. Something is pulling you up or you are carrying yourself up. The other is your body’s breath. The two are combined together.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Run and Smile, Smile and Run*, p. 40.

<sup>39</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Sri Chinmoy Answers, Part 33*, pp. 17-18.

## 7.2. The Art of Running: Running, Aesthetics and Art.

“The seeker-runner’s glorification is a beautiful flower that charms and inspires his entire life. The seeker-runner’s illumination is a fruitful tree that shelters and nourishes his entire earthly existence. The outer runner runs through the golden gate and arrives at the sound-kingdom. The inner runner enters into the unique palace, runs up to its highest floor and places himself at the very Feet of the Silence-King.”<sup>40</sup>

Among the most significant features of Sri Chinmoy’s writings is its highly metaphorical and poetic nature. This highly poetic and symbolic language is a key instrument in bridging the gulf existing between the different planes that are at play, that is, in establishing an integration of the spiritual, psychic, intellectual and physical aspects of human nature. Through the use of poetic language, Sri Chinmoy employs strong aesthetic values in which the search for the beautiful is a guiding line. The aesthetic and artistic experience thus becomes a central element in the attainment of an integral and comprehensive understanding of the essence and totality of human nature which leads towards its perfection. This can be seen in the following poems:

“The outer life is like a beautiful flower  
and the inner life is its fragrance.  
If there is no fragrance,  
then we cannot appreciate the flower.  
Again, if there is no flower,  
how can there be any fragrance?  
So the inner life and the outer life  
must go together.  
The body is like a temple  
and the soul or inner reality is like  
the shrine inside the body-temple.”

“The athlete, during practice, should feel  
that he is preparing himself to become a beautiful flower.  
Then, at the time of competition,  
he has to feel  
that he has grown into the beautiful flower  
and is now all ready to place himself  
at the Feet of his Lord Supreme.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *The Inner Running and the Outer Running*, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Meditative Reflections on Peace for the Athlete*, pp. 6 & 7.

In his essay “Sport, Art, and Aesthetics: A Decade of Controversy (1978-1988),” Daniel J. Herman acknowledges the importance of the relationship that has been established between philosophy, aesthetics, art and sports, and their value towards an integral approach to everyday life, and comments: “An integral part of everyday life has finally come into the philosophical limelight, and | for this development one must be grateful to the sport aestheticians and their untiring search for meaningful relationships between art and sport.”<sup>42</sup> As an exemplary representative of this integral ideology and even transcending the limits of the written page, Sri Chinmoy’s writings become meta-linguistic insofar as they advocate for a practical exertion, an execution, a translation of the beauty perceived and transmitted through the poetry into the very core of physical existence, as in the case of the athlete who practices in order to make of his outer life “a beautiful flower” and of his inner life “the flower’s fragrance”. This aesthetisation of life thus transcends the limits of the merely literary or theoretical, and becomes a reality attainable by any human being on the path of self-transcendence, improvement and beautification of life.

Thus the athlete is in the position not only of consciously irradiating his life with beauty but is, on the strength of his inner and outer discipline, in a most intimate connection to an aesthetically or artistically surcharged life with high spiritual values, as shown in the following poem:

“An athlete is already an artist.  
Art means discipline.  
The supreme art is a disciplined life.  
He who has disciplined his life  
is a great discoverer of truth, light, beauty,  
peace and bliss.”<sup>43</sup>

The athlete-artist can thus steadily advance on his path towards inner and outer completion and perfection on the strength of an integral approach to life in which the beautiful or aesthetic becomes a linking bridge between the physical, intellectual, psychic and spiritual.

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<sup>42</sup> Herman, pp. 163-164.

<sup>43</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *Meditative Reflections on Peace for the Athlete*:

### 7.3. The Ever-Transcending Beyond.

Although having a strong preference for running, Sri Chinmoy's appreciation of the athletic world includes sports like weight-lifting, body-building, tennis, swimming and cycling, which he equally approaches from a spiritual and metaphorical perspective that gives the athletic experience a more integral role in the global understanding of human life. In the case of tennis and triathlons, for instance, Sri Chinmoy has established the following symbology:

“Playing tennis reminds us of being an instrument. The tennis ball is a self-giving instrument, always trying to please us in our own way. Whichever way we want to strike it, the tennis ball surrenders. So tennis reminds us of a divine goal, which is to become a perfect instrument of God and to please God in His own Way.”

“I have the deepest admiration for those who participate in triathlons. Swimming reminds us of our spiritual life. Right now we are swimming in the sea of ignorance, but we are praying to our Beloved Supreme and meditating on Him to be able to swim in the sea of Light and Delight. When we are running, we are reminded of our birthless and deathless journey along Eternity's Road. Then, while we are cycling, we are reminding ourselves of evolution, of how the world is evolving in cycles.”<sup>44</sup>

Having been an enthusiastic sportsman since childhood, Sri Chinmoy himself has always practised some type of athletic activity. He was a prominent runner until age 54 when, due to a knee injury, he had to pause his intense running and decided to concentrate on weight-lifting. In this field, he has set several world records according to his philosophy of constant self-transcendence.

Sri Chinmoy's high esteem of athletic practices has not only found lavish expression in his writings, but has transcended the limits of the printed page and the poetic utterance, and blossomed into a rich and variegated personal athletic life. It has even more flourished in the lives of countless other people who have found inspiration in the example of this august global man. Some of the most significant results are the various sports activities and programmes that have been organised under Sri Chinmoy's inspiration and guidance, such as the ones mentioned and briefly explained here below.

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<sup>44</sup> Sri Chinmoy: *The Inner Running and the Outer Running*, pp. 136 and 139.

The “Sri Chinmoy World Harmony Run”, a pioneering endeavour constituting the world’s longest, largest participation torch relay for world harmony that has ever existed. Runners and laymen of all over the world have the opportunity to carry a torch as it progressively advances along its world-wide course, in more than 70 countries over a period of nine months.

Based on two classical running distances are the “Two Mile Race” (previously known as “Runners are Smilers”) and the “Self-Transcendence Marathon”. These events are regularly organised so that participants may share and enjoy a feeling of oneness, and at the same time may have a specific goal to transcend their previous performances in running the traditional marathon distance or the shorter two mile course.

Multi-Day Races lasting 6 and 10 days, and Ultramarathons of 700, 1000, 1300 and 3100 miles taking up to more than 50 days of continuous running. These events are often experienced as remarkable feats that are less of a sporting achievement than a spiritual one in which the inner and outer journey are vividly and intensely intertwined.

“Lifting Up the World With a Oneness Heart”, a unique programme through which Sri Chinmoy offers a special award to recognise individuals from all walks of life who have inspired and uplifted humanity. Sri Chinmoy lifts the recipients overhead either with one arm or both arms using a specially constructed platform, in a symbolic gesture of oneness with their uplifting achievements.<sup>45</sup>

“The Body’s Fitness-Gong, the Soul’s Fulness-Song”, a yearly weight-lifting festival in which Sri Chinmoy himself lifts all imaginable things, from dumbbells to people, horses, elephants, boats, cars, airplanes and houses.

As their names testify, an undying spiritual and aesthetic spirit imbues all of these activities as they consciously aspire to support man in his quest for inner and outer self-transcendence and perfection, Sri Chinmoy himself becoming an instrument of inspiration and encouragement for others.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See the direct link at [http://www.srichinmoy.org/html/service/lifting\\_up\\_the\\_world.html](http://www.srichinmoy.org/html/service/lifting_up_the_world.html)

<sup>46</sup> For more information about these activities, visit Sri Chinmoy’s Official Website at <http://www.srichinmoy.org> or the Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team Website at <http://www.srichinmoyraces.org>

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Sri Chinmoy on the World Wide Web:

- <http://www.srichinmoy.org> : Sri Chinmoy's Official Website

- <http://www.srichinmoyraces.org> : The Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team.