



Swami says

Indian spiritualist is the go-getter's guru

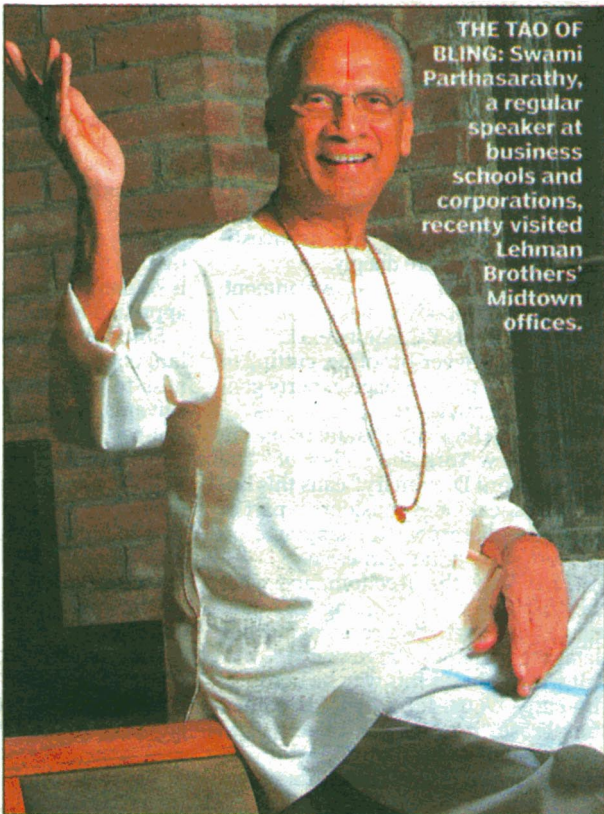
BY RAAKHEE MIRCHANDANI

FROM Bombay to the boardroom, Swami Parthasarathy is breaking it down — to shine in the corporate world, employees have to learn how to manage, control and inspire themselves.

And they should buy a watch, too.

"I came from 80,000 miles and was on time, and you came from upstairs and are late," the fiery Indian spiritualist harangued a crowd of 30 executives in the auditorium of Lehman Brothers' Midtown offices recently, after being made to wait more than 15 minutes to begin his lecture, "Self Management in the Corporate World."

"If you can't manage yourselves and your time, I don't understand how you're going to manage your jobs," he said, as several in the audience quickly reached for their cell-phones to make sure the ringers were shut off.



THE TAO OF BLING: Swami Parthasarathy, a regular speaker at business schools and corporations, recently visited Lehman Brothers' Midtown offices.

Christian Johnson

The swami and the suits had gotten off to a rough start.

But if the 80-year-old philosopher seemed an odd match for the aspiring Masters of the Universe in his audience, and if his traditional head-to-toe white garb stood out in the buttoned-down precincts of a white-shoe investment banking firm, it's a culture clash the swami is used to. The Bombay resident has been tapped by the World Bank, Harvard Business School and, more recently, the Wharton School of Business and Lehman Brothers to dish on how coupling ancient Indian ideals with modern business savvy is the recipe for corporate success.

Parthasarathy has tasted corporate success himself: He's a London University graduate and had a lucrative career in the family shipping business before he quit to address himself to more spiritual pursuits — giving away his Rolls-Royce in the process.

He preaches Vedanta, a school of Hindu philosophy that focuses on mental peace and clarity of the intellect. When translated, Vedanta is broken down into ved (truth) and anta (end) — but Parthasarathy defines the word as the “culmination of knowl-

edge” or “the ultimate knowledge.”

Parthasarathy says he isn't trying to teach those in the business world how to make more money — after all, he's been teaching Vedanta for the past 50 years for free and considers himself “unemployed.” He says he doesn't even charge a speaker's fee, goes wherever he's invited, and leaves it up to each institution to make a donation to his school and ashram in India.

But he does promise that those who follow his precepts of self-management will reap numerous benefits: among them an easier climb up the corporate ladder.

Parthasarathy, who hit Lehman Brothers on a two-week U.S. speaking tour, maintains a Vedanta school outside Bombay, where students study yoga, meditation and philosophy from 4 a.m. to 9 p.m. for three years — with no vacation days.

And the remarkably youthful and feisty octogenarian still practices what he preaches. He still does yoga, jogs and plays cricket, and has recently earned the “Man of the Match” title for his school, the sport's equivalent of an MVP.

As he lays out for his listeners at Lehman Brothers, Parthasarathy believes the mind and the intellect are

the driving forces behind all our actions. The mind contains our emotions, feelings, impulses and likes and dislikes, while the intellect reasons and decides. In order to make good decisions, he says, people need to develop their intellect so that it has control over the wayward tendencies of the mind.

“The mind has a tendency to ramble into the past, present and future — constantly worried about what happened or anxious about what will happen,” he says. “By the end of the day you're tired, and by the end of the week you can't function. All the anxiety and an overworked mind makes you tired. These constant desires must be controlled by the intellect; if not you get in to greed and lust, and that disturbs the mind even further.”

A far cry from the Greed is Good maxim of the 1980s — and perhaps a bit abstract for a group of high financiers. But the swami believes that a little mental rigor can be the key to success, financial and otherwise.

“Yoga has become so commercial here in the States, but that only strengthens your body,” he says. “But what about your mind? A strong body is one thing and a strong mind another.”