

Chinmaya Smrithi



A Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC)
Volume 18, Number 2 -- March 6, 2008

"Nature specializes in a kind of paradox -
Nature destroys and her destructions are always constructive destructions.
The bud is destroyed when the flower blooms,
and the flower fades when the fruit emerges,
and the fruit decays when the seeds are scattered,
the seeds decay when plants sprout.
This process of constructive destruction is Shiva, the annihilator."
- Swami Chinmayananda

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Next Issue

- May 2008, Articles due by April 20 2008
- Email submissions to smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Submission instructions at www.chinmayadc.org, Smrithi link, "Information on publishing in Smrithi"
- Contact us at smrithi@chinmayadc.org with your feedback or questions.

News, Calendar and Upcoming Events

- Registration In Progress
 - Mahasamadhi Camp 2008 (July 28th – August 3rd)
 - Summer Camp (VA: June 23 – July 18; MD: Aug 5 – Aug 15)
- Swami Ishwarananda Spiritual Camp on Kaivalya Upanishad, March 21-23
- Satyanarayana Puja – Saturday, April 19 at Chinmayam
- Hanuman Jayanthi Celebration – Sunday, April 20 at Chinmayam
- National Youth Seva – Saturday, April 26
- Seva Day, Chinmaya Jayanthi Observed – May 3
- Gita Chanting 2008 – May 4 at Chinmayam
- Tabla Talent Day – May 10 at Chinmayam
- Bala Vihar Graduation Day – May 17 at Chinmayam

Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Vijay Kumar ji by email at vijaykumar@rocketmail.com, if you are interested in forming or learning more about study groups.

Bookstore/Library

- Please contact Mr Vijay Singh by email at publications@chinmayadc.org to order any publication. Review list of Chinmaya Publications by downloading <http://www.cybermatics2.com/cmadmin/PriceListMay2007.pdf>

Useful Links:

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center
 Washington Region – Dulles VA Chapter website
 Washington Region – Springfield VA Chapter website
 Washington Region – Frederick MD Chapter website
 Chinmaya West Website
 Chinmaya Mission Trust
 Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta courses

www.chinmayadc.org
www.chinmayadulles.org
www.chinmayava.org
www.chinmayafrederick.org
www.chinmayamission.org
www.chinmayamission.com
www.chinfo.org

Editorial Staff:

Raju Chidambaram, Sitaram Kowtha, Swami Dheerananda ji, Acharyas, Chapter Coordinators and Teachers. ☺

Bala Vihar students - Asmi Panigrabi, Harsha Neerchal and Srikanth Kowtha

Learning with Lord Krishna

Anil Kishore
Director – Bala Vihar (Chinmayam)

Every year Bala Vihar team holds its Annual Teachers' Retreat, it is an endorsement of our commitment to teaching. We share our values, our vision and our mission in making our children first and foremost in our educational process. This is also a day of self development and a presentation by one of our acharyas is a keynote address during the retreat



This year our Bala Vihar teachers convened for the 2008 Bala Vihar Teachers' Retreat on Saturday, February 9. The keynote speaker was none other than our own Acharya Arpitaji from CM-Goverdhan, St. Augustine, FL. Brahmacharini Arpitaji is one of the founding acharyas for our own Bala Vihar program and bringing her back home was in itself a treat for many of us. Her discourse entitled *Journey to Love, Healing and Wholeness Through Sri Krishna Leela* was very inspirational. It reminded us that all of us are born with innate joy, love and creativity. Our feelings and dreams are God's voice inside us speaking the prophecy of who He is. Each child is a star with unique qualities as Lord Krishna says in the Bhagwad Geeta, *I am the eternal seed of all beings* (7:10). This prophecy is a message from the Lord and we have to learn to hear the prophecy within us because when we fail to do so we are misguided.

Arpitaji used the example of the birth of Lord Krishna. He was born in the prison, dark, damp and miserable. Whereas a pessimist might narrate his birth as a "sad, weepy story" of a child born in the worst of circumstances, only to be given up to foster parents, one must also remember that crisis is often the birth of a spiritual awakening. Vasudeva and Devaki wanted to save the child from Kansa (Kansa means one who divides, one with a vision of duality, note that this is a human condition that gives us a sense of delusion.) The moment Vasudeva took his first step to deliver infant Krishna out of prison, as commanded by the Lord, the jail gates were thrown open, guards fell off to sleep and he carried Krishna across the Yamuna on his head. Symbolically, Vasudeva kept the Lord his highest priority and to do so is to do God's will. The river waters raged on the stormy night and as soon as they touched Krishna's feet they subsided. While a pessimist might think of Krishna being given to a foster home, in His leela Krishna being transferred to Gokul also means that we are to always share our spiritual gifts with others: no gift is for us alone!! He brought happiness to all whom he interacted with or to whom he was "given."



We are nourished by being in the community and by singing His praises. Putana represents spiritual ignorance and basis of negativity which attempts to destroy our Knowledge of Oneness in its infancy. It is the poisonous thoughts and bitterness that brings negativity. As Krishna sucks out the poison, what is left is the fragrance and the sweetness. When we teach our children, provide them the spiritual nourishment, we too should take the time to reason with them and relate to them so that we can help them remove their fear, anger and doubts and help them grow.

In many stories from the Bhagavatam, Arpitaji awakened the thoughts in us and provided us with a valuable insight to our thought processes. Lord Krishna comes to us in darkness and despair to liberate us. When crisis struck Arjuna in Mahabharata, Lord Krishna himself brought him spiritually through the Geeta. The desperation, confusion, procrastination and anger in the battlefield was changed into a spiritual discourse by Him. Our greatest wounds become our greatest gifts when healed spiritually. God does not abandon us in times of difficulty, similarly helping a child vocalize his/her concerns helps in their spiritual nourishing. As we listen to them, embrace them they calm down and lose their negative feelings.



The teachers are extremely thankful to Brni Arpitaji for taking the time and presenting us with this beautiful discourse. We were also fortunate to have ALL CMWRC Acharyas present at the retreat. Swamiji was accompanied by Acharya Vilasiniji (Regional Director for Bala Vihar), Acharya Pramilaji (Springfield), Acharya Anantji (Dulles). The teachers assembled class by class to discuss ideas and share thoughts about the classes. We also heard about the

eVedanta course from Anantji. You can get detailed information from the links on our website.

In the morning Acharya Vilasiniji set the intention for the day with a meditation on allowing Lord's spirit to flow through us to the children. The teachers saw two beautiful DVDs. The first one showed Gurudev narrating a story to the children. His facial expressions and enactment of the bhajan were being appreciated by the children as apparent from their responses. It was a true example how a teacher, our master, could involve the children in a spiritual satsang. The next DVD was a new release produced by Brni Arpitaji on Swami Tejomayananda. His accomplishments in taking the lead from Gurudev were shown in a variety of clips. This DVD, A Light for Us All, also showed the growth and accomplishment of CM centers worldwide and the influence that Guruji has on the sevaks.

Many teachers missed this wonderful opportunity of self development. Please mark your calendars, it is held on the second weekend of February each year. Our sincere thanks to all the teachers who joined us and our Coordinators who helped make this event successful. More particularly Rekha Boray, Vandana Bapna, Raja Kirkire, and Andrea Beri for supporting the event. Last but not the least, Vijay Singh for being there to man the bookstore.



Chinmaya Mission®

Washington Regional Center

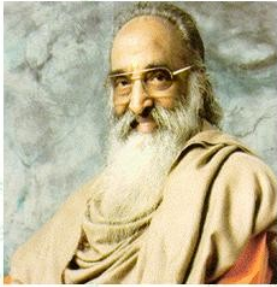
Mahasamadhi Family Camp 2008

Mon. JULY 28 – Sun. AUGUST 3, 2008

At Rocky Gap Resort, Cumberland, MD

NEAR WASHINGTON, DC

Conducted by **Swami Tejomayananda**



Listen to Mundaka Upanishad and absorb the timeless teachings to experience our inner Self, from Swami Tejomayananda, head of Chinmaya Mission worldwide. Several acharyas will be present for meditation, satsangs, and children's activities.

The backdrop for the retreat is the serene, nature-filled, award-winning Rocky Gap Resort and Lodges (www.rockygapresort.com), in Cumberland, Maryland. The resort is surrounded by hills and an alpine lake and is adjacent to Rocky Gap State Park. It combines the best of quiet resort luxury and the calm serenity of mother nature. The entire lodge has been reserved for use by the Mission during the retreat.

ADULTS

- 3 TALKS A DAY BY SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA ON MUNDAKA UPANISHAD
- MORNING GUIDED MEDITATION, GROUP DISCUSSIONS, DISCOURSES BY ACHARYAS
- UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN A MAHASAMADHI DAY PUJA WITH PUJYA GURUJI AND ACHARYAS

YOUTH

- TALKS, DISCUSSION, Q&A LED BY ACHARYAS GEARED TOWARDS COLLEGE STUDENTS & YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
- OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES INCLUDING NATURE TRAILS

CHILDREN

- BALA VIHAR CLASS ACTIVITIES BY ACHARYAS AND DEDICATED TEACHERS
- CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, EVENING BONFIRE AND OUTDOOR GAMES ACTIVITIES

Registration is now open—Download form, more info at www.chinmayadc.org

E-Mail: mahasamadhicamp2008@chinmayadc.org



G O D

*Apurva Nayak,
Shivam, Dulles*

Isn't it amazing that nature knows what to do without anybody telling them!
Flowers, when they lose their petals, they don't just die, they send seeds flying
around and when the wind dies, the seeds rest on the ground waiting to make
new flowers.

When we waste something, the ants come to pick it up. They are just like
policemen that capture FOOD!!!

Crickets, they make a wonderful, invisible band outside in the evening.
WHO TELLS Animals, Plants to make the world such a wonderful place, WHO??

G O D

GOD makes this world a wonderful place to live!

"Always do your duty to others, but love,
you must give to God alone. Worldly love
always brings in its wake, untold misery"

- Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi

Quiz: Our Solar System

Contributed by Shyam Harohalli

1. How long does earth take to complete a revolution around Sun (in days)?
 (a) 365.25 (b) 365.00 (c) 364.25 (d) 366.00
2. How many days are there in the calendar year April 1st, 2003 through March 31st, 2004?
 (p) 365 (q) 365.25 (r) 366 (s) 366.25
3. How long does moon take to go around earth once (in days)?
 (x) 30.5 (y) 27.5 (z) 31
4. How many hours are there between two successive sunrises?
 (a) 24 (b) 25 (c) 26
5. Solar eclipse is when people on Earth can not see Sun for a short period of time because Moon blocks the view of Sun. At this time, one side of the Moon faces Earth and the other side faces Sun. Da! Choose a suitable answer to complete the following statement:
 Solar eclipse _____ happens on a New Moon Day:
 (a) Sometimes (b) Always (c) Never
6. Lunar eclipse is when Earth's shadow falls on a well lit Moon. Choose a suitable answer to complete the following statement.
 Lunar eclipse _____ happens on a Full Moon Day:
 (h) Always (i) Never (j) Sometimes
7. The word 'Waxing' is used to describe the brighter half of a Lunar month. (called ('Shukla Paksham' in Sanskrit) This is the period:
 (a) starting from New Moon Day to Full Moon Day
 (b) starting from Full Moon Day to New Moon Day
8. First day of one of the Hindu Calendars is called:
 (r) Pongal (Sankranthi) (s) Vinayaka Chaturthi (t) Ugadi (Gudi Padva)
9. Good Friday is the first Friday after the first Full Moon Day after:
 (a) Spring Equinox (b) Fall Equinox

It takes less than a minute for ARYABHATA to answer all these questions. He is an ancient Indian astronomer whose period is believed to be between 300 A.D and 500 A.D.

Bonus: How many days are there between two Full Moon Days?
 (i) 29.5 (ii) 26.5 (iii) 32

Hint: The time between two Full Moon Days is longer than the time it takes for Moon to go around the Earth (question #3 above). – When Moon is revolving around Earth, Earth is also going around Sun. Hence, Moon has to catch up!

Bala Vihar Youth Seva Martin Luther King's Birthday service to the Community

*Anil Kishore
Director – Bala Vihar (Chinmayam)*

"**I Have a Dream**" is the popular speech that was given by Martin Luther King, Jr. The speech delivered on August 28, 1963 from the steps the Lincoln Memorial right here in Washington, DC was a defining moment of the American Civil Rights Movement. One of Martin Luther King's greatest achievements was his ability to help Americans appreciate diversity.

A consistent theme in observance of this day reiterates the importance of remembering Dr. King's work and legacy. It is said that no other day of the year brings so many peoples from different cultural backgrounds together and his birthday is a celebration of seva. To support the principles of this holiday, our Mission has participated in inter-faith events on this day in the past and this time we honored him with a display of volunteerism.

About 30 Bala Vihar children with 10 parents gathered at Kailas Niwas to commemorate this first Youth Seva event of the year spearheaded by our Bala Vihar Coordinator for Youth Seva, V. Sreenivas. The spirit of the day was conspicuously vibrant in our children, who braved the cold Monday morning on January 21, 2007. They gathered to prepare sandwiches for the homeless (Franklin Shelter) in Washington, DC. It was quite apparent that nothing would dampen their spirits or their motivation. Some did look sleepy but as soon as doors of Kailas Niwas opened, they all helped setting up the tables and an assembly line of bread, peanut butter jars and bags to get the work done.



This time for this seva, Kailas Niwas had an unusual commotion, an excitement and a sense of service. As the sandwiches were being prepared, the students chatted, joked and narrated their weekly experiences to their friends but the work went on. Their spirit and teamwork was very true to the pledge that we take every week. *We live honestly, the noble life of sacrifice and service, producing more than what we consume, and giving more than what we take.* What an example of putting words into action? The TWA (thoughts, words and action) story that Swamiji narrates had already become a reality on this day. By supporting our youth in this worthy cause, we have instilled not only the values of seva in

them but also provided them with an experience that lives up to the very values we endorse through our scriptures.

Our special thanks to the members of the volunteer sevaks – Raja Kirkire, T.K. Murali and Nagaraj Neerchal who chaperoned the event. We cannot forget our Bhiksha coordinator Meera Ravichandran who prepared a last minute lunch. *Lord Krishna impresses upon Arjuna that the whole life is a yagna; even the act of eating is a yagna. Eating is not for merely enjoying food but to sustain the body with which one can perform one's duty. Thus, taking food becomes a sacred ritual.* This yagna provided food to many of those in the homeless shelter who are not so fortunate to enjoy food every day so that they too sustain their bodies and do their duty.

You can enjoy some more of the wonderful pictures of the event on our website (under Bala Vihar, scroll down to Chinmaya Volunteer Services). Thanks to V. Sreenivas for capturing these noteworthy moments.



An important note to all, the Mission is an approved institution that provides volunteer hours to our students. The area schools have very strict criteria as to what constitutes volunteer or student service learning hours. We provide three major events to our students; today's event is one of the first projects. Please be on the look out for the following events:

April 26 , 2008
May 3, 2008

National Youth Day
Chinmaya Seva Day

All students are encouraged to participate. These activities not only provide our children with the media to learn how to provide service to our community but they strengthen their resolve from the Hindu scriptures and the pledge.

Earth Day is Every Day and for Everyone

*Devi Ramaseshan
for Frederick Bala Vihar*

We are the “caretakers” of this beautiful green planet Earth and are duty bound to protect it. Therefore, it is the collective responsibility of Chinmayam community and moral duty of every individual to be respectful of Bhu Matha and take care of her so that we can pass it on in good shape to coming generations.

Every year April 22nd is celebrated as Earth Day. In this connection, to bring more awareness in the minds of the adults and children alike about global warming and the impact it has on Bhu Matha, **ALL** Balavihar students of Frederick Chapter are participating in the poster activity. The theme for this activity is Save Bhu Matha. The children will be presenting their posters on April 6, 2008 to a panel of judges and visitors. Please watch out for a detailed article with pictures that will be coming up after the presentations are done. Go Green.

Quiz – Our Solar System By Shyam Harohalli

Continued....

Aryabhata -I lived about 1500 years ago, in current day Patna in Bihar State. His time is estimated to be between 476 AD to 550 AD. During this period, Patna was called ‘pAtaleeputra’ and also ‘kusumapura’. It was known as a center for higher learning. Several visitors from different parts of the world visited this city in quest of higher learning. (Source: http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Aryabhata_I.html)

Aryabhata wrote several texts but only one of them – Aryabhateeya – survived. Other texts are quoted by subsequent authors. Aryabhateeya is a short treatise on astronomy consisting of 118 verses. The first part mentions mathematical rules or postulates. The next part deals with measurement of time and planetary movements. The last part deals with spheres and eclipses.

The mathematical part includes algebra, plane and spherical trigonometry. It is in this part that Aryabhata has given the value of ‘pi’ which is accurate to four decimal points. In the

planetary motions chapter, he discusses the radius of sun/earth and their orbits. He believed that Moon and other planets shine by reflecting light from sun. He clearly explains the cause of solar and lunar eclipses.

Our ancient Hindu scholars lived with only purpose – ‘to empower fellow humans with wisdom to become positive contributors.

I just want to make two observations: (i) when we recite vedic arathi ‘na tatra suryo bhati..’ we realize how profound our Vedas were. These recitations are not just ritualistic hymns. They are the essence of deep understanding of nature around us and the mysteries of origin of life. (ii) Scholars knew the exact science behind eclipses but why did our ancestors propagate stories about demons called Rahu and Ketu? Such stories are lucid ways of empowering ordinary citizens with wisdom about complex natural processes. This helped improve the quality of life of several generations since then.

तुमरा नाम ह (Your Name)

Rakesh Khandelwal

हर दिवस हो गया हीरकनियों जड़ा
मोरपंखी हुई मेरी हर शाम है
जब से अधरों पे मेरे बसा आन कर
मेरे आराध्य का यह मधुर नाम है

मन मरुस्थल में उगती हुई प्यास थी
होठ जलते हुए, कंठ काँटे चुभे
पग भटकते हुए, कुछ ठिकाना नहीं
राह में सैंकड़ों भ्रम उमड़ते हुए
नाम आराध्य का बन घटा सावनी
तृप्ति देने लगा पुआस को बन सुधा
रोशनी बन गया राह में, चीरकर
भ्रम का हर एक कोहरा उमड़ता हुआ

एक ही सृष्टि का पूर्ण आधार है,
वो ही नानक, वही कृष्ण, वह राम है
मेरे होठों प मुस्कान जो बन गया
मेरे आराध्य का वह मधुर नाम है

मन काहर इक अंधरा हुआ दीप्तिमय
और मझधार, हर नाव होने लगी
जितनी संशय की छाड़ रही कालिमा
धुल गई, भोर की धूप होने लगी
मन में जागी नई भावना प्रेम की
आईने पर जमी धुंध, सब छंट गई
ज्ञान के पुंज आकर चमकने लगे
और अज्ञान की यामिनी हट गई

उठ रहे हैं कदम जिस दिशा में मेरे
उसका गंतव्य बस एक ही गांव है
मेरे होठों पे आकर थिरकने लगा
मेरे प्रीतम का बस इक मधुर नाम है

Meaning:

Every day is studded with gems
Evenings have turned into rainbows
since my lips chanted
the name of my devotion
I was lost in desert
without direction
surrounded with mirages
And thirst swollen lips
his name came with a cloud
embraced me in shadows
quenched my thirst
and eliminated all mirages
Whatever name you may give
that is the base of universe
that is the name
of my devoted
Enlightening every dark corner
guiding all lost ways
removing all doubts
And filling new hopes in life
The name guided me
to the right path
dissolving my ignorances
into pure wisdom
I am moving on the right path
and having right direction
since my lips chanted
the name of my devotion.

CONFUSED?

Aziza Meer

I'm not sure--
I think something's happening
A spiritual turn?
Or just a huge confusion?

What fun
I see me grinning
To be sleeping at night
Cos that sleep
doesn't feel like sleep
It feels like home

Home from life
Home from job
Home from kids even
Home from myself above all

Attend meetings
Establish position
Fight overpowering colleagues
Stand your ground
Drive miles
Keep your mind on traffic around
Hours behind the wheel and don't fall asleep

As I push colleagues at work
I know these are
Just more souls
Just carried away

Fighting for space
In traffic
I know these are
Just more souls, just carried away

What a vacation
Life, a vacation of the soul
Fun, fun, fun
It was once
work, work, work
Now it's fun, fun, fun

You See When You Don't See

Aziza Meer

When things get so bright that you can't see
It is so nice for you don't see
Cos that is when you really see
And I think I still see
And that means I still don't see

Things are getting more vivid
Friends started to look like friends
And not just another instance in my life
In the hectic world will live
I'm glad I'm beginning to see

It is when I don't see that
I will really see
It's when I don't feel is when
I will really feel
But I'm glad I see and I feel
That's a good beginning.

Did my world get any lighter?
What changed I wonder?
His hands now I can feel
Still carrying me to let me heal
I see Him and feel Him
Atleast now I see Him and I feel Him

Well, what heal, what feel!!
Why talk like I'm suffering
Suffering a long vacation I suppose
For it is just a vacation of the soul
The vacation of the soul: Life

We call it life
We go to work, We raise kids
We fight traffic, We fight politics
And take vacations
Within the vacation

Silly
Will I ever not see
So I can see

A Series based on Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's "The Art of Manmaking"

WHY STUDY GITA?

Acharya Ananta ji

(This is first of four talks Acharya Anantji gave at the Pentagon Jan/Feb 2008 on Gurudev's book)

All the great thinkers, through their varied philosophical flights, have realized the need for programs to evolve the individual. A world ordered for progress, through improved individuals constituting the community, is the prescription that all philosophers and prophets preach and work. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a scripture that tries to integrate the personality of the individual and make him capable of facing all his challenges in life.

This will sound as a strange conclusion to all of us who are trained in the modern age of secularism. Today's politicians, economists and scientists all over the world, in their totally extrovert considerations, come to the hasty conclusion the *individual is saved* when the *world has improved*. We have conducted daring experiments in political thought, capitalism, socialism, communism etc., have pursued heroic adventures in economics, and accomplished spectacular achievements in science. Politicians strive to bring concord and harmony in social life and maintain law and order in communities. Economists develop plans to increase wealth in the nation and redistribute it equitably. Scientists continuously work to discover means for exploiting the rich treasures concealed within the folds of Mother Nature. They explore sources of energy and tame them to help the people to harness them and make our lives more comfortable, richer and more luxurious. Such materialistic pursuits strive to raise the 'standard of living' of the people.

It is obvious that the blessings of materialism can remove the agony of poverty, the sorrows of illness, the discomforts of

everyday living. But the philosophers unveil with convincing logic, that in spite of the highest *standards of living* that we may create for our nation, man cannot yet feel happy in his ambitions, and live contented in his relationships with others, merely because he has plenty of food, clothing, shelter and amenities of modern lifestyle. It is here that we see the irresistible logic behind the view put forth by the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Man is an *intelligent animal*. Had he been just an animal, he would not need anything more than his security and physical comforts. But he is a highly developed psychological being. He wants his emotional satisfaction. Being an intellectual being, he is restless at and impatient with all imperfections. He is not merely a physical structure consisting of his body; he has a mind and an intellect. The materialistic needs of the body can satisfy only the physical man that is only a third of the individual; the remaining two-thirds of each individual is not taken into consideration when materialism strives to satisfy merely the basic needs in a community. It is here that the process of total satisfaction revealed in *Bhagavad Gita* shines out as a beacon of light for all the lovers of mankind and its destiny.

In short, while the modern world in its materialistic viewpoint strives to bring about a higher *standard of living* by improving the world around the man, the deep thinkers of the scriptures and the rational philosophers conclusively indicate that the happiness and glory of the world depend upon the *standard of life* that the individuals come to live.

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DULLES STUDY GROUP

Ramesh Golla

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The Dulles Study Group is a relatively new study group that started in summer 2006. The group has 8-12 members and meets on Saturday evenings at 4 pm. Usually, study class meetings are rotated in member homes each week in Herndon, Ashburn, Sterling and South Riding areas. The format is always discussion based on assignments to each individual of specific shloka(s) or section from the text that is being followed. Communication is mostly by e-mail.

The class was started by Vijay Kumar Ji as a summer class, but after the summer members were still interested in continuing the text and within a few months the class evolved into a study group. The Dulles Study Group is blessed to have Sri Goplakrishna Ji and Kishore Ji as the members of study group leading the discussions for the last couple of years. Recently, CMWRC Dulles Center was blessed with permanent Resident Acharya Anant Sharma Ji . Dulles Study Group is also fortunate to have Anant Ji as the member to lead the discussions.

The group started with Upadesha Sara text, completed in December 2006. Early this year, the group started with Tatva Bodha Text.

The group consists of very dedicated students who are eager to learn the vedantic knowledge and is an excellent contribution to the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center. Ramesh Golla is the coordinator for the Dulles study group and can be reached via e-mail at rameshgolla@yahoo.com. His address is: 44176 Navajo Dr, Ashburn, VA 20147.

The Dulles Group always welcomes interested people to observe and hopefully join us as members. Given the nature of the Washington DC area, there is a constant turnover of people but we have managed to keep a core of 6-8 members. For more information about the Dulles Study Group, please contact Ramesh Golla by phone or e-mail.

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“A wild, wacky, adventure” But, with a purpose

Nirmala Limaye

Reading the world news section in the September 2nd 2007 issue of the Washington post, the picture of an Indian girl pointing hands to an Autorickshaw caught my eye. What is this girl is doing with this Autorickshaw? Turned out it was a very interesting article. According to the world travel & tourism council in London, tourism in India is a 6.1 billion dollar industry. The question is: how does one see the heart of a country when all the world cities with 5 star hotels look alike?

Here was this adventurous tour sponsored and organized by the rotary club of Mumbai. Called as the Autorickshaw rally of 2007 which covered 2,500 miles in 13 days. It was a celebration for 50th years of Autorickshaw . It was arranged for fun. (!)

The Autorickshaw is South Asia’s mode of egalitarian transport. It was developed by N.K.Firodia, (a Protégé of Mohandas Gandhi,) who believed the 2 stroke engine could provide the poor with an affordable ride, the vehicles so simple and cheap. With their tin shells and canopies, they sound like lawn mowers and always air conditioned (as the sides are open to air, insects, and noise) The rally was non profit billed as Madcap Mardi Gras in India and a way to see India unscripted! it was meant for brave and determined souls.

There were 32 participants from all over the world ranging from a financial Analyst searching for real India, a cancer survivor with one leg, an Irishman from Brooklyn, a 72 year old retired nurse with her 2 sons, also our own backyard girl Raj Solanki from Tacoma Park. (Of course, she told her parents that she is touring India for 2 weeks but did not tell the parents how she was touring). The tour handouts had three rules. 1) Cows have a right of way. 2) Honk as much as possible. 3)

Pedestrians sleep by the edge of the road which is nothing wrong, they are just resting! They were followed by a bus carrying a medic, a Translator, and their bags.

The most amazing thing about this rally was that they raised money for schools and villages along the route for school supplies and medicines for the poor. They also talked with the local village leaders. The teams had wacky names for their rickshaws such as “rickshaws without borders, Wrong lane, Dukes of Hassan, Poppadam Preach, Autocrats, ETC.” Jen Cook named her rickshaw Grrls with a bust of Elvis and faux fur and hot pink boas. A British couple dressed as Obi Wan Kenobi with sabers and Princess Leia with hooded costumes and dubbed themselves as Return of the Chennai.

Their rickshaws broke down frequently; they were exhausted physically with wrist strain from gunning the engine. Raj Solanki mentions in the article “I was scared to death of the cows and the trucks during the ride.

At the rally’s closing ceremony, Rotary club officials handed out certificates to each team that read” you are shining examples of courage in the face of adversity and have a sense of adventure and exploration and concern and compassion for humanity”. The teams were happiest when they saw school children on the way where they offered them books, pens .They learned a lot about Indian culture as many people helped them on their way without any rewards. The State minister of tourism Mr.Suresh Shetty attended the closing ceremony where he stated “Friends, Our roads may not be that good, but, the road to the heart of every Indian is always open.

What a wild and Wacky ride! But, with a purpose.

Ahimsa

Sangamesh Konaraddi

Ahimsa means non violence or non injury.

What are ways one can cause an injury? One can cause injury through physical action, through words, or through thoughts.

What things can be injured or harmed? We could cause injury to another person, to ourselves (Body, Mind or Intellect), or the environment.

What are the types of injuries? The nature of injuries that are caused could range from grossest to subtlest. It could be caused intentionally or unknowingly. It could be hidden by inner motive but camouflaged by outer actions.

Why should one practice Ahimsa? According to Vedanta "Brahman" pervades everything. So causing harm to anything is like causing harm to "Brahman". According to Vedanta "Self = Brahman". This means causing harm to anything is like causing harm to our self. What goes around comes around. Though "Brahman" remains unaffected by all this, we do end up showing disrespect to it and cause disturbance to the entire ecosystem, which is shared by all of us. Causing injury or harm to anything has a cascading effect on everything. Suppose somebody angers us. We naturally vent this out on someone else. That person in turn spreads it to another individual and so on.

General public perception about Ahimsa is being non violent practicing vegetarianism. These are part of Ahimsa practice, but that's not the end of Ahimsa list. Ahimsa is the most difficult quality to truly inculcate into our personality.

An Ahimsa check list to find if we are causing injuries, knowingly or unknowingly:

- Are we physically beating or abusing a person or animal?

The worst kind of injury is physically beating a maid or servant, kid(s), spouse, colleague(s) or animals. Not harming any living beings at all is Ahimsa.

- Are we shouting, screaming or abusing anyone?

Next worst is shouting, screaming, abusing through words. Here we are harming the other persons mind and also harming our own mind too. Not to shout or abuse at anybody is Ahimsa. One should not have any ill feelings or thoughts for any person, animal, country, religion, race, gender, organization etc. Thoughts which are not Satvic (Satvic = pure) are injurious. Non Satvic thoughts harm your mind and cause harm to your body.

- Are we breeding bad ideas, selfish ideas or planning schemes against anyone?

Planning to deceive or cheat or laying a trap for a person. Sending misinformation through other person or spreading rumors targeted at a person. Are we targeting any person indirectly by instigating that person's close associate? Here we are harming our intellect and also the targeted person's intellect (could be body and mind too). Not to spread misinformation, rumors etc against any person or group of persons, organization, nation etc is Ahimsa.

- Are we habitually terminating a person's conversation?

When a person is speaking, we abruptly interrupt that person and start talking. So we terminated that person's speech. This is also a form of injury. We cut short the life of a thought that was emerging through speech. Listening carefully until the speaker stops is Ahimsa.

- Are we talking too much?

Talking too much and not giving other person a chance to speak is also a form of injury. When in conversation with a group of people, if you don't yield and let others express their views then we are creating sheer noise and communicating ineffectively. Communications have to be a two way process. Cutting it into a one way process is causing harm. The other person's mind will get irritated due to your nonstop talking and thus cause harm to that person's mind. Talk precisely and briefly, when chatting among group of people. If you are teacher / lecturer / guru or you are assigned a task of explaining something or giving a presentation, in this case the speaker is exempted.

- Are we harming our own body?

By eating too much or by not eating enough food we cause injury to our own body. By not exercising regularly or doing too much of exercise or by stretching our muscles beyond the limits, in yoga, we cause injury to our own body. By sleeping too much or by not sleeping enough, we cause injury to our body-mind-intellect equipment. So to practice Ahimsa, exercise regularly and maintain moderation in eating and sleeping habits.

- Are we harming the environment?

By wasting food, water, electricity we harm the environment in which we live! Not recycling plastic, paper etc we cause injury to earth. To practice Ahimsa, use minimum natural resources, conserve as much as possible, and avoid wastage. Planting of trees, watering the trees, feeding the birds etc are the ways to pay back to our nature. Driving less and driving a car with good mileage is the way of Ahimsa. We need to show gratitude towards the nature by doing some work to restore it as much as possible.

- Are we harming our present moment?

By always thinking or regretting about past and dreaming or fearing about the future, we are killing the present moment. We are harming the precious "Now" moment. It is only in the "Now" moment we can act. The past is dead and future is unborn, so fully utilize this precious "Now".

- Are we a rash driver?

By driving rashly we shorten the life span of the car and harm its tires and brakes. So while driving, accelerate slowly and anticipate the stop or signal or traffic and slow down before applying sudden breaks. Additionally we are increasing the probability of accident, which is also harmful for all the involved persons.

- Are we handling our daily use stuff roughly?

For example, while cleaning utensils, we habitually throw them in wash basin or dish washer and hear a lot of unpleasant sound. Sometimes we throw other things like shoes, bags, jackets etc between the times of use. Then again when we need it, we pick it up. First of all such a sound is not harmonious, it is also a kind of injury, breaking or harming the harmony of the environment. Second you cause physical injury to them. They are serving our needs; let us show some gratitude to them by handling them graciously.

- Are we copying any copyright material like books or CDs or DVDs?

We cause harm to the owner of the copyright. How would we feel if we were the copyright owners and public freely copied it?

The List can go on and on.

How should one start practicing Ahimsa?

The first step is to identify them-what does this refer to?, so that we can focus on one item at a time. Any kind of injury we do, it starts either from a thought or due to unawareness or because we are habituated and don't realize the problem.

Start focusing with the grossest or most frequently committed injury. Then move onto next item. Keep doing this as long as possible.

When a thought erupts, we get carried away with it. We start repeatedly entertaining same thought again and again. Then this thought expresses itself in the form of words or action. Then we repeat this action over and over again. Then this becomes our habit or part of our personality. Then we do this action without awareness and sometimes even in dream we perform such action.

To practice Ahimsa, let us start by observing our thoughts. When any thought of injury or violence arises, stop it and substitute with the opposite thought. For example, say we just have a habit of harming somebody, through words or action. Now superimpose the image of "Ishta Devtah" (personal favorite God). Now visualize that God, in its place and develop same kind of love and affection, as we have for our God. Keep doing this and see the results.

Always take one item at a time till it becomes a habit. Don't worry about the time factor. The more we practice, better we get. Initially it is tough, but with persistence, it becomes a habit!

Never start on a large or revolutionary scale, which itself is violent in nature. Sudden changes are suppression and they never stay for long. It is like a volcano, which will eventually erupt and cause more harm than we anticipated it. Go gradually, one small step at a time. Direction of our progress is more important than the speed.

No one can live a perfect Ahimsa path on this earth, so when we go to bed we should ask for forgiveness to all the Himsas (injuries) that we performed knowingly or unknowingly throughout the day.

Unknowingly we kill so many ants/ bacteria and so on, which is unavoidable. Let us try not to harm the things that we can see or perceive through our senses.

Nothing is my original concept. Most of it is from Chinmaya Mission's various CDs / books / live discourses. (Swami Chinmayananda-ji, Swami Dheerananda-ji, Swami Ishwarananda-ji, Br. Sumati Chaitanya-ji, Dr. Sadanada-ji, Dr. D.C. Rao-ji etc.). Also through discourses from Shri Siddeshwar Swamiji of JSS mission.

Hari Om!