

# Chinmaya Smrithi



A Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC)

Volume 19, Number 2 -- March 10, 2009

HAPPY Ugadi, Gudi Padva, Tamil New Year and Holi



Ganesha Temple Taking Shape at Chinmaya Vibhoothi

Photo - Courtesy of Suchit Nanda photography

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**Next Issue**

- May 2009, Articles due by April 20th 2009
- Email submissions to [smrithi@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi@chinmayadc.org). Submission instructions at [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org), Smrithi link, "Information on publishing in Smrithi"
- Contact us at [smrithi@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi@chinmayadc.org) with your feedback or questions.

**Calendar and Upcoming Events**

- March 28, 29 – Bala Vihar Annual day - 1
- April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Friday – Sri Rama Navami
- April 9<sup>th</sup>, Thursday – Hanuman Jayanthi Puja at Chinmayam
- April 18<sup>th</sup>, Saturday – Bala Vihar Graduation Ceremony at 3PM at Chinmayam
- April 25<sup>th</sup>, Saturday – National Youth Day – Bala Vihar Service to the community
- April 25<sup>th</sup>, Saturday – Bala Vihar Language Annual day
- May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Saturday – Gita Chanting Competition at Chinmayam
- May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sunday – Chinmaya Jayanthi Celebration and Seva Day
- May 9<sup>th</sup>, Saturday – Tabla Annual Day

**Study Groups**

- Please contact Sri Vijay Kumar ji by email at [vijaykumar@rocketmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:publications@chinmayadc.org) to order any books, CDs, DVDs, etc.. Browse online at [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org); and [http://www.cybermatics2.com/acb/webpage.cfm?&DID=6&WebPage\\_ID=2](http://www.cybermatics2.com/acb/webpage.cfm?&DID=6&WebPage_ID=2). Review list of Chinmaya Publications by downloading <http://www.cybermatics2.com/Catalog2008.pdf>
- Srimad Bhagvad Gita is online at [www.myholygita.com](http://www.myholygita.com)

**Useful Links:**

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center

[www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org)

Chinmaya Mission Trust

[www.chinmayamission.com](http://www.chinmayamission.com)

Chinmaya Mission West

[www.chinmayamission.org](http://www.chinmayamission.org)

Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Course

[www.chinfo.org](http://www.chinfo.org)

Washington Region – Dulles VA Chapter website

[www.chinmayadulles.org](http://www.chinmayadulles.org)

Washington Region – Frederick MD Chapter website

[www.chinmayafrederick.org](http://www.chinmayafrederick.org)

Washington Region – Springfield VA Chapter website

[www.chinmayava.org](http://www.chinmayava.org)***Please Note***

*The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of Chinmaya Mission or CMWRC*

***Editorial Staff:***

*Raju Chidambaram, Sitaram Kowtha, Acharya Vilasiniji, Acharyas, Chapter Coordinators and Teachers. &*

*Bala Vihar students - Asmi Panigrahi, Harsha Neerchal and Srikanth Kowtha*

*Please contact us if you are interested in joining the editorial staff!*

## News in Brief

### Hanuman Chalisa Chanting

Swami Dheerananda ji conducted Hanuman Chalisa three times during common time on February 15<sup>th</sup> to coincide with “Sri Hanuman Chalisa Samasthi Havan (Yagna) in Mumbai. Prior to the chanting, we listened to Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda's message about the meaning of Sri Ram, Sri Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman – Pure Knowledge, Devotion, Dispassion and Selfless Dedicate Service, respectively. In Mumbai, Hanuman Chalisa was chanted 108 times.



(Photos, courtesy of Suchit Nanda Photography, Mumbai)

### 2009 Mahasamadhi Camp – Niagara Falls/Toronto Canada

*Hari Om!*

*We warmly invite you to the 16th Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Family Camp 2009 from July 29th – August 3rd, hosted by Chinmaya Mission Toronto and Chinmaya Mission Niagara Falls . It will be held at the Delta Meadowvale Resort in Toronto only an hour away from the spectacular Niagara Falls .*

*Join us for an unforgettable experience! All preparations are underway with much enthusiasm and excitement to welcome you all to an inspiring week with Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda and our CM Acharyas. Under their guidance we have great programs for everyone – children, youth and adults.*

*Online registration is now Open! Register now and take advantage of the Early Bird Special before April 1st. For our US visitors, book now while the exchange rates are low and in your favour!*

*Make this a unique summer 2009 with our Spiritual Camp and an opportunity to visit Niagara Falls , Nature's Wonder, all in one package! We look forward to welcoming you all in Toronto for a memorable week together!*

*In Gurudev's service,  
Mahasamadhi Camp Team  
(<http://www.chinmayatoronto.org>)*

### CMWRC Events

- Shivarathri celebration took place at Chinmayam on February 23rd.
- Martin Luther King was remembered on January 25<sup>th</sup> ( a week later than usual) as the Bala Vihar youth gathered in a spirit of service to prepare peanut butter sandwiches for the homeless
- Mar 14<sup>th</sup> – Youth Leadership Session at Chinmayam – fully booked
- Summer Camp Registration Underway – please check website ([www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org))

## News in Brief

### Chinmaya Dham Yatra



28 January 2009

CM Centres & Acharyas  
Overseas

Blessed Self,

Hari OM!

This is for the information of those may not know of a special yatra called 'Chinmaya Dham Yatra'. This Yatra is specially meant for visiting places of importance of Chinmaya Mission and Pujya Gurudev. Starting from our centre in New Delhi, we will be visiting:

Haridwar, Rishikesh, Uttarkashi, Sidhbari, Bangalore, Tirupati, Chinmayaranyam, Tamaraipakkam (Ashram), Chennai, Coimbatore (Ashram & Chinmaya International Residential School), Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) near Cochin, Mumbai (Ashram), Chinmaya Vibhooti, Pune and Kolhapur.

Dates: October 20 to November 12, 2009.

Cost: US\$5,000 per person.

Capacity: 75 people. There is place to accommodate some more members.

Please inform all accordingly. Those interested may send an email for detailed information to [manisha.khemlani@chinmayamission.com](mailto:manisha.khemlani@chinmayamission.com).

I look forward to a beautiful and delightful Chinmaya Dham Yatra with one and all!

With Love and OM,

Swami Tejomayananda





## A Preview of Memorial Day 2009 Yajna on “Sat Darshanam”

(A text by Bhagavan Ramana)

*Who Realizes What or Whom?*

*Dr. K Sadananda ji*

*Disciple of Swami Chinmayananda*

Self-realization is always a puzzling problem, if one deeply thinks about it. ‘Who realizes what, whom and how?’ are the puzzling questions that a sincere seeker cannot but ask at one time or other. There is always a desire to realize and for some it is an intense desire, called mumukshutvam. The funny thing is, as long as I have desire to realize, I will never realize it, because in that very desire, the desirer has already resolved that it is going to be a fulfillment in the future. First, future never comes, since it will always be a future. ‘I am going to realize one day’ will ever remain as an unfulfilled desire. Second, in the very desire the desirer has already resolved that the desired is different from the desirer, and therefore does not realize that the desire that he is seeking is already an accomplished fact. We can ask others – ‘Sir/Madam, who are you?’ That may be a valid question. However, if I have to ask, ‘Who am I?’, then think again, who has to answer that question. I am the one who is asking the question? If I already know who I am, then what is the point in asking that question, unless I want to test myself? If I do not know ‘who I am’ then what is the point in asking the question to the one who is ignorant of himself. We will discuss these questions exhaustively when we take up the Sat darshanam text of Bhagavaan Ramana during the Memorial Day camp, but here let us have some basic understanding.

Atma is all pervading, self-conscious-self existing entity whose nature is satyam-jnaanam-anantam; existence-consciousness-limitless. Satyam-jnaanam-anantam are considered as swaruupa lakshanas which are swabhaavikam. Swaruupa lakshaNas, in mathematical precise terms, are those which are necessary and sufficient qualities. For example, sweetness of a sugar is a necessary qualification but not sufficient qualification, since there are many that are sweet but they are not sugar. Hence necessary and sufficient qualification is a very rigorous definition and in Sanskrit we can call them as swaruupa lakshaNam. The swaruup lakshaNa of water is H<sub>2</sub>O. That is H<sub>2</sub>O is water and water is H<sub>2</sub>O, no two ways about it, and both direct and converse statements must be correct. Applying this to sugar, sugar is sweet but sweet is not sugar; the converse is not valid. Interestingly Upanishads define Brahman by converse statements, which means it must fulfill both necessary and sufficient qualification. Satyam-jnaanam-anantam brahma – says Upanishad defining them in converse way establishing that they are swaruupa lakshaNam. What that implies is – satyam is Brahman and Brahman is satyam, that is, both direct and converse statement are valid. Similarly jnaanam, consciousness and anantam, limitlessness are swaruupa lakshaNas. That means – not only is Brahman a conscious entity, but it also means that if there is a conscious entity, that must be Brahman –hence if anybody says (although no – body can say) I am a conscious entity, they must be Brahman whether he knows or not. And if anybody says ‘I am an existent entity, I must be Brahman’, whether he knows or not. This swaruupa lakshaNa of Brahman comes from the scriptures and they become expressive and alive in the hands of a teacher, if the student is well tuned.

Now let us pose the question ‘who realizes this?’ – aatman that I am, who is existent and self-conscious entity does not have to realize that I am existent and conscious, which is Brahman, since I already am, whether I know it or not. In brief – the all pervading aatma does not have to realize anything since it is all pervading and infinite, already. Anaatma, the BMI cannot realize anything, being inert. Realization has a meaning only for a conscious entity. In short, ‘I the conscious entity’ need not have to realize; and ‘this, the unconscious entity’ cannot realize.

Then who realizes what? – If you are confused – do not worry, that is the beginning of the inquiry. Let us look at the problem more closely – I, who is conscious-existent entity takes myself as – this (this being BMI or kshetram to be more precise) which is inert and undergoes continuous modifications, vikaara. Hence there is a fundamental confusion here – the conscious entity that I am assuming myself to be the inert entity – this is. – Why am I doing this? – Frankly, I do not know why I am doing this. Since when, I started doing this confusion– as far as I can tell, from the beginning, before even I knew what ‘when’ means. Funny thing is every individual that I see also seems to be equally confused and operating with the same confused understanding about themselves. The good part is, I have a big company here. Looks like this is really a mass-scale joke, is it not? How can I, conscious existent entity takes myself to be – this – this unconscious, continuously deteriorating inert entity that I can see, feel, touch, etc. That is exactly what Vedanta says. You are taking yourself to be what you are not, from the beginningless beginning! But why? – do not bother asking that question, since no one can tell, since everyone is equally confused from the beginningless beginning; let us say for the time being that it is inexplicable (anirvacaniyam) – In fact, you should answer this question - why are you taking what you are not, since you are doing it.

Then how do I get out of this self-imposed confusion? – It is very simple and straight forward, ONLY IF YOU PAY CLOSE ATTENTION. Since you know that you are a conscious entity and any ‘this’ is unconscious entity which you are not, just do not take yourself anymore as ‘I am this’. Reject any this –as I cannot be ‘this’- including any conceptualization of I am, since any concept is nothing but ‘this’. When you reject ‘any this’ then what remains is I am since there are only two things in the universe; I am and this is. When you reject what you are not as I am, then automatically you will ascertain that you are the conscious entity that you are, and not this unconscious entity that you are not. That is, your swarupam is satyam, jnaanam and anantam Brahma that you already are, and realization is realization of what you already are; that is, when you drop all your notions about yourself as ‘I am this and I am that’ (all the pages of your Bio-data) and ascertain you are pure existence- consciousness that I am. It is just simple shifting your attention from ‘this’ part to I am part in the equation I am=this.

‘Sir – there is a fundamental flaw in the above explanation. When I realize that ‘I am what I am’ and ‘I am not this’, we have two things – 1) ‘I am, which is not this’ and 2) This is, that I am not. That is dvaita not advaita. Second, in the very rejection of ‘I am not this’, I am violating the very definition of I am as ‘I am infiniteness or anantam’ which cannot exclude anything including ‘this’ that you say I have to reject that ‘I am not this’. Why should I reject this since being limitless, this is also I am?

Beautiful question. Glad you are thinking deeply. If you really want an answer, you have to attend the Sat Darshanam camp during the Memorial Day, the announcement of which will be coming soon. This camp will be exhaustively answering these specific questions to your hearts content.

Hari Om!

## My November Trip to Durga Temple

*Anmol Tewari*

*Frederick Chapter*

I went to the Sri Durga Temple in Northern Virginia with my family on the day of navaratri, because it is a special time for worshiping the nine goddess names of Durga (Shailputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skanda Mata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Maha Gauri, and Siddhidatri). They all have symbols for their power and knowledge. When I got there I gave my wishes to all the gods so my parents and my sister will have a happy and healthy life. Looking at each of their faces gave me a special glory. We offered them a plate full of Pooja materials. Many people were sitting there peacefully and singing beautiful, devotional Bhajans and my family and I joined them too. Next I attended the Darshan for 15 minutes and got a banana as Prasad. After that I went downstairs to see a play going on with puppets. Then I went to the kitchen to get some Delicious food. Once I was finished eating I paid my respects once more, and went to my home in Frederick Maryland.

This was definitely a special and meaningful trip to the temple and I would love to keep on going each year.

*Sarve Mangal Mangalye, Shive Sarvarth Sadhike |  
Sharanye Trayaambake Gauri, Narayani Namostute*

## Sundaram Class Activity

*Prathima Joshyula*

*Bala Vihar Teacher, Frederick Chapter*

Duty, Devotion, Discipline



*The photograph shows the work done by Sundaram children -*

*Saiprasad Ravi, Payal Arora, Raveesha Arora, Prajwal Choudhry, Omkar Konaraddi and Gaurav Arora.*

This activity was done to emphasize on the importance of 3 D's - Duty, Devotion and Discipline. Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda has set an example for all of us to follow the 3 D's: doing duty without attachment, devote yourself with compassion to the world and the people simply by loving them and practice personal discipline to maintain a sense of control.



## Courageous Ramakrishna

*Vamsi Manne*

*Sundaram, Dulles Chapter*

I was reading a story about Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Suddenly, I was walking with Sri Ramakrishna through a lush green forest. We were talking about plants, when all of a sudden, someone interrupted us. “Please come in. I can offer you shelter,” the man said. “How can we trust you?” I asked. “I am Rajacharya. Oh, valorous saint and pious child, please enjoy the warmth of this village.” We had no choice but to stay in his dwelling for a while. Sri Ramakrishna preached religious teachings to Rajacharya while I devoured delicious Indian snacks like a ravenous lion. These events were going on so smoothly.

Unexpectedly, we heard a loud noise. I opened the door quickly to investigate what had just happened. I saw thugs dashing toward us. “Those are the city thugs! Hide quickly!” Rajacharya whispered.

“There is no need to be afraid of ghastly people.” I was surprised by Sri Ramakrishna’s courageous words. Sri Ramakrishna walked up to the thugs and admonished them.

“How dare you rob innocent people! Give up the money,” Sri Ramakrishna reproached. The thugs were frightened with the Saint’s daring words. “Yes, master,” the thugs responded in a scared voice. They handed several wallets to the Saint. “Now run along. Don’t ever do mischief again,” the Saint said. The thugs ran for their life! Saint Ramakrishna handed the wallets to their rightful owners. “Wow, the Saint accomplished a brave and courageous deed,” I murmured. Finally, I woke up with a start. I realized that all of this was a dream! Oh, how lucky I was that I was with Sri Ramakrishna! It was like a real experience with the great Saint, Sri Ramakrishna.

## Shivrathri Crossword

*Submitted by Devi Ramaseshan  
Frederick Chapter*

Directions: Seek and circle words

Clue: Words are from left to right, right to left, top to bottom, bottom to top and diagonal.

All words are connected with Lord Shiva. Please try to do without looking at the key. ☺

G	A	P	O	T	L	S	I	T	A	R	A	M	L	R	A	V	A	N	C
A	A	L	G	R	M	U	M	A	P	A	T	I	N	I	M	A	Y	A	R
N	S	N	I	I	G	R	A	D	H	A	K	R	I	S	N	P	A	B	E
G	H	A	G	D	S	A	D	A	S	H	I	V	A	J	E	G	K	I	S
A	E	R	H	E	O	A	V	E	D	U	R	U	G	L	S	E	A	U	C
D	S	D	T	N	S	S	H	I	V	A	R	A	T	H	R	I	P	K	E
H	Y	U	T	T	S	H	A	N	K	A	R	A	D	A	M	A	R	U	N
A	D	R	U	D	R	A	K	S	H	A	R	A	U	U	U	K	A	L	T
R	I	G	A	N	E	E	A	H	N	N	Y	O	N	D	R	A	Y	A	M
A	K	A	Y	A	N	I	V	H	M	A	V	I	U	H	U	J	S	K	O
M	A	H	A	D	E	V	A	F	V	C	N	B	L	V	G	A	K	H	O
P	A	R	V	A	T	H	I	I	M	A	T	D	A	A	A	R	A	A	N
S	S	M	S	A	G	V	H	S	A	G	K	J	I	S	J	A	I	A	N
S	H	A	V	E	A	S	R	R	B	V	A	C	B	U	A	W	L	V	A
H	A	L	C	R	A	M	A	S	V	R	R	S	A	K	D	H	A	A	R
I	K	A	F	M	B	W	F	G	A	B	O	P	L	I	A	S	S	R	A
V	T	D	A	C	H	T	H	T	I	B	A	L	A	J	U	E	H	I	D
A	I	N	S	S	S	Y	A	L	M	N	I	R	U	A	G	H	T	A	H
U	M	L	A	D	S	N	V	G	O	V	I	N	D	A	S	A	G	H	A
O	P	E	S	A	N	A	L	O	M	K	A	R	A	L	D	M	J	B	F

### SCORECARD

Excellent  
Good  
Your score

25-31 words  
24-20 words

Shiva  
Parvathi  
Rudraksha  
Crescent Moon  
Gangadhara  
Shivarathri

OmNamashivaya  
Vinayaka  
Bhairava  
Sadashiva  
Shakti

Ganges  
Muruga  
Kailash  
Omkara  
Umapati

Vasuki  
Damaru  
Nandi  
Mahadeva  
Bilva

Maheshwara  
Ashes  
Linga  
Gurudeva  
Shankara

Eashwara  
Trident  
Nataraja  
Rudra  
Gauri

**Bala Vihar**

## Book Review – 2 of 3: Breadwinner Trilogy

*Siri Neerchal*

*Silver Spring Chapter*

The Breadwinner Trilogy is written by Deborah Ellis. It is about two Afghan girls. The trilogy reflects the situation in Afghanistan when the Taliban was in power. I love the way the books are written because the readers feel like they are one of the characters witnessing the scene. These books reflect courage and perseverance. The two main characters show courage because they dress up as boys to support their families. Also, the two girls persevere to reach the goals that they set for themselves. The qualities of these girls remind me of all of the saints I learned about in my Sundaram class, such as Swami Chinmayananda, Adi Sankaracharya and Guru Nanak. *Parvana's Journey* is the second book in the trilogy. The first book, *The Breadwinner*, was reviewed in the January issue.

### Parvana's Journey

Parvana, now thirteen, is searching for her family who had gone to Mazar-e-Sharif for Nooria's wedding. Her father returned from jail, but died in a village not very far from Kabul soon after they started their journey. While in a deserted village devastated by bombs, Parvana finds a baby whom she names Hassan. Soon, she meets a one-legged boy named Asif. Parvana and Asif keep meandering on, carrying Hassan. One day, Parvana and Asif are trying to see who can throw a rock the farthest. When a huge rock thrown by Parvana makes a mine explode, they realize that they have ended up at the edge of a mine field. Through the dust, they see a girl skipping towards them. The girl, whose name is Leila, lives with her grandmother in a shelter close to the mine field. All of them stay there and eat things that they find. Leila thinks that land mines don't hurt her because the ground likes her. When peddlers get blown up by the land mines, she goes out and takes things that they need from their carts. Leila's mother had left a year or so before to search for Leila's father and brother. Will all five of them end up in a refugee camp? Or will they stay there forever? Read *Parvana's Journey* to find out!

## Bhagvad Gita Chanting Competition

*Smruti Hariprakash*

*Shivanandam, Frederick Chapter*

Om Harihi Om, Shri Gurubhyo Namaha, Harihi Om.

I have been participating in the Bhagavad-Gita competition since last 3 years. And it is really exciting. I like it because of various reasons. The most exciting thing in this participation is that we have a mini competition held at our Frederick Chinmaya chapter sometime around December- January. Hence we have to get ready for that. Once the competition in Frederick is done then it is easy to get ready for the main competition in May. I just have to make sure I remember all the verses by chanting it once in two days or so.

Around October I start practicing my Geetha shlokas everyday aiming to learn at least two verses per week. I manage to learn most of it by mid November. The way I learn the verses is by listening to the chanting by Swamiji's in the audio CD every night. Most often I listen to it before going to bed. I feel that it is so soothing and inspiring that I like to listen it then as it will prevent me from getting any bad dreams. It is very nice and so clear that most often I do not look into the binder provided with the CD.

Another reason that I like the competition is because it is fun to know your results at the end of the competition. Diamond, Gold, Silver or Bronze trophies. I like collecting them.

I have little challenges with my friends when we meet at Sunday Chinmaya classes to know who has learnt more number of verses for that week. That is one way of encouraging myself to learn all the verses. Yet another reason for my participation in this is because I get to learn new verses every year and it is fun to watch other children do their way of chanting musically.

The most important idea of practicing BG chanting is that it helps me in building memory and concentration.

So my dear friends please take the same view about BG competition and see what fun it is to participate in the chanting competition. Big leaders like Mahatma Gandhiji and Albert Einstein also read and were followers of Bhagavadgita.

Sometime you should try it out too!



**Bala Vihar**



**2<sup>nd</sup> in the Series**  
**Hindu Rituals and Routines -**  
**Why Do We Follow Them?**

*Submitted by Sowmya Sundararaman*



**4. Why do we prostrate before parents and elders?**

Indians prostrate before their parents, elders, teachers and noble souls by touching their feet. The elder in turn blesses us by placing his or her hand on or over our heads. Prostration is done daily, when we meet elders and particularly on important occasions like the beginning of a new task, birthdays, festivals etc. In certain traditional circles, prostration is accompanied by **abhivaadana**, which serves to introduce one-self, announce one's family and social stature.

Man stands on his feet. Touching the feet in prostration is a sign of respect for the age, maturity, nobility and divinity that our elders personify. It symbolizes our recognition of their selfless love for us and the sacrifices they have done for our welfare. It is a way of humbly acknowledging the greatness of another. This tradition reflects the strong family ties, which has been one of India's enduring strengths.

*Handwritten signature in blue ink.*

The good wishes (**Sankalpa**) and blessings (**aashirvaada**) of elders are highly valued in India. We prostrate to seek them. Good thoughts create positive vibrations. Good wishes springing from a heart full of love, divinity and nobility have a tremendous strength. When we prostrate with humility and respect, we invoke the good wishes and blessings of elders, which flow in the form of positive energy to envelop us. This is why the posture assumed whether it is in the standing or prone position, enables the entire body to receive the energy thus received.

The different forms of showing respect are :

**Pratuthana:** Rising to welcome a person.

**Namaskaara:** Paying homage in the form of namaste

**Upasangrahan:** Touching the feet of elders or teachers.

**Shaashtaanga:** Prostrating fully with the feet, knees, stomach, chest, forehead and arms touching the ground in front of the elder.

**Pratyabivaadana:** Returning a greeting.

Rules are prescribed in our scriptures as to who should prostrate to whom. Wealth, family name, age, moral strength and spiritual knowledge in ascending order of importance qualified men to receive respect. This is why a king though the ruler of the land, would prostrate before a spiritual master. Epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata have many stories highlighting this aspect.

## 5. Why do we wear marks (tilak and the like) on the forehead?

The tilak invokes a feeling of sanctity in the wearer and others. It is recognized as a religious mark. Its form and colour vary according to one's caste, religious sect or the form of the Lord worshipped.

In earlier times, the four castes (based on varna or colour) - Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra - applied marks differently. The brahmin applied a white chandan mark signifying purity, as his profession was of a priestly or academic nature. The kshatriya applied a red kumkum mark signifying valour as he belonged to warrior races. The vaishya wore a yellow kesar or turmeric mark signifying prosperity as he was a businessman or trader devoted to creation of wealth. The sudra applied a black bhasma, kasturi or charcoal mark signifying service as he supported the work of the other three divisions.

Also Vishnu worshippers apply a chandan tilak of the shape of "U," Shiva worshippers a tripundra of bhasma, Devi worshippers a red dot of kumkum and so on).

The tilak cover the spot between the eyebrows, which is the seat of memory and thinking. It is known as the Ajna Chakra in the language of Yoga. The tilak is applied with the prayer - "May I remember the Lord. May this pious feeling pervade all my activities. May I be righteous in my deeds." Even when we temporarily forget this prayerful attitude the mark on another reminds us of our resolve. The tilak is thus a blessing of the Lord and a protection against wrong tendencies and forces.

The entire body emanates energy in the form of electromagnetic waves - the forehead and the subtle spot between the eyebrows especially so. That is why worry generates heat and causes a headache. The tilak and pottu cools the forehead, protects us and prevents energy loss. Sometimes the entire forehead is covered with chandan or bhasma. Using plastic reusable "stick bindis" is not very beneficial, even though it serves the purpose of decoration.

## **6. Why do we not touch papers, books and people with the feet?**

To Indians, knowledge is sacred and divine. So it must be given respect at all times. Nowadays we separate subjects as sacred and secular. But in ancient India every subject - academic or spiritual - was considered divine and taught by the guru in the gurukula.

The custom of not stepping on educational tools is a frequent reminder of the high position accorded to knowledge in Indian culture. From an early age, this wisdom fosters in us a deep reverence for books and education. This is also the reason why we worship books, vehicles and instruments once a year on Saraswathi Pooja or Ayudha Pooja day, dedicated to the Goddess of Learning. In fact, each day before starting our studies, we pray:

**Saraswati namasthubhyam  
Varade kaama roopini  
Vidyaarambham karishyaami  
Sidhirbhavatu me sadaa**

*O Goddess Saraswati, the giver of Boons and fulfiller of wishes, I prostrate to You before starting my studies. May you always fulfill me?*

## **7. To touch another with the feet is considered an act of misdemeanor. Why is this so?**

Man is regarded as the most beautiful, living breathing temple of the Lord! Therefore touching another with the feet is akin to disrespecting the divinity within him or her. This calls for an immediate apology, which is offered with reverence and humility.



## Island's Pace

*Krishnan Family*

*Silver Spring Chapter*

In December, we spent a week in Kiawah Island off the coast of South Carolina. It was a time of quiet and respite from the frantic pace of daily life in D.C. We decided to do a family project that week – we picked a topic each day and Aditya, Vishnupriya and I all wrote a poem on that topic. Here are three poems that we wrote on our second day there at Kiawah, all entitled 'Island's Pace'. We cannot always be relaxing by the ocean! However, I have found that reading the Srimad Bhagvad Gita, a little prayer, meditation, and Sunday Satsang with our dear Swamiji – all of these take us inward into the silence, from a rat race to.....an island's pace.

### Island's pace

Aditya Krishnan

Shivam, Grade 5

When you are on an island you can hear the rhythm of the waves  
As if they were drums drumming away  
When you are on an island you can feel the rough sand  
As if it were a porcupine's back  
When you are on an island you can see colorful seashells  
As if they were bright rainbows  
When you are on an island you can smell the freshness of air  
As if it were just born  
When you are on an island you can taste the cold wind  
As if it just unfroze  
And that is all about the island's pace



**Island's pace**

Vishnupriya Krishnan

Chinnmayam, Grade X

here there is only the quiet stillness of the moon's wing;  
here there is only the sweetly raucous dance among rain and tree;  
the story of a place cannot be contained in pages,  
even old and older pages

it must be felt

it lets itself be discovered like the ripest orange of the bunch that grows  
itself so that when, weighing it in your hand,

you consider,

the peel is still secure, yet you can already taste each  
burgeoning saccharine crescent piece;

here there is unhurried rhythm in the waves, in the pastel yellow walls  
even the peeling elevators take their time

the sand allows no footprints to dictate its course forever;

here there is no end, no beginning

synonymous with time

here is a flock of cranes traveling in circular pattern or a lullaby

whose last few lines will always be left unsung;

the waves, they are

the push and pull

the back and forth and still;

here, and deep breaths,

they ensue.

## Island's pace

Deepa Krishnan

Gray, blue, ocean,  
crashing waves,  
salty spray,  
washes your face,  
at Kiawah,  
island's pace.

Spanish moss,  
swaying leaves,  
sandy dunes,  
palm trees,  
at Kiawah,  
island's pace.

Wooden bridges,  
footsteps slow,  
grasses, lagoons,  
sunsets glow,  
at Kiawah,  
island's pace.

Silent meditations,  
on the sea,  
surround you,  
and surround me,  
at Kiawah,  
island's pace.

Fresh breeze,  
windy tunes,  
a soft perspective,  
a pause from the race,  
at Kiawah,  
island's pace.



## The Empty Flute

*Chetana Neerchal*

*(Silver Spring Bala Vihar Teacher*

*& Bala Vihar Graduation Tilak Ceremony Coordinator)*

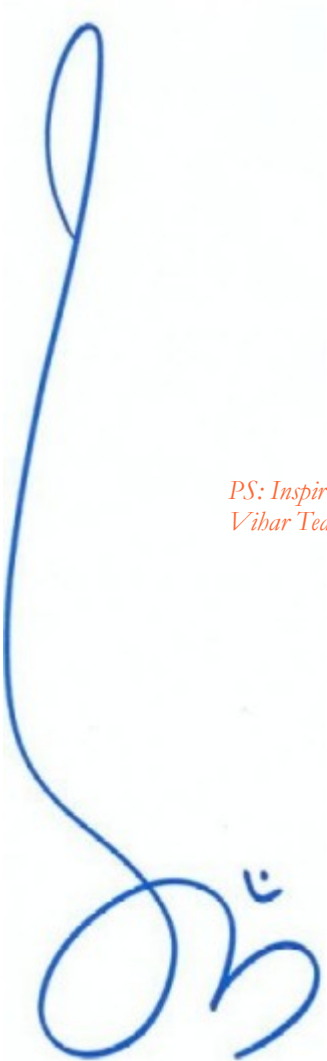
World and Spirit  
disconnected.  
Unhappy schizophrenia.

Shed diverse personalities,  
surrender into Thine arms.  
Unity  
with the one Dharma  
possible by  
sadhana alone.

Sweet plays the Empty Flute.

Your different words,  
connected  
in the smiling melody  
of  
the Empty Flute.

*PS: Inspired by the messages of our Acharyas (Swami Dheeranandaji, Vilasiniji, Anantji and Pramilaji) during the CMWRC Bala Vihar Teachers Retreat on January 31, 2009.*



## Parent and Child

(June 19, 1999)

*Chetana Neerchal*

*(Silver Spring Bala Vihar Teacher*

*Bala Vihar Graduation Tilak Ceremony Coordinator)*

You once were caught  
by a little enchantress;  
perhaps you had smiled  
with indulgence  
as I do now,  
your everyday tasks  
cast in disarray  
by the coos and wails  
of a naughty captor.

You once looked  
ten feet tall  
to my four-legged crawl.  
You scooped me in your arms,  
blessing the creator  
for placing you on  
Earth  
and giving you a  
gift such as I.

You once were thankful  
not to be  
elsewhere  
in time and space,  
lest you would have missed  
the summer path we took,  
plucking the passing blossoms,  
their imminent sereness  
to be softened by

the memory of  
my five-year-old thoughts  
holding hands  
with yours.

We once shared many moments  
together,  
we share them again now.

You once were my  
parent,  
I once was your  
child;  
A fossil from Earth falls on Mars  
and back on Earth again.  
Who can tell where its birth took place?  
Who can tell when it will die,  
to become dust and nothing more,  
scattered into a million bits  
in this limitless expanse of life?

You once were my  
parent,  
I once was your  
child,  
we alternate our roles  
in our walk together,  
until the end of time.





## A Visit to Sandeepani Gurukul

*Nirmala Limaye*

All of us revere our swamijis and acharyas who impart a wealth of knowledge, giving today's examples, which make it very interesting and easy to understand. Children are given fine examples of good ethics, morality and the interesting stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata.

We often wonder how all of our Acharya's and Swami's have such a great sense of humor and a very pleasant attitude. Where does this come from? To get an answer we have to visit Sandeepani ashram in Mumbai. This Gurukul is an Oasis amid the busy hustle bustle of millions of people struggling to make a better living. Sandeepani is somewhat away from busy streets, noise and pollution and is located near Powai lake and surrounded by tall trees.

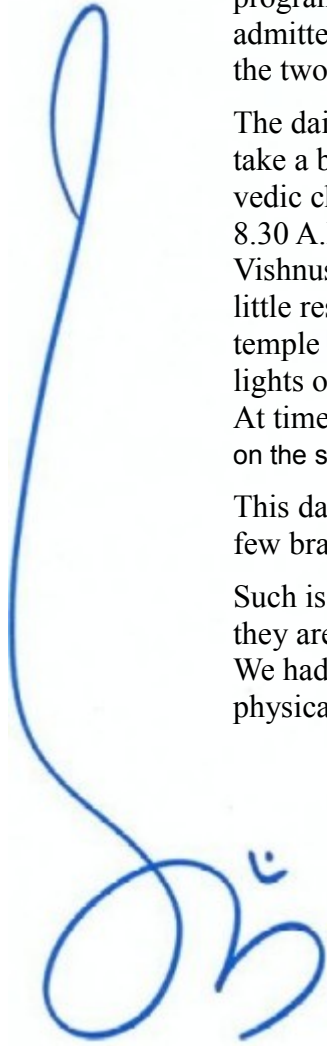
As soon as you enter the main gate, to the left is a set of steps atop which there is Shiva temple; right at the entrance is a quote by Guruji – "Don't give your children valuables, give values". The temple is kept very clean by the Brahmacharis and few helpers. It is open to the public. The big hall is surrounded by Ganesha idol, Gurudev's picture. Everyone keeps silence and prays. The library is full of scriptural texts from ancient to the modern literature. There is a hall with Gurudev's picture in front where people come and meditate.

Our teachers have spent twenty four months in this peaceful atmosphere in a very rigorous training program. Hundreds of aspiring men and women apply, but only a few are selected. Once they are admitted, they are given a room and simple food to subsist. They cannot leave the premises during the two years it takes to complete the studies.

The daily schedule consists as following: 4 A.M. the wake up call at which the students or sadhaks take a bath and do their personal meditation, prayers and then gather at the temple for aarati and vedic chanting at 5.30A.M; after a small tea break at 6, the first class starts at 7A.M. with Guruji; 8.30 A.M. is breakfast and later homework, or Sanskrit class; at 12 noon, chanting of either Vishnusahasranama, or Lalitasahasranama; a little personal time to visit library or homework ,or a little rest time; tea is served at 3 P.M. and afternoon lecture by Guruji at 3.30; 6 P.M. Aarati at the temple followed by satsang with guruji takes place; dinner at 8P.M; and at 10 P.M. the bell rings and lights off. There are special days such as Mahashivratri etc. when everyone does seva for the visitors. At times the students are given a topic to present a talk (at other times, students are asked to comment on the spot without time to prepare).

This daily routine is followed without interruption (no holidays or weekends) for two full years. A few brahmachris cannot stand the hardship and leave or asked to leave.

Such is the training at Sandeepani. But almost all students seem to enjoy this boot camp and then they are fit to be called Acharya. They go around the world spreading our ancient Vedic knowledge. We had opportunity to talk to some students who conveyed a sense immense enjoyment in spite of physical hardships.



## What's Your Calling?

*G. B. Sastri*

I came home one spring evening after a walk, admiring the springtime greenery around the mountainside in Covington, VA, and was fixing my dinner when I heard a knock on the door. It was my friend Steve at the door, complete with a backpack and hiking equipment, asking me if he could stay the night at my place. I knew Steve, an MIT graduate, for over a year before he left Covington to pursue an MBA at Stanford. I was sure when he left Covington that I would hear about him as a corporate type who made it big. So I was a little surprised that two years later he showed up at my doorstep asking if he could stay at my place for the night.

Covington, VA, is a quaint little town on the Appalachia. Picturesque and located in the western part of Virginia, it is wedged in the Allegheny Mountains and dotted with hiking trails, golf courses, and campgrounds. The Appalachian Trail, a continuous marked footpath that goes from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Katahdin in Maine, a distance of about 2,160 miles runs through Troutdale, VA which was not too far from there. Steve, having completed his MBA, was hiking the Trail and decided to stop by my house.

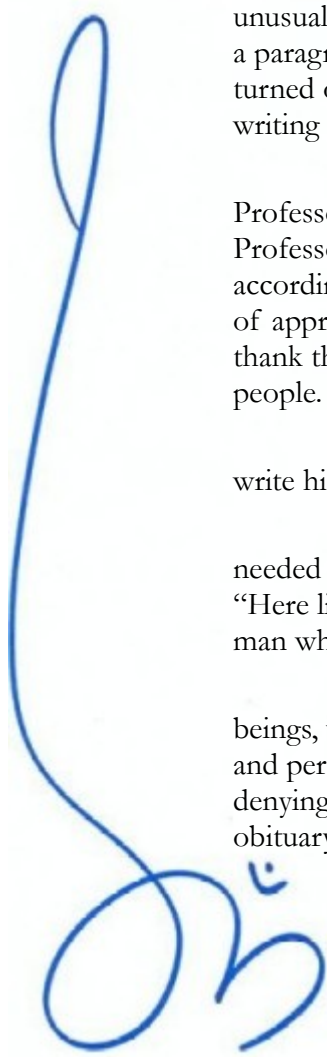
We got to talking during the dinner and Steve said that he finished his MBA and that he had plenty of job offers but going on the Trail took priority because of a course in English Literature that he had to complete as part of the arts requirement. He went on to say that the Professor gave an unusual homework assignment early on. He struggled with that assignment and could not as much write a paragraph after a four week time-period! So he asked the Professor to give him an extension. As it turned out, all the students in the class asked for an extension, as they could not complete this simple writing assignment.

After four additional weeks he turned in the assignment and requested personal time with the Professor about the assignment he completed. They talked and Steve got fascinated by what the Professor told him. Almost all the students who took this class over the past 25 years did the same thing according to the Professor – requesting more time to write the composition. He went on to show letters of appreciation that the students sent him years later. All of them had a singular theme- they wanted to thank the Professor for making them write this essay that changed their lives and made them better people.

So, what was that assignment that the Professor gave his students? He had asked each student to write his or her obituary!

While writing his obituary, Steve realized that more than making money in his new job, he needed to contribute something to this world to remember him by. He wanted his obituary to read “Here lies a man that helped humanity, hiked the Appalachian trail...” than for it to say “Here lies a man who made a few million dollars...” In writing this simple essay he found his calling.

Like Steve, we are all called to do something in our lives. To the extent that we are spiritual beings, we are called to accomplish something that goes beyond the needs and requirements of our ego and personality. While the way in which we express our calling does not have to be religious, there is no denying that following one's calling is part and parcel of our spiritual evolution. Perhaps writing your obituary will help you find your calling. Try it!



## Vedas Realized

*Submitted by Sowmya Sundararaman*

What are the Vedas?

Veda means knowledge.

The original knowledge in this creation is the teachings of the Vedas. These teachings were revealed by Lord Vishnu to Lord Brahma in his heart.

When we are in a conditioned state (that is what we are) our knowledge is subjected to many deficiencies. These deficiencies are there because the conditioned soul has four defects:

- a. Committing mistakes: Human being is prone to making mistakes. You must have read the famous saying, "To err is human".
- b. Subject to illusion: We are all subject to illusion (maya). It means that we perceive or see things which they are not. The meaning of maya is "that which is not".
- c. Imperfect senses: Our senses are imperfect. We cannot see beyond some distance, we cannot hear everything, and so on.
- d. Cheating propensity: We have a tendency to cheat. It is difficult to accept this for us but if you sincerely think about it you will agree that we tend to cheat at least in minor ways - don't we?

These deficiencies make us unfit for having perfect knowledge. An imperfect being cannot create perfect knowledge. Look at American or Indian constitutions - how many amendments have taken place since they were written?

In contrast Vedas are apaurusheya, which means they are not compilations of human knowledge. Vedic knowledge comes from the spiritual world, from Lord Krishna (Vishnu), the Supreme God. It has remained unchanged. No person has ever been able to find a single mistake in the script of Vedas. And that is why we accept them as authorities. It is better to follow something which is perfect rather than something which is prone to mistakes or imperfection.

In the beginning the first living creature was Brahma. He received the Vedic knowledge from Lord Vishnu. The existence of Vedas is Sanatana - eternal - no beginning or end.

Vedas are compared to desire tree (kalpa vriksha) because they contain all things knowable by man. They deal with day-to-day material necessities as well as spiritual realization.

The main purpose of Vedas is to gradually elevate human beings to a spiritual platform. This is recommended through the system of Varna & Ashrama. Vedas talk of 4 varnas and 4 ashramas.

The varnas are Brahmana - the intellectual, Kshatriya - the ruler and administrators, Vaishya - the farmer and merchants and Shudra - the worker. The ashramas are Brahmacharya - students, Grihastha - family men, Vanaprastha - retired people and Sannyasa - mendicants). These are based on one's quality and work and not a caste system as it prevails in our society. The caste system is perversion of the Varnashrama system as propagated in Vedas. Lord Krishna confirms this in Bhagavad Gita.

The Vedas say that the highest spiritual realization is knowledge that the Personality of Godhead is the reservoir of all pleasures, spiritual tastes.

The Vedas were compiled in Sanskrit which is the most advanced and perfect language and source of all languages.

The Vedas are source of all knowledge. There is no independent knowledge beyond Vedas

### ***The Origin of the Vedas***

When discussing the origin of the Vedas, we must keep in mind the fact that the Vedas are eternal transcendental sound vibrations. Therefore we cannot use the word create in its general usage to describe the source of the Vedas. At the same time everything has a cause except for the Lord. That is the meaning of the verse anadir adir govindah, sarva kaarana kaaranam, "Govinda has no beginning, yet He is the beginning of all. He is the cause of all causes."

When speaking of the spiritual realm, we must always remember that there is no limitation of time. Time practically does not exist in that realm. Only when you come down to the level of creation of the material world can we actually say that time is acting on anything. So any discussion of something constitutionally beyond the realm of material world is by nature free from the influence of time. Therefore there is no room to bring in the idea of a point of creation. With that in mind, when we speak of something spiritual such as the Vedas, we can never bring in the concept of a point of creation. I.e. "it was created at this point in time".

Therefore nothing spiritual was ever created in the general sense of the word. But still everything has a source, something on which it is dependent. Vishnu is the only sva-tantra (self- dependent principal) and all others are para-tantra (dependent on another).

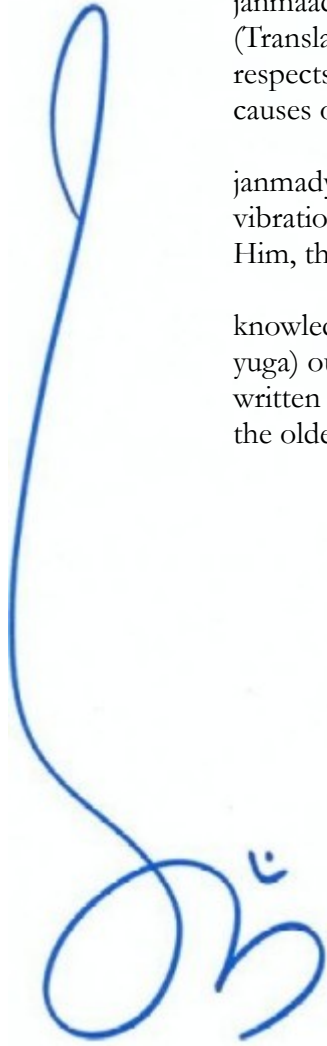
Everything has a cause, and that cause is directly the category of the Supreme God. But this dependence is eternal dependence. Never was there a time when it did not exist. So, though Vishnu is the cause of everything, everything eternally existed beyond time.

One may ask, "How can you understand this?" If you don't already understand it there are no mental gymnastics that will make you understand it.

The Srimad Bhagavatam clearly states right in the first shloka: om namo bhagavate vasudevaaya janmaadyasya yato 'nvayad itartash charthesv abhijnah svarat tene brahma hrda ya aadi kavaye. (Translation: O my Lord, Sri Krishna, son of Vasudeva, O all pervading Supreme Person, I offer my respects to you. I meditate upon you because you are the absolute truth and the primeval cause of all causes of the creation.)

Why the statement "tene brahma hrda ya aadi kavaye" is linked directly to the statement of janmaadyasya yatah? Because everything is an emanation of Krishna, including the eternal spiritual sound vibrations (Brahma) of the Vedas. Furthermore, we should remember that the Vedas are describing Him, the Supreme God.

The Vedas are also called Shruti - learning by only hearing. In the earlier yugas the vedic knowledge was passed on from guru to disciple by just recitation and hearing. In this age of Kali (kali-yuga) our memories are comparatively duller and hence for our benefit the Vedas were compiled in written form. There are many suggestions about the exact time they were compiled but they still remain the oldest scriptures in this world.





## On Being a True Leader

Sitaram Kowtha

A wonderful attribute of the American culture is to encourage everyone to be a leader. Being a leader means to step up, to be responsible, to be a spokesperson. Children, as early as elementary school level, are encouraged to take leadership in one activity or another. It may be one of the reasons America became known for innovation and enterprise.

The flip side of this is that many end up pretending to be leaders. We see the pretenders everywhere – whether they are in our offices, schools, school parent-teacher associations, politics, sports, etc. Most of them may best be regarded as ‘attempting’ to be leaders, or preparing to be future leaders or possibly emerging leaders.

Thus, it is just as important to strive to become a good leader, as it is to be encouraged to be one. Rarely do we come across a truly great leader. When one strives to be a leader, only then, can one recognize and appreciate a true leader. Learning from true leaders helps one transform from being a pretender to becoming a good leader. After listening to Swami Dheerananda’s Gita Satsang for the past few years, and reading other works, I have compiled a short (but incomplete) list of characteristics of a true leader. True leaders are:

- Always active – they have no time to waste. They set out to accomplish, others join them to serve in that same purpose. The leaders are always in the cycle of learning, planning, preparing and executing. They never waste away time in pleasure, luxury, laziness or unnecessary conflicts and quarrels. They don’t ride on success, success rides on them.
- Pursuing noble goals - Leaders are never selfish. They work for a cause greater than their worldly selves. They have clear and high minded goals, and they strive to reach them. This is important, because we often tend to under-achieve. If we start with a modest goal, and we then reach only 60% to 80% of that goal, then at best we have only achieved mediocrity. It is better not to have reached a higher goal than to reach a modest goal, ensuring mediocrity. Many reach mediocrity and claim success!. *In Chapter 6 of the Gita, Sri Krishna assures us that all the effort in the current lifetime will not be wasted.*
- Principled - They would rather fail carrying out their mission than give in on their principles. Abraham Lincoln faced monumental criticisms and challenges as he sought to free the slaves and reunite the country. He never gave in on the principle of freedom for slaves, and pursued war as the only way to reunite the country, for which he became immensely unpopular at that time.
- Fearless - They learn, plan and prepare, and then step into uncharted waters. The reason they are not afraid is that they have prepared themselves well, and they are not seeking results. They are seeking to execute what they planned, to the best of their ability. Hanuman recited Sri Rama’s name and lunged towards Lanka. Mahatma Gandhi started on the salt march that symbolized challenge to British authority. A young Sankara criss-crossed India challenging great spiritual minds of that time to accept his Advaita based integrated interpretation of the scriptures.

- Employing practical and pragmatic solutions - They are well aware of the potential skills, talents and constraints. They work within them, all the while striving for the higher goal. A good example of that is Sri Rama did not go Lanka on Hanuman's shoulders. He patiently waited for the ocean king to help show the way. Then, with the help of Sugriva's army, he built a bridge. He went to Lanka with all of Sugriva's army.
- Always loving and serving those who serve with them. They recognize that it takes team work to accomplish nobler goals. They acknowledge and appropriately appreciate the effort their team members have put out. A beautiful example of this is Sri Rama caressing a squirrel that was helping out with the bridge building in its own small way.
- Put into practice before they preach - They teach and lead by example of practicing what they realize is the right attitude to task at hand. Rama showed by example, how to adhere to dharma. He followed his father's wish in letter, in spirit and in principle. Similarly, he was always truthful, faithful, forbearing. There is famous story about Mahatma Gandhi. He cut back on eating jaggery before advising a child to do so.
- Never orders others to do what they are incapable of doing, or unwilling (beneath them) to do - No bossing around, just because they are leaders. They express their goals and how they may be achieved. The team members usually step up. Hanuman understood Sri Rama's pain at the fall of Lakshmana. He knew what had to be done. He went to bring the Sanjeevani. Sri Rama never ordered Hanuman, because he himself could not do it.
- Determined and steadfast - They are very clear on their goals, and are appropriately patient. Sri Rama embarked on a mission to bring Sita back, but at each step of the way, he followed Dharma, even if it meant loss of time. He waited patiently for Sugriva to start the search; he waited for the ocean king to help with a bridge to Lanka; he gave every opportunity to Ravana to return Sita to freedom; but not once, did he waver on his goal of rescuing Sita.
- Skilled, Learned and Wise - They have received rigorous training, and excel in their field of endeavor. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was not formally educated, but he persevered single-mindedly to receive blessings of Mother Kali. As a result of his pursuit, he became a realized master. Even great scholars of that time, such as Ishwarchand Vidyasagar bowed their heads to this illiterate, but wise man.
- Representatives, not owners - They lead as representatives, not owners. They take their duty as representative very seriously. They never confuse responsibility with ownership. They are like King Bharath, and not like King Dritharashtra. The former saw himself as a representative of his people, and appointed the most qualified citizen as his successor. The latter was not only unqualified, but was steadfast in wanting to make his son as his successor. Too often people think they "own", and don't realize that they don't "own", but have responsibility, and the burden of duty that goes with it.
- Honest and Sincere - Their names, thoughts, words, actions and character are synonymous with each other. That is how we know them and remember them. They are consistent in their thoughts, words and actions. Their character serves as model for people to live up to.

● Motivating and Inspiring

- *As they serve and lead.* George Washington inspired his men to continue serving the cause of young America, when the morale was at its lowest in 1783.
- *Long after they are gone.* They continue to inspire a long time after they have left their body. Their names, in essence, become verbs, nouns, adverbs, adjectives in the common language. The words “Rama Rajya” still reverberate around India. Mahatma Gandhi is synonymous with non-violence. Abraham Lincoln is remembered for a simple, beautiful and moving speech at Gettysburg. (We celebrate 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Abe Lincoln this year!). Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda is synonymous with conducting Gita Jnana Yagna.

The Chinmaya Mission Swamijis and Acharyas have been inspired by Swami Chinmayananda, and they strive every day toward to live by the examples set by Gurudev. We see it in their training, their preparation, their motivation, their love for their guru, and their selfless and tireless work. They are living examples we can relate to. It is important for every one of us to step up into a leadership role in our own areas of talent and specialization. We should encourage others to step up as well. All the while keeping in mind the qualities of a true leader, and striving to be one.

Hari Om!

## Series – Summary of the Gita Ch. 3 (Karma Yoga) - The Art of Performing Actions

*Nilkanth Bhatt, Richmond Chapter*

Krishna scolded Arjuna for becoming pusillanimous just before the war was about to begin. He encouraged him to perform his duty as the commander of the Army to fight the war. On the other hand he sang the glory of knowledge and wisdom. This contradiction confused Arjuna, so he asked Krishna “Tell me definitively; which path is good for me, the path of knowledge or path of action?”

Krishna explained to him that in this world there are two paths available for all beings to achieve their goal. Depending on their inherent tendencies they can either choose the path of knowledge and contemplation or the path of action. However neither can one achieve bliss by simply giving up action nor can one achieve supreme goal by mere renunciation.

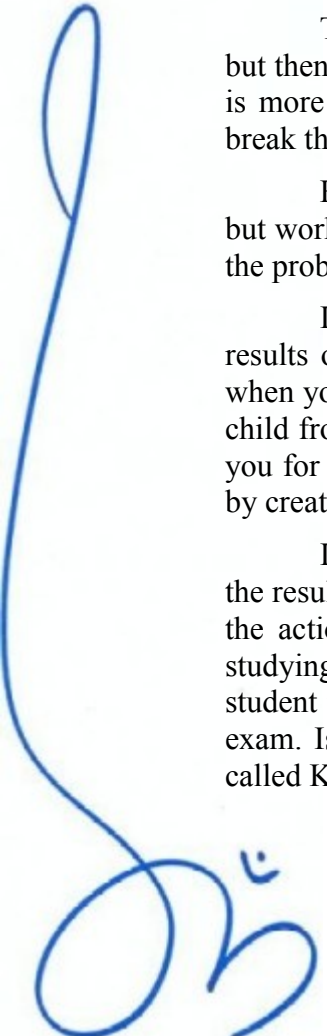
Science tells us that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Every reaction is an action in its own right and will have a reaction to it. Thus, this cycle of action and reaction perpetuates itself and creates an unending chain of actions, or shall we say a chain reaction, as in a nuclear chain reaction. In our lives we also experience an unending chain of Karma (actions) and Karma Phala (results of actions). Most of us work for fifty weeks and earn two weeks of vacation. When we are done spending time and money on our vacation, we have to go back to work to earn some more vacation.

This cycle of work and enjoyment seems unending. We dream of retiring to get out of this rut but then we see retired people craving for something to do. We truly cannot decide, whether working is more enjoyable or retiring from work is more enjoyable. It does not seem there is any way to break this chain of action and reward (reaction).

However Krishna tells Arjuna that there is a way to break this chain. Not by stopping work, but working with an attitude that does not bind us with its results. Actions and their reactions are not the problem; it is the association of the two in our minds that creates this problem of chain reaction.

If we perform actions simply because they need to be performed and do not expect particular results out of them, there will be a pure joy and satisfaction of performing actions. For example, when you see a child playing on a road and a car speeding towards him, you will rush to remove the child from the path of the speeding car. At that time you do not think whether people will recognize you for saving the child or not? Therefore, that action will give you pure joy and will not bind you by creating more desires.

If we can perform all actions in our life in a similar manner, without pre-determining what the results should be, our actions will be more effective. We can employ all our energy in performing the actions and not in worrying over their results. A student who employs all his/her energy in studying will be more effective than a student who worries about the result. Simply because the student in the latter case would be wasting most of his/her time in worrying versus preparing for the exam. Isn't it? This attitude of doing what needs to be done, without worrying about its result, is called Karma Yoga.



We must perform actions, because we cannot stay without performing actions even for a second. That is our nature. Therefore, we see in our society that people retire from their jobs with the big corporations and the next week they start working as consultants to the same corporations. This is not unusual; this is actually in accordance with our nature. In Bhagvad Geeta Lord Krishna says

*Na hi kaschit kshanam api jatu tishthati akarmakrut*

*Karyate hi avashah karma sarvah prakriti jai gunaihi.*

Verily, none can ever remain without performing actions, even for a moment; because everyone is helplessly made to perform actions by the qualities (inherent in them) born out of PRAKRITI (*manifest nature*)

So, act we must, but we should act with the complete faith in the law of karma. We must have complete faith that our actions will be rewarded appropriately without exception. We must have as much faith in the law of karma as we have in all the other laws of nature. We have faith in the laws of Physics, and therefore we can rely on our modern appliances and equipment. We have faith in the laws of Chemistry, and therefore we can rely on the modern drugs to maintain our health. Can you imagine how difficult our lives would be, if we do not have any faith in all our appliances and drugs? Then, why not have faith that Nature will reward us exactly in accordance with our efforts, not any less and not any more. Acting with such a faith will free us to enjoy our lives of active service. Actions performed with such an attitude will not bind us to their results because we left the results to Nature. In other words, we have left the results to the Lord of Nature, who controls all the natural laws.

Bhagavan Krishna advises us in the Bhagavad Geeta that

*Yagnarthat karmanah anyatra lokah ayam karmabandhanah*

*Tad artham karma Kauntey mukta sangah samachar*

This world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of Yagna, and Therefore, O son of Kunti, earnestly perform action for Yajna alone, free from attachment.

Actions performed with pre-conceived results bind us mentally to enjoy or suffer their results. The actions performed in the spirit of Yagna (offerings to the Lord) free us from the attachment to their results, and therefore, we will enjoy whatever results we get, freely without judging them against our preconceived ideas.



## Analysis of the Mind – Transmigration of Soul

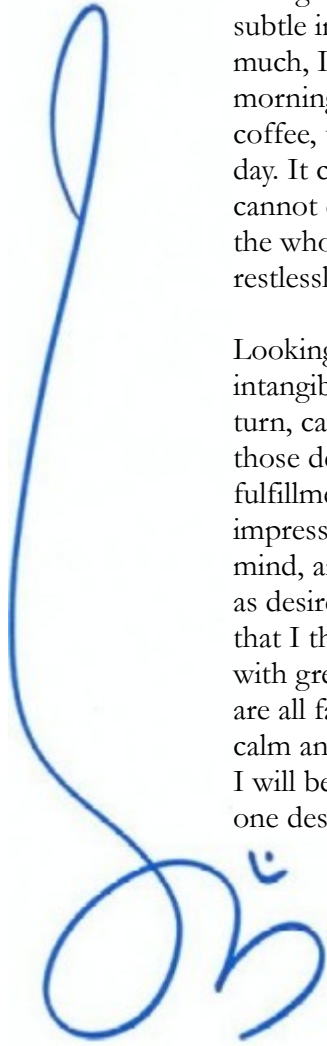
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*[Editor's Note: This is 6th<sup>th</sup> and last in the series – Analysis of the Mind. The first five appeared in the 2008 issues of Chinmaya Smriti]*

The life of everyone is driven by his or her desires to do 'this' or to have 'that' or to get rid of 'this', etc., so that he can be happy. In these entire pursuits one is looking for his happiness. 'This' can be a person, a place or a thing. My desires are different from yours, which are different from his. Some people want to become something great or famous, some want to become artists, some actors or actresses, some dancers, musicians, scientists, doctors, or multimillionaires or football players and some even vagabonds or some just want to sit around and drink. A mother can tell that the likes and dislikes of two look-alike twins are different even when they are babies, as though each one brought his likes and dislikes with him. Likes and dislikes (rAga and dvESha) which are two sides of a coin are different for everyone. Where do these likes and dislikes come from?

Let us illustrate with an example: When I drank for the first time a delicious cup of South Indian coffee, that someone has offered me, I liked it so much that I want to have it again for the next day. While the cup of coffee that my friend gave me pleasure, which is an immediate tangible effect, it had also intangible effect. It left behind a subtle impression in my mind, to have that experience again. That subtle impression is called vaasana, meaning fragrance of that action in the mind. Since I liked it so much, I went to shop, bought all the ingredients needed, and started making it at home, first thing in the morning. I began to enjoy that hot cup of coffee in the morning, everyday. Every time I enjoy that coffee, the subtle impression in the mind or that coffee- vaasana becomes stronger and stronger, day by day. It comes to a stage that as soon as I get up, I have to have that hot cup of coffee and without that I cannot do anything else. My happiness depends on having that cup of coffee, otherwise I feel miserable, the whole day. Sounds familiar, is it not? If I run out of coffee, I will run after from place to place restlessly to get that hot cup of coffee.

Looking at the mechanics of this process reveals that deliberate or ego-centric actions will leave intangible impressions of likes or dislikes called Vaasanas in the core of the mind. These Vaasanas, in turn, cause desires at the intellect level, agitations at the mind level, and actions at the body level. Unless those desires are fulfilled, I become restless. I go in search of environments that are conducive for the fulfillment of my desires or vaasanas. All ego-centric desires are grosser manifestations of the subtler impressions in the mind, the vaasanas. When vaasanas manifest as desires, they cause agitations in the mind, and the mind becomes restless until those desires are fulfilled. When the coffee vaasana manifests as desire for coffee, my mind is no more free to think anything else other than that hot cup of coffee that I think I need for me to be happy. I can suppress the desires temporarily, but they will spring again with greater forces, in one form or the other. They will express as anger, frustration or irritation, etc. We are all familiar with these experiences. On the other hand, when a desire is fulfilled, my mind becomes calm and quiet, and I am happy until of course the next set of vaasanas drives me to do something else. I will be tossed from one desire to the other for me to be happy. Life becomes a rat race, trying to fulfill one desire after the other.





From this example, we arrive at some important conclusions. Vaasanas are accumulated by deliberate willful actions – we call them as ego-centric actions. Ego-centric means ‘I, and I want’. Vaasanas can be favorable or unfavorable type, that is, they include both likes and dislikes. These are subtle impressions in the mind, perhaps even deeper than the unconscious mind in the western psychology. Even though actions are over, their effect in terms of these subtle impressions will be long lasting. That is one of the reasons why one should be very careful of how he acts or with what attitude he acts. Action can also be done in such a way that it does not leave a vaasana or it can nullify or neutralize the previous vaasanas; and that attitude in action is called karma yoga or yoga of action, which we will discuss later. When vaasanas cause desires in the intellect and agitations in the mind, the mind becomes restless. In the coffee example, unless I have that hot cup of coffee in the morning, I am agitated and restless and cannot do anything else. When that hot cup of coffee comes, I am back to myself, and say that I am so happy that I have my cup of coffee. Happiness did not really come with coffee, but when the desire for coffee is fulfilled, all the agitations of the mind are subsided and I am back to myself – I am free from a wanting mind or desiring mind. In those moments, the mind is calm and I say I am happy, but conclude that coffee gave me happiness. Hence the happiness that I want, I am actually tapping it from myself, because as we discussed before, I am in reality complete and full or limitless by myself; and that is the state of happiness. Hence happiness is my intrinsic nature. Fulfilling the desire for coffee has brought myself back to myself, where I become contented with myself, at least for those few moments until another desires props up in my mind. One can get happiness that one is longing for in this way by fulfilling the desires all the time. One serious caveat is, as I fulfill my desires, the stronger those vaasanas become and there will be situations where I will not be able to fulfill my desires. That is the time when anger, frustrations and all other psychological problems arise. I lose my freedom since I depend for happiness on something other than myself. Essentially I have become a slave to my own vaasanas. As a corollary, we can now define absolute freedom is freedom from all our vaasanas. All other freedoms that we talk about are only circumstantial or temporal freedoms.

More vaasanas means more desires, more agitations, and I am continuously busy and restless, and 24 hours are not sufficient to do what I want to do. In the same vein, if there are less vaasanas, there will be less self-centered actions, the mind has fewer agitations, and I am more peaceful with myself. My happiness depends less on the things other than myself. Suppose if I have no vaasanas, there are no self-centered desires, I will have no agitations in my mind, and I am happy all the time with myself as I am. One who revels in himself by himself, Krishna calls him as jnaani or sthita prajna or a realized soul (aatmani eva aatmanaa tushTaH). In that state of fulfillment, any action that I do then is not for gaining any personal fulfillment (since I am happy even otherwise), but for the benefit of the society at large. Such a person is called mahaatmaa or a great soul, and is revered for generations to come. They leave a mark in the society with their self-less service. Anne Bessent called Mohandas K. Gandhi as Mahaatma, and that became his title as people called him affectionately as Mahaatma Gandhi.

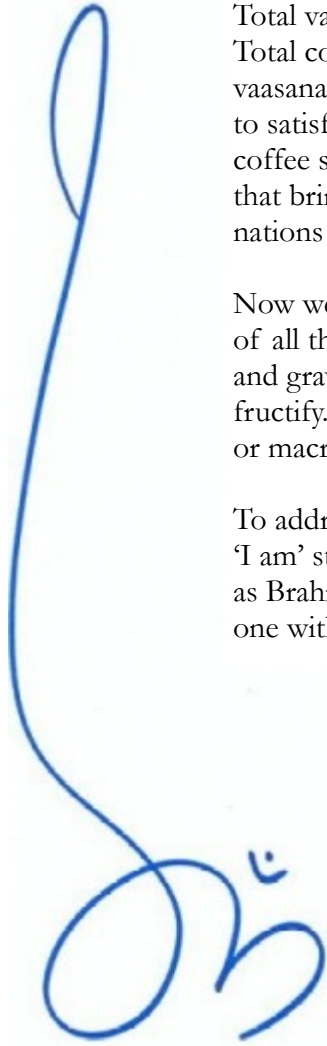
If we examine our lives, we go from one environment to the other to fulfill our likes and dislikes. We are driven by our vaasanas to seek environments that are conducive to fulfill our vaasanas. In the process of fulfillment, we only reinforce those vaasanas. Thus we get caught up in this whirlpool of vaasanas – desires – agitations – actions – vaasanas – more desires, etc. Every ego-centric action that we perform will leave its characteristic vaasanas in the mind. There are vaasanas that cannot be exhausted in this life and they are stored in to our total account. The total account of vaasanas each one has is called sanchita karma. Of the total account, we can only bring into this life those that can be exhausted or those that are ready to germinate. The ones we bring with us is called praarabda karma or one can

loosely translate it as our destiny. Since we always seek environment that is conducive to fulfill our vaasanas, we obviously seek birth in a place, to particular parents or in an environment that is conducive to exhaust the set of vaasanas that are ready to germinate. During living, being a will-full person, we act and in the process of acting we accumulate new set of vaasanas that can be exhausted in this life, if not put them back into our total account. The new set of vaasanas that are being deposited into our account are called aagaami karma. Thus we have a total account (sancita karma), we have brought from this account only those that can be exhausted and is called as destiny (praarabda karma), and the new ones that are getting accumulated are deposited into our account called aagaami karma. The vaasanas are called causal body, which is the cause in determining what type of body, what type of parents and what type of environment or what type of world around me that I need in order exhaust my vaasanas. In this model every cause and effect is perfectly accounted. No one gets what he is not entitled. If there is God up in the skies, he can only be God, if he gives what one deserves. Or to put it bluntly, everyone gets what he deserves, whether one wins millions in a lottery or loses those when stock market crashes.

My vaasanas determine my world that I need that is conducive to exhaust them, the world that you need is determined by your set of vaasanas, her world is determined by her vaasanas. Hence total world is determined by total vaasanas of all beings in this universe. Now whom should we blame for the type of the world that is created? If we do not like the world we are in, we need to blame ourselves, since it is the world that we need to exhaust each of our vaasanas, including the vaasanas of a mosquito that is trying to get its share of the food that it needs for its survival. If I change my vaasanas, you change yours and she changes hers and thus everybody changes their vaasanas then we create a new world that is more conducive to our new set of vaasanas. If there is a God up in the skies, He is bound to bless the type of environment that incorporates all the demands of all the vaasanas of all beings in this universe. Total vaasanas become the cause for creation for the total world. Now we can define God or Iswara. Total consciousness or Brahman takes the role of Iswara, creates the total universe based on the total vaasanas of all beings in this universe. It is like Star-bucks coffee shops spring forth all over the country, to satisfy the coffee vaasanas of all coffee lovers in the country. If no body wants to drink coffee, all the coffee shops will close in no time. Just as individual has vaasanas, the family has the collective vaasanas that bring them together to exhaust their mutual vaasanas. Same principle applies to groups and to nations at large. Hence Vedanta says, if you want to change the world, begin that change first in yourself.

Now we are ready to define what a soul or jiiva is. When I die, I take with me my subtle body (consisting of all the nineteen entities that we discussed) along with causal body which is nothing but my vaasanas and gravitate towards a field that is conducive to experience my next powerful vaasanas that is ready to fructify. To look at this total scenario correctly, we need to look at the problem from both totality point or macro cosmic point (or total vaasanas point), and from individual point or micro cosmic point.

To address this issue correctly, we can examine from three references. First, from the absolute reference, 'I am' stands for absolute, immutable pure consciousness-existence that I am. That is what Vedanta calls as Brahman – infiniteness or limitlessness is my nature. It is 'I am = Brahman' is absolutely infinite; it is one without a second, advaityam. We cannot say anything more since words which are limited and mind



which is limited cannot describe that which is unlimited. Only descriptions that are possible are that it is indescribable, infinite, imperceptible, etc, all negative descriptions to negate what it is not. Even those descriptions are only from the point of finite, mutable and perceptible things. It is beyond all words and there is nothing beyond this. It is the very substratum of the entire universe, since it is ever existent and conscious and infinite entity. From that reference there is nothing other than it. Since it can only be one, there is nothing else to differentiate it from. This can be stated as - it is free from three fundamental possible differences – called in Sanskrit – vijAti, sajAti, swagata bhedas. JAti means family or class of the same types. We can say chairs are one family or jAti, which is different from jAti of tables. The differences between different jAtis are called vijAti differences. The differences within the family are called SajAti differences. For example, within the family of chairs, there could be differences between one chair and the other. Finally, within the chair there could be internal differences called swagata bhedas. For example, hands are different, legs are different, etc. These internal differences, swagata bhedaH are possible, since chair is assemblage of parts. Brahman is a homogeneous mass of pure consciousness, which has no parts for it to be parted. Vedanta says I am that Brahman and that is the absolute truth. Since Brahman is infinite or limitless, Vedanta calls its intrinsic nature as satyam, jnaanam and anantam, brahma – It is of the nature of pure existences-knowledge-and limitless or pure happiness. Realization of that as my intrinsic nature is called self-realization, God realization, moksha, nirvANa, or liberation or freedom from all differences and discriminations – it is the very goal of the human life itself. It is a fearless state since fear comes from the second. Vedanta defines this absolute reference as pAramArthika satyam, supreme reality.

Next reference we are concerned from our point is called vyAvahArika satyam or transactional reality. In this reference we can look at the situation from micro scale that is individual point and macro scale, from collective totality point. Somehow we need to connect all this (at least conceptually) to the absolute reference. At Individual point, the same existent-consciousness that I am, who is one without a second, appear to be with varieties of individual bodies, minds and intellects. How can one 'I am' become many? We gave a dream example before, how I, a waker, create a dream world consisting of varieties of objects as well as beings with their own tiny body, mind and intellects (BMI) as well as myself with my own BMI. That power by which one appears to become many we have defined as maayaa.

At an individual or micro level, the consciousness-existence that I am appears to be limited by my BMI and I become a jiiva or individual soul. We use the word – appear to be – since consciousness-existence cannot be limited, similar to space. Even though space is limitless, we divide this indivisible space into compartments as different countries, states, cities and even different houses. Within the house we have different rooms where bath room is different from bed room and kitchen, etc. Even the dividers that divide the space are within the space only. But these divisions are valid for transactional purposes or for our vyavahaara. Therefore transactional reality need not be absolute reality, although it is inherent in that, just as indivisible space is inherent in the all divisions that we have made for our convenience or transactional purposes.

The situation is identical. All pervading consciousness as though or appears to be divided into multitudes of things and beings just as in the dream. We have both insentient as well as sentient things and beings. In the dream, the differences (three types of differences stated above – SajAti, vijAti and swagata) appear to be real, as long as I am dreaming. However, once I am awakened all things and beings resolve into me, the waker. In the same way, the plurality of things and beings appear to be real in the

waking world, and only when I am awakened to the absolute state of reality or pAramArthika satyam, all differences resolve into me, the absolute existence-consciousness. Just as the dream is due to projection of suppressions and oppressions of the waking mind, exactly identical situation occurs for the waking world. The total vaasanas become the root cause for the projection of the total world and individual vaasanas become cause for the individual BMI. At the individual level, the total conscious as though reflected in the intellect as the ego – or individual I, transacts with the individual BMI, without realizing that I am the pure existence-consciousness. Likes and dislikes or vaasanas of the individual manifests as desires at the individual intellect, agitations at the individual mind level, and actions at the individual body level. Jiiva or individual I, or soul, is when the reflected consciousness in the BMI takes itself to be real, transacts as if it is real, and takes the responsibility for the actions that go on with BMI. It is like the villager who is sitting in the train but carries the language on his head to help the train in carrying that luggage. I, as an individual ego (as I am this), take the responsibility for the actions that are being performed. These ego-centric actions will leave vaasanas and the rest of the repercussions follow. I, the reflected consciousness (chidAbhAsa), move from birth to birth, from one field of experience to the other, along with my subtle body and causal body to exhaust my vaasana account. Just as I go to deep sleep everyday (called nidra or laya) folding everything into myself without any identification with BMI other with the causal body, totality consisting of all jiivas and things – go into deep sleep state called pralaya. Similarly when I get up in the morning, all the things that were there before I went to sleep project back, exactly in the same way, after pralaya, when the Lord or totality gets up (his sleep is called yoga nidra) the whole universe which was in the subtle form during sleep projects back into grosser form. This transformation from subtle to grosser form is called creation in Vedanta. The totality or macrocosm supported by consciousness-existence 'I am' is called Iswara or the Lord or the creator. The same existence-consciousness reflected in the individual intellect is called jiiva or soul. It is important to recognize that we are not equating the individual soul or jiiva with totality or God. What we are equating is the essence – the existence-consciousness that I am, is the same, reflected in the microcosm or in the macrocosm. As long as I think I am only an individual with local equipments of BMI, then the world I see or transact with is different and the creator of the whole universe, God is different. Hence if and when I view the creation or the world as different from me, then there is a creator or the father in heaven who is different and who is omniscient and omnipresent.

The dream world of plurality is real for the dreamer. The material that the dreamer sees appears to be very real. It is difficult to convince him that the building that is under blaze and the fireman that is trying to put out the fire and the water and the hose that are being used and the spectators that are all watching are not really real. The reality of the dream is only for that particular dreamer since it is projected by a single waker's mind. The other beings have their own dreams to deal with. This reality at the subjective level is called 'prAtibhAsika satyam', subjective objectification. When a dreamer wakes up, all the dream world of things and beings resolve into the waker's mind. Then only he will realize that all the dream world is only subjective not really objective, and therefore not really real. However for that waker, the waking world of things and beings are real and has objective reality or transactional reality. He would not accept that this is also like a dream. He looks for some scientific proofs, without realizing one cannot prove to a dreamer that the dream world is not real. He forgets even the dream world was objective from the point of local mind in the dream, as in the case of fireman's mind who is trying to put out the fire in the dream. The analogy is exact. We only classify the waking world as objective reality, while the dream world as subjective reality. That is only a waker's notion. But from the point of absolute reality, both worlds are only different degrees of reality but none of them are really real.



We can now go one step further. I consider myself that I am an individual different from others. I have to deal with the world around me, from birth to death. I do not know where I came from, nor I know where I am heading. I am forced to deal with the world around – things that I like and things that I do not like. I came into the world that is already there, and wondering why I am here, what is this world and who created this world, why I have to deal with this world; all the questions that we posed in the first post – Analysis of the Mind-I. Now we have better idea in terms of who I am and what is this world. We posed a question in the second post whether mind is a matter or not. It is like dreamer asking a question is the dreamer's mind a matter similar to that how his gross body is made? Dreamer can learn about different theories - Kantian philosophy or Descartes' theory or Freud's analysis of the mind, etc., all about the nature of the dreamer's mind (he does not know that he is dreamer and as far as he is concerned he is a waker and the world and the matter in front of him is real) – but when he awakened from a dream, what would be his attitude about all the questions and answers about the mind and the matter of the dream body and dream mind. Vedanta points out that any theory that is based on partial data is inconclusive. Hence all western theories about the mind that we study are based on partial data of waker's mind and therefore they are speculative at best. Vedanta says any analysis can only be complete and full only if all the data pertaining to the human experience is considered. Hence not only the waking state, but dream state and deep sleep states have to be analyzed to arrive at correct conclusion. Such a scientific analysis done by Vedanta in 'Mandukya UpaniShad', considering the three states of human experience that everyone goes through – the waking state, the dream state and deep sleep state. It concludes that I am none of the three states, I am there as a waker, I am there as a dreamer and I am there as a deep sleeper, and I am there in all the three states and yet I am beyond all the three states. I am that existent-consciousness limitless since there is nothing other than I am – and that is the pAramArthika satyam – the absolute reality, independent of any religious doctrines, or philosophies or theories.

Hari Om!

