

Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 19, Number 6-- November 7, 2009

We wish our readers and members

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Merry Christmas &

a wonderful holiday season

On Being Charitable – Swami Chinmayananda

A word of sincere sympathy, a look of love, a smile of true affection, can give to the recipient much more than a heartless check even if it be for a fat sum. So be truly charitable, in this diviner sense.

In This Issue

Events & Library

- Events and Links
- News Briefs
- Flyer – Jnana Yajna by Swami Dheerananda
- Flyer – CMW 2010 Vedanta Course
- Flyer – Jnana Yajna by Guruji Swami Tejomayananda
- Flyer – Adi Sankara Nilayam

Bala Vihar Articles and Stories

- Art Work: Ganesha, by Jyotsna Rao
- Smruthi Hariprakash – My Vacation to 2009 Mahasamadhi Camp
- Keshav Rao – Celebrating Lakshmi Puja and Its Significance
- Hindi Students – On Obama's Nobel Prize
- Series: Hindu Rituals and Routines – Sowmya Sundararaman

Members & Friends

- Poem: The Bouquet – Chetana Neerchal
- Please Live in My Heart!! – Aziza Meer
- Poem: What is it Like When I Turn Inwards?? – Aziza Meer
- Art of Giving – Shashikala Duraiswami
- Spiritual Meaning of Namaskaar – Sowmya Sundararaman
- Summary of “Sadhana” by Tagore – Sitaram Kowtha
- Dana (Charity) – D. C. Rao
- Finitization – Acharya Dr. K. Sadananda
- Series: Brief Introduction to Gita: Ch 7 – Nilkanth Bhatt
- Series: On Karma Yoga – Acharya Dr. K. Sadananda

Next Issue

- January 2010, Articles due by December 20th 2009
- 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.

Calendar and Upcoming Events

- October 18 – December 13 – Philosophy and Practice of Patanjali Yoga Darshan (Sutras) by D.C. Rao
- November 7th – Annual Banquet, Marriott, Fairfax, VA
- November 28, 29 – Thanksgiving Break
- December 29 – January 2 – Jnana Yajna by Swami Dheerananda, Chantilly, VA
- December 26,27 & January 2,3 – No Bala Vihar Classes: Winter Break
- January 1, 2010 – New Year's Day Pooja: Vishnu Sahasra Namavali and Guru Paduka Pooja
- January 9 & 10, 2009 – Bala Vihar Classes resume after the Winter Break
- January 18, 2010 – Martin Luther King Day – Youth Seva Day – Food for the Homeless

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 books, CDs, DVDs, etc.. Browse online at www.chinmayadc.org; and 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

Useful Links:

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

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

CMWRC Events Held

- Bala Vihar students went on a field trip to nearby parks and playgrounds enjoying beautiful autumn weather. This was the first time a common field trip date was chosen for all Bala Vihar classes for a session.
- 108 Oblations to Devi – A Navarathri celebration was held in Virginia
- Lakshmi Pooja and Deepavali celebration was held at Chinmayam on October 10th

Announcements

A Plea from CMWRC

Have you participated in our Congregation loan program to support our Virginia Property?

- If you did, please spread the word around.
- If not, please contact your Treasurers. CMWRC needs your help, now more than ever.

Chinmaya West Newsletter

Be sure to read the latest newsletter from Chinmaya Mission West.

Browse and download at www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter:
<http://www.chinmayamission.org/newsletdownloadfile.php?filename=132nov2009.pdf>





CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

(A non-profit religious organization registered in Maryland)
Kailas Niwas, 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905



Presents

Jnana Yajna (a series of free discourses) in VIRGINIA

JEWELS FROM SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA

By

SWAMI DHEERANANDA

Acharya, Chinmaya Mission, Washington Regional Center

At Dulles South Multipurpose Center, 24950 Riding Center Dr, South Riding, VA 20152

(Venue of Chinmaya Mission Dulles Chapter – *see directions below)

7:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Dec 29 through Jan 02, 2010

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna imparts teachings to Arjuna, who has psychologically broken down in the midst of a battle. If the Upanishads or Vedanta (the last section of Vedas) expound philosophical principles discussing human being, world and God, the Gita is a handbook of instructions discussing how everyone can live the subtle philosophical principles of Vedanta in our daily lives. Swamiji will cover selected verses from this glorious text during the course of the talks.

"In the Bhagavad Gita, we find a practical handbook of instruction on how best we can reorganize our ways of thinking, feeling and acting in our everyday lives. As we proceed with a serious study of the Gita, chapter by chapter, we shall find how she unfolds a way of life which helps us grow to be socially more productive and individually more balanced and tranquil, pursuing our life at peace with ourselves.

"The Gita is a ready-made textbook which serves us where we are; whoever we may be, whatever may be our problem, irrespective of place and time, caste and creed, the Gita serves us. This is the special charm of the scriptural textbook, the Bhagavad Gita." - Swami Chinmayananda



Swami Dheerananda has served the Washington DC area, guiding families since 1989 when Poojya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda sent him to this area as Resident Acharya. Swamiji is the architect behind Chinmaya Mission's very popular Bala Vihar and Summer Camps for children in the Washington DC area. For the adults, Swami Dheerananda has been conducting year-long weekly talks in Virginia and Maryland, expounding Vedanta through scriptural texts such as Bhagavad Gita, Vivekachoodamani, Aparokshanubuthi, Sri Dakshinamurthy Stotram and Purushasooktham. Swamiji is unique in articulating the difficult Vedantic concepts through very simple, real-life examples that provide practical guidance in our daily lives.

Directions: From Beltway- Rt 495 take I-66 W to Route 50 West past Route 28 overpass. Travel 5 miles, turn left on Loudoun County Parkway and turn right on Riding Center Drive. Go past the 4-way stop sign and the center will be to your left. Parking is free.

For details, send email to yajna2009@chinmayadulles.org or contact Vish Ramabhata 703-986-3151.

VISHNU SAHASRA-NAMAVALI AND GURU PADUKA PUJA
will be celebrated on Saturday, JANUARY 1st, 2010 at the same location



CHINMAYA
MISSION®
WEST

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

ONE-YEAR,
RESIDENTIAL,
FULL-TIME, INTENSIVE
VEDANTA COURSE

AUGUST 2010-2011

AT CMW's
KRISHNALAYA ASHRAM
IN NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA, AMIDST
SERENE REDWOODS

CONDUCTED
IN ENGLISH

ENHANCES ONE'S
UNDERSTANDING AND
CLARITY OF BASIC
AND ADVANCED
VEDANTIC CONCEPTS

HARI OM



Vedanta 2010



With the blessings of His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda, Head of Chinmaya Mission worldwide, Chinmaya Mission West (CMW) is pleased to announce its one-year, residential Vedanta Course at CMW's headquarters, the ashram of *Krishnalaya* in Northern California, amidst the serene Redwoods.

This residential, full-time course, without any holidays, will be conducted in English.

ELIGIBILITY

This Course is open to sincere seekers between the ages of 20 and 70 years.

REGISTRATION

\$12,000 (covers registration, lodging, boarding, and books; payable in installments)

DATES / ACHARYAS

The course will commence on August 7, 2010 and conclude in August 2011.

Full-time Resident Acharya

Acharya Smt. Sharada Kumar

August 2010

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

August-October 2010

Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya

November-December 2010

Swami Ishwarananda

January 2011

Swami Shantananda

February-March 2011

Swami Ishwarananda

April-May 2011

Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya

June-July 2011

Acharya Smt. Sharada Kumar

August 2011

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda



TO REGISTER

Complete the online form at
www.chinmayamission.org/plyrcy

All applications received will be reviewed. Eligible candidates will be asked to schedule a personal interview, the details of which will be provided at a later date.

For more information:

prabodh@chinmayamission.org

(707) 207-5011

TEXTS

His Holiness Swami Tejomayananda: Mandukya Upanishad, Tattva Bodha, Essence of Shrimad Bhagavatam and Ramayana

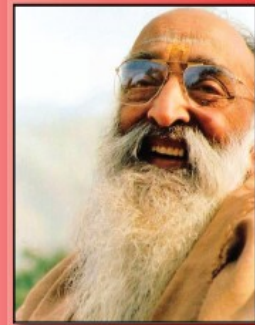
Swami Shantananda: Dakshinamurti Stotram, Sat Darshanam

Swami Ishwarananda: Shrimad Bhagavad Gita

Brahmachari Prabodh Chaitanya: Upadesha Sara, Atma Bodha, Drg Drshya Viveka, Panchadashi Ch. I, and Upanishads (Ishavasya, Kena, Katha, Mundaka)

Acharya Sharada Kumar: Taittiriya Upanishad, Vivekachudamani, Vedic Chanting, Sanskrit, Sahasranamavalis, Bhajans

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THE JOURNEY FROM CHANGE TO CHANGELESS



HH Swami Tejomayanandaji
Spiritual Head of
Chinmaya Mission World Wide



CHINMAYA FAMILY CAMP 2009

HOSTED BY CHINMAYA MISSION D/FW

December 24 - 30, 2009

PUJYA GURUJI SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDAJI

Discourses on
Kaivalya Upanishad

Bhagavad Gita - Chapter XVII
(Yoga of the Three-fold Faith)

Free event open to all

Hilton DFW Lakes Executive
Conference Center
1800 Highway 26 East,
Grapevine, Texas,
United States 76051-9641

Category	Full Camp	Partial Camp
Family of 4	\$1,500	\$800
Family of 3	\$1,400	\$750
Family of 2	\$1,300	\$700
Single - non-sharing	\$1,000	\$600
Single - sharing	\$800	\$450

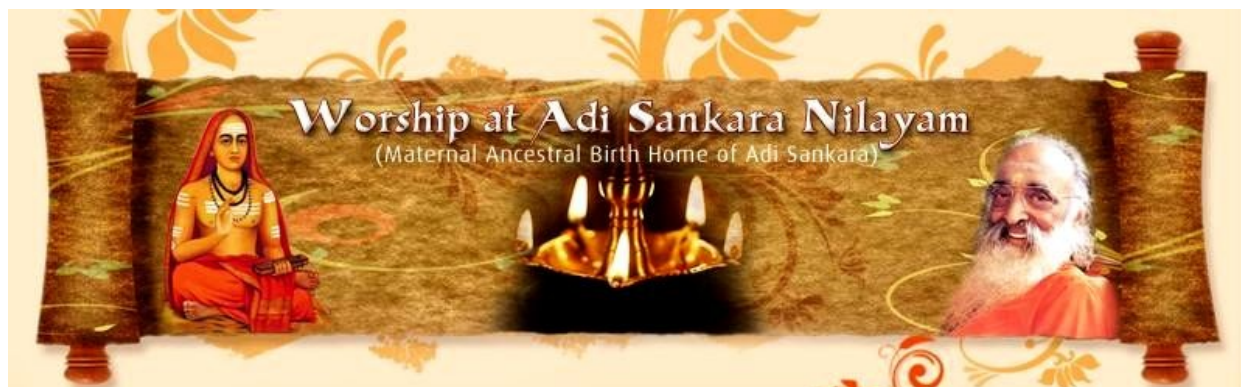
Ashok Dandekar
972-491-0018

Sandhya Gawra
972-491-0606

U.K.Gupta
972-307-0102

Sunil Maini
972-527-6272

www.cmdfw.org



Adi Sankara Nilayam is a hallowed place, the maternal birth home of the great saint, Adi Sankara. This centuries old sacred dwelling houses some precious temples from an era gone by. These temples were worshipped by Sri Sankara and his mother, Aryamba.

TEMPLES AT THE NILAYAM

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| ❁ Lord Ayyappa | ❁ Vettakorumakan |
| ❁ Lord Ganesha | ❁ Devi Nagayakshi |
| ❁ Sri Rama | ❁ Devi Bhagavati |
| ❁ Sri Krishna | ❁ Gurudev Shrine |

TO PRAY IS TO INVOKE THE BLESSINGS OF THE LORD ON ONESELF AND ON THOSE WE LOVE. WITH PRAYERS WE ESTABLISH OUR PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE COMPASSIONATE DIVINITY.

At Adi Sankara Nilayam, we provide opportunities for worship at these sacred and divine temples.

PUJA SERVICES

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| ❁ Chuttu Vilakku /1008 Lamps | ❁ Anniversary Puja |
| ❁ Ganapati Homa | ❁ Kalasa Puja |
| ❁ Sahasranama Archana | ❁ Samskriti Samrakshak |
| ❁ Birthday Puja | |

[View More](#)

Now Offer Your Puja Online : www.worship.chinfo.org

॥ पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति । तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, that I accept, offered by the pure-minded with devotion.
- Bhagwad Gita 9.26



For More Details Contact

The Puja Administrator
Adi Sankara Nilayam
Vellyanad, Ernakulam District
Kerala, India – 682 319

Phone: 0091 484 2747307
Email: worship@chinfo.org



Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) is located in the sacred precincts of Adi Sankara Nilayam.

Ganesha

Jyotsna Rao

Sundaram, Silver Spring



Om

My Vacation – 2009 Mahasamadhi Camp

Smruthi Hariprakasha

Frederick Chapter



Hari Om! Did you all have a nice vacation this summer? I did while going to the 2009 Chinmaya Mission Mahasamadhi camp held at Toronto, Canada. This camp was for one week, full of exciting things. The topic this year was Bala Bhagavatham. Usually every morning we would wake up at 6:30 am and take a quick shower and go to the morning yoga and meditation. After that we would get breakfast and then enter the next class we were supposed to be in. We read stories, played games and learned about Krishna. We would get lunch and play for about 3 hours in the hotel where the camp was being held. Then we would have outdoor activities. Some of the days we had assemblies. All the kids also got to perform in a drama called Krishna O' Krishna! We sang bhajans and danced in that drama. It was so wonderful! We also participated in dandia raas with all the people. In addition we also got to see a professional Bharathanatyam dancer perform. And that was my thrilling vacation trip.



Om

Celebrating Lakshmi Puja and Its Significance

Keshav Rao

Tapovanam, Dulles Chapter

On the Deepavali weekend of 2009, as many of us celebrated this auspicious occasion in our own ways, we at Bala Vihar celebrated Deepavali by doing a Lakshmi Puja. Our Lakshmi puja was led by 5 of our very own Bala Vihar students from the Dulles chapter: Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Samapriya Dandibotla, Chinmay Dasari, Apurva Nayak, and Tarun Golla. They were guided by their Shloka class teachers Sri Gopalakrishna and Jaya Rajagopal.

Sri Uncle initiated the puja by invoking (Avahanam) the Goddess Lakshmi to come and bless us all. As he chanted and explained the puja vidhi for various steps of the puja, all of us repeated after him. The students leading the puja offered water, rice and flowers to the Goddess at the altar while the rest of us did the same in our mind. The students then took turn to recite Sri Lakshmi Astottara sata Namavali which contains 108 names of Goddess Lakshmi, each symbolizing various divine attributes of Divine Mother.



Illustration 1: From Left to Right: Acharya Ananth, Jaya Rajagopal, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Samapriya Dandibotla, Chinmay Dasari, Apurva Nayak, Tarun Golla, and Sri Gopalakrishna

Everyone participated in the puja, not directly using all the materials we normally would, but we used our minds to do the puja (Manas Puja). Lakshmi is a very symbolic goddess; there are certain qualities and things we can learn from Lakshmi that many of us do not know.

Worship of Goddess Lakshmi ensures that our mind will be pure, concentrated and single-pointed. Deepavali (also called Diwali) is celebrated as the beginning of the New Year for some regions of India and thus it is a great time to set goals and refocus your mind on the upcoming year. Many children know Lakshmi as the goddess that will bring you money and riches. The real wealth that we should all be praying for is the wealth of knowledge. What good would material wealth, such as money, be without qualities of a pure mind? A pure mind can also be defined as a mind one have control over.

When we have control over our minds we have the power to handle material wealth efficiently. Only an intelligent mind can be given \$1,000,000 and still have some of it left ten years from then. Self-control and self-discipline are just two factors one must have before trying to achieve material wealth. Love, kindness, respect, sincerity are all values that tie into the great challenge of keeping material wealth when handed to you. In the Upanishads, you can see that the rishis asked for wealth not in the form of gold but in values. Is it not true that a nice, hardworking person will make more money, than the mean, cold-hearted one? It is obvious that more people will hire the nice one. The real six-forms of wealth are calmness of mind, self-control, self-withdrawal, forbearance, faith and single pointedness. When these are all at its highest strength one can attain true wisdom. So in all, we performed this Lakshmi Puja in order to prepare our mind to take on these qualities, so we can have victory over our minds.



Illustration 2: Dulles Bala Vihar Students & Parents doing Lakshmi Puja

Om

On Obama's Nobel Peace Prize

Nandini, Siri, Isha, Sambrum, Harsha

Hindi Language Class Students, Silver Spring Chapter

ओबामा को शांती पुरस्कार मिला

हिंदी पाठशाला समाचार

अक्टूबर २००९

इस साल बराक ओबामा को नोबल शांती पुरस्कार मिला | श्री ओबामा इस पुरस्कार के एक सौ आठवें विजयता हैं | हमारी कक्षा के कुछ विद्यार्थी मानते हैं की ओबामा इस पुरस्कार के योग्य हैं लेकिन दुसरे विद्यार्थी इस निर्णय से पूरी तरह सहमत नहीं हैं |

श्री ओबामा को यह पुरस्कार इसलिए मिला क्योंकि उन्होंने संसार में शांति फैलाने की पूरी कोशिश की | हम सोचते हैं की श्री ओबामा की योजनायें अच्छी हैं पर इन योजनाओं को पूरा करने में काफी समय लगेगा |

श्री ओबामा ने अब तक सिर्फ एक किताब लिखी है | वह अम्रीका के राष्ट्रपति हैं और सब अम्रीका वासी उनके पुरस्कार मिलने से बहुत खुश हुए | अब हम आशा करते हैं की ओबामा सब काम बहुत अच्छे करेंगे |

नंदिनी, सम्ब्रम, हर्षा, ईशा, सीरी,
हिंदी पाठशाला

6th and last in the Series

Hindu Rituals and Routines - Why Do We Follow Them?

Submitted by Sowmya Sundararaman



19. Why do we say shaanti thrice?

Shaanti, meaning "peace", is a natural state of being. Disturbances are created either by others or us. For example, peace already exists in a place until someone makes noise.

Therefore, peace underlies all our agitations. When agitations end, peace is naturally experienced since it was already there. Where there is peace, there is happiness. Therefore, every one without exception desires peace in his/her life.

However, peace within or without seems very hard to attain because it is covered by our own agitations. A rare few manage to remain peaceful within even in the midst of external agitation and troubles. To invoke peace, we chant prayers. By chanting prayers, troubles end and peace is experienced internally, irrespective of the external disturbances. All such prayers end by chanting shaanti thrice.

It is believed that trivaram satyam - that which is said thrice comes true. For emphasizing a point we repeat a thing thrice. In the court of law also, one who takes the witness stands says, "I shall speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth".

We chant shaanti thrice to emphasise our intense desire for peace. All obstacles, problems and sorrows originate from three sources.

Aadhidaivika : The unseen divine forces over which we have little or no control like earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions etc.

Aadhibhautika: The known factors around us like accidents, human contacts, pollution, crime etc.

Aadhyaatmika : We sincerely pray to the Lord that at least while we undertake special tasks or even in our daily lives, there are no problems or that, problems are minimised from the three sources written about above.

May peace alone prevail. Hence shaanti is chanted thrice. It is chanted aloud the first time, addressing the unseen forces. It is chanted softer the second time, directed to our immediate surroundings and those around, and softest the last

20. Why do we offer a coconut?

In India one of the most common offerings in a temple is a coconut. It is also offered on occasions like weddings, festivals, the use of a new vehicle, bridge, house etc. It is offered in the sacrificial fire whilst performing homa. The coconut is broken and placed before the Lord. It is later distributed as prasaada.

The fibre covering of the dried coconut is removed except for a tuft on the top. The marks on the coconut make it look like the head of a human being. The coconut is broken, symbolising the breaking of the ego. The juice within, representing the inner tendencies (vaasanas) is offered along with the white kernel - the mind, to the Lord.

A mind thus purified by the touch of the Lord is used as prasaada (a holy gift). In the traditional abhishekha ritual done in all temples and many homes, several materials are poured over the deity like milk, curd, honey, tender coconut water, sandal paste, holy ash etc. Each material has a specific significance of bestowing certain benefits on worshippers.

Tender coconut water is used in abhisheka rituals since it is believed to bestow spiritual growth on the seeker.

The coconut also symbolises selfless service. Every part of the tree -the trunk, leaves, fruit, coir etc. Is used in innumerable ways like thatches, mats, tasty dishes, oil, soap etc. It takes in even salty water from the earth and converts it into sweet nutritive water that is especially beneficial to sick people. It is used in the preparation of many ayurvedic medicines and in other alternative medicinal systems.

The marks on the coconut are even thought to represent the three-eyed Lord Shiva and therefore it is considered to be a means to fulfill our desires.

21. Why do we chant Om?

Om is one of the most chanted sound symbols in India. It has a profound effect on the body and mind of the one who chants and also on the surroundings. Most mantras and vedic prayers start with Om.

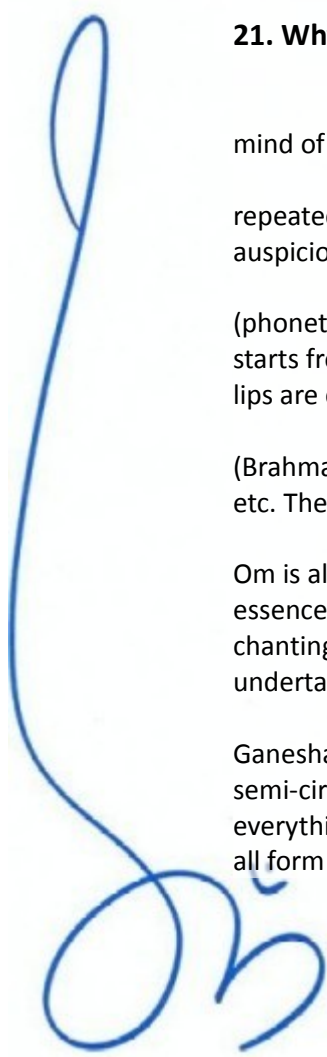
All auspicious actions begin with Om. It is even used as a greeting - Om, Hari Om etc. It is repeated as a mantra or meditated upon. Its form is worshipped, contemplated upon or used as an auspicious sign.

Om is the universal name of the Lord. It is made up of the letters A (phonetically as in "around"), U (phonetically as in "put") and M (phonetically as in "mum"). The sound emerging from the vocal chords starts from the base of the throat as "A". With the coming together of the lips, "U" is formed and when the lips are closed, all sounds end in "M".

The three letters symbolize the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep), the three deities (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), the three Vedas (Rig, Yajur and Sama) the three worlds (Bhuh, Bhuvah, Suvah) etc. The Lord is all these and beyond.

The formless, attributeless Lord (Brahman) is represented by the silence between two Om Chants. Om is also called pranava that means, "that (symbol or sound) by which the Lord is praised". The entire essence of the Vedas is enshrined in the word Om. It is said that the Lord started creating the world after chanting Om and atha. Hence its sound is considered to create an auspicious beginning for any task that we undertake. The Om chant should have the resounding sound of a bell (aaooommm).

Om is written in different ways in different places. The most common form symbolizes Lord Ganesha's. The upper curve is the head; the lower large one, the stomach; the side one, the trunk; and the semi-circular mark with the dot, the sweetmeat ball (modaka) in Lord Ganesha's hand. Thus Om symbolizes everything - the means and the goal of life, the world and the Truth behind it, the material and the Sacred, all form and the Formless.



22. Why do we do aarati?

Towards the end of every ritualistic worship (pooja or bhajan) of the Lord or to welcome an honored guest or saint, we perform the aarati. This is always accompanied by the ringing of the bell and sometimes by singing, playing of musical instruments and clapping.

It is one of the sixteen steps (shodasha upachaara) of the pooja ritual. It is referred to as the lighted lamp in the right hand, which we wave in a clockwise circling movement to light the entire form of the Lord.

Each part is revealed individually and also the entire form of the Lord. As the light is waved we either do mental or loud chanting of prayers or simply behold the beautiful form of the Lord, illumined by the lamp. At the end of the aarati we place our hands over the flame and then gently touch our eyes and the top of the head. We have seen and participated in this ritual from our childhood. Let us find out why we do the aarati?

Having worshipped the Lord of love - performing abhisheka, decorating the image and offering fruits and delicacies, we see the beauty of the Lord in all His glory. Our minds are focused on each limb of the Lord as the lamp lights it up. It is akin to silent open-eyed meditation on His beauty. The singing, clapping, ringing of the bell etc. denote the joy and auspiciousness, which accompanies the vision of the Lord.

Aarati is often performed with camphor. This holds a telling spiritual significance. Camphor when lit, burns itself out completely without leaving a trace of it. It represents our inherent tendencies (vaasanas). When lit by the fire of knowledge which illumines the Lord (Truth), our vaasanas thereafter burn themselves out completely, not leaving a trace of ego which creates in us a sense of individuality that keeps us separate from the Lord.

Also while camphor burns to reveal the glory of Lord, it emits a pleasant perfume even while it sacrifices itself. In our spiritual progress, even as we serve the guru and society, we should willingly sacrifice ourselves and all we have, to spread the "perfume" of love to all. We often wait a long while to see the illumined Lord but when the aarati is actually performed, our eyes close automatically as if to look within. This is to signify that each of us is a temple of the Lord.

Just as the priest reveals the form of the Lord clearly with the aarati flame, so too the guru reveals to us the divinity within each of us with the help of the "flame" of knowledge (or the light of spiritual knowledge). At the end of the aarati, we place our hands over the flame and then touch our eyes and the top of the head. It means - may the light that illuminated the Lord light up my vision; may my vision be divine and my thoughts noble and beautiful.

The philosophical meaning of aarati extends further. The sun, moon, stars, lightning and fire are the natural sources of light. The Lord is the source of this wondrous phenomenon of the universe. It is due to Him alone that all else exist and shine. As we light up the Lord with the flame of the aarati, we turn our attention to the very source of all light, which symbolizes knowledge and life.

Also the sun is the presiding deity of the intellect, the moon, that of the mind, and fire, that of speech. The Lord is the supreme consciousness that illuminates all of them. Without Him, the intellect cannot think, nor can the mind feel nor the tongue speak. The Lord is beyond the mind, intellect and speech. How can this finite equipment illuminate the Lord? Therefore, as we perform the aarati we chant;

Na tatra suryo bhaati na chandra taarakam
Nemaa vidyuto bhaanti kutoyamagnib
Tameva bhaantam anubhaati sarvam
Tasya bhasa sarvam idam vibhaati

He is there where the sun does not shine,
Nor the moon, stars and lightning.
then what to talk of this small flame (in my hand),
Everything (in the universe) shines only after the Lord,
And by His light alone are we all illumined.

THE BOUQUET

Chetana Neerchal

Bala Vihar Teacher and Graduation Coordinator

A couple of days ago, on my return from work, I was greeted by my mother heading out on a walk and she stopped, to give me a beautiful flower. My thoughts....

*Fragrant
was
that bouquet
of
uninhibited smiles
headed down
my path.
The traffic
behind me
stopped,
but
nobody honked.
Perhaps
they were
as captivated
as I was...
their impatience
lost
in
the
sweetness
of that moment.*



Please Live In My Heart!!

Aziza Meer

Every time i go to a store and i wander looking for something really hard, i don't seem to find it.

Then i end up asking someone and inevitably they point to the items that i have my back turned to. So to find what I wanted, all i had to do was to turn away from where i was looking; and then there it was, what I was looking for was right under my nose.

When i was 16, i was in my first year MA Literature and i was in a dorm. One morning, i woke up bright and early at 4 or 5 AM, full of energy, focus, and intention to finish a Linguistics assignment. i sat right down to work.

A few minutes later, i felt something in me. i felt a vessel, a white vessel, with nothing in it and endlessly deep and it was within me. i felt that sensation for a split second and in that split second i felt a complete satisfaction. Total satisfaction.

Then that moment passed. i went back to my homework. i was focused on my work and although that split second did register strongly in my mind, i didn't stop to pause and think. Yet, i did tell about this experience to my friends when I met them later in the day. They made fun of me saying that all the metaphysical poetry i was reading started to play on my mind. They laughed at me and i laughed with them, and yet I knew that my experience was true.

A couple of years later, i met Gurudev. i told him about this experience. He said my short-lived experience was like lightening and if that sensation stayed with me, then that is enlightenment. Well, that experience remained a lightening.

Like at a store, in my life as well, I am looking and working hard to find something that is right inside of me--That vessel and that joy and strength and satisfaction. Every time I zero in on it, I go to a social gathering or to work, or elsewhere, chasing life with my senses, working extremely hard to gain every ounce of spiritual strength and peace—while all of the spiritual peace lies right within me.

REJOICE IN THE LORD AND HE WILL GIVE YOU THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART.

When i have the thought and intention to surrender, to let go and let God, there is fear of the unknown. i feel like i need to control things around me or i will be in a huge mess. That is so because, that is the way we are conditioned to live life. But at times when i can let go and surrender to the joy within, i see that the fun in that surrender is much more than the fun from the senses. The fun from the senses is always accompanied by the contrary. It is short lived, it comes with a price. The joy within is pure and very substantial.

I intend to live in pure peace and joy.

What is it Like When I Turn Inwards??

Aziza Meer

*What is it like when i turn inwards??
It's like going into my backyard
After circling around the world to get there;
Like being a human being
And not a human doing;
Like the old woman who lost her needle in the hut
And searched for it outside the hut,
Finally turning into her hut for her needle;
Like the world that seemed real
And the inwardness that seemed like a dream,
Switched places;
Like abuse slides off of me
Just as water slides over a rock;
Like doing nothing
And yet doing everything;
Like joy without excitement--
the depletion that comes from the excitement
And then the dying of it;
Like turning my back to chaos
And turning my face to a substantial nothing;
Like a sensible child
Doing the simplest and the most obvious.*



Art of Giving

Shashikala Duraiswami

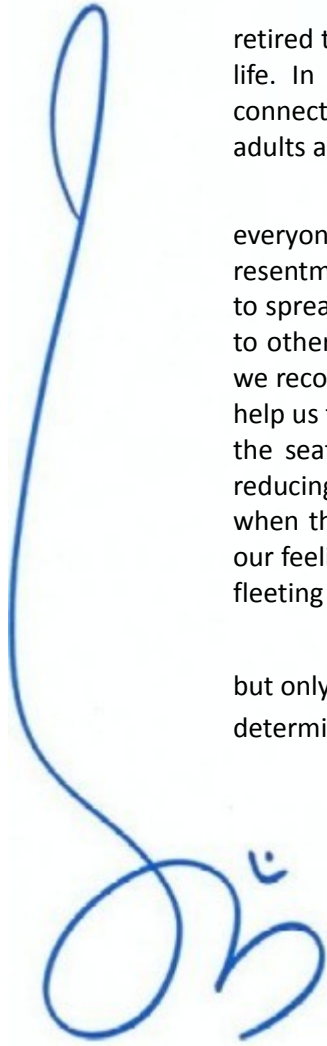
Holidays are a wonderful time of the year. In India, I would wait for Navratri and Diwali celebrations as we would see all the houses being painted and decorated with lights, and the best part was of course, the entire family got new clothes. Moving to the US, the Navratri and Diwali celebrations are followed by the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. For me, the best place to visit during the winter holidays is New York City. You can really feel the holiday spirit walking down Rockefeller center, with the stores and the trees along the road all lit up. Brings back great memories!

Having family get-togethers and buying gifts for the whole family has been quite a tradition in our household for the past several years. It is quite amazing to recollect the number of new games and toys introduced each year around the holidays. It is equally amazing to see the joy on our children's faces as they open up their presents with such enthusiasm and excitement. The old toys from the previous years are tossed aside or lowered in priority – the kids have naturally outgrown the old ones and have moved on with the new ones. This ability to naturally outgrow certain desires and wants is nothing but Dispassion. Dispassion or Vairagya is not about suppressing or ignoring one's desires but to simply not want it anymore. In my adult life, I begin to wonder what I have outgrown in the last some years. Now that I think about it, I don't believe I have outgrown anything in the last several years. Ironically, I have pretty much the same wants and desires.

In the olden days, the grahastha and vanaprastha ashrams were quite well-defined and when one retired to the forest he/she has consciously given up all the "worldly" desires and decided to lead a spiritual life. In today's modern times, the "aging gracefully motto" and the concept of staying involved and connected as long as possible, along with new toys and gadgets continuously being bombarded to both adults and kids alike, I wonder if I will know when and how I should "retire".

We know that happiness and smiles are contagious – when we get what we desire it is obvious to everyone around us (even when we don't flaunt it). Unfortunately, so are the feelings of sadness, anger, resentment and discontentment. When we are sad or dissatisfied, whether we intend it or not, we are likely to spread it to the people around us. As long as we are happy and satisfied, we send out positive vibrations to others around us. The moment we are unhappy or dissatisfied, we will send out those vibes also unless we recognize it and consciously make an effort to replace them with the positive ones. And the tool that can help us to achieve this is "Meditation". Although Meditation is about focusing on a single thought, it is also in the seat of solitude and silence that we can analyze and accept all our feelings and gradually work on reducing the innumerable thoughts to the single thought. The mind cannot possibly hold on to one thought when there are all other feelings and thoughts, triggered by desires and expectations. Also, since many of our feelings are subtle we cannot recognize or address them in our active day-to-day life or in the occasional, fleeting "meditative" moments.

I think the act of giving is a very noble deed and can give us tremendous good-will and contentment, but only if it is done with good and pure intention. In fact, this is true also of all our actions. Intentions determine the value of all our actions. Giving is not about satisfying one's ego but should be aimed at



truly benefiting someone – not as an “exchange” or a trade. Additionally, giving often automatically implies giving to somebody else. How about giving to our own self? We have certain responsibilities towards ourselves. If we intend to give joy and happiness to our children and the people around us, we need to truly experience the joy and happiness within ourselves, not occasionally but all the time. The only way we can have lasting happiness is when we start focusing inwards and keep our thoughts and feelings under control such that they always are positive and contented. The more time we give ourselves to reflect, the more stable and quiet we become; and in quietitude alone the true, everlasting bliss or “ananda” can be revealed. With continued practice of meditation, one should be able to get rid of all the negative or useless thoughts and create more positive and happy ones. This will not only enable us to sit in the silence of our inner Self but also help spread happiness around us. So for this Thanksgiving, how about giving ourselves the gift of some silent moments of meditation or a spiritual retreat? I plan to gift myself just few minutes in the morning and evening for reflection. While I am still looking forward to continue the tradition of family get-togethers and buying gifts for the holidays, I am sure that getting into the habit of meditating daily will be something that I and my near and dear ones will cherish in the years to come.

I would like to conclude with couple of quotes from Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda:

“Don’t put the key to your happiness in someone else’s pocket”

“Tomorrow we will be what we are now plus what and how we have faced life’s challenges today. This is the law of cosmic justice.”

SPIRITUAL ANALYSIS OF "NAMASKAR" What is the meaning and the benefits of 'Namaskar'?

Submitted by Sowmya Sundararaman

Origin and the meaning of the word 'Namaskar'

The word 'Namaskar' is derived from the root 'namaha', which means paying obeisance (Namaskar) or salutation. From Science of Justice - 'Namaha' is a physical action expressing that 'you are superior to me in all qualities and in every way'.

Worldly Benefits

- By doing Namaskar to a deity or a Saint, unknowingly their virtues and capabilities are impressed upon our minds. Consequently we start emulating them, thus changing our selves for the better.

Spiritual Benefits

- Increase in humility and reduction of ego / Enhancement in the spiritual emotion of surrender and gratitude / Gaining the Sattva component and faster spiritual progress

We receive the highest amount of Sattva component from the posture (mudra) of Namaskar..

By doing Namaskar to Deities or Saints we receive subtle frequencies emitted by them, e.g. frequencies of Sattva or Bliss.

How does one do Namaskar to an individual of the same age group?

When meeting someone of the same age-group do Namaskar by joining the fingers and placing tips of the thumbs on the Anahat chakra (at the centre of the chest). This type of Namaskar increases the spiritual emotion of humility in the embodied soul. Sattva frequencies from the universe are attracted by the fingers (which act as an antenna) and are then transmitted to the entire body through the thumbs which have awakened the Anahat chakra. This activates the soul energy of the embodied soul. In addition, by doing Namaskar in this manner to each other, frequencies of blessings are also transmitted.

What is correct method & science of doing Namaskar to God?

A. 'While paying obeisance to God, bring the palms together.

1. The fingers should be held loose (not straight and rigid) while joining the hands or palms.
2. The fingers should be kept close to each other without leaving any space between them.
3. The fingers should be kept away from the thumbs.
4. The inner portion of the palms should not touch each other and there should be some space between them.

Note: The stage of awakening of spiritual emotion (Bhav) is important to the seeker at the primary level. Hence, for awakening spiritual emotion (Bhav), he should keep space in between the joined hands, whereas a seeker who is at the advanced level should refrain from leaving such space in between the palms to awaken the unexpressed spiritual emotion (Bhav).



- B. After joining the hands one should bow and bring the head forward..
- C. While tilting the head forward, one should place the thumbs at the mid-brow region, i.e. at the point between the eyebrows and try to concentrate on the feet of the Deity.
- D. After that, instead of bringing the folded hands down immediately, they should be placed on the mid-chest region for a minute in such way that the wrists touch the chest; then only should the hands be brought down.

Underlying Science in this action

A. The fingers should not be stiff while bringing the palms together because this will lead to a decrease in Sattva component from the vital and mental sheaths and thus increase the raja component in them. By keeping the fingers relaxed, the subtlest Sattva component will get activated. With the strength of this energy, embodied souls are able to fight powerful distressing energies.

B. In the Namaskar posture, the joined fingers act as an antenna to assimilate the Chaitanya (Divine consciousness) or the Energy transmitted by a Deity. While joining the palms, the fingers must touch each other because leaving space between the fingers will result in accumulation of energy in that space. This energy will be immediately transmitted in various directions; therefore the seeker's body will lose the benefit of this potent energy.

C. About the space to be maintained between the palms:

For a seeker at the primary level, it is advisable to leave space between the palms; it is not necessary for a seeker at an advanced level to leave space between the palms.

D. After joining the palms, bow a little. This posture puts pressure on the navel and activates the five vital energies situated there. Activation of these vital energies in the body makes it sensitive to accepting sattvik frequencies. This later awakens the 'Atma shakti' (i.e. soul energy of an embodied soul). And later, Bhav is awakened. This enables the body to accept in large measures the Chaitanya emitted by the Deity.

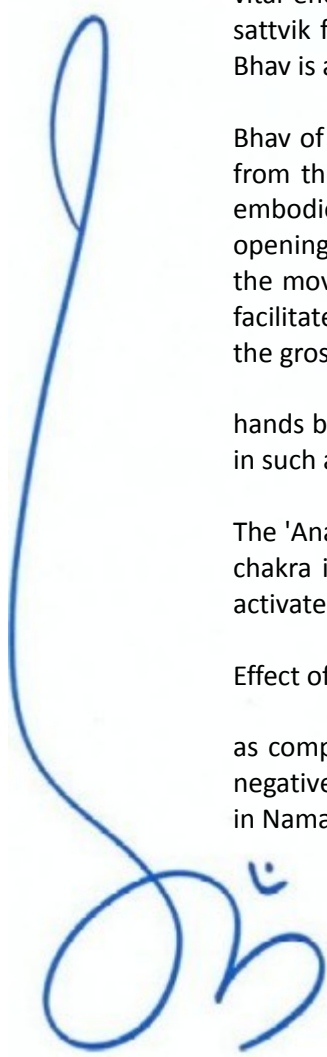
E. Touch the thumbs to the mid-brow region. (Please see images above..) This posture awakens the Bhav of surrender in an embodied soul, and in turn activates the appropriate subtle frequencies of Deities from the Universe. They enter through the 'Adnya chakra' (Sixth of the 7 chakras in the Kundalini) of the embodied soul and settle in the space parallel to it at the back interior of the head. In this space the openings to all the three channels converge; namely, the Moon, the Central and the Sun channels. Due to the movement of these subtler frequencies in this space, the Central Channel is activated. Consequently it facilitates the speedy transmission of these frequencies throughout the body, leading to purification of both the gross and subtle bodies at the same time.

F. After doing Namaskar, to completely imbibe the Chaitanya of the Deity (that has entered the hands by now), instead of bringing the folded hands down immediately, place them on the mid-chest region in such a way that the wrists touch the chest.

The 'Anahat chakra' is located at the centre of the chest. Akin to the Adnya chakra, the activity of the Anahat chakra is also to absorb the Sattva frequencies. By touching the wrists to the chest, the Anahat chakra is activated and it helps in absorbing more of the Sattva component.

Effect of this Posture

By doing Namaskar in this manner, the Deity's Chaitanya is absorbed to a greater extent by the body, as compared to other methods of doing Namaskar. This gives maximum distress to negative energies. The negative energies that have manifested in a person are unable to touch their thumbs at the mid-brow region in Namaskar.



What is the reason for not wrapping a cloth around the neck while performing circumambulation, doing Namaskar, ritualistic worship, sacrificial fires, chanting and while visiting Guru and deities?

When a cloth is wrapped around the neck, it does not activate the Vishuddha chakra (in the throat region) and hence an individual gets less benefit of the Sattva component.

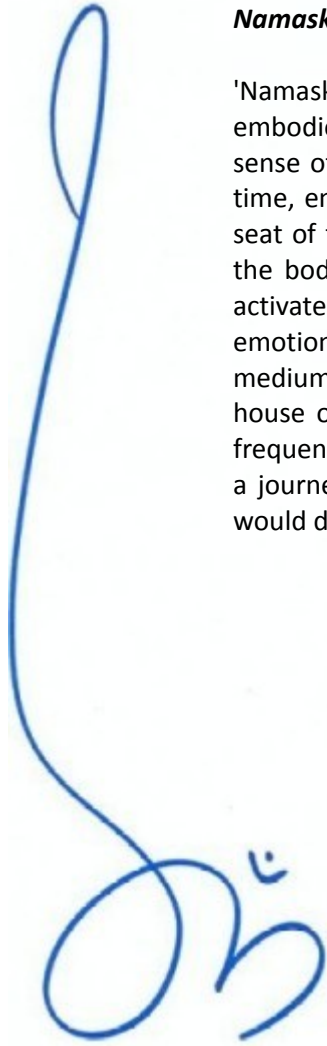
Why should one always do Namaskar to elders?

Meaning: When an elderly person arrives, the vital energy of the young person starts rising and when he gets up and does Namaskar, it returns to normal. - Manusmriti 2..120; Mahabharat, Udhog, Chapter (Section) 38.1, Sr. no... 104, 64-65

Explanation: 'As the sojourn of the elderly person is gradually towards the southern direction, that is, towards the region of Lord Yama (towards death), his body starts emitting raja and tama frequencies on a high scale. When such an elderly person comes in the vicinity of any younger individual, these frequencies start affecting the younger person.. A subtle magnetic field is created between the two. Consequently, the vital energy of the younger person is pulled upward. This way the younger person can suffer due to sudden momentum to his vital energy. When this younger person does Namaskar to the elderly person, some amount of the Central channel of his Kundalini system is activated and the Sattva component in it starts increasing. Consequently the raja and tama components in him are influenced by the Sattva component and the vital energy comes back to normal state. Hence on arrival of an elderly person, it is customary for the younger individuals to do Namaskar to them.'

When travelling, prior to the commencement of a journey and upon returning, why should one do Namaskar to elders in the family?

'Namaskar to the elders in the family is one way of surrendering to the God principle in them. When an embodied soul bows in Namaskar to an elder by surrendering to the God principle in him, at that time a sense of compassion is created in his body. This compassion percolates right upto his subtle body. At that time, energy of his mind is activated and in turn activates the five vital energies, which are located at the seat of the Manipur chakra (situated in the Naval region). Transmission of these five vital energies all over the body then awakens the soul energy. With the strength of the soul energy, the Central channel gets activated and converts the expressed energy of spiritual emotion to the unexpressed energy of spiritual emotion. With the help of this unexpressed energy of spiritual emotion, the embodied soul, through the medium of elders, gains the required Deity's principle from the Universe. For this purpose, while leaving the house on a journey, the embodied soul should do Namaskar to elders and with the strength of Sattva frequencies has to protect himself from distressing frequencies in the atmosphere. Similarly, returning from a journey, one should immediately do Namaskar to elders and awaken the God principle in them, which would disintegrate the raja-tama particles from the air around him, which might have been brought along.



What is the correct method of doing Namaskar to Saints?

1.. The portion of head, which should be placed at the feet :

We can imbibe maximum Chaitanya through the Brahmarandhra (the seventh chakra of the Kundalini system located in the crown of our head). Since it (Brahmarandhra) cannot be placed at a Saints's feet, the part of head beginning above the forehead is to be placed at the feet of Saints.. Due to this, maximum Chaitanya emanating from Their feet can enter into the one doing Namaskar.

2. The exact spot to place one's head on a Saint's feet:

The big toes of Saints emit maximum Chaitanya; hence we should place our head on the big toe, than on their foot. If we are in a position to touch both the toes, then place the head on the right big toe.

3. The position of hands when placing the head on a Saint's feet:

a. Some interlock their hands behind their backs at the waist and do Namaskar. If we are in a position to touch both their toes, then we should place the hands one on each foot and the head should be placed on the big toe of the right foot. If we are in a position to touch one of Their toes, then place both the hands on it and keep the head on the big toe.

b. Some do Namaskar by placing hands on the ground. This is also wrong because if the hands are placed on the ground then the Chaitanya emanating from the Saint's feet are absorbed by one and then returns to the earth through the hands of the one doing Namaskar. Thus the person does not benefit from it.

c. Some cross their hands and place them on the feet of Saints, that is, their right hand on the right foot of the Saint and their left hand on the left foot of the Saint while doing Namaskar. This is a crude imitation of the manner in which Christians place their crossed hands on their chest. Instead, our right hand should be placed on the left foot of the Saint and our left hand on the right foot of the Saint. This is convenient also. However, if a Guru has started some procedure in a particular sect, then the hands are to be placed in that manner only.

d. The hands are to be positioned in such a way that the palms are placed on the feet..

How to do Namaskar to the wooden footwear (paduka) of Saints?

Namaskar to the wooden footwear (paduka) of Saints. 'The left paduka symbolises Lord Shiva and the right symbolises Divine Energy. The left paduka is the unmanifest saviour energy and the right is the unmanifest destroyer energy of the Supreme God. The saviour or destroyer energy of the Supreme God emanates from the 'pegs' of the paduka as per the need. When we do Namaskar by placing our head on the 'pegs' of the paduka, some may experience distress due to the inability to tolerate the manifest energy emitting from it. Hence, while doing Namaskar to the paduka, instead of the pegs, place the head on the foremost part i.e. the place where the Saints place their toes.'

If this be so, should we do Namaskar to the dead bodies in Kaliyuga only as a custom? If it is a custom, can we discontinue it?

One can maintain respect for the dead person by doing Namaskar and in addition set an ideal with regards to respecting elders. In Kaliyuga, from this one will benefit at an emotional level and not at a spiritual level. However, one should not discontinue this custom; instead one could learn how to get spiritual benefit from it. Due to the deterioration of the Sattva component in embodied souls, this practice has become a mere custom in Kaliyuga.

However, as per the saying, 'God exists where there is spiritual emotion', while doing Namaskar to a dead body if we have a spiritual emotion that we are doing Namaskar to the God principle in it, then the God principle in the dead body awakens and we receive God's blessings. This happens because the God principle is immortal and has no limitations that a physical body has.

It is said that one should not do Namaskar to a sleeping person. In Kaliyuga if one does Namaskar by touching the dead body, then are the chances of getting distress from negative energies not higher?

Yes it is; but while doing Namaskar it is important that the action be performed with correct spiritual emotion. Since Namaskar is done to the God principle in the dead body instead of activating raja, tama components, it activates the Godly principle in the dead body and bestows Sattva corresponding to the degree of spiritual emotion.'

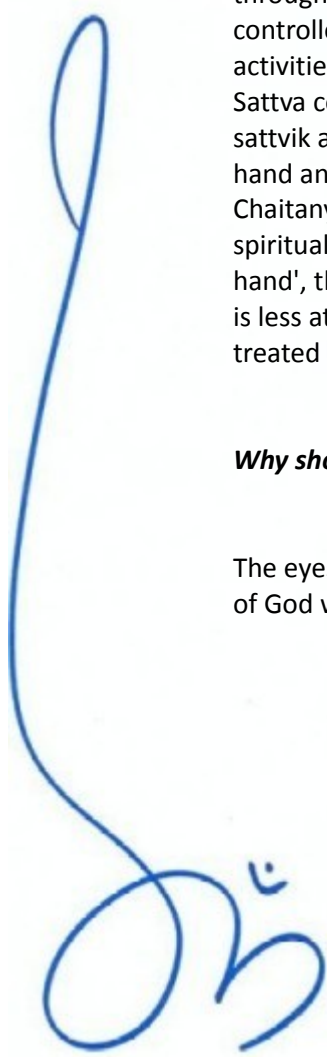
'One hand ' touch to the Temple Steps

Action: Touch the step with the fingers of the right hand and move the same hand over the head.

Science: 'The area around the temple is charged with frequencies of Deities which leads to an increase in the Sattva component. The presence of Divine consciousness in the area charges even the stairs in a temple. 'Climbing' steps is one of the activities, which increases the raja component in the body. Hence, the raja component is already activated in the body of an embodied soul so by touching the steps with the fingers of the right hand, the Sattva component and peace from the charged premise, get transmitted to the body through the right hand. In addition, from this action, the activated raja component in the body can be controlled through the medium of the surya nadi (Sun channel). This means that, for a moment, the activities of the Sun channel can be stopped. From this process, the embodied soul learns to enhance the Sattva component through raja dominant actions. Therefore, it is very essential to perform the appropriate sattvik actions at each corresponding level, hence the method of touching the steps with fingers of the right hand and then moving the fingers or palm over the head. Even the dust present on the steps is charged with Chaitanya and so we must respect it and derive spiritual benefit from it... If the embodied soul harbours the spiritual emotion that 'the Chaitanya from the steps be transmitted all over my body from the dust on my hand', then it will give increasing benefit to the embodied soul.. In addition if the ego of the embodied soul is less at that time then it gives even more benefit. When any action is performed devoid of ego or 'I'ness it is treated as a 'non-action' (akarma-karma) '

Why should the eyes be closed while doing Namaskar?

'Joining hands while bowing the head amounts to saluting God or the divinity in the person in front. The eyes are closed while doing Namaskar to God or any respected person, to enable one to have the vision of God within us.'



Why should the footwear be taken off while doing Namaskar?

While sitting, partaking meals, sleeping, wishing and doing Namaskar to Gurus and other elderly people, footwear should not be worn. - Gautamsmriti 9.

1. Footwear increases the raja-tama components in a person.
2. Paying obeisance (Namaskar) with high raja-tama components will not help in activating the Kundalini (centre in the spiritual energy system).
3. The ability to absorb the sattva component too is reduced, due to an increase in the raja-tama components, leading to little benefit from a Namaskar.
4. Doing Namaskar to a Deity, with footwear on, may also invite the wrath of the Deity.'

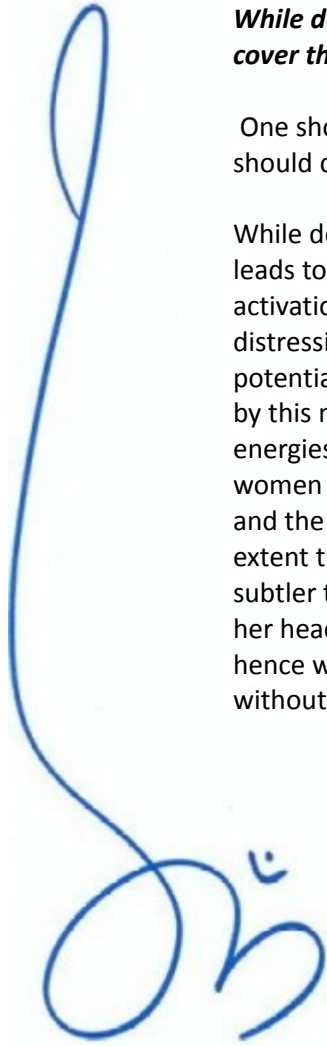
Why is it not advisable to hold any object while doing Namaskar?

1. While doing Namaskar if an object is held in the hands, usually the fingers and their tips are in a curled position and not straight. As a result, the sattva component received is unable to enter the tips of the fingers.
2. The sattva component emitted towards the seeker, strikes the object held and bounces back. Also, at times, instead of the person absorbing the sattva component, the object may absorb it..
3. If the object in the hand is raja or tama predominant, and if it is touched to the forehead or chest while doing Namaskar, then the raja-tama components from it may enter the body of the one who is doing Namaskar.

While doing Namaskar, why are men not supposed to cover their head, whereas women are advised to cover their head?

One should not do Namaskar with footwear on, covering the head or holding any objects. (But women should cover their head with their saris and only then do Namaskar) - Apastamb Dharmasutra 1.4.14...19

While doing Namaskar the Kundalini gets activated at the chakra which is touched by the folded hands. This leads to the absorption of the Sattva component in greater proportion in the body. Sometimes due to the activation of the Kundalini, Sattva component starts entering the body through the head. But at times the distressing energies try to take advantage of this and mix black energy with the Sattva component.. The potential to activate the Kundalini is higher in men as compared to women. Hence they are hardly affected by this negative energy. Contrary to this, as women are more vulnerable, they get affected by distressing energies to a greater extent and thus they can experience distress. That is why, when doing Namaskar, women are advised to cover their head with the ends of their sari. This creates a barrier between the head and the distressing energies and prevents them from penetrating the body of the woman. However, to some extent this also blocks benevolent frequencies from entering the women. (Benevolent frequencies are subtler than negative frequencies; hence they enter a woman to some extent even though the sari covers her head.) However, the proper posture of Namaskar gives maximum Sattva component to an individual and hence women too get required benefits. This shows how God takes care of every devotee. Doing Namaskar without these restrictions is equally effective if the devotee does it with spiritual emotion.



Summary of “Sadhana” by Rabindranath Tagore

Sitaram Kowtha

Note: Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a great literary and spiritual figure of 20th century India. He won a Nobel prize for Literature in 1913, first non-Westerner to do so. His main language was Bengali but he translated many of his works into English. He authored many short stories, poems, novels and songs. He authored the famous song ‘Vande Matharam’, which pays respects to Mother, and India’s national anthem, ‘Jana Gana Mana’.

During the summer, I took my kids to a local ‘Barnes and Noble’ bookstore, where they wanted to select their books for summer reading. I also made my way through different sections of the bookstore and paused briefly at the ‘Religion’ section. I came across a paperback, titled ‘Sadhana – The Classic of Indian Spirituality’ by Rabindranath Tagore. I quickly reviewed the table of contents, glanced at a few pages, and decided to make it my summer must-read. (Note: The paperback version of this book is available for about ten dollars online at Amazon, Barnes and Noble and other bookstore sites.)

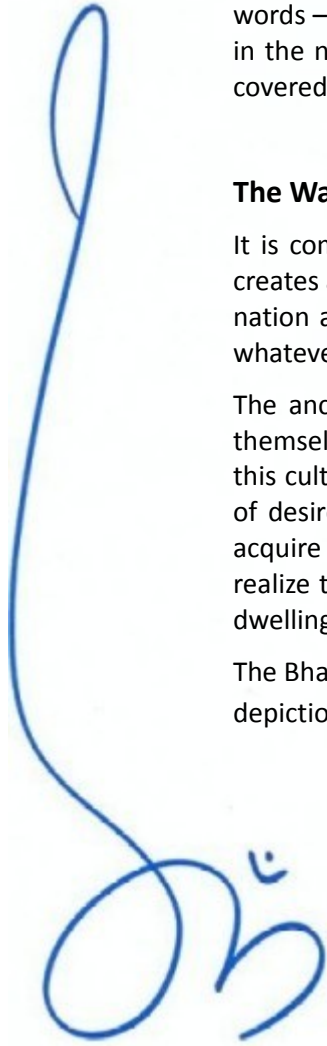
This book is a collection of papers, translated to English from Bengali, and read by Tagore at Harvard University. The book vividly and poetically describes the essence of the Upanishads – the Advaita Vedanta. In it, Tagore uses such simple symbols as a flower, a river and a wall, in a powerful manner, to illustrate the inter-relationships among the nature, the infinite, the soul and the man’s sense of self. By invoking two key words – love and joy, Tagore explains the source, the purpose and the final goal of man’s being, and his place in the nature. In the following paragraphs I quote, summarize and paraphrase a few of the topics Tagore covered. In so doing, I hope to convey the pleasure and excitement I experienced in reading it.

The Wall

It is common in urban civilizations to build up walls as a means to protect and preserve what is in. This creates a situation of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The walls separate the man from the nature. This cultural wall “divides nation and nation, knowledge and knowledge, and man and nature”. “It breeds in us a deep suspicion of whatever is beyond the barriers we built, and everything has to fight hard for entrance into our recognition”.

The ancient rishis spent their time in the forest, where they did not build walls. They did not separate themselves from nature; they lived in harmony with nature. The seeds of Indian Spirituality were sown in this cultural tradition. “Having been in constant contact with the living growth of nature, his mind was free of desire to extend his dominion by erecting boundary walls around his acquisitions. His aim was not to acquire but to realize, to enlarge his consciousness by growing with and growing into his surroundings.” “To realize the great harmony between man’s spirit and the spirit of the world was the endeavor of the forest-dwelling sages of ancient India.” Tagore says that the Upanishads help explain the great harmony.

The Bhagvad Gita invocation states that the Gita is essence of the Upanishads. The Gita starts with the depiction of mental wall of King Dritharashtra. He asks Sanjaya about the goings-on on the field of



dharma at Kurukshetra as “his” Kauravas are arrayed against the Pandavas. Even though the Pandavas were also “his”, the wall he built kept them out. Dritharashtra believed that his Kauravas were engaging a dharmic battle against them (the Pandavas).

The Gita describes that Arjuna also built up an emotional wall, rising out of his ignorance, in which the great warrior declared himself unfit for the battle, for he was unwilling to slay his grandfather and teacher, and his kith and kin. The wall was between performance of his duty and his unwillingness to engage his enemy. This was the battle for which he long prepared, and secured services of Sri Krishna as his charioteer!

Finally, the Gita captures the words of Sri Krishna as he comes to Arjuna’s rescue. He milks the essence of the Upanishads in helping Arjuna breakdown the emotional wall, and realize what his true duty is.

Success and Failure

In our worldliness, we give high value to success and look down on failure. Often, when we meet someone for the first time, we quickly start calculating if the persons is or will be successful. Our subsequent interactions are based on those calculations. According to the Upanishads, success and failure are play of maya, and they often go hand in hand. Tagore uses history of science to make this point.

If one were to study the history of science, the landscape would be littered with failures. That is because for every success in science, there is a trail of failure. One might say that failures outweigh success. However, if one were to pay attention to what science has been able to ascertain, then its history is full of glory. The story of science is a glorious march of ascertaining truth. The failures are but stepping stones on the path to success.

Another example Tagore cites is a child learning to stand up and walk. From one point of view, the child fails more often and succeeds. As parents, watching the repeated falls, and frustrations expressed by the child, can be painful and alarming. However the beauty is in the persistence and learning, as child is actually succeeding! Before too long the child is able to stand up and walk, and all the past failure are only history!

Similarly, our life experiences, the knowledge we gain and the paths we pursue are leading us down the path of success of recognizing and uniting with the truth. But taken individually and independently, they may seem failure ridden.

The Flower

Flowers have an important place in religious and cultural traditions. They represent the beauty of nature, the vigor of life, a symbol of forbearance and a source of joy. For example, the lotus flower is widely used in Hindu traditions to represent purity and dispassion.

Tagore explains that a flower is a mere worker in the scheme of things, but as it toils, it serves another purpose by sending a loving message from God.

“However dainty it may look, it is pressed for great service, and its colors and forms are well suited to its work. It must bring forth the fruit, or the continuity of plant life will be broken, and the earth will be turned into a desert before long.” “No sooner is it fertilized by the bee, the time for its fruition arrives, then it sheds its exquisite petals and a cruel economy compels it to give up its sweet perfume. It has no time to flaunt its finery, for it is busy beyond measure.” Science confirms that the purpose of the flower is nothing but to make way for a fruit.

“But when the same flower enters the hearts of men, its aspect of busy practicality is gone, it becomes the very emblem of leisure and repose. The same object that is the embodiment of endless activity without is the perfect expression of beauty and peace within.”

A flower is like the signet ring Hanuman brought to Sita, when she was a hostage in Lanka, surrounded by pomp and pageantry of worldliness in Ravana’s golden city. The ring reminded her that her beloved had not forgotten her, and was coming to rescue her. A flower reminds us of the love and beauty of our creator, and that he has not forgotten us, and will surely come to rescue us from our worldliness. The flower says to us, “I am come. He has sent me. I am a messenger of the beautiful, the one on whose souls is the bliss of love. This island of isolation has been bridged over by him, and he has not forgotten thee, and will rescue thee even now. He will draw thee unto him and make thee his own. This illusion will not hold thee in thralldom forever.”

Tagore's contrasting of the two roles of the flower is described as the way to live in this world in the Bhagavad Gita. Especially in Chapter 5 of the Gita, Sri Krishna describes a sanyasi as one who lives and works in the world, but has no ego associated with his works. Just like a lotus leaf is in the pond, but still remains separate from it. The great sanyasins or realized masters are like flowers. They ceaselessly work, guide by example and bring the message from the Infinite.

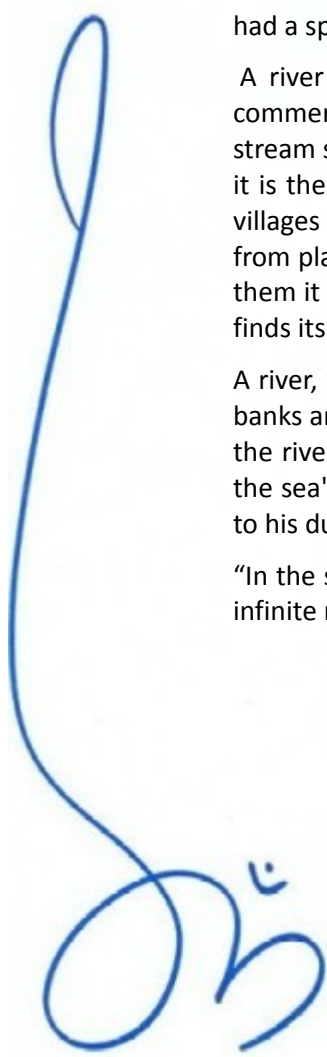
The River

The river Ganga has a special place in Hindu tradition. The river flows down from the Himalayas, the abode of the Lord Shiva. As she flows through the plains, she purifies everything she touches. In Bengal, the river is in its final leg of its long journey, before it merges into the ocean. Tagore was born and raised in Bengal, and had a special reason to contemplate on the symbolism of a river.

A river quenches thirst, supplies water to the towns and forests it runs through, cleans, and supports commerce and marine life. It does so continuously, untiringly and joyously. “In the music of the rushing stream sounds the joyful assurance, ‘I shall become the sea’. It is not a vain assumption; it is true humility as it is the truth. The river has no alternative. On both sides of its banks it has numerous fields and forests, villages and towns; it can serve them in various ways, it can cleanse them and feed them, carry their produce from place to place. But it can have only partial relations with these, and however long it may linger among them it remains separate; it can never become a forest or a town. But it can and does become the sea.” “It finds its finality when it reaches the sea.”

A river, when it overflows its banks, seems to lose its purpose. It may enjoy its new found freedom from its banks and spread its dominion across vast tracts of land covering forests, towns and villages. But, eventually the river ebbs and rediscovers its purpose when restored to its banks, and its joyous cry of ‘I shall become the sea’, returns. A man's soul is also crying joyously, ‘I shall become one with Brahma’, while he stays true to his duty and service.

“In the same manner our soul can become the Brahma just as a river becomes the sea.” “It is this ocean of infinite rest that gives significance to endless activities.”



Making sense of it all

Tagore persuades in the book that every action, every bit of knowledge gained and every experience is an assertion of the Truth, the Joy and Love. Nature's play makes sense only when seen holistically. When seen in isolation, it appears purposeless, wasteful and even insulting.

He cites a personal example what at first seemed onerous, tiresome and meaningless. "I remember in our childhood we had a teacher who used to make us learn by heart the whole book of Sanskrit grammar, which is written in symbols, without explaining the meaning to us. Day after day we went toiling on, but on toward what, we had not the least notion. So, in regards our lessons, we were in the position of the pessimist who only counts the breathless activities of the world but cannot see the infinite repose of the perfection by which these activities are gaining their equilibrium every moment in absolute fitness and harmony. We lose all joy in thus contemplating existence, because we miss the truth." Rabindranath Tagore was a Sanskrit, Bengali and English scholar. All his memorization of Sanskrit grammar paid off handsomely as exemplified by his service to fellow human beings!

A man caught in the web of worldliness cries out 'take me across'. Upanishads say not to search for the other bank elsewhere, it is in your own home. Upanishads say do your duty and service with love and joy, for that is what the nature teaches us by example. Brahma is that infinite love and joy from which we come, by which we sustain and into which we finally merge.

Tagore concludes with a prayer, "Where can I meet thee unless in this mine home made thine? Where can I join thee unless in this my work transformed into thy work? If I leave my home, I shall not reach thy home; if I cease my work, I can never join thee in thy work. For thou dwellest in me and I in thee. Thou without me and I without thee is nothing."

Hari Om! Sri Gurubhyo Namah! Hari Om!



Dana (Charity)

DC Rao

The oft-recited Vedic Mantra says: na karmanaa na prajayaa dhanena tyagena eke amrutatattvam....: our aspiration to be immortal, beyond the world of change, cannot be realized by rituals, through our children or by amassing material wealth. The sole means is “tyaga” – renouncing not action but performing right action without selfishness, without attachment and without desire for its fruit.

While praising tyaga, Lord Krishna specifies three things that must NOT be abandoned: yajna, dana and tapas because these activities are vital to inner purification. [BG18.5] Lord Krishna emphasizes their importance even for the wise. Why so?

We have often discussed the concept of yajna: the idea that all of life is a yajna and why it is important to approach all our actions in life in the “spirit of Yajna”. We can readily understand the importance of tapas: undergoing personal hardship in order to develop a more enlightened approach to life. This means developing a serene mind, speaking the truth in an agreeable style for the benefit of others and serving others in every way we can.

Why is Dana, giving in charity, so important for inner purification? This is nicely described in a story from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: 3 groups of beings approached the Creator for spiritual instruction. The groups were:

- (1) The Devas who lived in heaven; Devas were accustomed to getting anything they wished for, instantly. Entirely busy enjoying themselves.
- (2) The anti-gods, extremely powerful, who enjoyed oppressing others.
- (3) Human beings, focused on how to acquire more and hold on to what they had.

For each of these groups, the creator summarized his spiritual teaching in one word “DA”. [If he had been American, he might have said “DUH”, but we will never know.] He then asked the leader of each group to explain what “da” meant to them.

The first group, the Devas, said da meant DAMA, which means self-restraint. Instead of being preoccupied with pleasure and indulgence, they should exercise self-restraint and try to develop their own inner potential.

The second group, the anti-gods said da meant DAYA, which means compassion. Instead of being cruel and oppressive toward others, they should be compassionate toward those who were less powerful than themselves.

The third group, human beings, answered that da meant DANA, which means charitable giving. Instead of acquiring and hoarding, they should share their wealth with others and learn to be content with less.

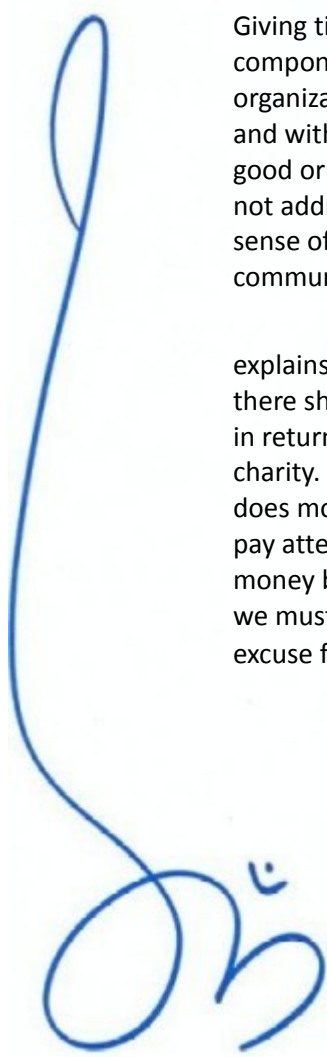
The Upanishad adds that each time we hear the sound of thunder, it is our creator reminding us: DA DA DA.

So dana is critical for us humans to overcome our tendency to greed. Why is greed such a powerful force for humans? The root is our ignorance of who we really are: because we forget our oneness with pure Consciousness, we think of ourselves as separate beings who are finite, limited, weak, and vulnerable. We think we need to protect ourselves by gathering material possessions in the false belief that they will bring us security and happiness. At every opportunity we have a tendency to grab what we can and then we strive to hang on to everything we have. We are fearful that others might snatch things from us and think our best protection is to have more than others. Of course, however much we have is never enough; we always think we need more. This is the force of greed.

What is the antidote for greed? The Yoga Sutras recommend a simple technique for overcoming such negative tendencies: pratipaksha bhavana: contemplation of the opposite. To overcome anger we contemplate patience, to overcome agitation we contemplate tranquility and to overcome greed we contemplate a sense of santosha, contentment. We actively cultivate an inner sense of abundance, the feeling that, by the grace of God, we have all we need, even more than we really need. We remind ourselves of how we were very happy with so little a few years ago; how the expectations that a bigger house or a fancier car or a bulging wardrobe would make us happy turned out to be false after all. We remind ourselves how others can be cheerful and content with so much less than us. We remind ourselves of how our material possessions can sometimes come in the way of our doing what we really would like to do. All these are simple contemplations that help us develop a feeling of santosha.

How do we know whether this feeling of santosha is genuine or simply a façade? What impact does it have on the way we behave? The clearest test of whether we are really developing santosha is the extent to which we engage in dana. The essence of dana is “giving”. Are we living up to our pledge to “give more than we take” from society? There are many aspects of giving; the most relevant for us are time and money. Giving time means being ready to volunteer to take on tasks for the good of the community. This is the key component of the “yajna spirit”. And giving money means contributing financially to support the people and organizations that are devoted to serving the community. In sharing our time and money with those in need, and with those who are dedicated to helping others, are we giving just token amounts to enable us to feel good or are we giving in amounts that are significant in relation to what we have. Token contributions do not address the problems created by our innate feelings of greed; indeed they may add to our greed a false sense of accomplishment that we are “donors” and hence deserving of special respect and privileges in the community that we are pretending to serve.

Our shastras have extensive discussion of the right way to engage in dana. The Bhagavad Gita explains when dana is tamasic, rajasic or sattvic. What are the main characteristics of sattvic dana? First, there should be no expectation of return. When we make a donation and expect to receive something back in return for it, whether those expectations are explicit or implicit, this is a commercial transaction, not true charity. When we expect our contributions to be publicly acknowledged and applauded, our so-called dana does more to feed our ego than to overcome our greed. So, sattvic dana comes without strings. Second, we pay attention to the time, place and quality of the recipient. Deshe, kale ca paatre ca. Is our time and money being used to promote the wellbeing of the community or simply to promote personal ambition? So we must think of where we invest our dana. But we must also beware of falling into a trap, using this as an excuse for not engaging in dana at all. How easy it is to dismiss every cause as unworthy: they are serving



only this part of the community and not that; they are wasting money; they are not managed efficiently; they seem to have more than enough money already; etc. the criticisms are endless. The truth is we are simply looking for an excuse not to give anything at all; wallowing in our greed rather than opening up in compassion.

The primary characteristic of sattvic dana is that it is done out of a sense of duty. Our shastras tell us that each of us owes a debt to Devas, rishis, our ancestors and other beings in society. All of us here are remarkably fortunate. By the grace of God we are endowed with exceptional capacities and blessed with unbelievable opportunities for further advancement. We may believe that this is fully deserved, only a just return for all the hard work we put in to our studies and our professions. But a little honest reflection will show how hollow that claim is. And even if we believe that all this is merely the operation of our past karmas, the question remains, what are we doing now to establish good karmas for our own future? The bottom line is that we each of us have a duty to share our good fortune with others in our community. And to do so cheerfully, generously and with a sense of gratitude.

When we begin to give, we begin to realize the sheer joy that lies in giving. In a small way we realize this joy when we give to our children. The paradox is that the joy multiplies when we give without attachment, not just to our family but to benefit those we may never meet. And why is that? By sharing with others we are celebrating our common humanity, coming closer to the realization that we are each in all other beings and all other beings are in us. This is the essence of Vedanta, the essence of our own true nature. When we give generously, we turn away from greed to embrace our own true nature. It is no wonder then that we experience the objectless joy that the scriptures call Brahmananda.

To quote Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, on the subject of charity: ***“Charity, honeyed with the spirit of love and the joy of identification, blesses the giver with an inner abundance far out weighing that which was given.”***

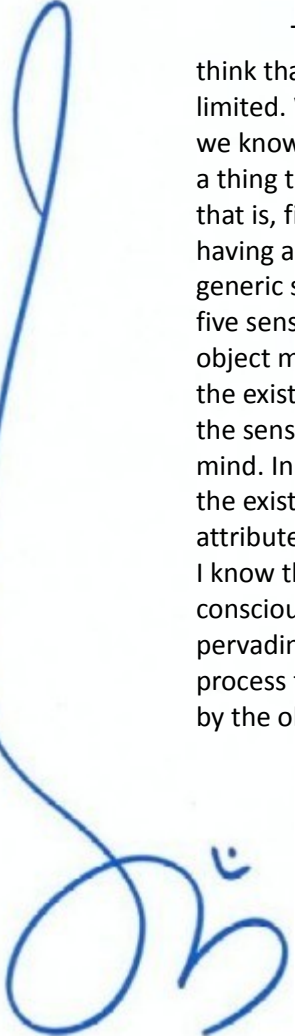
Finitization

Acharya Dr. K. Sadananda

Recently in the Taithreya Upanishad class, I used a phrase- finitization of the infinite- in explaining Brahman as the cause for creation (yatova imaani bhuutani jaayante...). Even if one considers the universe as infinite, any objectification involves finitization. Ms. Julie, a student of Vedanta, said after the class, that the word intrigued her, since it is not a word that could be found in English dictionary; although thinking about it, the word describes correctly the exact state of affairs in accounting Brahman as the cause for creation. Let us contemplate on it more to see if the missing word in the dictionary makes some sense.

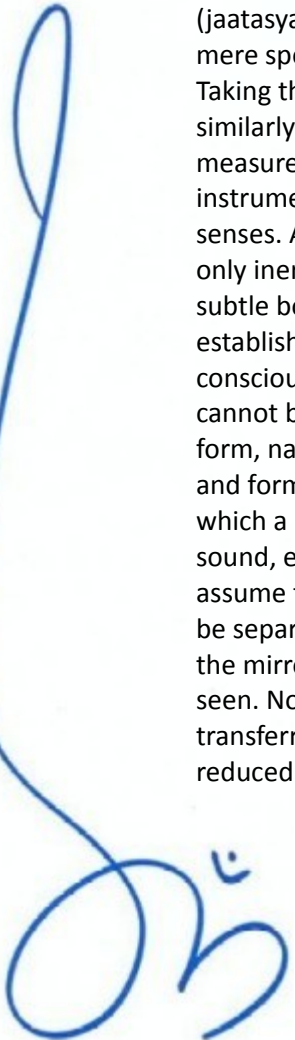
Why finitization word is not there in the Dictionary? Finitization obviously involves an operation that makes some thing finite. Finite need not be finitized, since it is already finite. Infinite cannot be finitized, since it is infinite. No wonder, the word, finitization, is not found in the dictionary. To make finitization as a valid word, it involves an impossible task of making infinite into finite. If we can do that, we can also do the opposite that involves infinitization of the finite, which 'in a way' is what is involved in self-realization. Both are not processes that can be defined. That which cannot be done but appears to have been done is, what we call in Vedanta as, maayaa – aghaTita ghaTanaa paTiiyasii, maayaa- That which makes impossible possible is maayaa. In addition, maayaa itself is maayaa, since maayaa is yaa maa saa maayaa – that which is not there but appears to be there, not as apparent but apparently real, is maayaa. So both finitization and infinitization are due to maayaa only. The real truth is I am infinite all the time, nitya shuddha mukta swaruupoham, eternally liberated from all finitizations.

To understand this apparent process, let us first look at the two words: finite and infinite. We all think that we know what they mean. Right? Let us discuss what we know. We know finite is that, which is limited. We can also say that whatever we know is finite, not only in terms of total knowledge content that we know, but knowledge content of a given object too. Epistemologically, we can say that we can only know a thing that is finite. What is finite is formally defined as that which has desha, kaala, vastu-paricchinna, that is, finite is that which is space-wise, time-wise and object-wise limited. Space-wise limitation involves having a boundary that defines the form for the object which can be perceived. Form or ruupa is used in a generic sense that covers all the attributes that the senses can perceive or measure. Hence, it includes all the five sense-inputs; shabda, sparsha, ruupa, rasa and gandha; sound, touch, form, taste and smell. Any finite object must have one or all of the above qualities that the five senses can measure, for anyone to establish the existence of an object, and its knowability. The knowability of an object depends first on the capacity of the senses and the mind to translate attributes of the object to the thought, or vRitti, of the object in the mind. In the formation of vRitti of the object in the mind, the existence of the object 'out there' is imaged as the existence of the thought of an object in the mind, with attributes of the objects 'mapped' as the attribute-content of the vRitti. When the thought of the object rises in the mind, I say, I know the thought or I know the object. According to Vedanta Paribhaasha, the knowability condition is fulfilled when the consciousness of the subject unites with the existence of the vRitti of the object. This happens when the all pervading consciousness get reflected by the thought, making the thought known. This is similar to the process that we are all familiar. Any object is known when light in the room falls on the object, gets reflected by the object, and therefore is seen. Reflected light of consciousness from the thought is the knowledge of



of the thought in the mind, that translates to the knowledge of the object 'out there', as perceived by the senses. By this unity of the consciousness of the subject and the existence of the object, one becomes conscious of, the existence of, the object via its ruupa or attributes of the object. The object thus known is assigned by a name, established by a convention via shabda (hearing from others), or by a naming or naamakaraNa ceremony. Thus every object that is perceived is reduced to a name for a form – naming involves knowing or being conscious of the object and form involves limitations of the attributive existence. In essence every object is known via its attributes which are finite and thus measurable by senses. If none of the five senses function, the existence of the object cannot be established. If there is no conscious entity, the existence of any inert entity is not established. There is a well known puzzle that asks if a tree falls in the forest that no one knows, can any one hear the sound of the falling tree. Problem with the puzzle is – how to establish the existence of the tree and then its falling before we can discuss the sound that the falling tree generated. If there is a conscious entity that sees the existence of the tree and its falling, it will also be able to hear the sound of the fall, if the sense of hearing is functioning. The important point is a conscious entity has to be pre-existing before we can discuss the existence of an inert entity, nay even before we discuss anything in the world.

Thus, an object is limited by the boundaries of the object – that is, object is there within the boundaries and not present outside the boundaries. This is termed as spatial limitation. Time-wise limitation arises due to its perception within some time span. An object is technically defined by Nyaaya as that which is praagaabhaava pratiyoginii – that which is counter to its previous non-existence. All it means is - now it is there, but there was a time when it was not there. We can also define as 'counter to its posterior absence', uttaraabhaava pratiyogini. Taking an example of a pot – pot is an object which was not there before it became a pot and will not be there in future when the pot breaks into pieces. Thus every object is a creation and every created object has a beginning and whatever that has a beginning must have end, says Krishna (jaatasya hi dhRivo mRityuH). The birth and death have to be noted by a conscious entity, otherwise it is mere speculation. Therefore every object is time-wise limited. Finally, every object is 'object-wise' limited. Taking the example of a pot, pot is limited by its pot-ness, which is different from jug-ness that jug has; similarly different from every other object that is not a pot. Thus every object is finite, since its attributes as measured by senses are finite. Sensitivity of the sense-measurement can be enhanced by karaNaas or instruments that include microscopes or telescopes and all other scopes, which augment the capacity of the senses. All objects that are perceived or perceivable are inert. Even in the living beings what we perceive is only inert entities or bhoutika shariira or external body only. We cannot perceive even the subtle entities like subtle bodies, etc., although we can deduce that they have minds of their own. By this discussion, we establish few aspects: 1. Every object is finite and 2. Objects are perceived via their attributive content by a conscious entity, the subject, and 3. Without the conscious entity the subject, the existence of the object cannot be independently established. Ultimately every object is reduced to naama and ruupa or name and form, name brings in the conscious subject and form brings in the attributive content. Note that in the name and form – there is no substantive. Substance part is not there because what we perceive is only a form for which a name is given. There is an assumption involved that there is a substance with attributes, form, sound, etc., but substance of that object itself is not perceived by the senses. Several philosophers wrongly assume that senses gather substantive too along with attributive content by arguing that attributes can not be separated from their substantive. The truth is perceptual process is exactly like the image formation by the mirror. Mind is like a mirror. When we stand in front of the mirror in a lighted room, our image can be seen. Now, is there any substantive for the image in the mirror? In forming the image, no substance is transferred from the original to the image in the mirror. Let us thank God for that, since we will soon be reduced to nothing by standing in front of mirrors. What is seen in the image is only attributive content of



the original but not the substantive content of the original. Hence every object perceived is only based on its attributive content, that too as measured by the senses of the perceiver. This is the reason why errors in perception about the objects perceived can also occur since no substantive of the object is perceived. Thus when I mistake rope as a snake, it is because of partial or incomplete attributes perceived, without the substantive of the rope along with those attributes.

World is nothing but objects that we see. If we do not see the world, as in deep-sleep state, then the existence of the world becomes indeterminate. Objects exist in space but space itself exists independent of the objects. Space cannot be perceived, but is inferred by the mind. Distance between any two objects or more correctly distance between any two non-collinear points establishes space. The presence of two eyes, or two ears, or the sense of touch that are spatially separated form the basis for the stereo perception. Time is also an inference in the mind. Movement in space is the origin of time, movement being observed by a mind supported by a consciousness. It is a gap between two sequential events observed by an independent entity which does not change with the events. Even the biological or chronological time as observed by the changes in biology or events outside the body, requires an observer to recognize the changes and thus time. Thus existence of space, time and world of objects, which are all inert, cannot be established independent of the observer, or a conscious entity. On the other hand the existence of consciousness is independent of the inert entity. One is dependent and the other is independent entity. One is inert, the other is conscious entity. Consciousness is not only self existent but self-conscious too, while inert has to be illumined by the consciousness for it to be revealed. This is what was discussed above as the knowability condition, where consciousness of the subject and the existence of the object in the form of vRitti or thought in the mind have to unite for a conscious entity to be conscious of the existence of the object. On the other hand, one is always conscious of one's presence. Even in deep-sleep, although the mind is folded, the presence of a quiet mind is experienced by the one who is awake (saakshii) during the deep-sleep too. Only after the mind is awake, a person says, 'I slept very well', that is when the mind becomes available to express that experience.

Every object is finite, the world is sum total of all objects. The sum total of all finite objects is still finite. All objects, in principle, are perceptible through their attributes by a conscious entity when the perceptuality conditions are met. Space is also an object (hence inert), yet it is not perceptible, since the five senses cannot perceive its attributes. In addition, space is infinite; if it is finite then a question arises - what is there on the other side of the space. If some thing is there on the other side, that something must be in space. Being infinite, space is formless; hence eyes cannot see. Similarly it has no other attributes that can be measured by our senses. Since all objective knowledge is attributive knowledge, one cannot perceive the space. Hence mind has to infer the infinite space. The conditioned space, as the space in the house or in the pot etc., which is conditioned by walls of the house or pot, 'as though' can be conceived by the mind. When there is no mind as in deep sleep, there is no space or time, since both are inferences at mental level. World includes the objects, space and time, some are perceptible and others are inferred; but all are inert. Being inert cannot exist independent of a conscious entity since their very existence can only be established by the conscious entity, either by perception or by inference.

Hence we arrive at a very fundamental law of Vedanta that existence of inert depends on the existence of the conscious entity, while converse is not true. Scripture says the relation between consciousness and the world is like the relation between gold and golden ornaments. Existence of gold as such is independent of the existence of the ornaments while the existence of ornaments depends on the existence of the gold. If I remove the gold out of ornaments, they cannot exist separately. All ornaments are names and forms or naama and ruupa of gold. The gold and its ornaments are related by material cause-its effect or kaaraNa-kaarya sambandha. It was stated before that naming involves knowing and form involves

attributive content. Similarly the world that includes space and time are dependent on the conscious entity for their existence. Hence the scripture says: world is the product of consciousness with kaaraNa-kaarya sambandha – that is cause-effect relationship.

Scripture declares that consciousness is Brahman, prajnaanam brahma. Brahman means infiniteness. Hence by this declaration, scripture establishes the following: consciousness is infinite. There is nothing other than consciousness, since there is nothing other than Brahman as it is one without a second, ekam eva advitiiyam. Now we need to reconcile these two diagonally opposite entities. Consciousness that is one without a second, and the other is the inert world, which is an assemblage of finite objects made of matter. As mentioned before all objects are finite, the substantive of any objects cannot be known through perception, and all objective knowledge is attributive knowledge involving some kind of inference that what I see is what is there; the proverb seeing is believing is not without a basis. It is indeed a belief that there is a substantive object out there based on what I see through the perceptual process. Now, we can formally define the word finitization. It is the process by which infinite consciousness appear to be a multitude of finite objects, which are inert, with each object having different attributive content that helps to distinguish one from the other. The impossibility of infinite becomes a finite and consciousness appearing as inert are achieved by the power of maayaa. Just as we define a force, which cannot be perceived otherwise, as that which causes an object to accelerate or change its direction, maayaa is that force which cannot be perceived but can be defined as that which causes the infinite to appear as finite and consciousness appear as unconscious entities. Just as the proof for the existence of an imperceptible force is the perceptible movement of an object, the proof for the existence of the imperceptible force of maayaa is the existence of perceptible world of objects whose existence can only be known through the attributive knowledge through the senses by a kshetrajna or knower of the field. No wonder we cannot find this word, finitization, in the English dictionary. Hence the scripture defines Brahman as the material cause (upaadana kaaraNa) of this material world, where it being pure consciousness and has no material of its own. The clear understanding of the impossibility of finitization of the infinite requires scriptures as pramANa with shravanam, mananam and nidhidhyaasanam on the scriptural teaching, since we cannot find even this word finitization in the English dictionaries. Infinitization of the apparently finite subject also requires discriminative understanding that in the perception of the finite object, the consciousness which is infinite and part-less appear as the subject and the object united into one. The play of maayaa becomes clear in this understanding.

Series – Summary of the Gita Ch. 7 (Gnana Vignan Yoga) - Yoga of Knowledge and Wisdom

Nilkanth Bhatt, Richmond Chapter

All religions tell us that God is everywhere. All religions also tell us to Love God. However we do not see him anywhere nor do we know his nature. How can we love someone whom we do not know? We love someone whom we know and more we know about that person more we love him or her. To love God we must know about him but out of this vast humanity very few try to know him and out of those who try to know him very few succeed in knowing him. So Bhagavan reveals his nature to us in this chapter. He says he is everywhere in this world and we see him everyday but do not recognize him.

He manifests in this world as five great elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space), mind, intellect and ego. This is his eightfold manifest Prakriti. It is all around us and we are part of it. He is so near to us yet we feel he is so far. With his own self he supports this entire universe. All things and being are born out of and dissolve into this prakriti. There is nothing in this universe, which is anything other than this eightfold prakriti. Everything is strung into this prakriti just as the pearls in a necklace are strung onto the string.

Whatever the nature of things and beings we see in this world is because of the lord's presence in it. He is the intelligence of the intelligent, the splendor of the splendid, strength of the strong and weakness of the weak. All the beings pure, active and inert are part of his universal self, but he is not in them as an individual entity. Therefore we see things and beings in this world having these three basic qualities of Satwa (purity) Rajas (activity) and Tamas (inertia) and get confused by them. We do not see the immutable, imperishable self that pervades all things and beings. Those who take refuge in the Lord can cross this delusion and recognize his presence everywhere.

Those who worship God can be categorized in four distinct types 1. People who seek God when they are in distress 2. People who seek God out of their curiosity. 3. People who seek God to achieve wealth and comfort. And 4, the wise, who worship God to end his separation from him. All of them are noble but Bhagavan says he is very dear to the wise and the wise is very dear to him.

But most of us, whose wisdom is looted away by this or that desire, worship only that aspect of Lord's manifestation which satisfies our desire, and we only achieve that. The astronomers explore the sky, so they come to know about the stars and planets. The oceanographer explores the oceans so he comes to know about the oceans. Thinking that this manifest world is the only reality we try to understand and explore, we do not recognize the unseen thread that ties the entire manifest world together. After efforts of many births a wise person comes to comprehend this truth and then he becomes one with the God. He realizes that there is nothing existing other than the God. His own self is also no different than the God's self.

However all beings are deluded by this sense of duality born out of the likes and dislikes right from their birth. They develop this sense that I am different than this world and therefore they divide this world into the things they like and things they do not like. They spend all their life in trying to achieve things they like and to avoid things they don't like.

Those devotees, who have realized the fallacy of this life and who strive for liberation from old age and death, realize the nature of the God pertaining to this manifest world, nature of the God pertaining to the sense perceptions and the nature of the God as the enjoyer of all offerings. Even at the end of this life they keep their mind steadfast in the God and achieve the oneness with him. That is the supreme Love for God all religions are talking about.

Swadharm

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We have discussed the obligatory duties or niyata karmas. But what about the kaamyas or desire prompted actions? Should one perform or not? Does one have a choice not to perform? Asking us not to have desires is a useless advice since we already have them. It was mentioned that among the purusharthas, we have artha and kaama along with dharma and moksha. During marriage time one declares in front of the fire, 'dharmeca, artheca, kaameca naati charaami', I take this lady as my wife to follow the three purusharthas only.

The desires are classified as two types. One is dharmaic or righteous and the other is adharmaic or unrighteous. Dharma depends on the ashrama or simply one's status in the family and in the society.

Krishna says:

shreyaan swadharmo viguNaH paradharmaat svanushhTitaat |
svadharme ndidhanam shreyaH paradharmo bhayaavahaH |

Krishna says that it is better to follow one's dharma than dharma of others, even if he can do that better. It is better to die while doing one's dharma than taking up dharma of others, since in the final analysis the later would lead to a fearful end. Swadharm has been interpreted as varnaashrama dharma, which depends on one's guNa and karma. Since Krishna is a universal teacher (jagat guru) and the Geeta's teaching has universal application, varnaashrama dharma based on guNa and Karma is a universal classification, relevant not just for Bharat. Those who have predominate saattvic guNa are intellectually oriented and prone to a contemplative mode of living, and it is better for them to study, teach and contemplate on the higher nature. Those who are predominantly rajasic guNa action-oriented and cannot sit down and contemplate, their swadharm demands an active life of constructing, maintaining law and order and improving the standard of living for all beings. They are workers of the society – religious workers, political workers, social workers, etc. And those who are tamasic by nature and do not have any self-motivated drive and do not have the capacity to study, or act independently, it is better for them to follow their leaders and act as instructed. They are laborers. Their motivation for work is only sense-enjoyment. There are intermediate class whose major concern is only their bottom line, the business minded persons, who work towards their gain. They look for name and fame or self-glory, even while performing noble actions that benefit the totality. Thus Krishna provides a universal classification based on both guNa and karma. This classification is provided to evaluate oneself to determine his own swadharm and is not meant for evaluating others, since one cannot evaluate others as these guNas are based on mental attitudes than physical attributes. Applying the converse, those who work for their selfish ends only are laborers (they could be Ph.Ds), those who work for the benefit of society are workers where primary beneficiary is the society, and those who study, teach and contemplate on the higher reality are contemplative seekers. This classification is universal. Being in a conducive

environment or born to saatvic, rajasic or tamasic parents could cause to foster similar guNa-s, but that by itself does not define one's swadharma. One can see that children born to the same parents having different types of guNa and karma. One's samskaara dictated by his guNa and karma alone determine one swadharma. By following one's dharma one evolves to higher – from tamasic to rajasic to saatvic is the path of evolution. Saatvic nature alone takes one to go beyond all guNas through contemplation. 'dhyaanena atmani pasyanti'.

We may note here, as a slight divergence, that Bhagavaan Ramanuja provides a peculiar interpretation for swadharma and paradharma. Swadharma is interpreted as doing karma yoga and paradharma is interpreted as doing jnaana yoga – where jnaana yoga in his system involves realization of one's own self (jiivaatma), which is not the final end in itself. Self realization is only a step towards realization of Paramaatma, which can happen only when that self that is realized completely surrenders – which is called prapatti or sharanNaagati. For that, Bhakti is the only means and not jnaana or karma, or to put it correctly it is bhakti ruupaka jnaana involving a recognition of sesha-sheshii bhaava. Jiiva is dependent entity and Paramaatma is the independent entity and is all pervading reality that indwells in all, as antaryaamin. The relation between paramaatma and jiiva is not one of identity as in advaita, but one of organic relationship. That is, jiiva is part of Paramaatma like an organ is part of a body. That is oneness from the total perspective like one body (advaita), but distinct and different from the rest of the jiiva-s, and different from jagat with different and non-different relation with Paramaatma– vishishhTa advaita. From Ramanuja's point, the above sloka excludes everybody from jnaana yoga since it is paradharma for everybody. Ramanuja says one need not go through that path since one can directly go from karma yoga to bhakti yoga using charama sloka (sarva dharmaan parityajya..) as the basis, where one surrenders all dharma-s other than, of course, service to the Lord or kainkarya dharma.

Coming back to our topic, adhaarmic desires are called nishhiddha karma and to be avoided at all costs. In case if one does without his knowledge, there is a praayaschitta karma, constituting essentially actions to repair the damage as much as possible. Even if it does not eliminate, it makes one to be conscious of his actions, so that he does not repeat it in future. Once a devotee-salesman asked Swami Chinmayanandaji, "Swamiji, as a salesman I have to lie a lot to sell the products that I know are not really worth, but that is my profession; what should I do". Swamiji said, "Then, do it very well, but do not forget to take the help of Krishana, He is good in that". Then Swamiji added "It becomes Krishna's problem and not yours. He will make sure you will find a better job that is conducive to your dharma. Until then follow Krishna's orders; just as Arjuna did to kill Karna when Karna became armless or shot arrows at Bhiishma hiding behind ShikanDi'. Once you handed over your reins to the Lord, you are no more accountable. Hence, Krishna says:

mayi sarvaaNi karmaaNi sanyasyaadhyaatma cetasa|

niraashiirnirmamo bhuutvaa yudhyasva vigatajvaraH||

Offer all actions (without exceptions – including both obligatory and desire prompted actions) to me with full devotion without concerning about the results and without any attachments and excitements that deprive one's efficiency in action – fight on your war of life. This teaching is repeated in the ninth chapter – where Krishna says – I accept everything as prayer if it is done with full devotion.

yat karoshhi yadashnaasi yajjuhoshhi dadaasi yat |
yattapsyasi kounteya tatkurushhva madarpanam ||

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblations, whatever you donate and whatever austerities you perform, offer all that to me. Of course, He will not accept anything even if your offer unless it is done with full devotion – ‘yo me bhaktyaa prayacchati’.

Devotion to the Lord becomes a glue in converting karma to karma yoga. I cannot offer all my actions to the Lord, unless I am a full-time devotee. This we will discuss in the next part.

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