

# Chinmaya Smrithi



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

**Volume 20, Number 1-- January 14, 2010**

*We wish our readers and members*

**Happy New Year and Happy Sankranti**

## *On Teaching and Learning – Swami Chinmayananda*

Facts are mere raw materials to build a relationship between the teacher and the taught. The real job of teaching is to weave a fabric of relationship with your ideas and to attach it to so many points of the student's life that it becomes a part of him. The talks are the canopy of words that spread from the mouth to the ears of the student. But the actual transaction of Truth takes place under this auspicious roof of words: between the hearts of the teacher and the taught.

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### Next Issue

- Articles for the next issue - March 2010, are due by February 20th 2010
- Email submissions to [smrithi@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi@chinmayadc.org). Submission instructions at [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org), Smrithi link, "Information on publishing in Smrithi"
- Contact us at [smrithi@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi@chinmayadc.org) with your feedback or questions.

### Calendar and Upcoming Events

- January 18, 2010 – Martin Luther King Day – Youth Seva Day – Food for the Homeless
- February 11, 2010, Thursday – Maha Sivarathri Day. All day and night observance at Chinmayam
- February 13-14 – Bala Vihar Parent-Teacher Conference
- March 24 – Wednesday – Sri Rama Navami
- March 30, 2010, Tuesday – Hanuman Jayanthi observed at Chinmayam.
- March 20-21 – 1<sup>st</sup> Set of Bala Vihar Annual Day performances
- March 29 – April 4 – Swami Ishwarananda's Jnana Yajna and Camp in MD, VA

### Study Groups

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

### Bookstore/Library

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

### Useful Links:

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center  
 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](http://www.chinmayadc.org)  
[www.chinmayamission.com](http://www.chinmayamission.com)  
[www.chinmayamission.org](http://www.chinmayamission.org)  
[www.chinfo.org](http://www.chinfo.org)  
[www.chinmayadulles.org](http://www.chinmayadulles.org)  
[www.chinmayafrederick.org](http://www.chinmayafrederick.org)  
[www.chinmayava.org](http://www.chinmayava.org)

### ***Please Note***

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

### ***Editorial Staff:***

*Raju Chidambaram, Sitaram Kowtha, Acharya Vilasiniji, Acharyas, Chapter Coordinators and Teachers. & Bala Vihar students - Vishnupriya Krishnan, Asmi Panigrahi, Harsha Neerchal and Srikanth Kowtha*

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

## CMWRC Events Held

- Annual Banquet was held on November 7<sup>th</sup>, See article by Monica Thakrar.
- Swami Dheerananda ji conducted Jnana Yajna in Virginia – See message from Sri Gopalakrishna
- Acharya Vivekji conducted Youth Camp at Chinmayam for Tapovanam, Chinmayam Bala Vihar kids and a separate one for Youth
- The new year – 2010 was welcomed on January 1<sup>st</sup> with Namavali puja, this time held in Virginia

## Richmond Chapter in the News

### Inspirational Verses

*Study group explores messages of Hinduism*  
BY TINA ESHLEMAN, Richmond Magazine

Issue: [January 2010](#)

Link to the Article in Richmond Magazine:

<http://www.richmondmagazine.com/?articleID=f3a23676ec75c9605f7df84935dab30f>

## 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 January 2010 newsletter from Chinmaya Mission West.

Browse and download at [www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter](http://www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter):  
<http://www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter.php>



## News in Brief

### Swami Dheeranandaji Jnana Yajna in Virginia and New Year Puja



Hari Om:

We just concluded a successful Jnana Yajna in VA (Dec 29-Jan 2nd). Even more significantly, this Yajna coincided with some important milestones such as the signing of the contract for the VA land acquisition (Dec 29th) on the opening day of Yajna and the New Year 2010 Puja (Jan 1st) as a part of the Jnana Yajna.

We had a great coordination team lead by Vishwanath Bhatta and numerous sevaks. Many people in VA had the opportunity to meet and spend time with Pujya Swamiji along with Acharya Anantji, Pramilaji and Vivek ji. The hosts (Veena and Kishan Gupta) accommodated numerous people in their home through the week for over 12 bhikshas.

We had adult attendances that varied between 60 and 110 (adults) and 30-55 children over the 5 days. Satellite room with Audio/Video broadcast was arranged to handle overflow and participants with young children. The New Year Puja was attended by around 180 people (125 adults and 55 children). Lunch was provided by sevaks to all who attended. Children from the Dulles shloka class participated/lead the chanting on all days.

We also had some generous contributions that are summarized below.

Our thanks to Pujya Swamiji and all Acharyas for having made this possible.

Unto Sri Gurudev,

Sri Gopalakrishna



## News in Brief

### Bala Vihar Hindi Language Program Success with Fairfax County, VA School District

Hari OM:

I would like to share the first tangible success of the Hindi language program offered by the Mission.

Please join me in congratulating the three students that have successfully passed the Fairfax county Hindi exam. They will be getting two credits towards the foreign language requirement that is a part of graduating requirement from high school. I would like to thank Vijay Kumar (Director), and Ashok Sharma for starting the program. I would also like to thank Sunitha Simhal for fostering the program. Rekha Mhasawade and Shuchi Marwaha for being active participants (not only as parents, but also as part of the teachers) of the program. These are some of the few people that were behind the scenes for this accomplishment.

The faces in the limelight are (1) Shruti Mhasawade, (2) Shivali Marwaha, and (3) Kushali Marwaha. They have worked hard and long for this success.

Please join me congratulating all the supporting cast and the students.

Hari OM

Nagesh Gadamsetty

### Sign up for Gita Chanting

If you haven't already signed up for Gita Chanting, it is still not too late. Please check with your session coordinator.

Gita chanting is a sure way to study, become intimate with, and understand the divine words of Sri Krishna.





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



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](http://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](mailto:prabodh@chinmayamission.org)  
(707) 207- 5011

#### TEXTS

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

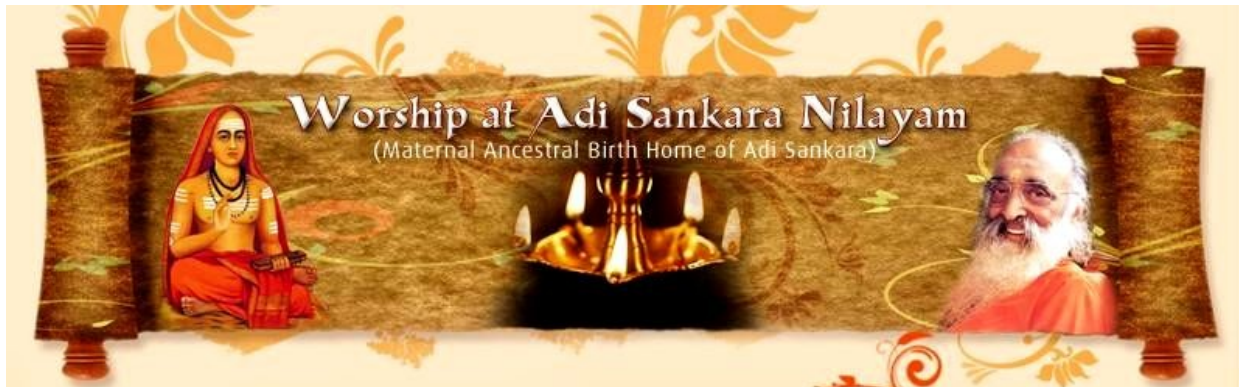
**Swami Shantananda:** Dakshinamurti Stotram, Sat Darshanam

**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





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](http://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  
Veliyanad, Ernakulam District  
Kerala, India – 682 319

Phone: 0091 484 2747307  
Email: [worship@chinfo.org](mailto:worship@chinfo.org)



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

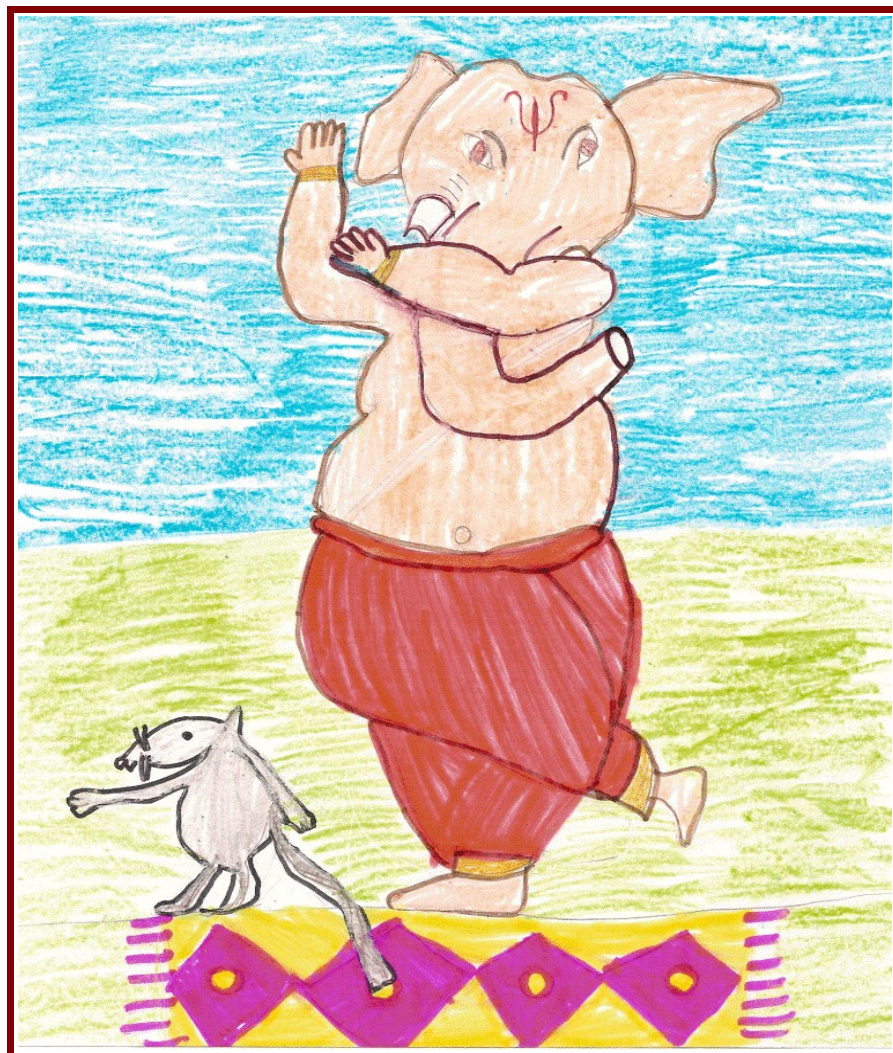


## Dancing Ganesha by Ankita Somalwar

*Submitted by Uma Ramakrishnan,  
Bala Vihar Teacher, Dulles Chapter*

Recently "[www.chinmayakids.org](http://www.chinmayakids.org)" organized a world wide Ganesha Painting Contest- Ganesha in Action. The theme of the contest was to paint any scene of Ganesha you like from the stories of Ganesha you know or Ganesha as you imagine in any situation/occasion/environment.

Ankita Somalwar, a member of Chinmaya Mission Dulles Chapter was declared the third Runner Up in group A (6-8yrs). This is what her mother Darshana Somalwar, a Bala Vihar teacher at Dulles, had to say about Ankita's participation: "When Ankita heard about the competition, she was very excited about the subject for the competition. But she was not sure until the last day on what "Action" to depict "Ganesha" in. She has been learning Bharata Natyam since last year and she thought of drawing a picture of a dancing Ganesha. Dancing Ganesha gives her inspiration to smile and be happy all the time. She loves to attend Chinmaya Mission's Bala Vihar program and looks forward to it every Sunday. We are very thankful to Chinmaya Mission for providing the support and encouragement."





## What Makes Me Smile

Varsha Krishnan

Shivam, Silver Spring Chapter

*The sunflowers makes me smile  
While the strawberries make me hungry.*

*When my father tells me a joke  
I laugh so hard my tummy starts to hurt.*

*When I go to my sister  
I realize she is drinking a glass of milk and I giggle  
Because her milk moustache looks silly on her.*

*When I hug my mother  
It makes me cozy and I smile a big smile from ear to ear*

*When I go to the pool  
The diving board and water slides look very exciting  
and I can't wait to go on them forever.*

*When I see the snow  
The lovely snowflakes falling from the sky  
I feel like sticking my tongue out to taste the fresh snow*

*The time I see an old friend  
I feel like saying hip hip hooray a bunch of times!*



## My Brother

*Adithi Sundararaman,  
Sundaram, Springfield Chapter*

I cry, he smiles  
I say yes, he says no  
I disagree, he agrees  
But I love him  
He's my brother.

It snows outside, he wakes me up  
I'm excited, so is he  
We build snowmen together  
We have snowball fights together  
Yes, I love him  
He's my brother.  
And oh!  
How I love him.

I sing a song, he blocks it out  
I listen to music, he sings something else  
I play a game, he plays along  
Oh, I love him  
He's my brother.

I read a book, he plays outside  
I read to him, he says it's good  
He comes in the night, just to say  
"I love you."



**Bala Vihar**  
(A Diamante Poem)

*Apurva Nayak*  
*Sundaram, Dulles Chapter*

**BalaVihar**  
**Fun, Religious**  
**Influencing, Inspiring, Teaching**  
**Bala Vihar makes you better**  
**Shlokas, Stories, Bhajans are aplenty**  
**Caring Teachers, Acharyas Swamijis**  
**Learning, Meeting, Loving**  
**Great, Awesome**  
*BalaVihar*





## What Bala Vihar Means To Me

*Sundaram Bala Vihar Class*

*Dulles Chapter*



### What Bala Vihar means to me



Sundaram PI  
2009 - 2010  
CMRC Dulles Chapter



#### What Bala Vihar Means To Me



For me Chinmaya is a place I meet friends and do fun things. At Chinmaya I learn more about Indian culture. Together we celebrate Indian festivals and learn about the stories behind them. I also do extra classes such as slokam class.

Meenakshi



Om

## BALA VIHAR

When I came to BALA VIHAR I could feel some calm things going through me. I can also feel a balance in mind. It is very good for me. I feel calm and relaxing. I could also control my energy (I can't always control it). BALA VIHAR is important to me. It is also a nice place to learn. It means peace, calmness, and devotion to God to me.

Puneet S. Velidi

## What Bala Vihar Means to Me

Bala Vihar is an open door of discoveries for me. I learn so many things here that can also help me in every day things. I know to be a better person not only here but everywhere.



Nitya

Om

## What Bala Vihar Means to me – Anshul

I go to Bala Vihar to learn about God. I learn prayers and practice them. I also learn to purify my mind by thinking good thoughts and knowing what is good and what is bad. I learn about all the characters in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Sometimes we play games! These are reasons why I go to Bala Vihar!!!

## At Bala Vihar...

- I made a lot of new friends
- I learnt many Shlokas, Bhajans from teachers.
- My teachers have told me very interesting *stories*.
- I learnt about popular Indian festivals.
- We play games.
- We have lots of fun.

### • Stories



### • Shlokas, Bhajans

### • Teachers



### • Friends

Rahul

Om



## What Bala Vihar Means to Me

Bala Vihar is unique in a way. Bala Vihar teachers teach you different things depending on if you are in Madhuram, Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram, Shivanandam, or Tapovanam. In Shivam they teach you about Hanuman. In Sundaram they teach you about the festivals of India and the characters of the Ramayana.

## How Bala Vihar Benefits Me

I learn more about our culture, Hindu gods, and our religion. I can learn and chant more prayers. My favorite way of learning things is learning by stories. Then I can actually picture what happened. I learned to steady myself. I learned respectfulness and responsibility from the Shabari story. I learned some sanskrit words from sloka class.

Shriienidhie

### Why Bala Vihar is important

by: Shreyas

I think Bala Vihar is important because ...

In Bala Vihar we learn to stay focused. We also learn about our culture, and learn what makes the characters good or bad. We also learn how Hindus think things formed .



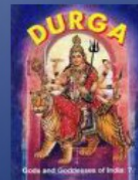
Om

## *What Bala Vihar Means to Me*

*During Bala Vihar we...*

- *learn to respect elders & youngsters also*
- *learn good character traits through stories*
- *learn about Indian festivals*
- *try to clear our mind of bad thoughts in and out of Chinmaya Mission*
- *play games*
- *have fun!!!*

*Pranav*



## **Bala Vihar means a lot to me because**

1. You can spend time with swamis and acharyas
2. It is a lot of fun
3. We have lots of fun projects
4. We celebrate holidays
5. You can meet new people and make new friends
6. You learn how to become a better person



**APURVA**

## Lord Ganesh

*Nina Beri,  
Chinmayam, Silver Spring Chapter*



Om



## Hindi Paathshala – Silver Spring Center

*Anil Kishore*

*Bala Vihar Coordinator*

We started the Hindi program in its current format in Silver Spring in 1997. At that time, we only had one or two teachers and less than 10 students. In our infancy, we lacked structure to the program because we did not have any resources available to us at that time. The teachers painstakingly used handouts and photocopies of text that they could lay their hands on and did the best they could. In the coming years, the interest in learning Hindi became very popular and with demand, we tailored our program to best suit the needs of our members.

We have made significant strides in the recent years. As we look at the activities of other Centers, we are certainly at a point where we should make the best use of our collective strength in further developing our Language curriculum (for that matter not just Hindi but whatever our children are key to learning) to be one of the best. We have a leading edge since there are no other institutions like ours that blend the best aspects of our cultural and religious heritage.

We were fortunate to have a professionally trained Hindi teacher during the inception of our program who introduced the textbooks to us so that our children could find the tools to perfect themselves. These books are the same ones used and approved by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (Ministry of Education, Government of India). We have used them since 1999 and have found them extremely valuable. Some of the other CM Centers have approached us in the past and are probably using the same books. Moving to textbook provides a learning medium – we use phrases from the books to supplement vocabulary, poems to provide expression and exercises to test the acquired skills. Many of our students are non-Hindi speaking families and our tools collectively give them a focus for learning at home.

About 3 years ago, *Bala Bharti* changed its format to *Rim Jhim* (the current textbook). We found that the entry level book is a higher level than the *Bala Bharti* 1. Our teachers have since supplemented this book with our own handout and provided the students with a binder (similar to the Bala Vihar binder). We also use Mohini Rao's *Learn Hindi* – a text written by someone who learnt Hindi as a second language. We also supplement our vocabulary with pocket Hindi to English and English to Hindi dictionaries. The *Learn Hindi* book is only used for levels where the students have learnt the alphabet – or they read from the Roman script J. Our highest level (7-8) students are reading *Harry Potter* in Hindi – a beautiful book that they can relate to. Rajeev Gopal, our Hindi teacher has also written a book *Hindi with Harry* to meet the needs of our youngest students.

Our book store coordinator Vijay Singh is gracious enough to order our books through his contacts in India and our family contacts in India have also supported us with teaching materials (charts, tables, etc). The material is sent to us by courier and by the time we convert our cost to dollars, the books are cheaper than buying from a local bookstore. We sell the student material ONLY to Hindi students with a nominal markup to cover the cost of photocopying etc. The binder cost covers the handout and the binders.

Hindi Paathshala tests its students once a month – this is not just a test to see the progress of the students but also a test for our teachers to see what they have taught and what has been received by our students. Students move up and down the levels throughout the year.

We also use handouts that are designed after the Spanish curriculum in the county school system. I took the handout and added tables – subject, predicate, noun verbs etc. to mimic the curriculum. Our children learn better from structure!! And this provided them with the sentence structure. It also helps them put reading material to spoken language.

We have a fixed curriculum that is evaluated every year – the decision is based on previous year's success and not so successful moments. We have seen students move from Level 1 to 7 in one year!! There is a lot of potential and we need a lot of help, but it is amazing how children have progressed in this curriculum. It is a motivation for us to continue in this pattern. We hope to learn from other Centers of CMWRC and come up with a collective Hindi resource.

Last but not the least, we could not be successful without the selfless service of our teachers, we have eight of them. (Nalini Kumar- Coordinator, Anil Darbari, Rajeev Gopal, Reena Gopal, Anil Kishore, Rajiv Mahajan, Mallinda Mallick and Savita Nigam). Many of our teachers just come to the Mission to teach Hindi. Their children have graduated from the Mission but their efforts are strong and dedicated.

Finally, our linguistic culture is rich and vibrant. There is no language as rich as ours and to read our scriptures and learn our values, vision and mission in our mother tongue is a blessing. Let us be proud of it and keep working together to maintain the momentum.



## The Delicate Art of Rangavalli

*Radhika Rao*



Rangavalli (Kolam or Muggu), loosely translated as Sand-art or sand painting, is an ancient traditional art of India. Though Rangavalli is common to many parts of India, Southern India is most famous for these rich and diverse patterns that adorn a household's entrance and prayer room. Primarily signs of welcome, these beautifully intricate geometric designs (in which dots are either connected by lines or skirted around by curves) form a unique visual art that not only appeals to the bystander but also offers mental and physical challenges to the artist.

### **Origin:**

Though the roots of Rangavalli and the evolution of its purpose are relatively unknown, several tales muse about the origins of the art. One legend claims that the *gopikas* of Vrindavan drew these to spend their time while waiting for Lord Krishna's return from Mathura. Another story describes Lord *Brahma's* request for the painting of a King's son (who had died prematurely) to be done, so that He could breathe life into the portrait. Yet another legend has it that the drawings are made to invite Goddess *Lakshmi* into the house, and the more intricate the lines, the more difficult it becomes for evil spirits to enter. A more practical reason for these drawings was that the designs were originally made of ground rice flower sprinkled on the ground, and this powder provided food for ants and insects.

**Significance:**

Primarily practiced by Hindus, *Rangavalli* is noted as a sign of prosperity and a unique symbol of decoration among homes. Certain months in the Hindu calendar (for instance, during *Deepavali* and the months of December-January before *Pongal*) are auspicious, and these drawings take on a special meaning and revival in front of many homes and temples.

**The Traditional art:**

*Rangavalli* patterns are normally taken from nature and depict birds, animals, flowers, leaves, and festive scenes. The art form is typically practiced by women and subsequently is handed down to girls through generations. Traditionally, women wake up before sunrise, sweep the ground before the entrance to the house, sprinkle the ground with a mixture of cow dung and water, and use powdered rice flour to drop dots and sketch patterns by free hand. By grabbing a pinch between the thumb and forefinger, the women drop the powder steadily while moving across the ground forming thin lines uniform in nature. The women stand, kneel and bend painstakingly for extended periods of time to get the perfect angle, line and pattern that they have visualized. The intricacy and the range of the drawing depends on the auspiciousness of the day or time of the year, with marriages and special festivals demanding more elaborate drawings than occasions that are more simple in nature.

**The Modern art:**

Nowadays, *Rangavalli* drawings have undergone changes to reflect the current lifestyle and environment. Consequently, they not only depict patterns and scenes from natural surroundings and mythological tales but also use 3-dimensional objects to fill, line and take the place of the powdered rice flour. Flowers, seeds, lentils, and colored dyes are used to make the *rangavalli* more appealing by increasing its visual contrast and thus enhancing its attractiveness. As with any art, there is no limit to a human being's creativity and these drawings continuously evolve in their make and materials used.

**Different Names:**

This drawing of patterns in front of the threshold is called by different names within India. Called "*Rangavalli*" in Sanskrit for "painting", this ancient art has several different variations and names in each Indian state and language. (Andhra Pradesh: *Muggu*; Bengal: *Alpana*; Gujarat: *Sathiya*; Karnataka: *Rangavalli*; Kerala: *Puvidal*; Madhya Pradesh: *Chowk purana*; Maharashtra: *Rangavalli*; Orissa: *Ossa*; Rajasthan: *Mandana*; Tamil Nadu: *Kolam*; Uttar Pradesh: *Sona Rakhana*)

**Benefits:**

Apart from *Rangavalli*'s cultural significance, there is further evidence that practicing this art everyday has valuable benefits.

1. **Cognitive and Logical reasoning:** The patterns follow mathematical logic, and require counting, spotting patterns, and executing them with remarkable precision. Modern day games like 'connecting-the-dots' are simply different versions of this age-old tradition; in fact, all of these exercises help to enrich the brain's capacity to think critically.
2. **Fine Motor Skills:** Using the fingers to accurately hold an ounce of the powder and then carefully and gently allowing it to sprinkle down in a steady stream without large lumps and breaks in the lines requires diligence, patience, and concentration. While the brain is constantly keeping track of the direction and flow of the pattern (for example: "turn half loop right, left, connect the dot to the one in the next line and two spaces above," and so on), maintaining firm equal pressure strengthens the fine motor skills.
3. **Art appreciation:** Just like coloring and tracing pictures and figures in books, these drawings not only spark the appreciation of the beauty created but also explore creative boundaries. Interest ignites the freedom of expression, and the zeal to create new patterns and drawings enriches the person's artistic abilities.



### Heritage and Future:

As our lives become busier and more frantic, some truly wonderful age-old traditions are being lost. Extensive land and ground surrounding homes is being replaced by concrete landings, and, in the name of “modernism”, the handful of followers of such traditions is dwindling. We should be proud of the different symbols of our heritage like *Rangavalli*. Furthermore, understanding the significance and meaning behind such practices would be admirable, rather than just following them for their visual appeal.

#### How to draw a Rangavalli

##### Step1:

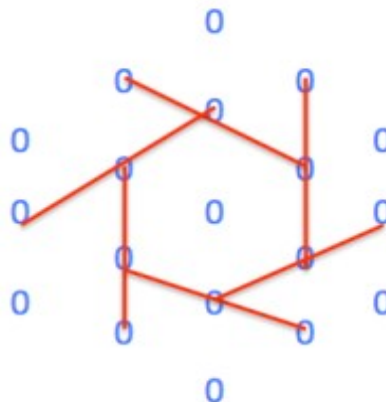
1. Draw 5 dots one below the other
2. Add another line of dots on the right side, placing one dot BETWEEN the earlier dotted line.
3. Do the same again – You will have a sequence of 5, 4, 3 on the right side.
4. Do the same on the left side.
5. You will have a pattern as seen below.



#### How to draw a Ranaavalli

##### Step2:

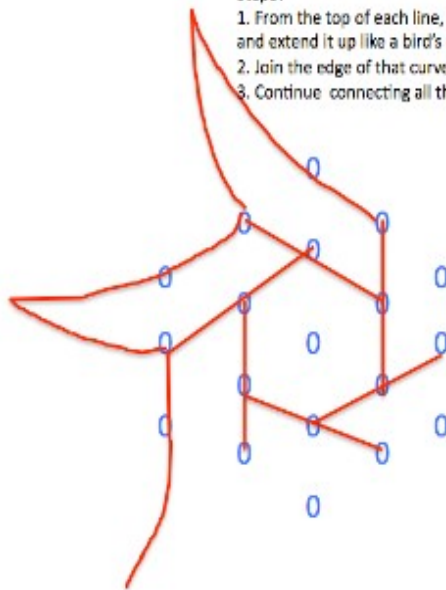
1. Draw lines connecting three dots at a time as seen below.
2. Follow a pattern and you will have 6 lines connecting 3 dots each.



### How to draw a Ranaavalli

Step3:

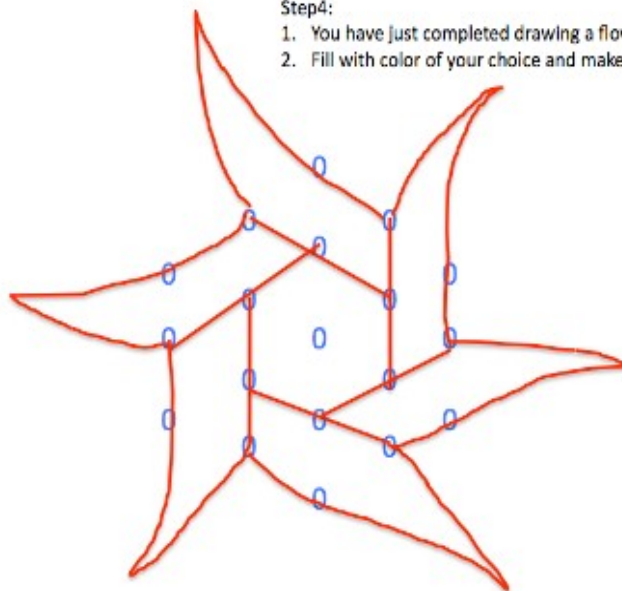
1. From the top of each line, draw a curved line joining the dot next to it and extend it up like a bird's wing.
2. Join the edge of that curve down to the end of the adjacent line.
3. Continue connecting all the lines.



### How to draw a Ranaavalli

Step4:

1. You have just completed drawing a flower!
2. Fill with color of your choice and make it pretty.



## Ananda Lahari

### A Book of Songs by Kalavathamma Kalakonda

#### *Introduction by Sudhakar Kalakonda*

Ananda Lahari is a book with compilation of 108 Telugu traditional and folk Songs. All these songs were brought to life from the fine memory of my mother, Kalavathamma, which she has learnt and practiced from her childhood. My mother lives in Thadiparthi near Wanaparthi in the Palamoor district of Andhra Pradesh. She learnt most of these songs during the early years of her life, and she is now 63 years old. She has six children, and I am the third child.

The following is a brief account of why we published this book. My mother married her first cousin, Balaramaiah Kalakonda, at the age of 11 years. At 26 years of age, an interesting and memorable incident happened in her life. Her father insisted her to take the 'Guru Upadesham' for gaining the knowledge of scriptures and to follow the path to attain Moksha. She was mentally not prepared then for it and expressed her concerns such as routine domestic responsibilities etc. But the Guru clarified her doubts and showed her a way to the path to Moksha, while still carrying out routine duties. She has always been happy and comfortable while conducting her regular duties without missing the practice of Guru Mantra. My mother learnt songs from her mother, Guru, and also from other friends and relatives. Even though, she had only minimal formal education, with the grace of God and blessings of Gurus, she could remember and recite the songs she learnt during her early years of life. Since she is a strong devotee of God, she sings these songs regularly in the praise of God, and especially during Shraavana masam, festivals and other family occasions. We, the six siblings, enjoy listening to our mother when she sings, whenever she finds time, or when she is doing her day-to-day chores. Even though, we did not know the meaning of those songs during our childhood, we always enjoyed her melodious voice. Now, we have started appreciating the meaning of them, as we apply our gained knowledge and experiences in our own lives. During the testing times in our lives, we start singing those songs and find a great relief, relaxation and contentment. Most of these songs are not readily available in print as they are passed on from one generation to the next, through the word of mouth. So, we decided to publish these songs to preserve their existence for generations to come. Our aim is, for interested people to enjoy these songs and try to understand the importance of Indian tradition and the teachings of spiritual Gurus.

I came to the USA in 2002. We started attending the Chinmaya Mission from 2006. After listening to the lectures of Swami Dheerananda on Bhagavad Geeta, I realized that during all these years of my life, I missed the true meaning of Bhagavad Geeta. Credit goes to the founder of this mission, Poojya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda. On February 10, 2008, my father passed away. Our family fell into deep sorrow and grief. With an informed understanding of the spiritual principle "attachment and detachment", we slowly came out of that grief by publishing the book of our mother's songs. By the grace of God and best wishes of friends, we published and released the book in February 2009 on the occasion of the first anniversary of my father's passing away. Those who want to enjoy knowing and singing these traditional songs can download a copy of the book from the following Web site, <http://www.archive.org/details/AnandaLahari>  
{ Editor's Note: Through Swami Dheeranandaji's inspiration, Sudhakarji has taken on a project to translate the songs to English. }

## 2009 CMWRC Annual Banquet

### Rajiv Malhotra Keynote Speech on “Hindu Identity” - A Summary

*Monica Thakrar*

{ Editor's Note: The notes by Monica reprinted here, and the audio recording of the keynote are available on the CMWRC website – [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org), under “Banquet Keynote Addresses” }

- Swami Chinmayananda talked about the basis for having an identity (practical application in this world) while knowing the oneness of Vedanta. The banquet speech by Mr. Malhotra was on the same topic.
- Mr. Malhotra held a discussion with Indian youth who left Bala Vihar and are in college. The common issue raised by all of them revolved around identity:
  - What is our identity?
  - Why do we need an identity?
- There were three common arguments raised by the youth around why they didn't need to have a Hindu identity
  1. **We have to give up our identity – it is all nama rupa, maya, mithya, and isn't everyone the same, so why do we have an identity?**
  2. **Identity actually causes conflict, so if we don't have an identity (we are all the same anyway) then we don't have conflict**
  3. **We are American and isn't it un-American to be Hindu because we are all part of this big melting pot?**
- Answers to the question of “Why do we need an identity” using Vedanta:
  1. **We have to give up our identity – it is all nama rupa, maya, mithya, and isn't everyone the same, so why do we have an identity?**
    - One thing Mr. Malhotra learned from Swami Chinmayananda is the need to understand reality at both levels – the ultimate and the relative
    - While the ultimate is where we are heading and where the goal is but we are in a relative realm – the realm of dharma and karma where to discriminate between right and wrong, we must know the difference between dharma and adharma
    - If we didn't have to worry about the relative reality (if we could escape out of it) then there would be no Mahabharata or be conscientious or have karma;
    - All the things we perform and act are in the relative world - karma and dharma are in the relative world
    - We cannot mistake the end for the means, the means is through the relative world to reach the end
    - Pravriti – positive action from a sattvic point of view or detachment and aprivriti; the basic message is selfless action and not running away



- Whole idea of the Gita is why you have to perform your dharma and not run away, escapist argument of Arjuna is no good, we cannot run away from karmic imprints and samskaras, we cannot be irresponsible and not take action, we have to act in a detached way and not be attached to the fruits
- This confusion has been a club with which many people argue against Hinduism. It is an escapist view from taking action so that they do not have to care of the poor and sick. Westerners go to India to do this; It is an idealist view (or moral relativism) that there is no difference between right and wrong because it is all one – this is the wrong understanding of Vedanta or Hinduism
- The role we have to play in the Lila (in the manifestation) is taught in the Gita that you have to play your role the best way that you can (e.g. – if one is a doctor then one has to play the role as a doctor the best way that one can)
- When something selfish is at stake (e.g. - getting sued by malpractice) then we are able to discriminate and then we know we have to take action, we are very clear that these differences of right and wrong when personal interest is at stake
- When it is a matter of serving dharma or serving the cause of collective identity then it is a convenient excuse to make it an idealistic view
- Two distinct views were outlined:
  - **Bipolar** – when the time has been split between the view of oneness and being in the practical world (turned off the oneness and in a materialistic life) – when you are not conscious of the oneness when dealing with the “real” world (when both are not there at the same time), alternating between the two states
  - **Bifocal** – I am in the world of competition (e.g. - I am maximizing my portfolio, being the best teacher or doctor, etc) while being conscious of the oneness; in carrying out my identity and performing my duties (as Arjuna has to do) it may also mean making tough decisions and taking tough actions and am also cognizant that we are all the same, but in the manifestation we are in different modes
  - Common mistake is not being able to reconcile the ideal oneness with the practical world in many people’s understanding – they fall into a bipolar mode instead of acting in a bifocal mode
- There is criticism in the academic world in the West that this philosophy of advaita has a pre-trance fallacy – (pre maturity is child state and transcending is when you are not limited by the intellectual mode (not limited by the mind) and have transcended it); allegation is that advaitas regresses us to childlike state instead of advancing into the transcendent state it
  - Argument vs this criticism says transcending doesn’t mean that your mind is no longer functional, it means that your mind is included, but is not a limiting factor; enlightened beings are not dysfunctional, they are very active and use the mental state when needed, they have not regressed to a childlike state



- SO this is a confusion that Vedanta doesn't tell you to take action or be smart and competitive, etc
- The issue of ego is a very tricky one – we are to transcend the ego, but at the same time the starting point is one where the ego is very disturbed or distorted. You have to work first to purify the mind and live in a sattvic mode (where then you can transcend)
- For example we often hear that if we stop thinking and just go with spontaneousness and go with your instincts (this is the transcendent state), but if you are an addict then your spontaneity is wrong, your spontaneity has to be from a sattvic place, this spontaneity has to come from a clean/sattvic place to be right otherwise it could be a delusion (e.g. – needing a cigarette or getting angry)
- Purification of the person is not something that our tradition is avoiding
- Another issue that comes up is the question of whether there is a problem with this world or do we have to get out of this world? Did God make a mistake by creating a world and humans are supposed to fix this mistake because we are trapped in here? Or is our understanding of the problem a mistake and we have to fix our understanding to live in this world in a blissful way? Is it a cognitive shift that is needed?
  - Vedanta does not negate having a functioning identity in the world, the ultimate satchitananda and tat tvam asi – doesn't mean we don't perform our dharma and our role or have an identity in this relative world
- So now suppose having an identity is now proved to be ok, what is positive about our faith or Hinduism? What do we bring to interfaith discussions, which is distinct from the other religions? Not what is superior, but what is distinctive about it?
  - Pluralism that is built into Hinduism is distinct
    - Issue of history is distinct – (e.g. - God spoke only to a few prophets and then went away, this is a history dependent access to the truth as described in the Judeo Christian view of the world)
    - In Hinduism in each of us is the highest reality and it is dependent on each of us to access it, I don't have to access the truth through some historical experience of some other person. I can learn from it, but every one of us has the innate ability to get access to the highest truth without needing history (because of the idea of satchitananda). This works through yoga, etc. Many non-Indians have tried yoga.
    - Religious conflicts come into being because of competing and conflicting historical claims instead of enjoying and learning from the here and now.
  - Ishtadevata – deity, unlimited way of expressing
    - Tolerance – "I tolerate you" – this is heard very often, but this is an insult; when you ask some people from other religions what they think about other religions and other histories, they say I believe in religious tolerance and Mr. Malhotra says this is an insult



- At an interfaith conference (Council of World Religions) Mr. Malhotra suggested to them that they should change religious tolerance to mutual respect – other religions had a hard time accepting this because of the fact that Hindus believe in idolatry and believing in deities
- He mentioned this to one of the swamis who was part of the Millennium Summit and he said he would push for this mutual respect and not just religious tolerance and in the end it was passed with “mutual respect”
- Pluralism in Hinduism is very deep
- Sacredness of the Cosmos – the current environmental movement/sustainability is for a selfish reason (e.g. - we don’t want Global Warming, species to die out, not to be able to use oil, etc) not because the earth is sacred, but because we don’t want to not be able to use it; in Hinduism the cosmos is not separate from the Lord so when we are worshipping the Cosmos it is not from a pragmatic/selfish reason, but because it is one with all of us so we respect it
- The Divine as Feminine is very distinct
- Vegetarianism to end world hunger – you can feed 5 times as many people if they are vegetarian from a given piece of land than if they are meat eaters (e.g. – if used same land to raise cattle or just grow vegetarian food)
- Aging and Dying with dignity –the different stages of life, the ashrama model in Hinduism says that each age has dignity so don’t have to keep trying to be young to be good – each stage is legitimate, youth culture because it doesn’t have the ashrama model doesn’t give you the dignified aging process
- Yoga, mind sciences, healing paradigms – its importance today and how it is being respected now, this is inseparable from Hindu Cosmology – connection of asanas to oneness (Hindu world view, nature of self, nature of prana, psychology of mind, Patanjali Yoga Sutra)
- Freedom from consumerism – many NGOs say consumerism is bad, but no underlying theological rationale to this, but just that the resources are starting to get limited. But Hindus are taught to be content on less, to not be dependent on desires to be happy, to have a state of anand which is not dependent on a lot of material things, so we have a philosophy of not be consumerist and yet being able to be blissful

**2. Identity actually causes conflict, so if we don’t have an identity (we are all the same anyway) then we don’t have conflict**

- “I am different from you” should not cause a state of anxiety – I should not feel superior or inferior just different. I am not claiming exclusivity from this or chauvinism (as this is what causes anxiety) – if you have difference with respect then you have difference without the tension, this tension exists when it comes from a place of exclusivity





- Homogeneity is harmful, diversity is a principal of creation (e.g. – there are so many types of flowers, animals, etc) – just like we don't want genetics to create one ideal type of fruit or spice so homogenization is dangerous or harmful thing because diversity is part of creation and the whole manifestation is for the many-ness
- Also if we don't claim our own distinctiveness then we leave a vacuum for our youth because then they don't know who they are and can get into many bad things. When asked Indian college students at Rutgers University "What is your spiritual identity?" the most common answer was "South Asian." So there is a strange fear of claiming your heritage or identity as may not be able to explain it (e.g. – why have so many deities, etc) so then try to downplay their identity which can create an inferiority complex which leads to mimicking what is popular
- When say you are going to be same as somebody then it is a problem to have one way sameness – many other faiths are not open to having deities put up in their church to discuss Hinduism, but are willing to put their deity in our temple to discuss their religion – so this one way sameness is not right (e.g. – religions being similar to Christianity), one sided sameness is not acceptable – I will be the same as you, but you do not need to be the same as me.

**3 We are American and isn't it un-American to be Hindu because we are all part of this big melting pot?**

- It is very American to have hyphenated identities (e.g. – Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, Hispanic Americans, Black Americans) so there is not reason we cannot have Hindu Americans and it adds to the distinctiveness of the country and enriches American society
- Part of the open-mindedness of Americans is to be open to be explained about Hinduism, but nobody is going to do it for us we have to take responsibility and explain it to them; we become full Americans when we start contributing our distinctiveness to the table in a non chauvinistic or exclusive manner
- It is also very American to be critical of systemic biases so we as Hindus need to fight for our identity to have dignity or claim our space in a way that is based on mutual respect



## What is Success?

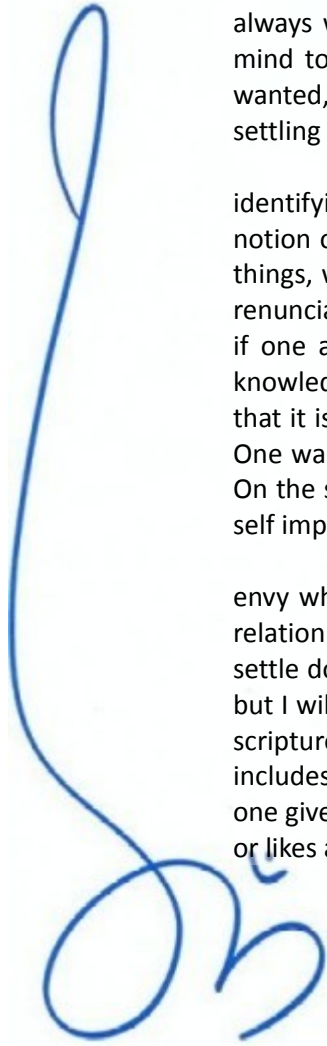
*Acharya Dr. K. Sadananda*

Normally success is measured in terms of one's achievement. It is said that success comes before work only in the dictionary. Hence every success involves hard work. One wants to acquire good education that secures good job, and that gives more opportunities to become more successful in future. The one who is most successful is the one who has the most of everything that all others desire – a good education, a secure high paying job, with all the personal relations with all other beings, exactly the way one wants. Like in fairy tales, he lives happily ever after. Unfortunately, every set-up changes continuously, and that is the law of nature. All set-ups are not necessarily conducive for one's likes and dislikes. The changing set-up can always up-set the mental frames of a person, even though he is successful in terms of his accomplishments.

Listen to any parent – His success is connected to the success of his child. He first feels that the child is successful if he gets first rank. Then the next success depends on his securing an admission in very good university, then his completion of his higher studies with high rank, then getting a job in a prestigious company. That is not settling yet. Then, he feels that his son should get married to 'settle' in life. Indian parents proudly declare that all their children are 'settled now'. What it means, as any parent can explain, is all the daughters are married and now 'settled', - and all the sons are 'settled' with secure jobs and married, etc. Though, all his children are settled, he is not settled, yet. Now to settle, all he wants is to have grand children; with the cycle that starts again; their school admission, their education, their marriages, etc. Hence, none feels at any time that he is completely settled with what he has. None is happy with what he has; but always wants something more to settle – complete settlement is where there is no more longing for the mind to have anything else in order to settle. Wanting mind will never settle down with having what it wanted, since the wanting mind keeps moving forward at a faster pace with some more wantings than settling down with what it has.

'Having' is living in the present, while 'wanting' is to achieve something in future. 'Owning' is identifying with what one is having as one's own. In the same way, renouncing also involves some kind of notion of owning, since one has to own in order to renounce. Thus it involves renouncing the ownership of things, which one never really owns, to begin with. The true renunciation is not renunciation of things, but renunciation of the notion of ownership. The notional ownership cannot be renounced by any process, even if one argues that it is only a notional renunciation of the same order. Any notion is removed only by knowledge and not by any process, however notional that process is. What is required is firm understanding that it is false. The wanting keeps shifting to the future all the time without settling down with the present. One wants to want, than just settled with what one has. Thus wanting mind never settles with just having. On the same token any statement that renunciation of external things is needed for one to realize one own self implies inherently ownership of things that one never really owns.

Nobody is happy with what he has or what he has achieved. He is happy, of course, when others envy what he has or others long for what he has. He can measure his success in counting what he has in relation to others who do not have and would want to have what he has. Yet, that is not where the mind can settle down and say I have no more wants since I am happy with what I have. I am happy with what I have, but I will be happier if I have this, this, and this, which I do not have. Wanting mind is the desiring mind and scripture says feeding the mind by what it wants is like pouring ghee to put out the fire. The wanting mind includes those that one wants to have and also those that one wants to get rid off. Both are wants, even if one gives a fancy name for the later as renunciation. These in the language of Vedanta are called as Vaasanas or likes and dislikes.



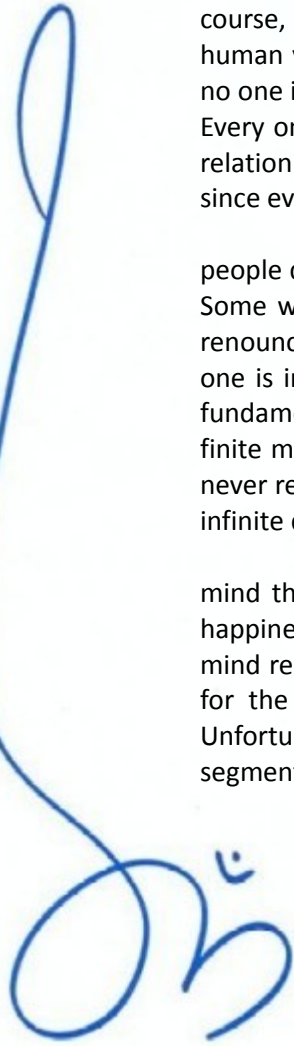
The wanting mind can never settled down with what it has, unless it has, of course, everything in the universe and there is nothing left for it to want. That means having infinite that is Brahman, the limitless. However, finite being can never achieve or acquire infinite by adding finite things. That is mathematically illogical. Thus the problem can never be solved since wanting mind remains all the time wanting. It is a useless advice to ask the mind not to want more, since that feeling of inadequacy and wanting to be adequate is natural and instinctive too.

The reason is simple. The wanting is the very nature of the ego. Ego arises by identification with what I have, with automatic exclusion of what I do not have that I want to have, to feel that I am an adequate being. This forms the fundamental human struggle; nay the struggle of every being in the universe; from the first born (hiranya garbha) to the blade of grass, says Shree Sureswara in his introduction to Naiskarmya siddhi.

Hence, what one has represents the present state. Future is where one is heading with his - wants to have this and that. Wanting mind is the one which longs to have this and that in the future, and gains a measure of success in achieving what it wants. Achieving puts the man with the present as having what one wanted. However, the mind never settles down in the present with what one has; hence it wants all that it still does not have; the struggle continues till death. Nay, it continues ever after death. Even if one goes to heaven the problem continues. In Tai. Up., it says, in its amicable style, that there are three different colonies even in heaven, just like here, the slums, the middle class and the hierarchically elate class. Shankara says, the slum class residents are those who reached there by noble deeds prescribed by smRiti texts, the next higher class is those who reached there by following the righteous actions prescribed by Shrutis, and of course the elate class are the natives who hold very important positions like MP and ministers etc – they are supposed to be 33 of them. They do not have any ministers without portfolio. They deal with the God on the first name basis. Each one is 100 times happier than the fellow down the next level. Happiest person is, of course, the first born, hiranya garbha, whose happy scale is 10 to the power of 23 times that of ideal happy human youth, who is owner of entire earth with all the yellow and black gold resources at his disposal. But no one is happy, they are happier than the fellow who is below their rank or below what they have achieved. Every one falling in this happy scale has egotistical happiness, since happiness depends on what one has in relation to what others do not have and like to have. Actually everyone is only happier but no one is happy, since everyone is still left with a wanting mind that wants to want.

It is interesting to note that those who do not have and those who have, both are not happy. Some people do not have anything not by choice, while some do not have by choice – shotriyasya akaamaya tasya. Some want to gain happiness by acquiring what they do not have. Others want to gain the happiness by renouncing what they have. They quote scriptures that say that one has to renounce every thing to realize one is infinite or the interpretations of the scriptures that says so – tyagenaike amRitatvamaanasuH. The fundamental problem remains. Happy state is state of limitlessness where there is no more wanting mind. A finite mind cannot but WANT in order to be happy or to reach that infiniteness or limitlessness. Finite can never reach infinite either by adding or subtracting finite things. On the other hand, the pursuit to reach the infinite does not stop and cannot stop until the wanting mind ceases to want.

Thus there is a fundamental problem in all these – not happy with what it is – and having wanting mind that wants to want – be it absolute happy state by renunciation or wanting to reach that absolute happiness by trying to acquire everything in the universe. These are two sides of the same coin. The longing mind remains in both. Both are not happy with what it is. Present is always perceived as the stepping stone for the coming future. It is a transitory state or a passage for the future happy and absolute state. Unfortunately future never comes. There is no bridge from the present to the future, since future is just a segment of mental projection.





Thus, we have fundamentally two overriding factors: longing to achieve absolute happiness and not relative happiness, or being fully adequate all the time, which is very intrinsic nature of all beings. Most try to gain that absolute happiness by gaining what they want. Some want to gain that infinite happiness by renouncing everything that they have. In both cases one is not happy with what is, and there is a wanting mind involved in both. Not to have that wanting mind is not the solution, since it is the intrinsic nature of the limited mind. Hence neither renunciation of what it is (the present state), or gaining of what one wants, is the solution to the problem. In either case, the wanting mind remains wanting and not happy with what it is, since there is a desire to become something other than what it is. This is also what JK calls it as conditioned mind. A mind conditioned to look for or to want for things that make one to be absolutely happy. Unconditioning is not a process, since any process reconditions in some form. Solution to this desperate problem is to recognize the problem correctly. This is what Krishna calls the solution as sanyaasa yoga – what Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji translates it as detachment-attachment technique. It is an oxymoron to solve a problem, which cannot be solved by any process. This does not include either sanyaasa or yoga, but sanyaasa-yoga that involves seeing what it is. What it is – is present and not what one wants it to be. It is neither by not wanting or wanting what it is, since both are essentially due to a wanting mind. Both are not happy with what it is and want to be different from what it is. True sanyaasa is not renunciation of things that one owns, but it is the renunciation of the very notion of ownership. It involves the recognition that I never own anything. This is true sharaNaagati or a complete surrendering of the wanting mind to the infinite wisdom. In the process, the wanting mind ceases to be wanting, since it rests with that infinite mind that pervades everything as His vibhuuti. In the sanyaasa of giving up the wanting mind to the infinite, one gains the yoga (of or with) the infinite - the essence of sanyaasa-yoga. The complete surrender involves identification with the totality, where the individuality ceases to be separate from the totality. It is the same as knowing that I own everything or the whole universe of things and beings, and therefore wanting mind that wants is no more wanting, since there is nothing more to want. It is also the same as complete renunciation of everything including the wanting to renounce. Since from the absolute point there is no relative to renounce or to want. Hence, the notional wanting mind ceases to be, in the unity of the totality that underlies the plurality.

I am - is the present, not an entity in the future, with something that I want my self to be, either by gaining or by achieving, or by getting rid of or by sanyaasa of what I have. Sanyaasa in the sanyaasa-yoga involves renunciation of not what I have, but renunciation of the very notion of separate ownership and the associated renunciation of the wanting mind which always wants to want. It is shift in understanding through yoga or by shifting my attention to that enlivening presence because of which the inert mind dances to its wants. It is 'as though' yoking the mind to the very existence-consciousness because of which I am conscious of the wanting mind that wants to want things that I do not possess, or that wants to renounce things that I possess. By being conscious of the very wanting mind that wants to want or wants to renounce what one has, one is beyond the wanting mind or beyond the longing for something in the future that never comes. That is the same as being the witnessing consciousness or saakshii by renouncing all mental misconceptions of ownerships. That includes both wanting mind and renouncing mind. Here sanyaasa is not renunciation of things but renunciation of notional ownership to the things that one never owned. It is true, that external renunciation can help in this internal renunciation of the notional ownership. However, to say that it is essential, I am giving notional ownership more reality than what it is. The true sanyaasa is mental detachment to the notion of ownerships, and attaching or abiding oneself as the very existence-conscious entity that I am. That is the essence of SharaNaagati. In that very understanding, the wanting mind itself gets resolved. It can exist only as long as the conscious entity which enlivens it identifies with it along with its limitations. It survives as long as there is an identification with the wanting mind as - I am the mind - continues irrespective of whether external changes in the set-up at the physical level. One cannot renounce notional ownership by a process. It can be done only by clear understanding that there is no reality for notional ownership of things and beings.

It can be only achieved by recognition that I am – is complete by itself – without any need of the wanting mind that wants things that one does not have, or renouncing things that one has. It is recognition that I am full and complete by myself with recognition that I do not own anything even to renounce, or I own everything since I am that everything thus cannot be renounced. 'aham annam, aham annam, aham annam - aham annado aham annado aham annado is the screaming song of a realized master – I am all that which is consumed or desired and I am all that who is consuming or desiring – I am that which is supported, and I am all that which supports everything – in essence there is nothing that is separate from me – I am the desirer and the desired– I am all that, yet beyond all that –I am immaculately pure with neither desire nor desired – I am that I am without a second - the very living present which transcends time, since there is no time in the present, as it is the meeting ground where past meets the future. What is there in the present is not the time-gap but that which transcends the time itself – where there is only the very presence of the existence-consciousness that I am. Now - alone is that which counts, and is that where one truly lives, or in that only all experiences takes place, but that which is beyond any experience itself – that beyond any sanyaasa or yoga. Wanting mind dissolves into the very presence in that present, since there is no more wanting in it which relates to future. What is there is only MY PRSENCE – AS I AM with simultaneous recognition that I AM is the essence of the world too, the things and beings that I wanted, since I AM is the infinite presence that pervades both the mind that wants and the wants that mind wants.

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## Series – Summary of the Gita Ch. 8 (Akshara Brahma Yoga) - Yoga of Imperishable Brahman

*Nilkanth Bhatt, Richmond Chapter*

We often hear people talking about how the town has changed since they moved in it. They can notice the change because they are there all throughout the changes as unchanged observers. We also notice the changes in our body and mind. We talk about how slim I was few years ago and how emotional I use to get then. We again can notice these changes because something in us is changeless throughout these changes. That unchanged entity in us we call *myself*. This self-remains unchanged not only throughout my lifetime but also remains unchanged after my death as realized by the sages and saints.

This imperishable self is common to all beings and therefore it is all pervading and called *Brahman* – The Big.

This Brahman, when seen as indweller in our body, is called *Adhyatma* – The self of a being. The actions performed by this being are called *Karma* and they become cause for the self to come into being again after the death of this perishable body, which is called *Adhibhuta*. Bhagavan says in this chapter that at the time of death, whoever contemplates the imperishable nature of the self becomes one with it; others become whatever they think about at the time of death. We do not know when death is going to visit us, therefore Krishna advises us to think about the imperishable nature of the self at all time in our life.

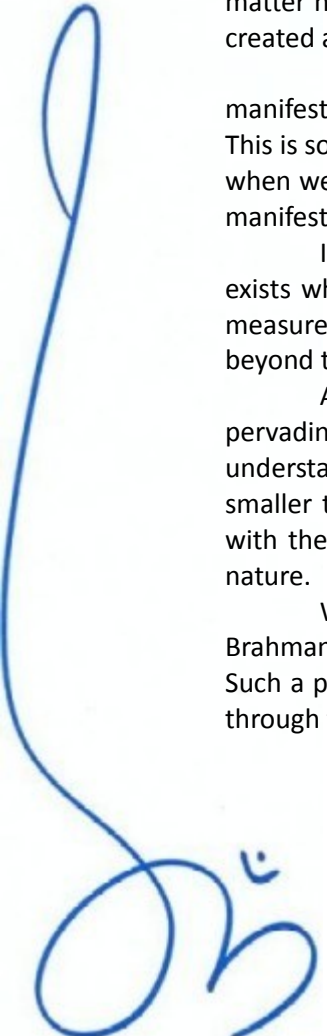
After becoming one with the Brahman, the great souls are no more subject to rebirth, which is temporary and the house of pain. Everything in this world is subject to the cycle of birth and death. Everything we see around us was created sometime in the past and will perish sometime in the future, no matter how long that time period may be. The whole universe when seen as one entity can also be seen as created at one time and it will perish at some other time in the future.

This time period is seen as one day for the creator *Brahma*. At the beginning of this day all beings manifest out of the un-manifest self and at the end of the day they will merge into the un-manifest again. This is something similar to all our thoughts manifest when we wake up in the morning and become dormant when we go to sleep. They become manifest again the next morning, when we wake up. All these thoughts, manifest or un-manifest are only possible because I exist in both waking and deep sleep states.

In a similar manner we must remember that the Brahman exists when this universe exists, and it also exists when this universe does not exist. It is beyond the cycles of creation and destruction. Since time is measured between the events such as creation and destruction (We call it a life time), the Brahman is also beyond time.

All our tools of cognition, the senses of perception, are time and space bound. Therefore, the all pervading, imperishable Brahman cannot be perceived by our normal senses. Bhagavan says that to understand and reach the Brahman, which is the most ancient, the ruler of all things and beings, omniscient, smaller than the atom, self effulgent and therefore beyond all darkness, one must meditate on its nature with the steadfast mind. To make the mind steadfast, one must constantly practice fixing the mind on its nature.

With constant practice, one can prepare one's mind ready to meditate upon the supreme nature of Brahman at the time of death with unwavering mind and all life forces fixed in the middle of the eyebrows. Such a person will become one with the Brahman after the death of the body and will no more have to go through the painful cycles of birth and death.



## Devotion and Devotee

*Acharya Dr. K. Sadananda ji*

*[ Editor's Note: This is 5<sup>th</sup> in the series – On Karma Yoga ]*

Love for higher is called devotion, while love for the lower is called lust. One rises in devotion while the other falls in love or lust. What constitutes 'higher'? That which provides an inspiration, that which integrates the mind and intellect, that which makes the mind calm and quite, and that which energizes an individual is called the higher goal. Higher the goal, higher the energy that one can draw from the goal itself. An inspired action can follow from the one who has high goal provided his mind is fully dedicated or devoted to the action. A puny man with a stick in his hand and handful of salt in the other could inspire the whole nation and shake the whole British Empire only because of his complete surrenderance to the highest goal.

Love demands sacrifice. 'I love you, but...' that but does not come when there is pure love. This is shown beautifully in Ramanand Sagar's Ramayana Series where Bharata goes to forest to bring Rama back to Ayodhya. He goes to the forest with notion that his devotion to Rama is greater than Rama's commitment to Dharma, and Rama has to oblige to return to Ayodhya. Janaka points out that devotion is greater than dharma provided one surrenders to his Lord. In surrenderance, there is no demand of 'what I want' but fulfilling only whatever the Lord wants – 'thy will be done not mine' should be the understanding. Iswara arpaNa will be transformed as Iswara aajna or daiva iccha – His will or His desire.

Life involves playing many roles and transacting with duality. From morning until night and from birth to death one is constantly playing roles. I am a son, brother, husband, father, employee, citizen, etc. All these are roles I play. When I encounter my father, I am a son; when I encounter my daughter, I am a father; when I encounter my wife I am a husband; and when I encounter my office I am an employee, etc. Thus with each encounter I play a different role. All roles are temporal roles since I am not a father all the time. I am a father only when I encounter my daughter, and husband only when I encounter my wife and likewise the other roles. In each role, I have to play my role as best as I can to make the drama of life as beautiful as possible. Life is a drama and one has to play the roles as long as one lives. Playing the game of life is not a problem, provided I know how to play. In the role-playing, I do face the problems in those roles; and that is part of the play. As a father, I may face a problem but as a husband or employee, I have no problems. The father role has a problem but those problems have nothing to do with other roles. If I am good actor playing different roles, each role is played independent of other roles. Unfortunately, our problem is we do not know how to play the drama of life. When father-role has a problem in the father-daughter set-up, I am carried away with that problem affecting my play in the other roles. Then playing all the roles becomes a problem. However, roles will have a problems and that is the nature of the roles and the nature of the drama of life itself. There should not be any problem if the roles have a problem; otherwise, the drama will be dull. However, if the problem of a role is taken as my problem, then I have a real problem. This is our number one problem.



Just as I am playing the role of father when I encounter my daughter, and role as a husband when I encounter my wife, I play the role of devotee when I go the temple. Once out of the temple, I am back to other roles. Thus, unfortunately, the role of devotee is also taken as a temporal role like any other role. My relationship with the Lord has become like any other relationships – that means I have not understood what Lord means. I have not recognized that Lord is everywhere and in every 'set-up'. Therefore a devotee's role is not a temporal role, since Lord and I are present in every set-up that I am involved (antarbahischa tat sarvam vyaapya naaraayana sthitaH – Narayana is inside as well as outside – there is no place where He is not). If I start recognizing this fact, then my role as a devotee and my relationship to the Lord become a fundamental relationship, independent of time and space. I cannot but be a devotee all the time, since I cannot but encounter the Lord all the time, and in all encounters.

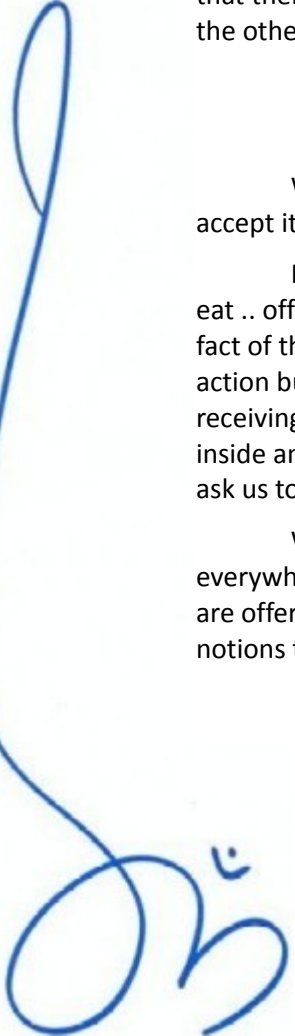
If we examine this carefully, we have to play two roles all the time, one a temporal role depending on the set-up and the other a devotee role in any set-up. Hence, I am father plus a devotee, a husband plus a devotee, a son plus a devotee, an employee plus a devotee, a seeker plus a devotee. My devotee's role remains constant while the other roles keep changing with the changing set-up. First thing to do is to recognize this fact and have constant awareness that Lord is there everywhere, and I cannot afford not to be a devotee all the time. We cannot even afford to ignore this relationship, since unlike other relationships this is a fundamental relationship in all relationships. When I love my daughter, I automatically am conscious of her presence when she is there and am ready to sacrifice for her happiness. The love flows in all my dealings with her. Similarly when I have the devotion (love for the higher is devotion) for the Lord, I have to begin to recognize His presence wherever he is and offer with love whatever I can. Only way to win over the Lord is by devotion. This is beautifully depicted in the story of 'Shree Krishna Tulaabhaaram' in Bhagavatam. Satyabhaama wanted to win over Krishna by offering equivalent weight of gold. However, she did not realize that there is no way Krishna who supports the whole universe can be weighed by any amount of gold. On the other hand, Rukmini wins over him with just a leaf of tulasi offered with devotion. Krishna says:

patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyaa prayacchati |  
tadaham bhaktupahRitam ashnaame priyataatmanaH ||

Whoever offers me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water desiring nothing but with full devotion, I will accept it very gladly.

Hence, 'yat karoti yad ashnaati .. tat kurushve madarpanam' whatever you do and whatever you eat .. offer it to me' can happens once I recognize that I have to play the role of the devotee all the time. But fact of the matter is, whatever I do or eat, it is automatically offered to him – since I have only choice in action but not in the results and He is the one who takes the action and return the results. He is already receiving the action whether I offer it to him or not. Similarly, he is the one who as vaiswaanara staying inside and digesting all that food that I eat. When he is already receiving everything anyway, why does He ask us to offer them with devotion?

When one offers with devotion, two things happen. First, we are recognizing the fact that He is everywhere and everything belongs to Him. So what we are offering is not ours but His only. Then, what we are offering is only our notions that it is ours. We are essentially offering our ahankaara and mamakaara, the notions that 'I am the doer and I am the enjoyer', which bind us down to our karma.



Second thing is in terms of our role-playing. We discussed that we are playing two roles, a husband plus a devotee, father plus a devotee, etc. Husband plus a devotee becomes a devoted husband. Father plus a devotee becomes a devoted father. Similarly a devoted employee, a devoted citizen, etc. Every action becomes a devoted action, with Him present. When one performs one's best, then it becomes a devoted action. Then the action itself becomes a prayer to the Lord. Thus, not only I recognize His presence everywhere, I become a full time devotee, and the actions and the role that I play become devoted actions and devoted role. Then karma becomes karma yoga. Every action becomes a yagna, or for yagna, since yagna also means the Lord. 'yagno yagnapatiH yagvaa yagnaago yagnavaahanaH' says in Vishnu sahasra naamaavali. Hence, do the actions in the spirit of yagna also implies do the action for parameswara preetyartham – perform the action to please the Lord. Even while chanting the Vishnu sahasra naamaavali, we chant – Shree mahaa Vishnu preetyartham – for the pleasure of mahavishnu only we are chanting this and not for our personal gains. Whatever that comes unasked is received with reverence as 'prasaadam'.

How do I become a full time devotee? A Swami used to tell a story. There was young boy who was hired as cook by a gentleman. Since the boy was very much interested in music, he used to hum and sing as he was cooking. Since he was a good cook, the gentleman did not mind his singing. When a visitor came and heard the singing, he asked the gentleman – “who is singing in the kitchen?” The gentleman responded, “Oh! That is my cook. He likes to sing”. The visitor said, “He is good, why don't you let him learn music?”. The gentleman agreed and arranged for music lessons for the cook. Because of his interest, the boy practiced a lot and slowly graduated from that teacher and then the next teacher and so on until he became an expert in music. He became a professional singer much sought after for music programs. One day he had a program in the same town where the gentleman is living, and he visited him to pay his respects. Since he knows the gentleman's tastes, he went into the kitchen to cook something for him. When a visitor asked who is cooking in the kitchen, the gentleman responded, “Oh! That is the famous musician is cooking in the kitchen”. The visitor was very much surprised why the famous musician is cooking in the gentleman's kitchen.

Before it was a cook that was singing – now the great musician is cooking. Whatever he does now, it is that great musician that is doing. The transformation is complete. A cook is transformed into a great musician – How? It is only by saadhana, that involves a single pointed effort withdrawing from all other dissipative pursuits.

ananyaashchitayanto maam ye janaaH paryupaasate |  
teshhaam nityaabhiyuktaanaam yogakshemam vahaamyaham | |

Without any other thought in mind who thinks of me all the time and worships me, desiring nothing, I will take care of him completely.

Thus, doing daily prayer and performing the panca mahaa yagnas, meditating on the glories of the Lord are essentially the process to transform oneself into a full time devotee. Krishna emphasizes that 'abhyaasa and viaragya' i.e. constant practice and detachment from all other dissipative pursuits, are the two essential tools for one's growth.

Therefore, bhakti manifests at the action level as karmayoga. I cannot but offer everything to him. Once I recognize that everything actually belongs to him, what is there left for me to offer. 'tvadiyam vastu govinda tubhyameva samarpaye', Oh! Lord this is all yours and I am offering it to you what belongs to you'. What I am offering then is only my notions that they are mine. Krishna understands our language and takes only our devotion and returns back what He thinks we need for our growth.

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