

Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 20, Number 2-- March 16, 2010

We wish our readers and members

Happy Ugadi, Gudi Padwa and Tamil New Year



Chinmaya Somnath – see message in News Briefs

In This Issue

Events & Library

- Events and Links
- News Briefs
 - Bhoomi Puja
- Flyer – CMW 2010 Vedanta Course
- Flyer – 2010 Mahasamadhi Camp
- Flyer – Swami Ishwarananda's Yajna
- Flyer – Swami Ishwarananda's Camp
- Flyer – Swami Chidathmananda's Yajna

Bala Vihar Articles and Stories

- Maya Deer – Frederick Bala Vihar
- MLK's Light of Hope – Roshan Rao

Members & Friends

- What Bhoomi Puja Means to me – Sushil Baluja
- Delightful Snow – Sitaram Kowtha
- An Unusual Guru – Usha Naik

Vedantic Thoughts

- Series: Brief Introduction to Gita: Ch 9– Nilkanth Bhatt
- Series: On Karma Yoga –Choiceless Choice - Acharya Dr. K Sadananda

Next Issue

- Articles for the next issue - May 2010, are due by April 20th 2010
- Email submissions to smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Submission instructions at www.chinmayadc.org, Smrithi link, "Information on publishing in Smrithi"

Calendar and Upcoming Events (www.chinmayadc.org, Link – Calendar of Events)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 20-21 - 1st Set of Bala Vihar Annual Day performances • March 24 – Wednesday – Sri Rama Navami • March 30, 2010, Tuesday – Hanuman Jayanthi observed at Chinmayam. • March 29 – April 4 – Swami Ishwarananda's Jnana Yajna and Camp in MD, VA • To Be Announced – National Youth Service Day • April 24, Saturday – Language Annual Day at Chinmayam • April 26 – 30, Mon-Fri – Jnana Yajna by | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swami Chidatmananda • May 1, Saturday: 1PM - 5PM – Geeta Chanting Competition • May 8-9 – Sat-Sun – Chinmaya Jayanthi Celebration • May 8 – Sat: 12PM -7PM – Chinmaya Seva Day • May 15 – Saturday – Tabla Talent Annual Day • May 22 – Saturday: 3PM – CMWRC Bala Vihar Graduation Ceremony • May 29-30 – Sat-Sun – Memorial Day Spiritual Camp by Acharya Sadananda |
|---|---|

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: (smrithi@chinmayadc.org)

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

- Bhoomi Puja was conducted at the newly acquired site for Virginia Chapter on January 14th to coincide with Sankranti and Pongal festival days.
- Youth Seva Activity was held at Chinmayam on January 17th in honor of Martin Luther King Day. Bala Vihar students made sandwiches for the homeless
- Mahashivaratri was celebrated on February 11 at homes of Chinmaya families as major snowstorm curtailed travel in the Washington DC area. Swamiji's puja guidance in audio and text format were made available for the families via the Internet.

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 March 2010 newsletter from Chinmaya Mission West.

Browse and download at www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter:

<http://www.chinmayamission.org/newsletter.php>



News in Brief

Naming of the Virginia Chapter - Chinmaya Somnath



Somnath Temple, Gujarat
(image from www.somnath.org)

Blessed Self!

Jai Jai Jagadeeshwara!
Salutations! Salutations! !

The long awaited name for our Virginia Chapter has dawned. Swami Tejomayanandaji called me this morning to convey greetings for Mahashivaratri and to give the glorious name for our Virginia Chapter "Chinmaya Somnath".

It was amazing that in response to our request for suggestion of names, we received 62 different names and we also shared with Swami Tejomayanandaji some of them.

The name is based on the Somnath temple located in the Prabhas Kshetra in Saurashtra on the western coast of Gujarat. It is considered as one of the most sacred shrines of Lord Shiva and is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. The Somnath Temple is known as the "Shrine Eternal".

With Sri Gurudev's Glorious Grace & Blessings let us all join hands in building "Chinmaya Somnath" as fast as we can.

Hari Om! Hari Om!
Unto Sri Gurudev!
Swami Dheerananda

News in Brief

Bhoomi Puja

By Karpagam Balan

With Pujya Gurudev's blessings the Bhoomi Puja and the ground breaking ceremony for the newly planned CMWRC Virginia center on Pleasant Valley Drive, Chantilly, VA took place on January 14th. Upon the initiative and advice of Pujya Swami Dheerananda, the date for the ceremony was fixed on the auspicious day of Makara Sankranti, January 14th, 2010. On the beautiful, sunny and mild winter morning, Sri Bhaskar Sastrigal conducted the purvanga (initial) puja at the residence of Srikumar and Jaya Gopalakrishna under the auspices of Swami Dheerananda, Acharya Anant Sarma and Acharya Pramila Poudel. It was attended by several key Mission sevaks, who could participate in spite of the short notice. Treasurer Prakash Soman, Bina Patel (Trustee), Virginia Dulles Chapter Director Ramesh Golla and his wife Sirisha Golla, Sushil Baluja and Bishnu Poudel were some of the senior Mission members present at this occasion.

During the purvanga puja, Lord Ganesha was invoked (Ganapati Puja), followed by the Kalasha Puja to consecrate the water. This was followed by the Navagraha Puja to the 9 bricks that represent the 9 Navagraha deities. After the Ganapati, Kalasha and Navagraha pujas were completed, the group visited the site carrying the consecrated kalasha water and the sanctified bricks. Swami Dheerananda broke the ground with the consecrated shovel and offered prayers for the new center's success. Acharya Anant Sarma was next to partake in the ground breaking followed by Acharya Pramila Poudel, Bishnu Poudel and others taking turns. The consecrated bricks were laid one by one on the land and the kalasha water, milk, and flowers were offered to these bricks. These bricks were left for a few hours at the location and then brought back to be carefully saved. These will be used during construction at the front entrance of the new center to bring it success and fulfill the promise of Sri Gurudev's vision.

Bhoomi Puja conducted on January 14th, 2010



News in Brief

Chinmaya Internet Channel

Download and Watch Pujya Gurudev's discourses - <http://www.chinmayainternetchannel.com/>

Swami Dheeranandaji's Yajna Audio Posted

Jnana Yajna on Bhagavad Git by Swami Dheerananda in VA (Dec 29-Jan 2nd) . The theme '*Jewels from Bhagavad Gita*' highlighted select verses from Gita Chapter 3 through Chapter 7.

Recordings of all sessions are now available in **mp3 format** for download at www.chinmayadc.org under the **AUDIO** section.

Photographs of the Yajna and New Year Puja can be found at the following links

<http://picasaweb.google.com/dulleschinmaya/JnanaYajnaSwamiDheerananda>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/dulleschinmaya/NewYearPuja2010?authkey=Gv1sRgCNbTzKfFqZPkGA&feat=directlink>

Upcoming Events

- CMWRC Frederick Chapter celebrates Sri Thyagaraja & Sri PurandaraDasa Aradhana. On March 20th, 2010 between 9:30am and 5:30pm
At Walkersville Middle School, 55 West Frederick St, Walkersville MD
- Swami Ishwarananda Jnana Yajna at Chinmayam, March 29 – April 1
- Swami Ishwarananda Spiritual Camp in Virginia, April 2-3
- Swami Chidathmananda Jnana Yajna at Chinmayam, April 26-30



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



W

ith 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

Handwritten signature in blue ink.



Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles Presents

17th **CHINMAYA MAHASAMADHI FAMILY CAMP**

July 29, 2010 • 6 p.m. PST – August 3, 2010 • 11 a.m. PST
 Marriott Hotel & Convention Center • Burbank, California



CAMP HIGHLIGHTS

- Spiritually focused approach
- Multi-track breakout sessions/ panel discussions on contemporary topics
- Cultural programs depicting important episodes in the life of Sri Rama
- Unique events designed for spiritual reflection
- Elaborate children's curriculum
- Special interactive sessions for youth
- Great ambience, conducive weather, catered Indian food

RAMAYANA SOUNDARYAM

Discourses on the beauty of "Ramayana"
 by H.H. Gururji Swami Tejomayananda
 Head of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide



Rare opportunity • Friendly payment plan • Special Rudra Puja

1-866-HARIOM-0 (1-866-427-4660)
 2010msc@gmail.com

Information and registration:
www.chinmayamahasamadhi.com

Handwritten blue signature/initials.



CHINMAYA MISSION®
WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER
 (A non-profit religious organization registered in Maryland)
 Kailas Niwas, 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905



Presents

Weekend SPIRITUAL CAMP on April 2nd/3rd, 2010

CHATUSLOKI BHAGAVATAM

By

SWAMI ISHWARANANDA

Acharya, Chinmaya Mission, Southern California

At Dulles South Multipurpose Center, 24950 Riding Center Dr, South Riding, VA 20152
(Venue of Chinmaya Mission Dulles Center – *see directions below)

Fri April 2nd Registration: 6:30–7:00 PM Session 1 (7:00–8:30 PM)
Sat April 3rd Registration: 8:30–9:00 AM 3 Sessions (9:00–10:15 AM, 10:45–Noon, 1:30–3:00 PM)
Lunch will be provided on April 3rd. Tea and snacks will be provided during breaks.

Srimad Bhagavatam is the very Self of the Lord (Bhagavan). Therefore to know the Bhagavatam is to understand the essential nature of the Lord. As such, the study of the Bhagavatam when done with devotion is capable of endowing us with all fortunes (Bhaga). The entire essence of the Bhagavatam is found in just four verses, found in the 2nd Canto (Chapter) of the Bhagavatam. These four verses are popularly known as "Chatusloki Bhagavatam". These verses were originally taught by Lord Narayana to Brahma ji and was passed on to Narad-Muni, Vyasa Muni, his son Sukadev and then to Raja Parikshit through a Bhagavat Saptah. These four verses expound the nature of the Changeless Reality (Brahman), the relative Reality (Maya), the relationship between the two and the means to liberation from this relative world by understanding our true nature.



Swami Ishwarananda started his association with Chinmaya Mission, Bangalore. Under the guidance of Swami Brahmananda and inspiration from Param Puja Swami Chinmayananda, he joined the Brahmachari Course in Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai in 1991. Since then, he has served various Chinmaya Mission Centers. He was the resident Acharya of Chinmaya Mission, LA till 2001 when he became the Acharya of Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai to oversee and teach Brahmachari course during 2002 - 2004. He currently serves as the Acharya of Chinmaya Mission centers at Tustin and Bakersfield, Southern California. Swamiji is a dynamic speaker and has given talks on Vedanta, stress management, management techniques and other such related fields. He has authored highly acclaimed books: 'Conscious Living', 'Silent Search' and 'Dewdrops'. Swamiji's free webcasts on www.chinmayachannel.com are well known across the world.

* 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 Dr. Go past the 4way stop sign and the center will be to your left. Parking is free.

----- Please complete Registration form below and return before March 25th -----

Contacts: Vish Ramabhakta 703-986-3151, Naval Agarwal (Registration), Ramani Akileswaran. You may pre-register for the camp by email to campva@chinmayadulles.org

Registration Fee: \$10 per person (adult / child)

Please submit your registrations with below information & check in favor of 'CMWRC' by March 25, 2010. You can hand forms to individual Chapter Coordinators or mail to: 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring MD, 20905. You can pre-register via email to campVA@chinmayadulles.org

Adult Names (s): _____ Children(s) Name/Age: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Kids activities are planned during the discourses



CHINMAYA MISSION®
WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER
 (A non-profit religious organization registered in Maryland)
 Kailas Niwas, 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905



Presents a
JNANA YAJNA
FREE Evening Discourses
7:00 – 8:30 P.M.
March 29- April 1, 2010
 on
Bhagavad Gita Chapter 7
 By
SWAMI ISHWARANANDA
 Acharya, Chinmaya Mission, Southern California
 at
CHINMAYAM, 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

Bhagavan Sri Krishna expounds the Yoga of Jnana and Vijnana in **Bhagavad Gita Chapter 7**. Some of the most poetic and poignant verses of Bhagavad Gita can be found in this chapter. Here begins the transition to explaining the significance of the term 'Tat' (That) and offers the glimpse of the goal of spiritual science. Bhagavan teaches both the indirect knowledge of sastras (Jnana) as well as the direct knowledge of experience (Vijnana) leading to freedom (Mukti). The seeker who has purified oneself through Karma Yoga (Selfless Action) and prepared the mind through Dhyana Yoga (Meditation) is now ready to go beyond the limitations of the ignorance and perceive the divinity manifest in everything. Such a prepared mind-intellect is a fit instrument to break free from the delusion of the pair-of-opposites. Take this flight with Swamiji towards meditating upon the Self through these verses and realize the identity with the Conscious Principle that pervades everything.



Swami Ishwarananda started his association with Chinmaya Mission, Bangalore. Under the guidance of Swami Brahmananda and inspiration from Param Pujya Swami Chinmayananda, he joined the Brahmachari Course in Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai in 1991. Since then, he has served various Chinmaya Mission Centers. He was the resident Acharya of Chinmaya Mission, LA till 2001 when he became the Acharya of Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai to oversee and teach Brahmachari course during 2002 - 2004. He currently serves as the Acharya of Chinmaya Mission centers at Tustin and Bakersfield, Southern California. Swamiji is a dynamic speaker and has given talks on Vedanta, stress management, management techniques and other such related fields. He has authored highly acclaimed books: 'Conscious Living', 'Silent Search' and 'Dewdrops'. Swamiji's free webcasts on www.chinmayachannel.com are well known across the world.

Driving Directions: I-495 to exit 28 North for New Hampshire Avenue (towards White Oak), drive approximately 6 miles and make a left on Norwood Road. CHINMAYAM is the 4th building on the left.

For details, send email to yajna@chinmavadulles.org or contact
 Raja Kirkire 301-774-1022, Sri Gopalakrishna 703-327-8307, Pratima Jadhav, 301-309-2931

If you would like to host Bhiksha for Swamiji, please contact Devyani Kavathekar, devayu@yahoo.com



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
(Free Evening Discourses in English)

TOPIC: **“ART OF HEALING”**
(Panchikaranam of Adi Sankara)

ACHARYA: **Swami Chidatmananda**
(Regional Head of Chinmaya Mission, Andhra Pradesh, India)

DATE: **April 26 – 30, 2010 (Mon-Fri)** **TIME:** **7:00 – 8:30 P.M.**

VENUE: **CHINMAYAM, 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905**

Healing is the process of getting better and becoming healthy. Healing lifts us out of the Negative energy field and places us in the Positive energy field. Events, Circumstances Incidents can never affect us, what affects us is our feeling towards them. We are the Source of our Happiness and We can Create It any moment; this Inner Conviction gives us a Sense of Completeness and Total FULFILMENT in every moment of our Life. Natural UNCONDITIONAL LOVE spontaneously awakens the Healing Power in us and Heals us completely.



Swami Chidatmananda joined Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in Mumbai in 1989 under the tutelage of H.H Swami Purushottamananda. Since 1991, he has been serving as Acharya to the mission center at Hyderabad. He was initiated into Brahmacharya Deeksha by Pujya GURUDEV SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA in 1993, and into Sannyasa Diksha in 1999 by Guruji Swami Tejomayananda. Swami Chidatmananda is a law graduate from Osmania University.

Swami Chidatmananda is popular for his talks on India's widely viewed cable TV channels (Gemini, Teja and Doordarshan), on topics such as the Bhagavad Gita and Vemana Padyamulu (poems by the Yogi Vemana). He also speaks on Vedanta (Upanishads), Ramayana and Mahabharata. He is acclaimed for his ability to unfold very complex concepts from Upanishads with ease. He has conducted many Spiritual, Meditation, Management and Personality Development camps for youth and elders in India, USA, Canada, UK, France and Oman.

Driving Directions: I-495 to exit 28 North for New Hampshire Avenue (towards White Oak), drive approximately 6 miles and make a left on Norwood Road. CHINMAYAM is the 4th building on the left.

CONTACTS:

Jnana Yajna Coordinator:	Sitaram Kowtha	443-280-1835	skowtha@verizon.net
Bhiksha Coordinator:	Lakshmi & Linga Rao	571-331-4430	

Maya Deer

*Ambika Ratnasabapathy, Jaya Ramesh & Vijayalakshmi Parandaman
(Teachers of Shivam and Sundaram, Frederick Chapter)*



The Shivam/Sundaram students , who are learning Ramayana characters enjoyed doing a deer as craft activity .

The deer was named 'Maya '.



Om

MLK's Light of Hope

Roshan Rao, Age 11

(Article Submitted by Sukanya Sathyanaraya.

Roshan is the winner of Frederick County MLK Day of Service Event)

Martin Luther King is an inspiration, he showed us justice and freedom and the light of hope when all odds were against him he stood his ground and he told us to have faith so hand in hand we could take a stand

He was a brave man in history who fought for rights

To me, he is a hero who wanted segregation to end

To me, he made a difference

That changed our lives in the future

He showed me that one man can make

a difference, if you stand with your believes

and work hard.

Today I stand here

In a world of equality

In which freedom rings throughout the lands

My dreams are simple all I desire of his true peace

To remain in the lands as well as thoughts of inequality

That lingers to disappear

My friends, the years of light

Have come and MLK's dream lives on

The walls of segregation have been conquered

And we have risen from the desolate valley

Happiness may be pursued and tranquility has taken its place

Brutality has come to an end and brother hood has replaced it



What Bhoomi Puja Meant to Me

Sushil Baluja

Bhoomi Puja for the construction of our new Chinmaya facility in Chantilly Virginia was performed on Jan 14, 2010 (auspicious Makara Sakranti Day), at the residence of Sri Gopalakrishna and Jaya Rajagopal. Priest Sri Bhaskar Sastri conducted the Puja. Sri and Jaya were the hosts, Swami Dheeranandaji, Acharya Anant Sarma, Acharya Pramila Poudel and about 10 other Chinmaya members attended the Puja. Appropriate ancient Mantras for the Puja were chanted and offerings to the divine were made. During the Puja nine shilas (bricks) were placed in a certain order and offerings and prayers made.

At the conclusion of the Puja at home, we all went to 4300 Pleasant Valley Drive Chantilly, the future site of our new Chinmaya building. The shilas were placed at the approximately the entrance of the future building and prayers conducted by the priest. After that Swamiji inaugurated the start of the construction phase by breaking ground followed by other members.

A few days ago, I only had a vague idea about the meaning and purpose of the Bhoomi Puja. Before attending the ceremony, I turned to Google for more information. This is what I found:

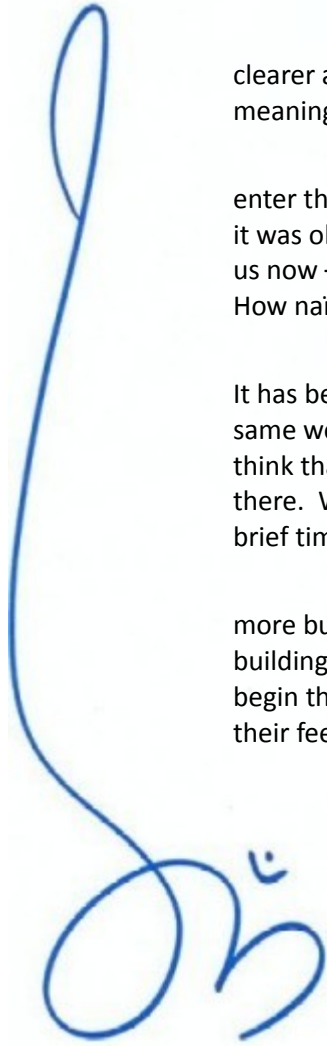
“Bhoomi Puja is a ceremony performed to inaugurate a new site for the construction of a home or building. The ceremony is conducted in conformance to Vastu Shastra, the ancient Indian science of structures and architecture. According to Hindu Beliefs by performing this Puja the right energy and natural elements surrounding the site can be propitiated”.

This information helped a little, but its true meaning still eluded me. Perhaps it would become clearer at the Puja itself? However, that did not happen either – all of the mantras were in Sanskrit and their meanings remained elusive.

When we reached the building site, the entrance gate was locked, and we had no key. We had to enter through a small opening we found to one side of the gate. While we were entering, someone asked if it was okay for us to enter the site through the fence. A member of our group replied “The land belongs to us now – we can do what we want.” That is when the meaning of the Bhoomi Puja became clear to me. How naïve we are in thinking of this land as ours.

The land never belonged to anyone – it doesn’t now, it didn’t in the past, and it won’t in the future. It has been there for ages long before us. Perhaps a few hundred years ago someone may have uttered the same words. In another 100 years, perhaps they will be uttered again – someone will once again naively think that this piece of land belongs to them. But when we are gone, and they are gone, the land will still be there. We are transients passing through and should be thankful to Mother Earth for letting us use it in our brief time here.

By doing the Puja we are giving thanks to Mother Earth for letting us dig holes in it and load it with more buildings and structures. We are praying for it to be kind and generous to us and let us complete our buildings and our doings without any hindrances. We do this for the same reason that our Hindu dancers begin their dances by praying and being thankful to mother earth for letting them pound the ground with their feet while dancing.

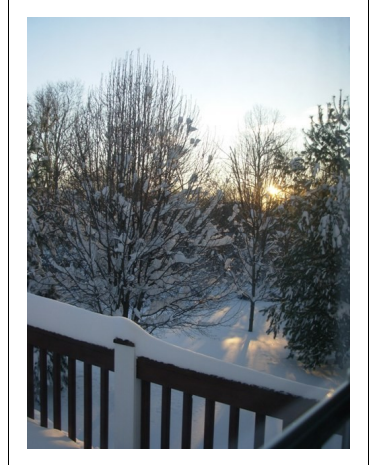


Delightful Snow

Sitaram Kowtha

The back-to-back snow storms in the Washington DC area in February brought historic snow-fall and forced the nation's capital to a crawl. Though we were sufficiently forewarned and were prepared to ride out the storm, nothing compared to actually experiencing Mother Nature's ferocity. The streetscape looked hazy in the evening light with winds blowing snow around just as the wind blows sand in the deserts. In every direction, it looked like the tundra. Snow dunes of various shapes sizes and heights, interspersed with houses in the neighborhood. The houses on the street looked like mirages, the only signs of life. The residents took the storms in stride, but patience reached its limits. To some the news of yet another storm in a few days was just too much to bear. But many took time to get to know the neighbors, help each other with shoveling and enjoy the scenery.

Watching the snow fall, it is interesting to see a snow flake make its way from the sky to the ground. It is like a small child, fresh, full of energy, irreverent and mischievous, yet, fragile, soft and delicate. A mere rise in the air temperature can melt it. A small breeze can alter its path. A snow flake does not know where it will land or if it will ever land. Once it does fall to the ground, it joins with other flakes to form an ocean of snow cover. In the snow cover, one cannot distinguish one flake from another. The flake visibly originates in the storm clouds and ends in the "ocean" of snow cover on the ground, but in the process, has a ride of its own from the cloud to the ground. Each flake is unique, but exists for only a short time. Each has its own story, and it makes the most of its short existence by illustrating the beauty of nature.



Perhaps the snowflakes are teaching us to enjoy the beautiful lives we have been blessed with. To enjoy the beauty in our lives, we must be like a snowflake – be innocent, fresh, and full of energy. The beauty in the snowflake is that the connection between itself and its source, and, between itself and its destination is not lost upon the observer. It is in this connection, the observer sees the beautiful snowflake dances in the air as it makes its way to the ground. We can observe beauty in our own lives when we recognize and savor the connection of ourselves to our source, and to our destination. Then the worries of the past, the agitations of the future, the likes and dislikes that pervade our thoughts, words, actions and habits will start to melt. We will see ourselves as mere agents in a continuum, dancing with our talent as we perform our duties, thus adding to the beauty of the nature.

Swamiji reminds us every week as we prepare for meditation that Lord Shiva is the consciousness in us, because of which our body acts or senses, our mind feels and our intellect thinks. Lord Shiva is that connection from where we came, what we are and where we are going.

Interestingly enough, this year, Mahashivaratri festival fell on February 11th, the day right after the end of the 2nd storm. Swami Dheeranandaji guided the CMWRC families in observing this festive day from their own homes. Instructions, audio and text material were made available via the Internet as Swamiji observed that "Mount Kailash has manifested itself on our roofs and around our houses". The thought of doing puja at home cheered everyone in our home, and the words that Kailash had manifested around us made the puja even more special.

The delightful snowfall and Shivaratri, what a glorious combination in 2010!

An Unusual Guru

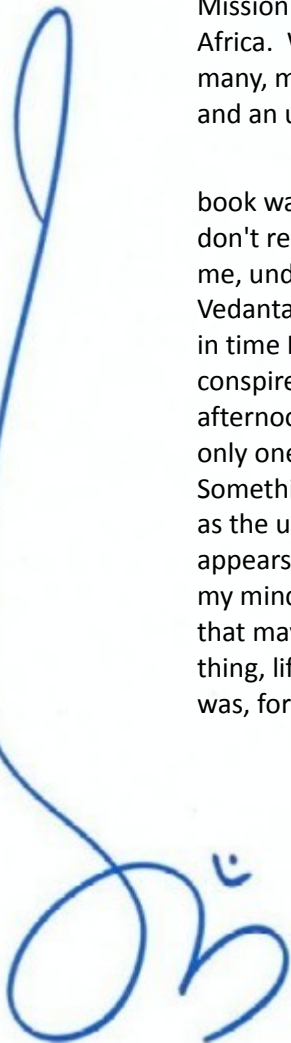
Usha Naik

For many members of the Chinmaya Mission, an understanding of the vocabulary and culture of Vedanta has been part of their lives since childhood. Having grown up in India, many members have first hand experience of saints, swamis and sadhus. The commonly used terms and scriptures are well known and pronunciation is never an issue. For me, however, the introduction to Vedanta was a little different and this is something that I'd like to share with you.

I grew up in southern Africa, in a Hindu Gujarati family, learning some prayers, learning about karma, faith, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and reading Amar Chitra Katha comics - generally being aware in a racially segregated environment that I was what was commonly called "Indian". But it wasn't until I visited India in my early twenties that I realized how little I knew about India and more importantly, about what I professed to be my faith.

So a few years later, having nothing better to do on a Saturday afternoon in a small town, I decided to join an old school mate of mine on her visit to the "ashram". It wasn't a traditional ashram – it was simply a home owned by a lady called Dhyanam and called the Emanon Center. Dhyanam was a South African lady who had emigrated to Zimbabwe in 1980 and used to run a study group on Saturday afternoons and provide reflexology and other homeopathic services during the week - all run on donations, without any fees. Dhyanam had grown up in the Anglican faith, but had met Swami Nisreyasananda of the Ramakrishna Mission and studied and trained with him during his years setting up and managing the mission in southern Africa. When I first met Dhyanam, she was 65 years old and had been studying and teaching Vedanta for many, many years. She was beautiful with a wonderful, youthful complexion. She had a wealth of knowledge and an understanding of Vedanta and mystical Christianity that amazed me.

The study group Dhyanam ran was similar to the current study groups at the Chinmaya mission. A book was chosen, and Dhyanam would then proceed through the verses explaining the meaning to us all. I don't remember the text that was being studied when I first started. The first few weeks were a bit hazy for me, understanding very little of what was being explained and almost nothing about the basic concepts of Vedanta. I was impressed by Dhyanam's breadth of knowledge and ashamed of my lack of it. Up to that point in time I had incorrectly believed that I was a fairly knowledgeable Hindu. But one week, the universe conspired so that only Dhyanam, Shantiben (another student) and I were present for the class that afternoon. Since I was such a new student, Dhyanam asked me if there were any specific questions I had. The only one I could think of was about the 3 Gunas (those were the only terms I had some familiarity with!) Something magical happened that afternoon as Dhyanam explained the concept of Brahman projecting itself as the universe, as Maya, as the Gunas. The greatest magic was the first understanding that Brahman appears as all things. Up to that point, there had always been a dichotomy between God and the universe in my mind. God was "up there"... somewhere - and we were "down here"... somewhere. The realization now that maybe there was some sort of divine expression within me, that it was not blasphemous to think such a thing, lifted my spirits and connected me to the universe in a way that I had never experienced before. It was, for me, the first of many beautiful moments.



After that I continued to study with Dhyanam - both in the study groups and also one on one. The private lessons began with the study of the Samkhya philosophy. I don't know if that's a traditional first text for many Vedanta students, but for someone who had grown up learning about the theory of evolution in science and the Book of Genesis in the Bible, the study of the Samkhya was a solid foundation for Vedanta. It allowed, for me, a logical acceptance of both science and divinity. Over the next few years, we managed to go through a couple more texts. Each verse or chapter took a long time as Dhyanam had to explain so much of it to me. Even though I didn't learn all the vocabulary and still struggle with pronunciation, Dhyanam's lessons changed my life. Her teaching of Vedanta gave me irreplaceable life skills, enhancing many positive life experiences and reducing the pain of negative ones. Dhyanam was my guru, even though she didn't wear the robes of a monk and I am forever grateful for the time I had with her.



Dhyanam

Om

Series – Summary of the Gita
Ch. 9 (Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga) -
The Royal Knowledge and the Royal Secret

Nilkanth Bhatt, Richmond Chapter

We often wonder, is there any way to end these seemingly unending sorrows in our lives? If there is a way, it certainly seems to be the greatest secret in this world, because nobody seems to know it. Even if someone comes and tells us that there is a way to end all these sorrows once and for all, we will have tough time believing it because we have no faith that such a thing exists. We are so used to having sorrows that we cannot imagine life without it. However, Krishna found in Arjuna such a seeker who will have faith in such knowledge and will not cavil at such an idea.

Krishna tells him that I will reveal to you this profound secret, having known that, you shall be free from all sorrows. This knowledge is so pure and simple that one can realize it by one's own intuition and it is very easy to practice, if one has faith in this knowledge. Those without faith will continue to suffer through the unending cycles of little joys and lots of sorrows.

Bhagavan says I pervade this entire world in my unmanifested form. All beings exist in me, but I do not dwell in them. Nor do beings exist in me in reality. I am the cause and the support of all the beings but I do not dwell in them. Just as seemingly all pervading air resides in space, but space even though all pervading, does not reside in the air, but being everywhere resides in the all pervading self of the Lord, but Lord does not reside in them.

These statements seem paradoxical and contradicting each other. However, we know that abstract ideas in science can only be explained by a paradox. For example, one can say the atom is a basic building block of solid matter, but atom itself is not a solid matter. Here Bhagavan says I am everywhere but do not dwell in the beings. This statement is in complete contradiction to what all religions have taught us all throughout our lives, that "God resides in our hearts, he is the indweller of this body"

It is not something we can accept easily. To understand this statement we may take the following analogy of space. The space is all pervading; all automobiles are in this space. There is space in each automobile and automobiles move in the space outside them. Now can we say that space in a moving automobile moves with the automobile? Or should we say that space remains stationary and unaffected while an automobile moves in it?

Lord is in all beings just as the space is in the automobile, but he remains unaffected by the actions of beings just as the space does not move with the automobile. If that is the case, what is our relationship to the Lord? Bhagavan says all beings are created from his own self by the force of his nature and therefore he is the father, mother, supporter and the source of all beings.

Because the nature of the Lord is imperishable, immaculate and ever blissful, the beings created out of his own self could not be any different than he. It is the ignorance of our own source that creates fear of death and all other kinds of insecurities, which is the cause of all sorrows in our lives. If we contemplate on our own true nature and realize that our existence is not independent of the Lord's existence, all fears will go away and all our sorrows will end.

The Lord is the goal, supporter, witness, abode, shelter, friend, origin, dissolution, foundation, treasure-house and the imperishable source of all beings, and therefore whatever we do, whatever we eat, whatever we give, whatever we practice, we must do it as an offering to him. Whoever offers him a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water with devotion and pure mind, him he accepts with love.

Bhagavan says he is same to all beings. To him none is dear or hateful, but those who worship (identify with) him with devotion will realize that they are in him and he is in them. Soon they become righteous and attain eternal peace. Bhagavan promises that his devotee is never destroyed. *Na me bhaktah pranashyati.*

Choiceless Choice

Acharya Dr. K. Sadananda ji

[Editor's Note: This is 6th in the series – On Karma Yoga]

After reading the last post, a gentleman from the advaitin list asked some relevant questions starting from - what should guide our choice of action and what are its consequences? Before we address these issues, it is important to recapitulate from the second chapter of Geeta the fundamental law of action that Krishna provides.

‘karmaNyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana |
maakarma phalaheturbhuhuH maate sangostvakarmaNi | |

Recognize that you have only right (choice) to perform an action and never in the results. Do not let the fruits of the action motivate your action. Also, do not let your attachment be towards inaction.

The first part contains the law of action and the second part contains some guidelines to follow. Let us examine the law of action first. adhikaari is normally translated as right, whereas ‘choice’ is more meaningful as we shall see.

Human being is a crown in the creation since he is given a choice to evolve rapidly. What makes him to stand out among the creation? It is the discriminative intellect or buddhi, which is the most precious gift to humans. BartRihari subhaashhitam says:

ahaara nidraa bhaya maitunamca saamaanya metad pashhubhirnaraaNaam |
buddhirhi teshaa adhiko visheshhaH, buddhyaa vihiinaaH pashubhiH samaanaaH | |

Eating, sleep, fear, producing, etc are all common for both humans and animals. Humans have something more than what the animals have, and that is the discriminative buddhi or intellect. If one does not have it (or use it properly), then he is as good as any animal. However, animals are pre-programmed and follow the path specified by the Lord; whereas man without buddhi will behave like an unprogrammed animal, which is worse than an animal. An animal does not become a Rakshasa. Man alone has the capacity to become either sura or asura, godly or devilish being.

Hence, Shankara says in VivekachuuDaamaNi that three things in the order are rare indeed. First is the birth in the human form. Having been given such rare birth, the second difficult thing to have is the intense desire for liberation and finally the third one is the association with a great soul or right guru who can provide the needed guidance for evolution. These three come only because of the blessings from the Gods.

durlabham trayamevaitad daivaanugraha hetukam |
munushyatvam mumukshutvam mahaapurushha samsrayaH | |

Animals are mostly driven by instincts. Birds build their nests exactly the same way and that skill is inborn. Their actions are dictated by instincts. On the other hand, since a superior intellect is provided for a human being, a man has to make a choice at every moment. He always has three choices at any time: to act, not to act and to act in a different way – kartum shakyam, akartum shakyam or anyathaa kartum shakyam- are three choices. So not to act is also a choice of action that he can exercise. People complain that they do not have any choice. What they really mean is that they do not have a choice since they want to have only a particular desired result.

The first line of above the well quoted Gita sloka says that at every moment I have a choice to make. As an intelligent being, I cannot act without expecting a desired result. I cannot put a step forward without expecting to move forward. I may fall in the process but that is the result but not my expectation. Even Krishna does not begin to teach Arjuna without at least expecting Arjuna to learn. That is the least expectation. Hence, human intellect cannot function without a goal in mind, which is the expectation for the action. However, if I am intelligent enough I should also expect that my expectation could go wrong. Why? Because, I am not omniscient to dictate the result to meet my expectation. Hence Krishna says “you have only choice in action and never in the results”. You can only choose how to act but never can choose the result you are going to get. Let us illustrate with an example. Let us say I have a big stone in my hand. I have a choice – I can throw that stone to the left side, to the right, throw up and pray it will not fall on my head, or throw in the back or just not throw anywhere at all. These are the choices I have. However, once I perform an action – say throw the stone up, I cannot determine its trajectory. I can pray the Lord to freeze the stone hanging in the air so that it would not fall on my baldhead. That prayer is also a course of action that I can choose to make. It may or may not give the desired result. The trajectory of the stone, however, is determined by the gravitational force, Newton’s laws of action and frictional forces, etc. I cannot mend or amend those laws to suite the results that I want, since I am not the author of those laws. They are part of the creation and Lord is the author of these laws that dictate the result of my action. Hence, Krishna says ‘you have only a choice in the action, but never in the result. The results are given by Me since I am the author of these laws. (Hence Lord is called karma phala data, giver of the fruits of action). You have to take whatever the result that comes’. I can demand or pray the Lord to change the Newton’s laws, at least once for my sake, since I have been very devoted Bhakta all my life. However, Krishna says; *Samo2ham sarva bhuteshu name dveshyo2ati na priyam* | - I am impartial to every body, I have no liking for any one nor hatred for any one. Whether one prays or not, whether one is a devotee or even non-believer, Krishna is impartial. Just as gravitational forces act impartially whether I believe in it or not whether I pray it four times a day or not. My intelligence is how to make use of these laws to my advantage. Hence Krishna says: *ye bhajantitu maa bhaktyaa mayi te teshu chaapyaham* – whoever worships me with devotion they are with me and I am also with them – Those who understand the laws of nature and operate correctly they are in compatible with me and I also bless them appropriately. Therefore, I have no choice than to learn to accept the results as given by the laws of nature. In the 18th, Ch. Krishna gives more details of all the factors that enter in formulating the results of an action.

Having a stone in my hand for me to choose the course of action is my praarabda and what kind of action I do with the stone that I have in my hand is my purushhaartha. Further, after I receive the results, what I do next with the results I have and the next set of choices I have will determine my next course of action. Hence I am at cross roads all the time, where I have to choose – to do, not to do or do it another way. Swami Chinmayanandaji puts this beautifully – ‘What I have is praarabda and what I do with what I have is purushhaartha’.

If the result is not meeting my expectation, then by observing the action and the result, I can deduce how the laws of nature act and devise the next course of action that is more conducive to meet my expectations. There also, I have only choice in the action. If an action is performed, you can try to alter the results of the previous action by performing another action – that is called praayaschitta karma. There again the choice in the action is only ours but not in the results.

Another way of looking at this law of action is that I can only act in the present. Past is gone and there is nothing I can do about it. I can sit down and cry about it but that crying is also my present action. The future has not yet come for me to act. I can plan for the future, but that planning is also a present action. Hence, I can act only in the present. The results of an action follow the action and not precede. Thus, results are future to the action. I cannot do anything about the future. Therefore, I have no control on the results, maa phaleshhu kadaachana.

As a digression, an interesting point to note is that I can act only in the present and I can enjoy only in the present. In fact, I can live only in the present. Present only is given to me in a silver plate for me to act and to enjoy. Past always remains past and future is always in future, while I live only in the present. Unfortunately, we refuse to live in the present. We live either in the past (regrets of the past) or in the future (anxiety about the future) and not in the present. When someone asks 'who are you?' – the answer, giving one's Biodata, is always about the past or future but nothing about the present. On the other hand, a sage or wise man lives in the present. Interestingly, we cannot even define that present also. Present is a thin imaginary gap where the past meets the future. I can subdivide that gap as small as possible, microseconds, nano seconds, pico seconds, etc. Ultimately, the concept of time itself evaporates. What remains in the present is only my presence, which is beyond any concept of time. The movement of that imaginary line creates the concept of time, which is only imaginary. Actually, the concept of space and time arises in me only, and it is folded when I go deep sleep state.

Efficiency in action:

Efficiency is different from proficiency. A doctor may be most proficient surgeon in the world, yet his efficiency goes down the drain if the patient on the operating table is his own beloved son. The attachment makes his intellect blind and makes him inefficient. Arjuna had the same problem. Hence, perform the action without any attachment for the fruits of the action. There are three channels through which our energy gets dissipated while performing an action. One is the regrets of the past, second is the excitement while acting in the present and the third is the anxiety about the future. I can optimize my energy in the action and perform to my best by arresting all three channels of energy leak. I will be most efficient in my action and that happens when I perform the action as an offering to the Lord. Even though Lord provides the results impartially whether I offer or not, but recognizing His role and offering the action itself as a prayer, I ensure that I perform the action to the best that I can. Secondly, Krishna says if it done in the spirit (for yagna) then the action will not bind us.

Right Choice of action:

The questioner asked, since I have no choice but to choose, what should be the right choice of action, or what should guide my choice of action. Since what I have is prarabha and what I do with what I have purusharthas, I should know what is right purusharthas that determines my right choice of action. The scriptures provide the primary guidelines. The four purusharthas that scripture provides is dharma, artha, kaama and moksha. Artha and karma, earning wealth and fulfilling the desires are bounded first by dharma and with a goal in moksha. What is my dharma? We have discussed this aspect before in terms of what is my swadharma. We can give a simple rule to guide what is the right course of action.

Whatever I expect others to do to me, I should do that to others. Whatever I expect others not to do to me, I should not do to others. This is a basic ethical and intelligent living and dharma for humanity itself (animals do not need dharma – they have no choice but to live by dharma). For example, I want others to be good to me, treat me kindly, compassionate towards me, forgive my mistakes, help me when I am in need, etc. Then I have to be good to them, treat them kindly, compassionate towards them, forgive their mistakes, help them when they are in need; these become my dharma. Similarly, I expect others not to lie to me, not to steal my property, not to hurt me, not to step over me for their needs, etc then I should not do those to others. One need not be religious to follow these simple ethical principles. By following, these ethical principles my mind gets purified and brings in healthy attitude in life.

The next level of dharma is to follow the sanaatana dharma what is wrongly translated as Hinduism. It is not an 'ism' but a way of life to appreciate my role in the creation. That involves the panca bhuuta yagnas to appreciate my inheritance in this earth. I am born in a culture and tradition that is centered on the moksha as the eternal goal of life. Every art – dance, music etc– all centered on guiding me towards higher values of life. I have to begin to recognize that I am a full time devotee as we discussed before. Performing the action as a prayer to the Lord becomes my attitude in the action. Every act that emanates from me becomes a devoted action, whether it is in the temple or outside the temple, since I recognize that Lord is everywhere and in every set-up. adhaarmic choices of action, I would not even entertain, since those will hurt me more than they will hurt others. Whatever I offer to the Lord has to be immaculately pure and noble and to the best that I could do since I am offering to the Lord of the entire universe. That is what devotion calls for and the choice of action is dictated by those values. Krishna gives an exhaustive details of the values that one should follow in several chapters of Gita if I want to purify myself, and right course of action that I should do and food that I should eat etc in the 18th Ch.

How do I know that particular action is dhaarmic action or not? This is the problem with Arjuna also? I donot know what is my dharma – Hay Krishna I am your student, please teach me. I will follow whatever you instruct me – was the outcry of Arjuna. First by education I learn what is right and what is wrong. Education from parents, from teachers and from noble persons, I learn what is the right choice of action. Scriptures teach us what is the right course of action. Ultimately, Guru teaches us what is the right course of action, provided one becomes a disciple just as Arjuna did. If none of these available, just surrender to the Lord and do what you think is the right course of action taking it as Lord's dictate. Know that wherever dharma is Lord is and wherever Lord is dharma is.

As long as I have the notion that I am doer (kartRitva bhaava), I have to do my best in any action that I undertake in the spirit of yagna. As long as I have a feeling that I am the doer, the results belong to me along with the associated impressions or vasanaas-s. When I do the action in the attitude of yagna, then the results are neutralized since I accept the results as prasaadam. My attitude is only service and results are not the motivating force. Hence, Krishna advises in the sloka do not let fruits of the action motivate your action. More than that, if my vision is in the results, my mind is already in the future since results are future to the action. Therefore, the mind is not available for the action that is being done in the present. I have to engage all the equipments that I have – body, mind and intellect- completely and fully in the action for it to become a devoted action in the spirit of yagna. In addition, inaction is not the choice either.

Therefore, one has to be participant in the wheel of action. There are some exceptions and that we will discuss in the next post.