

Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 21, Number 1 - January 14, 2011

Happy New Year! Happy Sankranti!



Welcoming 2011: Inauguration of Gurudev's Padukas and New Year Puja in Virginia

IN THIS ISSUE

Events & Library

- Events and Links
- News Briefs
- Flyers
- Event Report – Jnana Yajna on Bhakti Yoga
- Event Report – Celebration at Frederick
- Event Report and Photos – Grand Magic Show and Annual Banquet

Bala Vihar

- Makara Sankranti – Apurva Raghu
- Hindi Articles - Silver Spring Hindi Language Class
- Winter Youth Camp with Acharya Vivekji – Keshav Kowtha
- Class Summaries on Gita – Silver Spring Chinmayam

Class

CHYK – Chinmaya Yuva Kendra

- CHYK Chinmayam Connection and TGIF Socials – Veena Meer

Members and Friends

- The Power to Move You – Urmila Dholakia
- Silence and the Power of Thought – Shashikala Duraiswami
- Quest for Perfection – Sitaram Kowtha

Vedantic Thoughts

- Series: Brief Introduction to Gita: Ch 14– Nilkanth Bhatt
- Series: On the Concept of Creation– Acharya Dr. K Sadananda

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

- January 17, Monday – Martin Luther King Birthday – Youth Seva day at Chinmayam – Sandwich for the Homeless
- March - MahaShivaratri Puja at Chinmayam

Study Groups

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

Bookstore/Library

- Please contact Mr Vijay Singh by email at publications@chinmayadc.org to order any 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

Next Issue

- Articles for the next regular bi-monthly issue – March 2011, are due by February 28th, 2011
- Email submissions to smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Submission instructions at www.chinmayadc.org, Smrithi link, “Information on publishing in Smrithi”

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)

Sitaram Kowtha, Raju Chidambaram, Acharya Vilasiniji, Acharyas, Chapter Coordinators and Teachers. & BV students - Vishnupriya Krishnan, Asmi Panigrabi, Atman Panigrabi, Harsha Neerchal and Srikanth Kowtha

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



Camps at Chinmaya Vibhooti in 2010

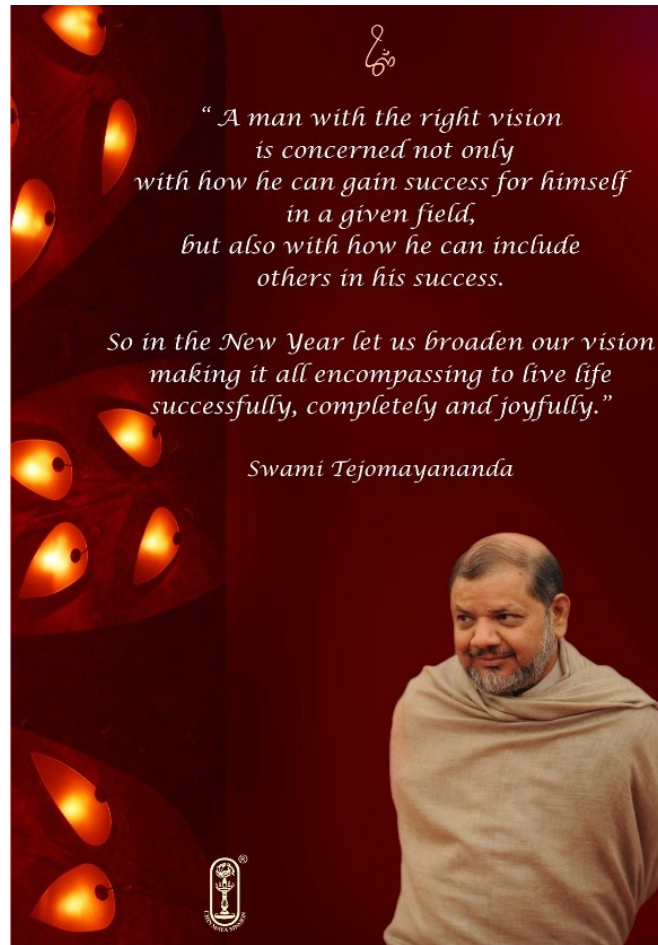
Bhagawat Saptah in Hindi

by Swami Abhedananda

Dates: 4th to 11th February 2011

Highlights:

- The unique opportunity of listening to the complete Bhagawat in Hindi in 7 days
- Shri Krishna Janma Mahotsav
- A programme by Chinmaya Naada Bindu



CMWRC Events Held

- Grand Magic Show and Annual Banquet was held at Oakton High School in Vienna VA on December 5, 2010. The sold-out event raised more than \$400K in pledges and donations towards Chinmaya somnath project.
- Winter Youth Camp for High School children by Acharya Vivekji of Niagara Falls, Canada was held at Chinmayam from December 27th through 31st, 2010.
- Jnana Yajna on Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 12 (Bhakti Yoga) by Puja Swami Dheeranandaji was held in Dulles VA from December 27 – 31. (See article in this issue by Ram Nayak). Audio recordings of the discourse are available for download – see 'Audio' link at the www.chinmayadc.org website. DVDs of the discourses will be available at the bookstore for \$25.00.
- New Year's Day Puja was held in Dulles VA. Puja Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji's paduka were inaugurated for the upcoming Chinmaya Somnath center, during this event.

Chinmaya Somnath Project

You can follow the progress on Chinmaya Somnath project – new center in Northern Virginia at www.chinmayadc.org/ChinmayaSomnath/chinmaya_somnath.htm

The page is continually updated to show progress and designs. Please review the fund raising appeal and use the pledge form, available for your convenience at the site, to support this important CMWRC initiative.

Chinmaya West Newsletter

Be sure to read the January 2011 newsletter from Chinmaya Mission West.

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

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



"CHINMAYA SOMNATH"

-- Phase-1 Construction Contribution (Tax-Deductible) Pledge Form --

From:

Mr. /Mrs. / Miss : _____

Date: _____

To:

The Treasurer,
Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center
46 Norwood Road,
Silver Spring, MD 20905



I/we Mr/Mrs/Miss _____ wish to pledge/pay my/our tax-deductible contribution toward the construction costs of Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center's "Chinmaya Somnath" building to be built at 4300 Pleasant Valley Road, Chantilly, Virginia, as indicated below.

I/we understand that this contribution is in addition to my/our annual membership contribution.

<input type="checkbox"/>	\$30.00 per month*	For two / three / five years	For a Total of \$ _____ per year
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$50.00 per month*	For two / three / five years	For a Total of \$ _____ per year
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$100.00 per month*	For two / three / five years	For a Total of \$ _____ per year
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$200.00 per month*	For two / three / five years	For a Total of \$ _____ per year
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____ per month*	For _____ years	For a Total of \$ _____ per year
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____	Lump sum payment	Enclosed Check# _____ Dated _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____	Pledge	Payment will be mailed by date: _____

* BANK DEBIT AUTHORIZATION

I hereby authorize CMWRC to initiate debit entries for the amount of \$ _____ every month for a period of _____ years, starting from _____ 20____, till _____ 20____ to my Checking account indicated below for credit to CMWRC's account with the Washington First Bank or such other bank as CMWRC may deem appropriate. I will notify CMWRC immediately if there is any change to my Bank information.

Name of Bank: _____

Transit/ABA Number. _____ Account Number: _____

Note: Please attach one of your checks, marked "VOID," for verification of bank particulars.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____ Email: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____ Email: _____

Home Phone: _____ Mobile Phone # : _____

*** Please mail this form to the address above and mark to "ATTN: Treasurer. Make Checks payable to "CMWRC" ***

"Chinmaya Somnath"

~~~~~ Phase-1 Construction Contribution (Tax-Deductible) Pledge Form ~~~~~

## Announcements

Weekly Discourse by Swami Dheeranandaji on “Drig Drisya Viveka”

Text: Drig Drishya Viveka (Insight into the Nature of Seer & Seen).

Day: Thursdays from September 16, 2010.

Time: 7:45 pm to 9 pm.

Place: Kailas Niwas 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905.

### **Vedanta Dhara – Regular Discourse by Acharya Anantji at Dulles VA**

Topic: Isavaya Upanishad. Starts Sep 18. Held 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month at 9:30 AM

See attached flyer for more details

### **Gita Chanting 2010-2011**

Registration is now underway for Gita Chanting Competition, to be held on April 30, 2011 at CMWRC chapters. This year, the chanting is on Chapter 12 of the Gita – Bhakti Yoga. Please review Sri Nilkanth Bhatt's summary on Chapter 12 in September 2010 issue. Also, please review Acharya Sadanandaji's article on Bhakthi Yoga in the July 2010 issue. Audio discourses of Puja Swami Dheeranandaji's Jnana Yajna in December on Chapter 12 are available at the website, and DVDs will be available at the bookstore for a nominal \$25.00. Registration fee is \$30.00 per participant. Study materials – book and audio CD will be provided upon registration. Register online at [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org), 2011 Gita Chanting Registration link.

### **TGIF- Thank Gurudev It's Friday Socials**

TGIF socials are held on Friday evenings for CHYK and Chinmayam students/parents. TGIFs are get-togethers hosted by a CMWRC family. The agenda is simple: free-form discussions, mentorship time, potluck dinner, and fun activity or hangout time. While Chinmayam kids and CHYK hang out, parents have their fun. TGIFs will be held each month, alternating between Maryland and Virginia.

*This Month's TGIF in Maryland:* Friday, January 28 2011 @ 6:30 PM to around 10 PM at the Kowtha's (410.531.9923) in Clarksville, MD. Chinmayam (Grades 10-12), CHYK and parents are invited to participate. *AGENDA:* While students discuss, parents will enjoy karaoke! To start the new year right, the topics of the short discussion will be S.M.A.R.T goal-setting and time management, topped off with the question “Why may it be wrong to not be effective with our time?” Chinmayam students will also meet, exchange contact information, and talk with their assigned CHYK mentor. The rest of the evening will be purely fun, social time for parents and students alike. Bring your favorite ideas for group games.

### **Upcoming TGIFs (All TGIFs start at 6:30 PM and end around 10 PM)**

Friday, February 11th in Virginia

Friday, March 25th in Maryland

Friday, April 29th in Virginia

Friday, May 27th in Maryland

Friday, June 24th in Virginia

Contact: Email [chinmayamTGIF@gmail.com](mailto:chinmayamTGIF@gmail.com) and/or call Abdulla Meer at (240) 381-1984 to RSVP or for further information, or with any questions, comments or concerns.

---

# Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center

## 2011 GITA CHANTING COMPETITION

### INVITES ONE & ALL TO PARTICIPATE

*Let us understand the grand vision behind the seemingly simple program. Chanting initially introduces one to the world renowned Bhagavad Gita. Naturally this leads to the study of the text, resulting in the gain of the knowledge revealed therein. Knowledge translated into action becomes a way of living one's life successfully and joyously.*

**When:**

Saturday, April 30th 2011

**Where:**

Chinmayam - Silver Spring Md  
Frederick MD  
Dulles VA

**Who Can Participate:**

- Children from Grades Pre-K to Grade 12
- Youth, Chinmaya Yuva Kendra Members
- Adults

**What:**

Bhagvad Gita - CHAPTER XII

**Study Materials:**

Practice CDs and booklets will be provided upon registration

**Judging Criteria:**

Sanskrit Chanting of verses in order  
with proper pronunciation, memorization & presentation

**How to Participate:**

Please register and submit your form and fees of \$30 online at  
[www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org)



*For More Information*

Visit Chinmaya Mission DC Area Chapter websites

[www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org), [www.chinmayava.org](http://www.chinmayava.org),  
[www.chinmayadulles.org](http://www.chinmayadulles.org), [www.chinmayafrederick.org](http://www.chinmayafrederick.org)

---





## CHINMAYA MISSION WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

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

### Vedanta Dhara

By  
Acharya Anant Sarma

#### TIME

9:30 AM—10:30 AM  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday's of  
every month  
Starts September 18, 2010

#### LOCATION

Vibha and Vinod Kulkarni  
25467 Gimbel Drive  
South Riding, VA 20152

#### CONTACT US

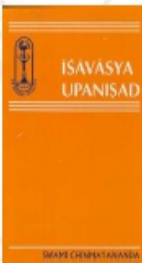
Phone  
703 327 6776

E-mail  
[vibhakulkarni@hotmail.com](mailto:vibhakulkarni@hotmail.com)  
[vish.ramabhatta@gmail.com](mailto:vish.ramabhatta@gmail.com)



Yahoo! Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vedantadhara/>



Isavasya Upanishad derives its title from the opening words "Isa and vasya", "God-covered." Isavasya forms the closing chapter of the Shukla-Yajur-Veda.

The use of Isa (Lord) – a more personal name of the Supreme Being than Brahman, Atman or Self, the names usually found in the Upanishads – is the uniqueness of this Upanishad.

**Oneness of the Soul and God, and the value of both faith and works as means of ultimate attainment are the leading themes of this Upanishad.** The general teaching of the Upanishads is that works alone, even the highest, can bring only temporary happiness and must inevitably bind a man unless through them he gains knowledge of his real Self. To help him acquire this knowledge is the aim of this and all Upanishads.

Vedanta Dhara is a bi-weekly event that is an extension of the e-Vedanta classes that Acharya Anantiji has been taking and plans to begin with Isavasya Upanishad and continue on to the other upanishads interspersed with prakarana-granthas such as Panchadashi in order to take students deeper into Vedantic expositions.



Acharya Anant Sarma was initiated as an Acharya of Chinmaya Mission after completing the Mission's two-year, residential Vedanta course at 'Sandeepany Sadhanalaya' Mumbai, in 2007. He was then posted to the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC).

When he moved to the Washington DC area in 1989, he came under the tutelage of our Pujya Swami Dheerananda who inspired him to undertake serious study of Vedanta in Sandeepany under Pujya Gururji Swami Tejomayananda. Anantiji now shares this scriptural knowledge with the members in the Greater Washington Metropolitan area.

Presently, Anantiji serves as the resident Acharya of CMWRC's Dulles (Virginia) chapter. He also conducts Vedanta classes in Frederick and Salisbury in Maryland, as well as Ashburn and Fairfax in Virginia. Anantiji, in the past 2+ years, has been active in various forums taking on texts such as Bhaja Govindam, Atma Bodha, Upadesa Sara, Isavasya, Vishnu Sahasranama, Bhagavad Gita and Self Unfoldment.

**Please register by sending an email to [vish.ramabhatta@gmail.com](mailto:vish.ramabhatta@gmail.com). This is mainly intended for planning and communication purposes**



# CHINMAYA MAHASAMADHI FAMILY CAMP 2011

Chinmaya Mission Chicago

Chinmaya Mission Northwest Indiana

## Mind and Beyond: The Gītā Way



Discourses on  
*Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*  
Chapter IX  
by

His Holiness  
**Swami Tejomayananda**  
Head of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide

**July 29 - August 3, 2011**

### Camp Highlights

- Additional Discourses: *Jñāna Sāra* by Swami Shantananda
- Bala Vihar Classes for Children • Cultural Program • Recreation: Golf, Mini-Golf, Tennis, Swimming
- Yuva Kendra (CHYK) Program for College Students and Young Professionals • Vegetarian Meals
- *Upanayanam Ceremony* in Holy presence of Swami Tejomayananda — website for details

### Camp Fees

(Rates Effective until March 31, 2011)

Double Occupancy: \$700/person

Children: \$275/child

CHYK: \$475/person (Quad)

### Contacts

Ach. Shanker Pillai (630) 789-6607

Rajul Bhalala (847) 302-2383

Padmini Makam (219) 924-7268

For Camp Details and Registration go to: [www.chinmayamahasamadhi.com](http://www.chinmayamahasamadhi.com)

E-mail: [info@chinmayamahasamadhi.com](mailto:info@chinmayamahasamadhi.com)



### Camp Venue

**Hilton**  
**Indian Lakes Resort**  
250 W. Schick Road  
Bloomington • IL 60108



## Jnana Yajna by Pujya Swami Dheerananda and New Year Guru Paduka Puja

*Ram Nayak*

The Virginia family was fortunate to benefit from a Jnana Yajna by Swami Dheerananda from Dec. 27, 2010 through Jan 1, 2011. The theme for the yajna was the Bhagavad Geeta Chapter 12 and the venue was the Dulles Multi-purpose Community Center that is also home to the Chinmaya Dulles Chapter.

Each evening, before the discourse, the children lead the group chanting of Bhagavad Geeta Dhyanam and Geeta Chapter 12. Some of the children had already learnt it during the 2010 Summer camp with Swamiji. The children were supervised by sevaks with different activities like learning to chant Chapter 12, art activities and, of course, some movie time.



Swamiji, with his gift words, enthralled the audience with clearly imparting the knowledge within this chapter with wonderful examples from our daily lives.

Later on during the week Swamiji noticed that some of the children were also sitting during the talk and on the last day, he let the children stay back. Swamiji then changed his talk extempore to cater to his younger audience and had them in peals of laughter as well as making them understand the import of this talk.

The recordings of Swamiji's talks are posted on CMWRC website. DVDs of the talk will also be available for purchase.



## New Year 2011 and Guru Paduka Puja

2011 was welcomed with the whole congregation being fortunate to be a part of the Guru Paduka Puja.

The puja started with a procession to bring Gurudev's paduka's to the Main hall. The Cultural team made a makeshift elephant to give as close as possible authentic touch to the procession.



Once the padukas were brought to the altar, the puja was performed by the yajamans with the children leading the chanting. They chanted Guru Paduka Stotram, Chinmaya Ashtothara, Vishnu Sahasranama Namavali and Lakshmi Ashtothara. The puja concluded with the Chinmaya Aarati.

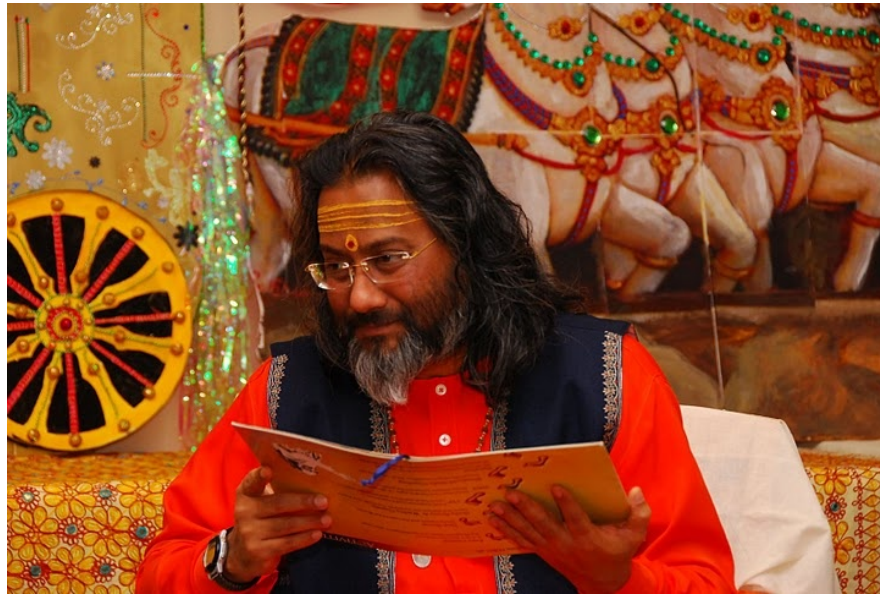




Our Acharyas addressed the gathering on this auspicious occasion. Swamiji reiterated the essence of Chapter 12 which he had taught the children during 2010 Summer camp. Swamiji stressed upon us the “My Ten Values” and how to practice it.

Acharya Anantji stressed the importance of the Guru and Guru Paduka worship. He mentioned that we at CMWRC and the new center, Chinmaya Somnath, are very fortunate that we have Gurudev’s padukas. When a long time Chinmaya member, Rajanji, in India heard about our new Center, he donated Gurudev’s Padukas. Rajanji wanted more people to benefit from these rare Gurudev’s padukas.

Acharya Vivekji, who had come to conduct a winter youth camp, was also present. He mentioned that God should be at the center of everything we do and now Gurudev's padukas will be at the center of Chinmaya Somnath. He noted that we at CMWRC are very fortunate to end one year with a wonderful satsang and herald in the New Year with Puja, with this year being special with Guru paduka puja.



## Celebrations at Frederick

*submitted by Devi Ramaseshan*

This winter Chinmaya Mission, Frederick Chapter celebrated Gita Jayanthi and Guru Remembrance Day. The Jayanthi celebration commenced with the beautiful chanting of verses from Bhakti Yoga of Bhagavad Gita by Tapovanam students. The students also gave the meaning of the chanted slokas very neatly and nicely. This was followed by the recitation of the same chapter by a large group of adults and students, who plan to participate in the Gita chanting competition.

Our scriptures always extol devotion towards Guru. Traditionally, we express thanks and gratitude to our teachers. Keeping Guru Bhakti in mind, Bala Vihar students showered praises and thanks to their teachers. The students also highlighted the important role Bala Vihar classes and Chinmaya Mission has played in shaping their values. They were in praise of the humorous stories told by Vijay Kumarji during common time. Furthermore, the adults conveyed their gratitude to Vijay Kumarji for sharing his spiritual knowledge and his experiences with Gurudev Chinmayananda. The program concluded by singing Gita Arati.

**- Devi Ramaseshan**  
**Sevak, Frederick Chapter**

*Below are examples of Gita interpretation by Tapovanam students, Frederick Chapter.*

*Advesta Sarva Bhuthaa-nam Maitrah Karuna eva Cha  
Nirmamo Nirahan-karaha Sama Duhkha Sukhah Ksami*

Sloka number 13 in Gita Chapter 12 talks about the perfect devotee in the eyes of Lord Krishna. This shloka describes a person that is kind to everyone and indifferent to emotion. In my opinion, this would mean that this perfect devotee would have no enemies, but, if so, they would not even hate their enemies. This would make fighting quite difficult. Arjuna experienced this when he had to face his own relatives in war. As for this second part of the shloka, being indifferent to emotion is also quite a feat. Even in anger and sorrow, a person would still think as if they were happy. Being able to do this is easier said than done. For me, being a perfect devotee would involve years of training oneself to be a certain way. For all of us, we have many of the qualities described, but not all of them. We may not be perfect, but we should all strive for perfection in our everyday life.

**- Smaraki Dash**



*Santustah Satatam Yogi Ya-tay-ma Dr-dha Niscayah,  
Mayyar-pita Mano Buddhih, Yo Madbhaktah Sa Me Priyah*

In the words of Lord Krishna, in verse 14 of Gita Chapter 12, a true devotee is one who worships me with love while being ever-content with high integrity and moral purity, pure minded with a true possession of concentration during meditation, containing moral purity and a vast intellect focused on me without wandering thoughts or distraction. With no attachment to material objects causing a break in thought and unwavering faith, such a devotee is very dear to me.

**- Anmol Tewari**

*Anapeksah Suchir Daksha Udaasino Gata Vyathaha  
Sarvaa-rambha Pari Tyagi Yo Madbhaktah Sa Me Priyah*

In this verse 16 in Gita Chapter 12, I believe that Lord Sri Krishna says that a true devotee is he who is pure minded, alert, unconcerned in the others' actions and he who is untroubled by others. Such people are very dear to Krishna. For example Hanuman had a task to find Sita Devi for Lord Sri Ram. He went through many difficulties with a pure, unconcerned, untroubled and alert mind with only a goal to find Sita Devi. And in between this mission Hanuman did not take a rest. He persevered to find Sita Devi. This shows that he is selfless and that he is dedicated to do his work. In addition when Hanuman flies back from Lanka he did not take any credit for what he had done. He did it with all his devotion to Lord Sri Ram. In conclusion, we all should do our services like Hanuman so that we become the most favorite devotee of the Lord.

**- Smruti Hariprakash**

# The Grand Magic Show and Banquet Dinner – The CMWRC Annual Fund-Raiser

*Submitted by Vinod Kulkarni*

On the evening of December 4<sup>th</sup> 2010, the families of Chinmaya Mission members and well wishers, most in their beautiful colorful Indian dresses, started gathering in Oakton High School in Vienna, VA for the Grand Magic Show and Banquet Dinner. As they came in, they were treated with awesome appetizers, masala tea and mango lassi before getting in the auditorium. Soon, the large auditorium was filled to capacity. With about 1100 people in attendance it was the largest event ever organized by the CMWRC.

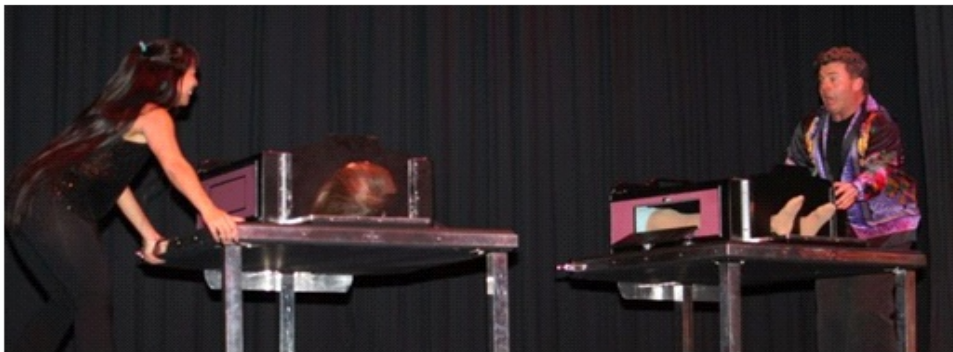
As the program started, people saw the huge stage filled with children, some as young as 5 years old.



And what a joy it was to watch these children with folded hands chanting the shlokas for invocation! The children from Shloka Class in Dulles and Summer Camp in

Maryland and Virginia participated in invocation.

And then the Grand Magic Show that everyone was waiting for started. Jeff Parmer, the



Hollywood celebrity magician had specially been invited to perform his magic and dazzle the audience. Children as well as adults thoroughly enjoyed his show and were hypnotized by Jeff's magic.

Children were so thrilled and excited to participate in the magic, every time Jeff looked for a



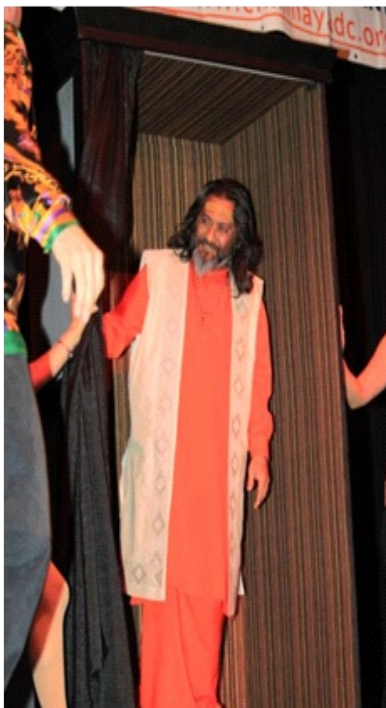
volunteer to participate in the magic, all the hands would go up!

The magic show was done in two parts. During the break, a rapid donation drive received a very good response from

donors. After that, many members came forward to take blessings from Swamiji and Acharyas of CMWRC and offered their Gurudakshina.

By donating generously, the members and well wishers of Chinmaya Mission wholeheartedly supported the project to construct Chinmaya Somnath, a new center in Northern Virginia.

Jeff was not performing his usual magic show that evening. He had specially created some of the magic tricks for Chinmaya Mission.



During the magic show, Jeff invited our beloved Swamiji, Pujya Swami Dheerananda on the stage. He requested Pujya Swamiji to get in a magical box. Then Jeff uttered his magic “mantras” as the box was spun. And lo and behold! After the box stopped, out came Swamiji but looking like a 20 year old Swami. Fortunately, Jeff remembered his mantras to revert the process and our Swamiji came back after spinning the magical box again.

For another trick, he had sheets written with “Maya”, “Samskriti” and “Seva”. He put all those sheets in an empty container and performed his “Maya”. Out came a sheet with logo of Chinmaya Mission!



The audience, especially children, wished the magic show went on for some more time, but the banquet dinner with mouth watering menu of entrees was awaiting them.

This was the first year the CMWRC organized the annual banquet dinner with children and parents together. The children had a special kids menu, but most chose to enjoy the delicious food for the adults and combine it with items from kids menu. Everyone enjoyed and praised the exquisite food.



This was the first year the CMWRC organized the annual banquet dinner with children and parents together. The children had a special kids menu, but most chose to enjoy the delicious food for the adults and combine

it with items from kids menu. Everyone enjoyed and praised the exquisite food.





During the dinner, Jeff Parmer went around the banquet hall and entertained the kids and adults with his magic tricks. He also involved Swamiji in some of these tricks.

Everyone who attended the event commended the organizers for making it such a grand event. The

Grand Magic Show and Banquet Dinner event was characterized by many firsts and superlatives. It was the largest ever event organized by CMWRC. This was the first year the tickets were also sold with a new online system, the first year the CMWRC printed a souvenir book for the banquet, the first time large sponsorships were collected for the event, the first year the Fundraising Committee reached out to non-members for ticket sales through web sites such as Sulekha and events such as Diwali Mela and the first year Annapurna team arranged banquet dinner for such a large event.

The event of such a magnitude would not have been successful without tremendous effort of the dedicated volunteers who made it happen. The Grand Magic Show team, along with members of the Fund Raising Committee started planning for the event 5 months before the event. For 3 months, the team used to have conference calls that lasted more than 2 hours every Tuesday and Thursday. More than 100 dedicated and selfless sevaks helped in executing this event from concept to fruition. There were many challenges and many doubts along the way, but the sevaks just did not settle for less. They knew that Pujya Gurudev's blessings were behind them and challenges could be overcome. And with God's grace, all the efforts of sevaks were well rewarded with the sold out show and appreciation from all the people in attendance for organizing such a fantastic event.

The Chinmaya Mission members and well wishers gathered that evening were happy to see that their goal of Chinmaya Somnath was coming one step closer.

With about \$200,000 raised from ticket sales, sponsorships and donations and another \$200,000 in pledges, it was certainly one BIG step!

Hari OM!

## Grand Magic Show and Annual Banquet Dinner

*Photos by Srini Pemmaraju*

















# Makara Sankranthi

*Apurva Raghu*

*Frederick Chapter*

India is a land where agriculture plays an important role. Therefore the lifestyles and festivals of India's people are linked to it. One of these festivals is called Makara Sankranti/Pongal. Sankranthi is celebrated throughout India with different names. In the Indian states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh it is celebrated for four days and in Tamil Nadu it is celebrated for three days and is called as Pongal.

## When is Makara Sankranthi?

Makara Sankranthi/Pongal marks the end of winter and beginning of spring throughout the northern hemisphere. Makara Sankranti is the day the sun enters the Tropic of Capricorn. Makara means Capricorn and Sankranthi stands for transition. Every year it is celebrated on January 14<sup>th</sup>. For the next six months from Sankranti the days are considered to be longer and warmer. On this festival farmers worship the sun god, rain god, and the farm animals, as they are very important for agriculture and is a form of expressing gratitude to nature.

## The Festival

On the first day of the festival, also known as Boghi, people worship the sun god and the earth. The dish Pongal is made by boiling rice with milk. The second day is called Sankranti/Pongal, which is the most important day. People worship Surya, the Sun God and his companions, Chaya and Samgnya. The old articles are thrown into fire and people have an oil massage and wear new clothes. The third day of the festival is called the Kanuma/Mattu Pongal, it is on this day Lord Krishna lifted the Mountain Govardhan to save the farmers and people of Gokulam. Cattle are bathed and dressed beautifully and fed Pongal. The last day is called Thiruvalluvar Pongal, people visit family and friends.

## Common traditions and Customs

On Makara Sankranthi/Pongal Day, people clean the house and wear new clothing. Women and young girls wear a lehanga or half-sari whereas the men and young boys are attired in a dhoti and angavastram. People also eat sugar canes and decorate houses with rangoli/kolam (the decorative designs on the floor in vibrant colors) which is made using rice flour.

Although Makara Sankranthi is celebrated with different names in different parts of India, it is always filled with pomp and fanfare and it is the festival of the Sun God!



## Hindi – Mahasamadhi Camp

*Siri Neerchal,*

*Hindi Language Bala Vihar Class, Silver Spring*

### महासमाधी कैम्प

इस साल चिन्मय महासमाधी कैम्प लास एंजलिस, केलिफोर्निया में था। कैम्प में सारे लोग रामायण के बारे में सीखते थे। मेरी अध्यापिका का नाम लक्ष्मी सुकुमार था। लक्ष्मी आंटी सेन डिएगो सेण्टर से आयी थीं। मेरी कक्षा में पच्चीस बच्चे थे। सारे कैम्प में लगभग हजार लोग थे। मेरी कक्षा में हम ने रामायण की कथा से सदाचार और नैतिक शिक्षा के बारे में सीखा। रोज हम ने स्वादिष्ट खाना खाया जैसे पूरी, ढोकला, मटर पनीर, और जलेबी। लास एंजलिस के सेण्टर का नाम चिन्मय रामेश्वरम है। चिन्मय रामेश्वरम के आचार्य स्वामी इश्वारानान्दा हैं। महासमाधी कैम्प एक बहुत बड़े होटल में था। उस होटल में तीन बिल्डिंग थीं। दो बिल्डिंगों में रहने के कमरे थे। तीसरी बिल्डिंग में कानफरेंस सेण्टर था जिसमें हमारा कैम्प हुआ। इस बिल्डिंग में चिन्मय मिशन की किताबों की दुकान भी थी। इस दुकान में बहुत सारी किताबें थी। किताबों के साथ बहुत सीडीस और डीवीडीस थे। इस दुकान का सामान बहुत अच्छा था। वहाँ स्वामी चिन्मयनन्दा के चार चित्रों को बेच रहे थे। वो चित्र बहुत सुंदर थे। रोज शाम रामायण का नाटक था। चिन्मय रामेश्वरम के बच्चे नाटक करते थे। नाटक बहुत अच्छा था। महासमाधी कैम्प में मुझको बहुत मज़ा आया।

सीरी नीर्चल

## Hindi – Lagaan – A Triumph for Truth

*Siri Neerchal, Nandini Kishore, Isha Darbari*

*Hindi Language Bala Vihar Students, Silver Spring*

### लगान - सच्चाई की जीत

लगान में भुवन और अंग्रेजों के बीच में एक क्रिकेट का खेल होता है। भुवन की टीम क्रिकेट मैच जीती क्योंकि उसने दूसरी टीम को हराने की दृढ़ निश्चय किया। भुवन की टीम इमानदार और महनती थी और कप्तान रसल की बहन ने उनकी मदद की। भुवन ने सबकी सहायता से एक अच्छी टीम बनायी। भुवन की टीम एकता से खेली। उन्होंने भगवान से प्रार्थना की और अपनी महनत से मैच जीता। इस चलचित्र में सच्चाई, महनत, और प्रार्थना की जीत हुई। भुवन की टीम के पास बल्ला, विकेट, और सही कपड़े नहीं थे। उनके पास क्रिकेट खेलने का अनुभव भी नहीं था लेकिन उन्होंने महनत से, एकता के साथ क्रिकेट खेल खेलकर अपनी टीम मजबूत बनायी। अंत में उनकी जीत हुई।

सीरी नीर्चल

नंदिनी किशोर

ईशा दरबारी



## Winter Youth Camp with Acharya Vivekji

*Keshav Kowtha*

*Tapovanam, Silver Spring*

Of the entire school year, the best time of year is definitely winter break. With Christmas and the New Year coming right after one another, many kids wait for winter break to come and deliver salvation from school. Personally, the best part is when I get home and realize that I have absolutely no homework. For the past few years, my brother Srikanth had gone to the winter camp, leaving me at home with all the video games and movies. But this year, now that I am in ninth grade and finally old enough to attend the Youth Camp, I had mixed feelings. Part of me was glad that I could spend time with my brother and cousin (who is also attending the camp), and to actually meet and talk to Vivekji for the first time. But another part of me was sad of missing my usual relaxation in winter break and was also scared that I would be left out and be friendless at camp. But when I thought further about going to camp, I decided to give it a shot.

On Monday Morning when I entered Chinmayam with my brother and my cousin, I noticed CHYKs (Chinmaya Yuva Kendra) members playing a game with the kids of the camp. However, I did not see Vivekji. Soon I learned that Vivekji was stuck in New York due to the snowstorm. But that did not stop the CHYKs from holding a great discussion. We first described what a hero was, following the theme of the camp: H.E.R.O.E.S. (**H**onesty **E**xplore **R**eflect **O**rchestrate **E**ndure **S**erve). This discussion was surprisingly fun as I expected only lectures. All of the discussions were free-form and exciting. During the week our discussion covered different parts of the acronym H.E.R.O.E.S. in depth. What I found the most inspiring of all the discussions was when Vivekji talked about how love can get rid of all of our bad tendencies. I was at first skeptical, as I did not think that love could get rid of tendencies such as procrastination. Then Vivekji explained that if you love your work than you will not procrastinate. I realized at that point that all of the discussion about H.E.R.O.E.S. made sense, because I can see how I can apply them in my own life.

The winter camp was a 4 and ½ day camp with 22 campers and few CHYK members. The first two days, the camp was lead by the CHYKs; Vivekji led the camp starting Wednesday. In the morning, we had a discussion on the H.E.R.O.E.S acronym. On Monday, we discussed heroes in general. On Tuesday and Wednesday we discussed H.E. On Thursday we discussed R.O. and on Friday we discussed E.S. Each day after the discussion we did guided meditation or yoga. The most interesting part of the day came next: Maunam.

Maunam is when a person sits quietly with their thoughts and contemplates. We could not interact with other campers, or anyone else. On the first day of camp, I had trouble with the Maunam. I could stay still with my thoughts because I felt have had done it before. But I had trouble keeping my thoughts away from food or television. It was easier to focus as the week progressed. On another day, the kids in camp were told to go walk outside for the Maunam time. It was extremely cold and uncomfortable. However, I found that it helped me focus on my thoughts. But the last day was the hardest of them all. All the kids were split up and put into different rooms. I was placed in the bathroom. 😊

After Maunam, we discussed our experiences in Maunam and meditation. After Lunch, we had a discussion about spirituality in our environment. Each day we were asked to bring in our favorite song, book, website, or news. We then looked for spirituality in the items we brought. These discussions were extremely popular as we all were surprised by the amount of spirituality in our daily lives. After this was the best part of the day: movie time. During the course of the camp we watched "The Dark Knight," "3 Idiots," and "Inception." We interpreted these movies during and also after they finished. For "The Dark Knight," we discussed the struggle the characters face, as the Joker threatened all they cared about. Our discussion about "Inception" was spent trying to fully understand the movie. And to finish off each day, the campers, led by the CHYKs, did Seva around the Chinmayam ashram.

All throughout Camp, we had fun with games, movies, and socializing. I really am glad that my parents made me go. I hope to go to camp next year and have a great time again. Thanks to Vivekji, Meera Aunty and all other Aunties and Uncles and the CHYKs who helped make this camp a success.

**Editor's Note: An excerpt on H.E.R.O.E.S from Acharya Vivekji's "E-Vichara" Dated January 10, 2011:**

E-Vichara / Electronic Reflections ( January 10, 2011 ) --- How to be a Hero

- ( Be ) **H**onest about the quality of one's personality with the focus being on one's weaknesses - most of us believe we are noble yet we live ignobly and this dishonesty with ourselves paralyzes the inclination to grow
- **E**xplore wholesome means to addressing our weaknesses - Vedanta accepts the need for some to examine the world ( pariksha lokan ) before turning within, in the same way we need to try different strategies to ' grow beyond ' our weaknesses even if we fall, even if we fail
- **R**eflect on what the Scriptures, Masters, the wise in general, advise in dealing with weaknesses - these are precious sources of knowledge whose authority is based on successful experience a.k.a. what we want
- **O**rchestrate one's resources, time and efforts to ceaselessly raise oneself - knowing the solutions to one's weaknesses is 1/2 the battle and the other 1/2 is executing the solutions thereby executing the weaknesses
- **E**ndure the felicitations and insults from society that is inevitable when one decides to change leave alone actually changes - offer the honour to the Masters whose grace alone enables any growth and offer the dishonour into the ' fire of self development ' providing more fuel to grow
- **S**erve all in all ways empowering others to be heroes as well - a true gauge of a true hero is how united with humanity he / she is, radiating light all around and inspiring the same, leading to the illumination of the whole universe

## Class Summaries

*Chinmayam Students*

*Silver Spring Session II*

**Harsha Neerchal**

**October 2, 2010**

The class began with each student independently writing a one page piece on “What is Hinduism?” More specifically, the class was asked to write on what Hinduism meant to them, and how they would explain it to another person.

Following this, we started introductory chapter of the Bhagavad Geeta, about Arjuna’s grief. The class then read/discussed:

- The Kauravas represent negative tendencies, while the Pandavas represent divine impulses. In each one of us, a constant Mahabharata war is being fought within us at all crucial moments. Usually, at these times, the negative forces in us are stronger than the positive, and because of this, we all feel the desperation of Arjuna at various points in time.
- Dhritrashtra, who was born blind, and Gandhari, who voluntarily blinded herself, represent the mind, which is born-blind to truth, and an intellect which has assumed blindness. When the two are wedded, as Dhritrashtra and Gandhari were, the negative tendencies coupled with low motives produce criminalities and sins (the Kauravas)
- In Sanskrit works, the opening stanza indicates the theme of the text, and the final part of the last stanza give the final conclusions of the text. The Geeta opens with “Dharma” and concludes with “Mama”, meaning “mine”. Thus, the Geeta discusses “Mama Dharma”, or “My Dharma”.
- Arjuna starts out eager to fight, but as he sees the members of the Kaurava army when he asks Krishna to drive his chariot between the two armies, he feels unable to fight.
- Arjuna suffers from anxiety-neurosis
- In addition to his mental confusion, Arjuna’s discrimination and morale have both been diminished

The class concluded as always with the closing prayers.



**October 10, 2010**

**Sambrum Sreenivas**

In class this week we finished up Chapter 1 of the Bhagavad Geeta called **Arjuna's Grief** and began the second chapter called **Yoga of Knowledge**.

Chapter 1 begins with everyone getting ready to fight in the war. Arjuna is initially very eager and "pumped" to fight in the war, but towards the end of the chapter, he starts to second guess the whole idea of fighting a war against other members of his family. Arjuna believes that this war is immoral, since he feels that there would be no gain/no good in killing his kin. He asks himself "What pleasure will I get from slaying my own cousins in battle?" Arjuna sees evil in the destruction of family, and believes that it would be sinful to do so, which the reason why he doesn't have a great feeling about fighting in the war.

In class, we discussed other reasons why we think Arjuna might want to back down from fighting in the war:

- Arjuna is scared to mess up his image by fighting his kin
- There is no guarantee that his side will win
- His ego got in his way
- Arjuna had the "disease" of procrastination

Therefore, we believed that Arjuna, at this point, is being dishonest with himself.

We believed that this chapter applies to our own lives when we come across difficult decision about whether to do or not do something. There could be positive or negative consequences either way, but we still have to make that decision.

Chapter 2 describes Arjuna's conversation with Lord Krishna about whether he should fight in the war or not. Arjuna is very confused at this point because he doesn't want to kill his kin or his teachers (Bhishma and Drona). Not knowing what to do, Arjuna looks to Krishna for guidance. This was a key point; at some point, even if you are not sure of the correct answer, it helps to ask for guidance from someone you trust.

Krishna doesn't exactly tell Arjuna what to do, but rather tells him what a wise person would do. Krishna says that this situation is not worthy of grief and wise people would not grieve for the living nor the dead. Krishna describes life as a cycle from childhood, to youth, to old age, and the soul passing to another body after death. He says that a self-realized person should not really be bewildered by this change. A self-realized person, according to Lord Krishna, should also perceive pleasure and pain as the same.

Relating to Arjuna's condition in these chapters, we made a list, as a class, of things that make us sad, anxious, and/or angry:

### Circumstances/Events

- SATs/ACTs
- Research Projects
- Interviews
- Physics
- Homecoming
- Monday mornings
- Performances
- Miscommunications
- Indian parents
- Relationships—starts and end (growing apart and death)

**October 17, 2010**

**Gaurav Luthria**

Hari Om!

We began the class with a review of chapter one of the Bhagavad Geeta which described the following

- We must eventually make our own choices. Others can provide us with reasoning, ideas, and suggestions, but the final decision is in our hands and we are responsible for the consequences
- Arjuna was confused and disoriented after seeing his brothers and teachers on the opposite side of the battlefield, he debated if he should really fight. This confused state of mind is very common when we have to make difficult decisions. The disorientation interferes with our goals and motives. From this example, we can learn that we cannot fulfill our duties or wishes by being confused or indecisive.
- We also discussed two metaphorical examples explaining that the mind should be controlled by the intellect
- Arjuna's five horses represent the five senses and Lord Krishna (the charioteer) symbolizes the intellect.
- In another example presented, Gandhari represents the intellect while Dhritarashtra represents the mind. To the blind king who symbolize the blind mind marries Gandhari. She out of emotionally love to her blind husband, ties a bandage on her eyes. Thus Gandhari symbolize the blind intellect following the blind mind. This blind mind and blind intellect breeds many desires.

Towards the latter half of the class we discussed the significance of Chapter 2 of the Geeta and values which one can extract from it as listed below. We discussed v47, - **You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.** what does this mean to the student? Should we not have goals of studying hard, going to college, getting a job?

- When working one should focus on the present, not on the past which is unchangeable, or the future which is uncontrollable. We read the commentary following
- If we perform work motivated by the end result, then we become distracted from our current activities. Such mental disturbances hinder our performance and success.
- Maintaining a balanced mind, in other words peace of mind, is an important aspect of success. When we lose composure, the openness of the mind gets clogged, we fail to correct mistakes derived from failures, and we cannot analyze consequences of actions.
- In addition, it is important to have a balance between failure and success. Success blossoms from failures. However, for valuable lessons to arise from failures, one must have a mind at peace. We learn not only from our experience but also from others.
- 

**October 31, 2010**

**Vishnu Rao**

Today in class we discussed the meaning of the Self in Chapter 2 of the Bhagawad Geeta. The class was split into four groups and asked to reflect on the following question: "What does the self mean to you?"

Many abstract and sometimes conflicting ideas came up. One group viewed the self as a unique individual presence that evolves over time. Another group said that the self was the consciousness that sustains life and enlightens everyone. Interestingly one group came up with an acrostic.

Soul  
Elemental  
Love and life  
Free faith



They discussed that life was made up of good and bad vasinas and that the body was just a tool that can be controlled.

In the discussion that followed an excellent example by Swami Chinmayanda was brought up by the teachers. The self is like electricity; it is only one thing, but is common to and lightens many different light bulbs.

We then read verses 62 and 63 of the Geeta.

*62. When a man think of objects, 'attachment' for them arises, from attachment 'desire' is born; from desire arises 'anger'*

*63. From anger comes 'delusion'; from delusion 'loss of memory'; from loss of memory 'the destruction of discrimination'; from destruction of discrimination to 'perishes'*

Each group was asked to come up with a scenario that illustrated this situation. Two strong examples were given:

The first related to Nazi Germany and WWI and II. During WWI Germany was humiliated by the terms of the treaty. The humiliation led to an attachment for power in the German citizens. This idea was propagated through the Nazi Party and the desire to become the most powerful nation in world was shown through the invasion of Poland . The desire to become powerful led the Nazis to become delusional and to blame their situation on the Jews, which led to destruction.

The second example was a real life experience of a student trying to get into college. The student had a dream school and put all her effort into getting into that school. In doing so she totally lost focus and did not apply to other colleges. When she did not get in, she blamed her situation on herself, the teachers for not giving her good recommendations, and the admissions office. Eventually this desire led her down the wrong path and she is not in college right now.

The example of the student led to a discussion on where does desire come from.

Several ideas were listed including:

- Society
- To maintain an image
- It ultimately comes down to the person
- To become successful and rich
- Self worth
- Delusion that there are no other options
- Human nature to look at what you don't have

We then read verses 64 – 72 and discussed attachment and goals.

The important thing that was talked about was that a person without longing is not a person without goals.

To end class the teachers gave the example of the ocean.

Many rivers and streams flow into an ocean and lose their identities. Similarly when the spiritual person proceeds through life with the only desires and actions for the betterment of the society, he or she reaches the motionless state of the ocean.

*{Editor's Note: Chinmayam children are studying the Bhagavad Gita, Chapters 1 – 9, this year}*

\* \* \*

## **CHYK-Chinmayam Connection (CCC) & Thank Gurudev It's Friday (TGIF)**

### ***Chinmaya Mission's New Student-Led Program for Chinmayam & CHYK Students***

***Veena Meer, CHYK Member and Bala Vihar Graduate***

TGIF- Thank Gurudev It's Friday- is the name of a monthly get-together in the home of a Chinmayam student, typically on the last Friday of the month, geared towards Chinmayam and Chinmaya Yuvakendra (CHYKS) students and parents. This past year, TGIF included lively discussions amongst Chinmayam students and CHYKs on college applications and preparation, tips to survive college life, relationships, time management, and relationships with parents. During a TGIF, while the students discussed, parents enjoyed Indian karaoke and made so much noise that they had to be told to keep it down. Parents enjoy these get-togethers as much as the students do. One of our highlights was a hike at Great Falls National Park, enjoying the waterfalls and nature.

Parents help out with the venue, logistics, and dinner, and the students decide their own agenda with no parental involvement. Students discuss a predetermined topic such as time management, love, relationships, college life, etc. Potluck dinner, mentorship time (CCC), and fun social time happen after the discussion. Chinmayam students and CHYKS interact in a casual, fun setting and TGIF serves as a forum for discussion and guidance on any subject of interest.

TGIF is for the Chinmayam students of the Maryland and Virginia Chinmaya Mission centers. Acharya Vivekji attends and facilitates the discussions when his schedule permits. This month in January, the TGIF will be held in Maryland, then in February it will be in Virginia. In this fashion TGIF will be alternated between Maryland and Virginia. My parents (Abdulla and Aziza Meer) and I (Veena) are the coordinators for TGIF in Maryland and the Reddy family (Pratibha) is the coordinator for Virginia. The coordinators find hosts in their respective area (Virginia or Maryland) for the TGIF get-togethers for one Friday evening of the month allocated to their area. TGIF is held on the last Friday of a month for the most part. Information on the TGIF this month (on January 28th) has been sent by email to Chinmayam students, parents, and CHYKS. Every other month, information will be emailed, and the tentative dates for upcoming TGIFs are provided below. At chinmayadc.org, click on "CHYK", and updated information on TGIFs will be available to view.

Lakshmi Kumar is a CHYK, and is the coordinator of CCC (CHYK-Chinmayam Connection, also known as the Mentorship Program) for both Maryland and Virginia. She beautifully describes the CCC program as follows:

*The CHYK Chinmayam Connection is a mentorship program designed to establish close bonds between the young adults (CHYKs) and high school students (Chinmayam students) of Chinmaya Mission. This bond serves, not only as a gateway for the high school students into Chinmaya Yuvakendra (CHYK), but also to provide the high school students with mentors who are a guiding light in the form of a friend. The CCC helps bridge the generational gap between teenagers and their parents when it comes to applying our philosophical morals and principles in our everyday encounters, trials and tribulations. Each CHYK is paired with no more than two Chinmayam students, with whom they maintain regular contact via facebook, email, phone, and in-person meetings. They meet at least every other month at a TGIF. The program is entirely voluntary, allowing Chinmayam students to request CHYKs they would like to be paired with. They keep in touch as friends, talking about their lives and struggles, and together, they work to apply the principles of Vedanta in dealing with any issues and in generating solutions to problems.*



Acharya Vivekji has been providing guidance and inspiration for TGIF and CCC, and Swami Dheeranandaji provides his support. Anil Kishoreji, the Balavihar director of the Maryland center, Vilasiniji, and numerous parents of Chinmayam students and CHYKS in the area have been very supportive of this program for the past year and student participation is growing steadily.

#### *After Chinmayam Graduation: CHYK Program*

CCC and TGIF, formerly called Satsanga Socials ("Satso"), were initiated a little less than a year ago by my family and I, and a group of fellow Chinmaya Mission graduates (CHYKS). Chinmaya Yuvakendra (CHYK) in Maryland and Virginia is headed by Ajay Ravichandran and Rasshmi Shankar. We CHYKS attended several CHYK retreats including ones in Chicago and Toronto. At the retreats, Acharya Vivekji's lectures and company, as well as the reverberating positivity of the one-hundred plus CHYKS around us, inspired us to seek Vedanta and a meaningful, happy lifestyle. We were inspired to organize our first Washington-Baltimore region CHYK retreat this past August in the Silver Spring Chinmaya Mission center, and it was a complete success, with CHYKS coming from all over the nation. As we all know, we gain more happiness when we can share our joy with others. After our siblings and other Balavihar students get their foundations laid through the Balavihar program and graduate from it, we want them to stay with Chinmaya Mission and experience being a CHYK. Graduating from Balavihar was just the beginning for us, and by engaging in the fellowship of other CHYKS afterward, that is when we began the real journey to self-discovery. We CHYKS did not know what was in store for us after graduation but we are so glad we stuck around to find out, unlike 95% of Chinmaya Mission graduates who, at least initially, leave Chinmaya Mission behind as an element of their past. In addition to periodic weekend retreats with Acharya Vivekji, CHYKS have weekly meetings every Sunday at the University of Maryland in College Park where we discuss texts like Self Unfoldment, in a casual environment. After the discussion, we often go for dinner at the campus Diner. We have periodic game nights, have informal hangouts, and are all just a positive group of friends who go through the daily joys and tribulations of college life .

together. CHYK-Chinmayam Connection (CCC) and TGIF are for Chinmayam students to get a chance to meet outside of classroom and build lasting friendships that can continue after they graduate from Balvihar and join the CHYK program.

CCC and TGIF have been making great progress. Looking forward to helping each other this year to experience fun, fellowship, and better living!

***All Chinmayam Students and CHYKs – Please use this opportunity to unwind at the end of the week in a casual setting and be a positive influence on each other.***

***All Chinmayam Parents – Please encourage your children to participate, and you are invited to come to enjoy the company of other parents. Thank you.***

Hari Om.

## **The Power to Move You**

*Mrs. Urmila Dholakia*

Without I, My, Mine  
Everthing is fine

As ego gone  
Happiness is born

Mind is pure  
Truth comes sure

Knowledge gives light  
All is right

## Silence and the Power of Thought

Shashikala Duraiswami

In today's bustling lifestyle "Silence" has become very rare and the experience of silence has indeed become a luxury. The need to remain connected with our family, friends and community has us equipped with all kinds of equipment – laptops, cellphones, facebook, twitter etc. As technology has advanced, we find ourselves adapting to it at an equally faster rate and becoming really adept at multi-tasking. In order for us to "perform" the tasks (actions) effectively we have to use and train our "mind" in the same fashion. As Swami Dheerananda ji has said many times our mind is like a "monkey" –it loves to entertain thoughts and stay ever-busy jumping from one thought to another. So even when we are not connected "physically" to the outside world, our mind enjoys being busy! Although our active lifestyle influences our mind and thoughts, the thoughts are not entirely dependent on the external world (at all times). A hermit trying to meditate sitting on the quiet Himalayas can still be prevented from achieving peace via a "noisy" mind. As such Silence can be experienced at two levels – gross (physical) and subtle. While some silence can be achieved (at both gross and subtle) by controlling our environment and lifestyle, meditation is a necessary tool towards silencing and quietening the mind.

All the scriptures give great importance to meditation; Dhyana and contemplation are other words that all work towards channeling and organizing our thoughts. As we read and reflect on the scriptures, some kind/form of meditation is required to reduce the innumerable thoughts to a few useful thoughts, and then to the One thought (e.g., *Aham Brahmasmi*), and eventually leading to Samadhi where one becomes merged with the thought. This is often compared to the thought and experience of sleep- Initially we have the thought – "I want to sleep" and eventually we experience sleep. When we are asleep there is no thought that "I am sleeping" – indeed the thought is merged in us.

Interestingly, Sleep is one of the five modifications of the mind – as described in the Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. According to the commentary by I.K Taimni in "The Science of Yoga", the five modifications (functioning) of the mind are (i) Right knowledge (ii) Wrong Knowledge (iii) Imagination (iv) Sleep and (v) memory (recollection) as follows:

६. प्रमाणविपर्ययविकल्पनिद्रास्मृतयः ।

Pramāṇa-viparyaya-vikalpa-nidrā-smṛtayah.

प्रमाण right knowledge विपर्यय wrong knowledge विकल्प fancy; imagination  
निद्रा sleep स्मृतयः (and) memory.



The author elaborates that “right & wrong knowledge comprises of all those images which are formed by some kind of direct contact through the sense organs with the outer world of objects”. He further states that “Imagination and memory comprises of all those images or modifications of mind which are produced without any kind of direct contact with the outer world. They are the result of the independent activity of the lower mind using sensuous perceptions which have been gathered before and stored in our mind. In sleep (dreamless sleep or deep sleep state) there are no mental images in the brain”. The author then asks the reader to examine their mental activity in the light of this information.

I would like to share a technique for meditation that I came upon. Recently, when sitting down for meditation I have begun a practice of observing my thoughts. Instead of trying hard to stay on a focal point and trying to bring my attention back to the focal point as my mind digressed, I categorize those thoughts in the five classes as described by Taimni. I visualize five buckets with tight lids and as the thoughts arise, I identify the bucket, drop my thought there, close the lid and then go back to the focal point. In fact, my experience with both open-eye and closed-eye meditation is that I really need only two buckets – imagination & memory. While I can set aside my planning and organizing thoughts (imaginary) to another time, I can easily discard the past thoughts (memory) as they are not always useful. Since I have started this, I find that the number of distracting thoughts has reduced in number and that I am able to hold on to the focal point with greater ease than before.

In conclusion, it is said that meditation is the road to liberation and it is only through meditation that we can reach our true inner Self. As we progress deeper in meditation, we should be able to eliminate the noise, and experience the stillness of the silence.

Lastly, I would like to share the following poem:

Watch your thoughts, they become words  
Watch your words, they become actions  
Watch your actions they become habits  
Watch your habits they become character  
Watch your character it becomes your destiny

\* \* \*

## Quest for Perfection

*Sitaram Kowtha*

We chase perfection, because we want to do the best we can in what we set out to do. However much we strive in our fields of endeavor, we may arrive, if successful, at a temporary state we think represents perfection, but soon after, we will resume chasing perfection all over again.

In major league American sports – baseball, football and basketball, all teams start out their season each year with a “perfect” record of 0 wins and 0 losses. Each team embarks on a quest for a perfect season (all wins, no losses), move into championship rounds, and ultimately, win the championship. If they do so, then they are said to have a ‘perfect’ season. It is rare for a sports team to have a perfect season; it is rarer yet, to have a perfect season year after year. Thus, a perfect season is only a temporary perfection.

Similarly, in making plans and preparations for a grand party, a hostess pays meticulous attention to every minor detail and every aspect of the party. She wants nothing less than perfection – in the invitations, decorations, entertainment, seating and food. After the party is over, the guests may compliment her for a perfect party, but she knows that she will have missed an important detail, or made seemingly small errors, that only she will be aware of. A perfect party it won't be.

Then how does one attain perfection that is not temporary? Should we give up on our quest for perfection, because it is impossible to achieve? Is mediocrity a prescription for how we should conduct ourselves in our daily lives?

Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, in his discourse on Chapter 10 of the Bhagavad Geeta, gave some hints on answers to these questions. A gardener in a beach front property, tending to a rose-bush, caught a twinkle of light from the corner of his eye. When he glanced over in the direction of the source, he noticed a dew drop reflecting the sun's morning light. He got up and turned around to look at the ocean and the sky. He caught the blinding glare of the sun's reflection from the surface of the ocean. The sun is the same, but the sunlight reflected by a dew drop was a pleasant, welcoming and refreshing sight, whereas the sunlight reflected over the vast surface of the ocean was blinding. The perfection, represented by sun, is what is being reflected, and it is the size of the dew drop and the ocean surface made different results possible – perfection expressed through limited or imperfect equipment. What we think is imperfect is really perfection reflected by ordinary things. There is also a perception problem. What is ‘perfect’ to one, may be ‘imperfect’ to another. Gurudev is asking us to search for perfection (the source) that is being reflected or expressed by things and beings around us, including us.

Vedanta teaches us that the supreme self in us is perfect, it is our equipment (body, mind and intellect) conditioned by our tendencies (Vasanas) that reflect the perfection either brilliantly or poorly, either pleasantly or glaringly, in a small way as a dew drop or in a mammoth glare of the ocean surface. Similarly, the same supreme self that is within us is also in every sentient being and insentient object around us, reflecting perfection, but limited by the composition, size and other factors associated with them. All of the sentient beings and insentient objects, including us, together form the universal nature pointing us to the perfection which is at once grand, glorious, limitless, indescribable, beautiful and astonishing. The message from the universal nature is that perfection is also within our reach. We see hints of that perfection when we visit our national parks, listen to beautiful music, learn about a great saint, marvel at an engineering feat, hear about heroism or the selfless dedicated service of ordinary men and women, and experience love from our mothers and teachers.

If perfection were not within our reach, we would not be in a quest for it. If our true nature were not perfection itself, we probably would have no thought, motivation or persistence to strive for perfection. It is the perfection ever present in us that is making us seek perfection so that our body, mind and intellect, along with our tendencies arrive at a perfect harmony with our true inner nature, the supreme self.

The quest for perfection begins with recognition that our knowledge is both incomplete and erroneous. We seek knowledge to improve upon our existing knowledge, so that we are able to pursue our endeavors with a greater degree of perfection. However, no amount of knowledge gained will make us perfect, it can only help us, with proper practice and application, arrive at a greater degree of perfection. The scriptures say that Sage Narada was a scholar in many fields of knowledge. Yet, he felt emptiness – an urge to know more. He approached his Guru for such knowledge, by which he will know everything there is to know. His Guru imparted him the knowledge of the Brahman – the supreme self. Armed with that knowledge, Sage Narada meditated on the supreme self and attained self-realization.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to cite an example to explain this. He suggested that ignorance and knowledge were two thorns. The embedded thorn is ignorance. In order to remove the embedded thorn, another thorn – knowledge is needed. With knowledge, one can remove ignorance. Once the embedded thorn is removed, the other thorn is no longer needed, similarly, once ignorance is removed, knowledge will have served its purpose. The complete removal of ignorance is the signal that one has reached self-realization, the point of perfection.

In Chapter 7 of the Gita, verse 2, Sri Krishna explains to Arjuna that he will impart supreme knowledge to him, knowing which, one will know everything there is to know. He continues in verse 3 that out of thousands of beings, only a few embark on the quest for perfection or self-realization. Of those who strive for perfection, scarcely one reaches perfection. Sri Krishna is encouraging Arjuna, thus all of us, to be on the quest for perfection. In Chapter 6 of the Gita, Sri Krishna assures us that any effort directed towards the pursuit of perfection will not be in vain.

Ch. 14 (Guna Traya Vibhaga Yoga) The Yoga of Three Gunas

*Nilkanth Bhatt, Richmond Chapter*

In this world it seems that everything has its own separate origin, and the things which are very distant or different from each other, do not have any common linkage. However we do know that present day science believes that the Universe started from a single entity at the time of the big bang. In that case, everything we see in this world, living and nonliving, has its beginning in that one single entity that existed prior to the big bang. So we are linked with each other by having the same source. The question now arises is “why things and beings are so different from each other?”

Bhagavan tells Arjuna that the all pervading “*Brahman*” is the universal womb and the all pervading “consciousness” is the seed-giving father of this universe, which brings all beings into existence. Understand that whatever forms are produced in all the wombs are in the womb of the *Brahman* created by the Universal Consciousness. The three qualities of *Sattva* (Purity), *Rajas* (Activity) and *Tamas* (Inertia) found in the *Prakriti* (manifest world) bind the inner-self of a being to its body. *Sattva* because of its nature of purity is luminous and healthy, binds by attachment to happiness and knowledge. *Rajas* because of its nature of activity creates passion, desires and attachment. It binds the embodied one to the attachment of action. *Tamas* because it is born out of ignorance deludes all beings and binds them by heedlessness, indolence and sleep.

When one quality predominates over the other two, it asserts itself as the personality of that being. When light of knowledge beams through all senses of the body, then it may be known that *Sattva* is predominant in that person. When *Rajas* is predominant in a person, he/she will experience greed, restlessness, longing, intense activity and desire to undertake more and more actions. And when indiscrimination, inertness, heedlessness and delusion arise in a person, it is to be known that *Tamas* is predominant in the person at that time.

Now whichever quality dominates a person’s life will be present at the time of the death of that person. Bhagavan says if at the time of death a person is in a *Sattvic* mood, he/she will go to the pure worlds of those who know the highest truth. On the other hand if he/she meets death when in a *Rajasik* mood, he/she will be born among those who are attached to actions. And finally those who die in a *Tamasic* mood will be born in the wombs of the deluded. We can only control which mood will be present at the time of our death by controlling our overall life so that we remain in that mood most of the time.

Now whichever quality dominates a person’s life will be present at the time of the death of that person. Bhagavan says if at the time of death a person is in a *Sattvic* mood, he/she will go to the pure worlds of those who know the highest truth .



On the other hand if he/she meets death when in a Rajasik mood, he/she will be born among those who are attached to actions. And finally those who die in a Tamasic mood will be born in the wombs of the deluded. We can only control which mood will be present at the time of our death by controlling our overall life so that we remain in that mood most of the time.

The result of good actions is Sattva and that gives rise to wisdom. The result of Rajasik actions is generally pain because they create greed, mistakes and heedlessness. Tamasic actions create ignorance due to inactivity. Those who remain in Sattva go upward in their spiritual evolution. Rajasik ones remain stagnated in their path. Tamasic go downward.

Those who recognize the fact that these bodies evolve out of these three Gunas in the Prakriti (the world of matter) must also realize that this body, due to these Gunas, performs all actions, and therefore the consciousness is beyond these three Gunas. For one who recognizes this fact for him/herself there is no cycle of birth, pain, decay and death (because those actually belong to the body only). He/she achieves immortality.

Now the questions arise, how does one rise above the Gunas? What are the characteristics of a person who has risen above the Gunas? And how will such a person act in this world?

Bhagavan says one reaches such a state where one does not long for any one particular Guna. He accepts whatever mood is present naturally. He does not hate when he feels Rajasik or Tamasic, nor does he feel proud when he is in a Sattvic mood. He accepts Tamas or Rajas when they overpower him and does not long for them when they are absent. He remains unmoved in his heart irrespective of which Guna dominates him because he knows that Gunas operate according the nature of the Prakriti.

He remains balanced in pleasure and pain, criticism and praise. He knows that the most valuable possession and most worthless possession both belong to the Prakriti. Knowing thus, honor and dishonor do not move him, he views his friends and enemies both as the manifestation of the Prakriti. He gives up all desire-prompted activities He firmly identifies with the all-pervading consciousness and becomes one with it. Because the "Self" is the abode of Brahman. The Self is immortal and immutable. The Self is our eternal Dharma and it is absolute bliss.

\* \* \*

## On the Concept of Creation – Part II

### Scriptural Inquiry Into The Creation

*Acharya Dr. K. Sadanandaji*

What is the cause for the creation is also a fundamental enquiry of all religions. That this is a creation is obvious from the fact that this is a thermodynamically well-behaved ordered system. A scientist does not invent physical laws governing the system; he only discovers the laws that are already there within the system. A scientist sitting in a corner of universe in this tiny earth that is insignificant in relation the magnitude of this universe is able to discover the universal laws that are applicable even at galaxies and galaxies away shows that this universe is a thermodynamically well-behaved system. Therefore universe has to be a creation and not a product of a random process. Any creation involves two aspects – 1) intelligent cause, nimitta kaaraNa and 2) material cause, upaadana kaaraNa, for the creation. If I want to create a pot, I need to have the knowledge or know-how of how to create this pot, that includes the skills necessary to create it, and 2) the material needed for the creation. Many religions stop with the answer – God created this universe – that is, He is the intelligent cause for the universe. Vedanta goes one step further. Other religions will stop without answering clearly where is that God that created this universe? Is He inside the creation or outside the creation? Why did he create? Even if He wants to create, why did He create me without asking me before, whether I want to be created or not? Why did He not create better universe than this, where there is so much of suffering all around, where young innocent children are born with so much of poverty and many with physical and mental deformities?, etc, etc. Is He incapable of creating a better universe or change the universe for the better so that every body can happy? What kind of sadistic God He is to create such universe? Rational intellects cannot accept such a God, who is insensitive to the suffering of the subjects of creation. If religions cannot provide the answers then they will chose to become atheists or Agnostics. Religions that are based on belief systems, cannot allow you to ask such questions saying that it is blasphemy. They are not any better than our friend Steven Hopkins who believes that Natural laws exist by themselves creating this universe.

An atheist went and told Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji frankly that he does not believe in such kind of God who creates this kind of miserable world and remains aloof sitting comfortably in heaven. Swamiji immediately said to him; I am with you, and I also do not believe in that kind of God. Some religions say; you have no past life but you will have eternal life either in haven or in hell, depending on whether you believe in their religion or not. They say: you are born because someone else has sinned in the past by violating the God's words. No, Vedantin will not accept such kind of illogical answers. On the other hand, Vedanta says that which is born has to die and what dies has to be born – that is the law of nature – jaatasyahi dRivo mRityuH, dRivanjanma mRitasya ca – mater never gets created or destroyed but only gets recycled. That is the law of conservation.

Krishna extends this law to the absolute limit and says— that which exists can never cease to exist and that which is non-existent can never come to existence – naasato vidyate bhaavo naabhaavo vidyate sataH| By this we conclude that creation cannot be anything out of nothing but just something out of something – That is it is only reassembling things or recycling things that are already there. This is because nothing new can come into existence and whatever that is there can never become non-existent or disappear. Hence creation can only be a transformation of one thing to the other with the absolute law of conservation.

**Creation has to be infinite:** If this is a creation there has to be intelligence behind this creation, which religions call as God. The first question to ask is where is that God who created this universe? Vedanta says, he is neither inside the creation nor outside the creation. Therefore we cannot put Him in Heaven or in VaikunTa or in Kailaasa. The all-pervading God cannot be at any particular place –that is illogical. First, He cannot be outside the creation, since that outside has to be created for Him to be there. If that outside is created, then that outside is inside the creation only. Hence by definition, creation has to be infinite. He cannot be inside the creation also, since 1) everything inside the creation has to be created, and 2) that which is inside the creation and thus limited by the creation cannot be cause for the limitless creation. The only choice left is He and the creation cannot be different. He, Himself, is the creation. This is the essence of the sloka that many are familiar – puurNam adhaH, puurNam idam, puurNaat puurNam udachyate| puurNasya puurNam aadaaya, puurNamevaa vasishyate|| - idam, this, stands for the entire universe that I can point out and it is puurNam or is infinite. adaH, that, which is different from this universe that is being pointed out, can only be the conscious entity, aham or I, that is doing the pointing of idam and therefore different from idam, is also infinite says the sloka. Since two infinities cannot exist by mutually excluding each other, the only possibility is a) I am the cause of this entire universe and 2) it is not different from I am. Hence the statement from puurNam (first adaH puurNam) this idam puurNam came (by parallel construction), and infinite is unaffected by addition or subtraction- puurNasya puurNam aadaaya puurNam eva avasishyate.

Some say, you cannot apply this kind of logic, the truth is beyond logic and also quote the scriptures to support that – naishaa tarkena matirapaneya. True, truth is beyond logic, but it is not illogical. Otherwise, Vedanta also gets reduced to other belief systems, whereas Vedanta is a science and wants us to use intelligence, viveka to discover the truth that is beyond the logic. It allows the student to ask intelligent questions until he discovers the truth. That in fact is the secret of invoking the grace of Ganesha, the embodiment of intelligence, before any study and in fact before undertaking any creative work.

**Infinite cannot be created:** Once we accept that (a) universe is a creation, (b) the creation is infinite and (c) the creator or the intelligent cause cannot be different from creation, we can go to the next step and say that infinite cannot be created, either. Creation involves a modification or vikaaara, and infinite cannot undergo a modification, because it is infinite. Only finite things can undergo modification. The scriptures say – Brahman meaning the infiniteness, cannot undergo modification – nirvikaaraH.

Therefore logically no creation can be possible, since Brahman is infinite and creation is infinite. Oh! I am seeing the world which is different from me and the world consists of infinite space with ever expanding galaxies and galaxies that are discovered and yet to discovered – If one says that Vedanta says, yes you do see this universe; but just because you see, it does not mean that it is real. From the point of reality, that is Brahman, there is absolutely no real creation or it is possible. How can this world be unreal when I can see and transact with it every minute, day-in and day-out – you may protest. Vedanta says – yes, you are right, it is not unreal like vandhyaa putraH (son of a barren woman), whom you cannot see and transact with. Since you can transact, it is transactionally real and not unreal. However, transactionally real need not be absolutely real, just like the dream creation; says Vedanta. For a dreamer the dream world is perceptually real, experientially real and transactionally real but it is not absolutely real since it is negated once I am awoken to the higher state of consciousness. Similarly even the waking world is only transactionally real (vyaavahaarika satyam) but not absolutely real since absolute reality is Brahman which is infiniteness and which cannot undergo any mutation to become the world. Hence creation is neither real nor unreal; and we call it as mithyaa. That is, it is real enough that we can transact with it and but unreal since it undergoes continuous modification. Hence it is called jagat – jaayate gachchate iti jagat.

We can come to the definition that what is real is that which is unchanging – tri kaalam abhaaditam satyam. What is unreal is that which has no locus for its existence at any time as in vandhyaa putraH. Mithyaa is that which appears to be there and therefore is experienced but does not remain the same all periods of time. Hence the universe, jagat is mithyaa since it changes continuously. If A changes into B then, there must be something that remains the same or changeless during that change. This is the law of conservation, which Chemists use for balancing the equations, since matter must be conserved during reaction or transformation. The absolute law of conservation that Krishna stated is already emphasized earlier. Therefore Brahman remains as Brahman without undergoing any modification while still creation appears to be there with Brahman as substratum without undergoing any change. Hence creation is an apparent transformation without undergoing any real transformation and to illustrate these points, scriptures provides three examples in Ch. Up. sadvidya. 1. Just as gold transforming into ornaments, bangle, ring, bracelet etc, while remaining as gold. This is called transformation-less transformation or name-sake and in Hindi – naamkevaaste – transformation. Scripture calls it as – vaachaarambhanam vikaaro naamadheyam – it is just names and forms with substantive remaining the changeless Brahman. Names, the attributes or qualities, utilities etc differ for bangle, ring, bracelet, but they are nothing but Gold only without any of their qualifications or attributes in Gold. From gold point there is really no creation of bangle, ring and bracelet – It can declare – they rise in me, sustain by me and go back into me, but I am unaffected by any of these. In fact – all are in me, and yet none of them are in me – look at my glory Arjuna, says Krishna. It appears that Krishna contradicts himself but not so, since these statements are made from two different reference points. Just as Gold can say looking from the point of ornaments, ring, bangle and bracelet – as all theses ornaments are in me. But from the point of gold itself none of them are there in gold since it was gold, it is gold and it remains as gold, even if others call it with various names as bangle, ring or bracelet. To emphasize this point, scripture uses two more examples, just as mud becoming many mud vessels like pot etc, and just as wrought iron becoming many tools like nail-cutters etc.



All are transformation-less transformations or vaachaarambhanam vikaaraH with naamadehyam or forms with names. Similarly creation is only apparent creation but not real creation from the point of Brahman. In addition, just as gold pervades all the ornaments providing the substantial support for them, Brahman pervades the whole jagat providing substantial support for it. Ring may look different from bangle, with the utility and date of birth etc differing from each other. Yet ring is substantially not different from bangle or bracelet. In fact all are gold only without any of their individual attributes. It is the glory of gold or vibhuuti of Gold to be able to exist in varieties of names and forms. Similarly Brahman appears to exist in various names and forms without undergoing any real transformation – Hence Krishna says – look at my glory, Arjuna – pasyamme yogamaishwaram. Hence from Brahman point there is absolutely no creation.

*(This series of articles, in three parts, by Sadaji came about in response to a question to him - "Could you please lend your thought on the concept of creation?")*

\* \* \*