

Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 23, Number 4, July 26, 2013

Remembering Sri Gurudev

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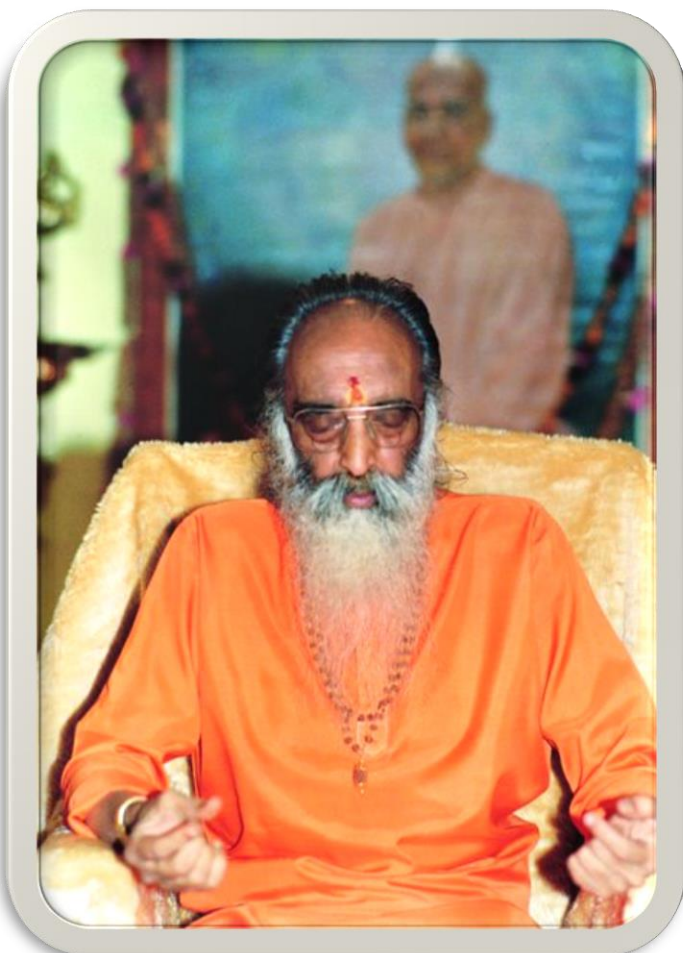
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Sadhana Day will be observed on Aug 3rd at Chinmayam.
Sri Gurudev attained Mahasamadhi on that Day.

Calendar and Upcoming Events

- Mon Jul 22 – Children Summer Camp in MD
- Sat Aug 3 – Sadhana Day and Sri Gurudev Mahasamadhi observation at Chinmayam
- Aug 18 – New Member Orientation at Chinmayam, 2 PM – 3:30 PM
- Fri Aug 23 – Sun Aug 25 - CHYK DC Retreat guided by Acharya Vivekji
- Aug 24 - Janmashtami Celebration at Chinmayam, 9PM - Midnight

- Sat Sep 6 and Sun Sep 7 - Bala Vihar 2013/2014 Sessions Commence with Ganesh Puja, locally at all chapters
- Sat Sep 6 – CHYK DC Hanuman Chalisa at Sri Bhakthanjaneya Temple, near Frederick
- Sat Oct 5 – 5K Walk/Run organized by Chinmaya Somath Bala Vihar to benefit CORD Sri Lanka. Event will be at Leesburg VA. Details on the site.

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.chinmayapublications.com
- Srimad Bhagavad Gita with Sri Gurudev's commentary is online at www.myholygita.com

Next Issue

- Articles for the next regular bi-monthly issue - September 2013, are due by September 1st, 2013
- Email submissions to smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Submission instructions at www.chinmayadc.org.

Useful Links:

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center www.chinmayadc.org

Chinmaya Mission Trust www.chinmayamission.com

Chinmaya Mission West www.chinmayamission.org

Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Course www.chinfo.org

Washington Region – Northern VA Chapter website www.chinmayasomnath.org

Washington Region – Frederick MD Chapter website www.chinmayafrederick.org

Washington Region – Richmond VA Chapter website www.chinmayadc.org/ActivitiesRichmond.htm

Please Note

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

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

News, Notes and Flyers

CMWRC Events Held

- Memorial Day Spiritual Camp, “Maitreyii Brahmana of Brihadaranyka Upanishad”, by Acharya Sadanandaji was held at Chinmayam. The audio files are available under Audio section at www.chinmayadc.org site. Videos are also available at http://www.livestream.com/advaita_sadaji
- Bala Vihar Annual Days for 2012/2013 sessions were held during the weekend of June 8th and 9th, locally at all chapters.
- Devi Retreat, conducted by Acharya Vivekji and Acharya Vilasiniji, with over 70 participants, was held weekend of Jun 12-14 at Chinmayam.
- 2013 Children’s Summer Camp was conducted during Jun 22-July 19 in Virginia.
- Guru Purnima was observed in Virginia on July 20.

Announcements

- Bala Vihar registration for 2013/2014 session are underway. Visit www.chinmayadc.org or chapter websites for more information and registration.
- Chinmaya West Newsletter for July 2013 is available at Chinmaya West website: <http://www.chinmayamission.org/cmwnews>
- Acharya Sadanandaji is offering talks on ‘Applications of Bhagavad Geeta in Daily Life’, Sundays 10:45 AM – 11:45 AM, at Durga Temple, Fairfax Station, VA. The Vedanta classes begin on the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima on July 21st.
- Friday Evening “Adult Vihar” Satsang at Chinmayam – next sessions: July 26, August 9 and 23. The bi-weekly sessions are free and open to all members and friends. For further details, please contact: fridaysatsang@chinmayadc.org or visit <http://www.chinmayadc.org/FridaySatsang/FridaySatsang.htm>

Current/Upcoming CMWRC Events

- Maryland Children’s Summer Camp: July 22 – August 16
- Sadhana Day and Sri Gurudev Mahasamadhi observation - August 3rd
- New Member Orientation: Aug 18, 2:00 – 3:30 PM at Chinmayam
- CHYK DC Retreat under guidance of Acharya Vivekji during Aug 23-25. Visit <http://chyk.chinmayadc.org/pages/retreat.php> for more information and registration.
- Janmashtami Celebration: August 24, 9:00 PM – Midnight, at Chinmayam
- Bala Vihar Sessions for 2013/2014 commence during the weekend of Sept 6-7, locally at chapters. The events include Sri Ganesh Puja and Open-house.
- CHYK DC leads Hanuman Chalisa on Sept 6 at Sri Bhakthanjaneya Temple in Ijamsville MD (near Frederick MD).

CORD USA honored at top Non-Profit

GreatNonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews on nonprofit organizations, announced on June 11 that CORD USA has been honored with a prestigious 2013 Top-Rated award.

The Top-Rated Nonprofit award was based on the large number of positive reviews that CORD USA received – reviews written by volunteers, donors and clients. People posted their personal experience with the nonprofit. One reviewer wrote, “I have seen how the work of CORD inspires teenage volunteers. This organization is one of the very few to use a 100% of donated money to causes - with the admin overhead being covered by volunteers. The positive impact of this organization on rural India, by empowering people to be self-sufficient, will be felt for multiple generations!”

While the Top-Rated awards run through the end of October, CORD USA Inc was part of the inaugural group to qualify for the year. “Savvy donors want to see the impact of their donations more than ever,” said Perla Ni, CEO of GreatNonprofits, “People with direct experience with CORD USA have voted that the organization is making a real difference.” This award is a form of recognition by the community that enhances the credibility of CORD.

CORD USA is a secular, non-profit that aims to help communities create a sustainable program to aid in their holistic welfare. We strive to facilitate integrated, sustainable social help programs in local communities and in the Indian subcontinent through processes of self-empowerment and enrichment.

GreatNonprofits is the leading site for donors and volunteers to find reviews and ratings of nonprofits. Reviews on the site influence 30 million donation decisions a year.

Check out CORD USA at <http://www.cordusa.org>



CHINMAYA SANCHAR

An offering by CCMT in association with Tekworks



Hari Om

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust launches Chinmaya Sanchar – the Official Chinmaya Mission Mobile App offering you vedic wisdom for modern living from the world renowned revered exponents of vedanta His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Tejomayananda and other Acharyas of Chinmaya Mission on your mobile devices.









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Chinmaya Sanchar offers you :

-  Talks and satsangs from Acharyas of Chinmaya Mission in video & audio format
-  Holy Gita: slokas in sanskrit, translation and commentary by Swami Chinmayananda
-  Stories, giggles and informative information for kids
-  CHYK Corner: inspirational stories, zenyasi, thinktoons, prayers and inspirational videos
-  Current news, events and itinerary of Swami Tejomayananda
-  Wallpapers and ringtones

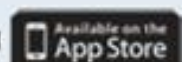
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Chinmaya Somnath Construction Progress

As of July 16, 2013

Current Progress

Lobby Area: The lobby area construction has come a long way. It is more than 60% complete. Three months ago even the foundation of the Lobby area was not there. Now we can see the lobby area prominently in the pictures.

Roof: Roof area is in its final stages of completion. In the next week or two the roof will be ready for the slab. This will be a major milestone. All interior work can then continue without being affected by weather conditions outside.

Cellar Level - inside framework for the walls: Cellar level inside framework for all walls is more than 90% complete. Window and door frames for all class rooms have been installed.

First Level Framework: Exterior framework at the first level is in progress. Once the roof slab is completed the internal wall framework along with the installation of door and window frames will begin.

Installation of Exterior stone and brick (masonry) work: Exterior stone and brick work has begun and is awaiting county inspection. County inspection is expected this week. Once the inspection is done this work will pick up speed.

Plumbing and Electrical rough ins: All plumbing and electrical rough in more than 90% complete in cellar area. Installation of ductwork for heat and air conditioning flow is in progress.

Easement for permanent electrical connection: This has been obtained recently and

our general contractor is working with NOVEC to map out next steps.

Shrine area construction: Shrine area is about 40% complete. Consecrated bricks from the Bhoomi Pooja performed in August 2010 are being embedded in this area under the platform for Lord Shiva's Murti.

Upcoming Work

- Installation of exterior stone and brick (masonry work)
- Installation of Electrical wiring and parking area lighting
- Installation of Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing equipment (Lift, A/C units etc)
- Installation of Drywall and wall finishes inside
- Installation of Flooring at Cellar, First level (Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Kitchen), Lobby areas
- Complete Entrance Lobby area handicapped access
- Inside and outside finishes including Sanctuary Stage & Shrine areas
- Landscaping and Play area base preparation
- Improvements at Blue Spring Road entrance and exit and Install roadside curb
- Installation of Security system and access controls for the building

Schedule – Overall

- Expected completion End-November to Mid-December, with occupancy permit from county shortly thereafter.



When I am 100 Years Old

Aarohi Phadke

Madhuras, Frederick Chapter

When I am 100 years old, I will have white silky soft hair. I will have a small bump on my nose. My skin will be wrinkled from head to my toes. My skin will be tanned and have a mole near my eye. My grandchildren will visit me every day, while my daughter will visit me too. I wear soft long dress while I drink hot cocoa. I am just too excited to become 100 years old.



Chinmayam Class Summaries

Silver Spring Chapter

Submitted by Anil Kishore

Editor's Note: *Chinmayam Bala Vihar students studied "Self Unfoldment" text by Swami Chinmayanand. This is continuation of Class Summaries by Sunday Morning students.*

March 3, 2013

Ram Jayaraman

Our class discussion primarily revolved around the principle of sheaths. As the sheath of a sword is used to suffuse the nature of the sword, the sheaths of Om are stated to overlay our inherently blissful nature. The sheaths can be divided into 5 categories that progressively define subtler veils of the intrinsic self: the food sheath, the vital-air sheath, the mental sheath, the intellectual sheath, and the bliss sheath.

The food sheath is said to be the most obvious aspect of our functions, including that which allows our direct interaction with the world. For instance, the food sheath is said to contain the 5 sense organs, our hands and feet, our larynx and pharynx, our genital organs, and our evacuation organs. Each facet of the food sheath is said to emerge from this essence of 'food'.

Even more subtle is the vital-air sheath, which focuses less on the direct interaction between our surroundings and our bodies, but more on the

faculty of their respective designs. Ergo, the vital-air sheath is composed of our faculties of perception, excretion, digestion, circulation, and thought. The seeming lack of this sheath's eponymous nature can be attributed to air's pertinence to the human body. Air is considered the pervading force behind our functioning and is therefore analogous to the faculty of our bodily functions--a vital functioning.

The following 2 sheaths delve into the higher complexities of the human psyche. However, they can be further subdivided as follows:

- 1 – the mind receives an external stimuli, the intellect then discriminates and communicates a decision back to the mind.
- 2 – the mind is a continuous flow of thoughts. It has no power of its own, but if there is enough continuous flow, it develops a dynamism and strength of its own. The direction of the flow however, is determined by the intellect. A noble intellect induces a noble flow of thought, and the mind follows suit.
- 3 – the mind is the seat of emotions, including love, happiness, greed, hatred, and jealousy. The intellect is the springboard of ideas and creativity, i.e. freedom, liberty, and political theories.
- 4 – the mind can only function in the known realms, the intellect can wonder much farther into uncharted territory of thought.

5 – the mind is in a constant state of flux. Thoughts stabilized and having taken the form of willed judgement is considered intellect.

The final and most subtle sheath is the bliss sheath. This sheath is the conglomerate of our vasanas and is the innermost sheath. Its existence can be most easily analogized to deep sleep, being a state that completely lacks any form of agitation. However, as the bliss sheath is essentially ignorance at its core, it cannot be recognized and sublimated by the human mind. In effect, the deletion of a vasana will undoubtedly form another in its place. During this time in our discussion, some debate was raised as to whether deep sleep can be determined as closest to bliss, as it is relatively meaningless to incur a comatose disposition as the fundamental cornerstone of human bliss. However, bliss exists as a more complex sheath than the rest; conscious awareness of bliss is impossible, so the development of an asymptotic bliss or that of a sinusoidal nature is that accomplished by a swami--hence the focused state of meditation. Beyond the sheaths is atman, the very nature of the soul. This is the divinity within all beings, and progressive shedding of our humanly sheaths yield a closer and closer connection to this infinite consciousness.

March 24, 1013

Atman Panigrahi

At the start of class, we reviewed the concept of Maya and delved further into the topic. Maya is the illusion that everything in our world is real. In reality, the only things that are real are those that are permanent; the changeless substratum upon

which everything exists. Aniket Bhaiya pointed out that our world cannot exist without ignorance associated with Maya. The world, or at least our perception of it, is actually created from ignorance along with Brahman, or the self. We should all strive to overcome Maya. In other words, we should work towards self realization. However, this idea poses two questions: why, and how, should we do this?

To become realized, one needs to become objective and let go of the ego. This can be accomplished by removing the sheaths and increasing selflessness. Understanding the concept of Maya and striving towards self realization has many benefits: one can give the right amount of weight to life, become objective, grow less materialistic, and become more humble. More importantly, understanding Maya helps us attain peace at all time, and can make us anchors in the unreal world. In essence, the overarching purpose is to find that which makes one continuously happy.

After this discussion, the class proceeded to the topic of Sadhana, or spiritual practice, a form of internal cleansing. People commonly associate seva with sadhana. However, selfless dedicated service is merely an exercise of learning to do things selflessly and spiritually. We must do service for the sake of service—this helps us transcend the limits of personal satisfaction. Selfless actions do not create harmful vasanas and can lead to a pure mind. It is crucial to recognize that the quality of service is what counts, not the quantity.

The primary objective is to improve yourself and the world around you. With this, we finished the class. It is interesting to note the progression of the book as we read further into it. We initially focused how

everything is done to obtain happiness --> only the ego is satisfied --> nothing is real --> the ego is not real. We have shifted onto far more complex topics, and earlier themes are being interwoven into class discussions and it is a wonderful for all of the students. We feel enriched and class is truly a pleasure to attend.

April 7, 2013

Rushmie Kulkarni

Instead of doing the usual read and discuss, we split into groups to collectively brainstorm examples that tied the topics of Self-Unfoldment to reality and our everyday lives. In our groups we discussed different themes from Self-Unfoldment that had most influenced us.

Group 1: Focused on the notion of the path of the good versus the path of the pleasant. Most of the examples were similar, like choosing to study rather than have fun and go to a party. We also equated the path of the pleasant as a path of escapism and procrastination which is not necessarily true.

Group 2: Talked about not being entitled to the fruits of our actions. We discussed the idea of sports and competitions and how winning should not be only focus. When we focus on winning or the end result/grade, we might not be as devoted to trying our best or experiencing the journey.

Group 3: Discussed the concept of standard of LIVING v. standard of LIFE. ☐ We can't change what happens but we can change how we deal with what happens.

Group 4: Discussed passion at length and the problems of reconciling one's passion with making a living.

Finally, we spent some time reviewing the BMI chart.

Chapter 18

Sadhana

Hari Devaraj

Sadhana is the act of freeing the mind of the conditioning we have created for ourselves in our day to day lives. The ultimate goal of Sadhana is to bring out our real nature and make it free of external influences.

Conditioning can be thought of as the default mindset that we have acquired though the means by which we live our lives. A simple example of conditioning would be if I grew up in a household that appreciated and always played classical music, then I would be inclined to think that classical music was the superior form of music. This would be a frame of mind that I would carry with me outside my house and influence my mood and actions in social settings. Through Sadhana, I could break this mindset and learn to appreciate all types of music.

Sadhana literally means 'spiritual exertion towards an intended goal'. The ultimate goal of Sadhana is far less superficial than 'learning to appreciate all types of music' as my previous example suggested. The goal of Sadhana is to attain spiritual realization or moksha through love of god (bhakti), selfless action (karma) and knowledge (jnana).

Success through Sadhana is independent of the number of times one meditates; more important is one's devotion, understanding and one's sincerity,

all of which are essential to reaching some level of spiritual awakening.

While experiencing Sadhana, it is important to practice Viveka (discrimination) and Vairagya (detachment). Viveka helps one to calm the agitated mind and prepare it for meditation. Though Viveka, one can distinguish between the real and the unreal, the imperishable and the perishable and the changeless and the changing. Thus, Viveka gives a person the perspective he or she needs to realize what is important in life without petty distractions getting in the way.

Vairagya often comes after Viveka, because once we are able to distinguish between the imperishable and the perishable, detaching ourselves from that which is truly not worth worrying over is simple. The harder part of Vairagya is detaching ourselves from that which seems to have emotional and spiritual (non-superficial) meaning to us. Once we attain some level of perspective, it is easy to realize that missing a party or attending one college over another is not too worrisome, but it is infinitely more difficult to detach ourselves from the facets of our life that we perceive to make us human (such as love or familial relationships). Vairagya aims to help us experience the True Self, but to reach such a level, we must completely detach ourselves from the outer world. It is important to note that detachment from the outer world does not necessitate seclusion (though seclusion makes it easier to attain detachment) but to live in the world while harmoniously fulfilling one's Dharma.

Sri Shankaracharya outlines four qualities of a Vedanta student:

- 1) Discrimination
- 2) Detachment
- 3) Desire for liberation

4) The capacity to demonstrate the following mental qualities:

- a. Calmness
- b. Self-control (of sense organs)
- c. Self-Withdrawal
- d. Forbearance
- e. Faith
- f. Tranquility

Chapter 19: Meditation

Tej Vora

Hari Om

Chapter 19 discusses meditation and its importance in our lives. "It is in the seat of meditation that we learn to use the mind to rise beyond the mind – and realize the Truth as our own innermost Self" (197). It is only through the medium of meditation that we're able to transcend the mind and realize our oneness with Truth. The practice of meditation trains the mind and allows us to see ourselves not just as body, mind and intellect, but also as the Pure Self. Common ways to achieve this is with Karma, Bhakti, and Jnana Yoga. When we train our minds using these tools, we can reduce our desires, and therefore become more poised and introspective.

Japa is a very important aspect of meditation. We practice meditation to focus our minds so that instead of many racing thoughts, we're able to focus on one specific thought. A popular method of achieving this is by Japa, the repetition of God's name. An example is outlined in the text: "Can you

repeat the word Pen without its form appearing in your mind? Try it. Can you say Lake and not have the image of a body of water appear in your mind's eye?" (199). As soon as we chant the Lord's name, whatever we choose, the image that we associate with Him will immediately pop into our mind. By doing Japa, we repeat the Lord's name, and through repetition, create an attachment to it. So as we repeat the Lord's name, we gain attachment to him, and lose attachment to the outer world of objects.

The book goes on to list many different things that you should do to properly meditate. For example, it outlines the process of finding a quiet and special room for meditation, creating an altar, seeking appropriate seating and posture and chanting. It also reviews cautions/warnings about meditation, but gives ways to solve the problems. "The mind has a tendency to drift away repeatedly from the point of concentration, even while chanting a mantra" (206). If you need to solve this problem, "You can apply certain external aids, such as the fragrance of flowers or incense or the sound of bells" (206).

This chapter also defines Om, and the three sounds that comprise it: A,U, and M. The sound 'A' represents the waking state; the sound 'U' represents the dream state; and the sound 'M' represents the deep-sleep state. 'A' represents the waking state because it's the first letter of the alphabet in any language and is the first of the three states of consciousness. The 'U' is the dream state because it's in the middle. The 'M' represents deep sleep because it is the closing syllable of the word Om.

This chapter is a very important one in the book Self-Unfoldment and no matter how well of a summary I do, it won't do the chapter justice. So I implore everyone to read this chapter especially because of how clear it's written and how significant it is for all of us to practice meditation.

Chapter 20

Sustained Joy

Soumya Pattanayak

At the start of this chapter, we learn that one is more efficient in completing tasks with a joyous mental state, or sattva, rather than with a preoccupied or anxious mental state. Therefore, we should all strive to reach this joyous state so that we can finish future tasks with greater ease. To achieve this state, one must meditate to convince and mold the mind to engage in the contemplation of the higher power. Once the mind is engaged it will transcend to a state of quietude and serenity, making it easier to transition to a cheerful mood. However, this takes much practice and regular meditation is needed to maintain this inner state of joy. With the power of inner joy and mental serenity, one can connect with the spiritual world, and the mind cannot be unsettled by challenges and obstacles. Your mental condition will be immaculate.

If one experiences mental disturbances such as anxiety, one should surrender his/her anxieties and responsibilities to the Lord. This will trigger the influx of inner joy since one is in spiritual contact with his/her own source, which is the Lord himself.

While a person is in a joyous and cheerful attitude, he/her should then begin chanting the Lord's name. Chanting can bring the mind to attention with focus on the Lord, rolling the mind away from the focus of external objects. After chanting, a person can reach a state of inner tranquility and balance, or poise. When faced with the struggle of many challenges, a person with inner poise will always be triumphant.

Reflections of a Bala Vihar Graduate

Asmi Panigrahi

After one year of college, if there is one that I've learned, it is that there are very few things that I know. Freshman year was a big mix of new people, new experiences, and new responsibilities, and over the course of the year I discovered have new strengths and weaknesses. While having the knowledge imparted to me through Chinmaya Mission and Bala Vihar definitely helped me navigate the highs and lows of my first year of college, looking back I notice that my freshman year was my first objective opportunity to apply these teachings. Applying knowledge is generally the objective of any teachings. As one could probably expect, this first round of trying to truly, independently "apply" what I already knew didn't come without its share of glitches. To me, Vedanta isn't something you read and discuss and then BAM you're ready to tackle whatever life throws at you. Well, theoretically that's how it should work... and perhaps the most mature and intelligent people can operate that way. Unfortunately, I don't think I'm in that category. Over this year, I learned that for me Vedanta is going to be something that I really have to PRACTICE.

At this point, you may be wondering well, haven't Bala Vihar youth been fortunate to be exposed to the spiritual gems of Vedanta and Hindu teachings for so many years? Shouldn't they have had plenty of time to practice these principles, like detachment, selflessness, discipline, and have perfected by the time they are ready to embark for college as strong, alert, and infallible individuals? My answer is yes, in a perfect world. Do we live in a perfect world? Well, that may be a topic for another article. But to address the main question, I can only

speak on my behalf, and based on the course of my freshman year, I wouldn't consider myself someone who embarked on college ready to be completely infallible. All that I learned definitely helped me, and I almost had a constant basket of wisdom to draw from with all that I have been exposed to in the Gita and Self Unfoldment, to name just a few examples. However, the quality that is so very specific about college for most youth is that we are, for most of us, for the first time on our own. Now I'm not saying we're independent...because college students are not a very good example of independent. We still rely on friends, on our family, on a support system. But, we are on our own in our own element for the first time. Now, I know students who went home every weekend, or every other weekend, and got a pretty frequent dose of their family and home and original environment. But in my opinion, no matter how often you go back to your original state (if you're living on campus) then college is a big enough change to have a constant effect on self-perception. Personally, I wasn't one of those students who went home a lot. Part of it was circumstance, but part of it was simply the fact that I enjoyed being away and in my own new world, which I think this is a position many college students find themselves in: a position of newfound freedom. And as such, this is the first time WE get to choose, on our own, how Vedanta plays a role in our life. Before, many of us had our parents around to indirectly remind us you what one's dharma is, what expectations should be set for oneself. In college, you aren't really accountable to anyone but yourself. Sometimes this is great. It really keeps you alert and on your toes and forces you to grow up. On the other hand, it can make you

realize that maybe you aren't as naturally expert at Vedantic living as you thought. But before I focus on my reflections of what went wrong for me over the year, I'd like to share what I thought went right.

I've always loved being an ambassador for Hinduism and for Vedanta. Learning so much in Bala Vihar, camps, and Chinmaya Mission in general has helped me become the kind of person who loves answering questions about my religion, who is always open to spiritual discussion. In college, this is an invaluable strength. I see so, so many students, Indian and otherwise, who mock their religion for having irrational beliefs, or who are self-proclaimed atheists because they claim that religion is simply irrelevant and unnecessary in today's world. But because of what I've learned at Chinmaya Mission, I'm able to have conversations with these students, and students of all different perspective about the nature and purpose of God and religion. Interestingly, I also find myself less often frustrated during these discussions than some of my peers of other religions. I'm not trying to say that Hinduism is "better," but rather that I'm simply thankful that my teachings at Chinmaya Mission have helped me align with the attitude that all of these religions are different rivers flowing to the same ocean of Truth. I don't have the same urge to convert or defend my specific way of thought, and instead find myself incredibly at peace with simply describing and sharing what I views as that Truth. This, coupled with what I find is a strong, deep-rooted confidence in my faith, is something that I will always owe to Chinmaya Mission.

So while I believe and cherish these teachings and attitudes, and even try so very hard to implement them in my life, freshman year made me realize that I have a long ways to go until I am actually good regularly implementing them to the point of effortlessness. Of course, every little bit of effort counts, and has counted thus far. But what I'm

trying to get at is that the whole process and experience of being a Hindu is about self-improving, day by day. I'll never forget when, during the past year, a good friend told me to stop comparing myself to the people around me, and to instead compare myself to who I was yesterday. I couldn't believe the wisdom in what she said to me, and how relevant it really is when you are trying to live a Vedantic life.

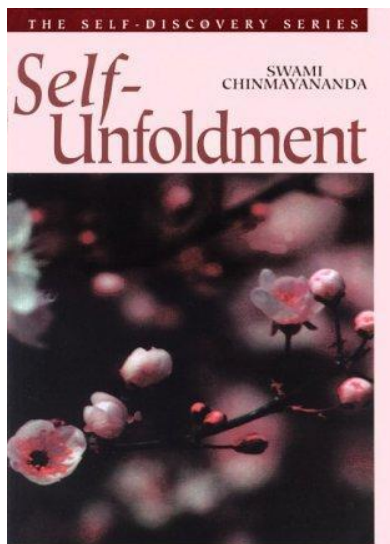
In college, it's all too easy to compare yourself to others. Here's a common thought process I found myself in, and perhaps other students find themselves in it too: "Gosh, Friend X always performs so much better than me in Topic A, but Friend Y is involved in some pretty bad things like Topic B and C where do I stand? Am I good or bad?" Almost everyone knows that the Vedantic choice in this situation to simply do your Dharma and stop the comparisons.... but sometimes it is just really, really hard to do that, especially when you're in an environment that is literally thousands and thousands of contemporaries, making it all the easier to compare yourself to those around you. Logically, it makes sense: just do your dharma. But it's often difficult when your thoughts and emotions and comparisons take so much control over your actions. The next step I usually take is to once again use Vedantic logic, and I think to myself, well I am not the mind feeling these emotions, I am Spirit, the Om. But seriously, knowing all of this provides only a certain extent of respite. While it is definitely a big step, once you assert to yourself that you're not the BMI it's like well, okay, now what? How am I supposed to act? My actions, my emotions, my thoughts still have a pretty big influence on pretty much everything in my life! It's all a lot to think about, to understand, and to most importantly apply. However, when I look back at situations that I didn't handle as "Vedantically" as I should have, I think the mistakes me appreciate the value of the right choice even more. I'm reminded of how far I

am from applying my knowledge 100% effectively, and more importantly, how much room I have to grow. The bottom line is, practicing a Vedantic lifestyle takes, well, practice!

Luckily, the universe is patient. One year of college is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what I'm going to experience in life, and I'm so thankful to have been able to navigate it knowing what I have learned from Chinmaya Mission. Looking ahead, I know there will be many more years of practicing, and I hesitate to say that it'll take me a lifetime to figure all of this out, because after all, I'm sure that the universe has more than a few lifetimes of practice in store for me. And I wouldn't want it any other way.

“Self-Unfoldment” Summaries

Chapter 6: Action



Editor's Note: This series provides short summaries of each chapter of the foundational introduction to Vedanta by Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, “Self Unfoldment”. This book is part of the curriculum for Chinmayam (10th - 12th grade) Bala Vihar class. It is also the recommended starting book for newly formed youth and adult study groups. These summaries are from one such recently formed study group.

As long as we live, we have to act, for life pulsating through the body becomes activity in the outer world. Life expresses itself with action, as death does in inaction. Actions vary from person to person – a farmer working in the field sweats with exertion; a poet may seem outwardly inactive, but may be in the midst of a great creation; Buddha seated under a tree, may have appeared to outwardly and mentally inactive, but was in deep meditation.

Everyone must work, but what matters is how we work – what is the quality of the activity we are engaged in.

Three kinds of Actions

The great thinkers of India classified all people engaged in activity into three categories: Laborers, Workers and Persons of Achievement. The difference is not in the work they do, but the way in which they do it: goals, temperament and mental outlook.

Laborer: one who has almost no ideals in life; works for selfish purposes – to provide for self or family; may work very diligently, but only aims to satisfy egocentric desires. A laborer may be a politician in

a high position, a judge, and a scientist. The individual only works own benefit (welfare of the self is the highest priority).

Worker: An individual who is less selfish, and has a definite ideal in life. All inspired political, social and religious leaders fall into this category. Every worker has a picture of a perfect society. The individual struggles hard, motivated by a high vision, and works to bring that into reality (sees personal welfare in the greater welfare of the society).

Persons of Achievement: These are extremely rare individuals whose only ideal is the welfare of one and all. They live an ideal life uplifting an entire generation, inspiring others even after their death. The fragrance of their thought, and the might and glory of their ideals gathers a new momentum as years pass by. Such mighty people are called saints, seers and prophets. They do not work for profit or success, but from a feeling that they are doing the right thing. All such people want is a secret joy: the sense of fulfillment that they have done the best they could. They remain untouched by blame or praise. They work despite persecutions by society for being idealistic.

Motivation for Actions

The activities are characterized by what prompts actions – desire-prompted or not desire-prompted. In the first category, the desires motivating a person may be totally selfish (laborer) or a higher cause such as welfare of a nation (worker). In the second category, however, no desires at all motivate a person's action (person of achievement). The person of achievement is tuned into supreme reality and is in state of total fulfillment. He or she wants nothing, and none of their actions bring them any more fulfillment than they already had before. Actions done without desires (nishkama karma) is the noblest of all.

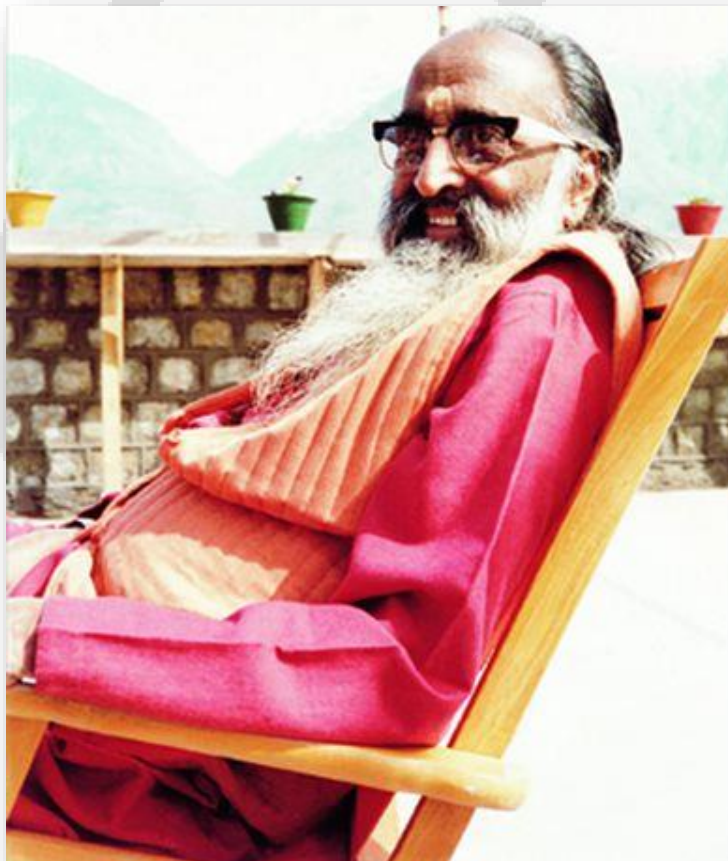
The Secret of Success

The value of work is measured by the idea that inspires it. The quality of our actions improves as we adopt higher ideals to inspire our work. The nobler the ideal, the greater will be the beauty in our actions. All great contributors to society have had such ideals, and their actions have left behind rich

achievements for many generations to enjoy.

Lack of definite ideal, selfish desires and anxiety about enjoying results of actions sap our mental energy causing fatigue and negative outlook in us. The secret of success lies in overcoming negative outlook. By making our mind positive, we conserve our mental energy, and thus have more energy to apply to action. Unselfish actions help energize us towards even more dynamic activity. We can achieve this energizing effect by choosing an ideal in life high enough to boost us beyond our selfish interests. If we work with constant dedication towards that high ideal, we will feel inspired in every activity. Besides having a more cheerful life, we will also have a better chance of being more successful at what we do. The higher the ideal, the greater will be our inspiration. As we serve the world, we discover new resources of energy welling up in us to pour out in tireless activity.

The ultimate ideal is to divert our attention from the body-mind-intellect to the Life Principle supporting them all. The enlightened being is one that has chosen this ideal and has dedicated all his activities to it. Such a person lives a life of total independence and is free from the influence all changes within and without.



The Man Who Lives Elsewhere

Aziza Meer

I met a man who was always very pleasant and spoke and acted from his heart. He said it has been an interesting journey since he started to live “elsewhere”. By “elsewhere” he means that he doesn’t live here on earth.

He said he reached the very baseline of living in various forms. To begin with, he cleared out the space he used of all that is extra and unnecessary. He gave away plenty and redecorated his home with the best of what he has. He says now my room looks like the heaven. “I didn’t buy anything new, I just gathered the right things that will make my room look like heaven. I have light blue walls, and found light blue curtains that were tucked away somewhere in my house, off white sheets and navy blue comforter.” He calls his room “Heaven.”

I asked him if he lives in heaven, since he said he lives “elsewhere” by which he meant that he doesn’t live in this world. He said “yes”.

“How do you live in heaven while you are physically here on earth?” I asked.

“I know the feel of heaven and I have entry there. So I keep my mind filled with the feel of heaven and associate myself with the heavenly visitors who had visited me at different times of my life.”

Heavenly visitors visited him at different times in his life!?

“What heavenly visitors?” I asked.

“Once it was Jesus, once it was Bapu, and I visited heaven and saw light bodies there and I don’t know who they are but I have the feel of the love they radiated. And so I just live with these sensations

and associate with them. I speak with them when I’m hurt or tired, or even to just share the sense of being.”

“Do they speak back to you?”

“Yes, they do.”

“What do they say?”

“They comfort me with just the sense of love they hold in them. Just turning my attention towards them is enough and I feel very relaxed and re-assured.”

I had to ask him this—“Are you a misfit in this world? Are you taking comfort in hallucinations?”

He said, “I at times wondered that about myself. But really, if I was maladjusted or if I’m losing my mind, then I shouldn’t be doing so well in the worldly sense. But I’m a successful professional and have a very put-together personal life and a well-maintained body as well as a nice wardrobe. I’m fun-loving and enjoy dancing and parties. People like me and seek me out. I enjoy people more now, than when I was not living outside this world. I enjoy people because I’m not caught up in small differences with them and even big misunderstandings go only so far in making a negative impact on me. I forgive easily and I move on with no regrets.”

“Why and when did you start living “elsewhere”?”

“It was a gradual process. I saw that there is a lot of peace and power in not living here. I’m associating with the deepest of energy sources and I call that faith. In faith I connected, and I depended on this

faith more and more and more as I went along. The faith got much bigger than I am, and I faded.”



2013 Devi Retreat Flashback

Richa Agrawala

Divya Shakti – Divine Strength, one of a kind retreat for mothers and devis over twenty-nine was held at the Washington DC area center of Chinmaya Mission on father's day weekend of 2013. Goal was to give them *"a chance to leave every day stresses and get in touch with their true self and to address many of the challenges they face in balancing their many responsibilities"*. Father's day weekend was a nice touch as it allowed children to enjoy the weekend with their father without mother being around. The retreat that brought together over 75 devis from various states, and a few international devis, was guided by Acharya Vivekji and Acharya Vilasiniji. Swami Dheerananda was present for the opening and closing of the retreat.

Retreat had pravachans and activities to relax and focus the mind. Main text chosen was "Medha Suktam" whose daily recitation with faith, devotion, and concentration, and by blessings of Medha devi, one can acquire a good and powerful memory, fame, good thoughts, courage, wisdom, internal light, good creative energy, and sound. Vivekji also described the correct way of reciting 'AUM'. No devi could match his length or steadiness but we were getting better!

Activities included

- yoga nidra sessions
- group discussions on balanced living, spiritual parenting, practicing awareness, and active priorities
- an art session
- a games session
- a cultural program
- actively practicing mauna and awareness

Yoga Nidra sessions had devis lie down on their backs, or sit on a chair if lying down on back was not comfortable,

and go through the process of relaxing the body and mind. Peace and relaxation experienced during the Yoga Nidra sessions was carried into and followed by an hour of Mauna practiced during breakfast. Some may find this hard to believe but this retreat saw a large room full of devis and no chit-chatting for over two hours on two days!

Group discussions had random groups of 5 or 6 devis discussing among themselves on a topic of their choice or from a given list of topics for about 15 minutes, presentation by the note taker from each group, and thought sharing on how the situation being discussed could be best resolved. Some of the concepts introduced as part of the discussions were (i) "The Sacred Pause", which is a way to reset oneself in approximately five minutes with the quick meditation technique, (ii) self-awareness through the practice of "Introspect, Detect, Negate, and Substitute", (iii) letting go of limitations and inhibitions through deciding for each weakness what your destiny will be if the weakness is not dropped and what the benefits are if it is dropped, (iv) "PLEA(D)" method of handling situations where you Pray, Lead, Engage, Accept, and when all of the above fail after sincere efforts, then and only then Depart, and (v) prioritizing by activity typing using matrix of Urgent/Not urgent and Important/Unimportant so that we can recognize the activities that are not important and stop wasting time on those, thereby having more time for the important activities that we can handle in a non-urgent mode.

Art session had devis playing with clay of different colors that could be molded by hand and later baked. Most artwork included deities, the symbol for Om, flowers, or animals with even a turtle that one person thought was for the Kurma avatar but in reality was for the mascot of the University of Maryland. I suppose one mother still had her mind go to her kid's college when she suddenly had to choose what to make with a few pieces of clay.

Games session was interesting in that all ladies, young and old, whether young at heart and old in body, or young in body and old at heart, or any combination thereof played together. Two games that were played were human knot puzzle and kho. To untangle the human knot created by holding hands in a special pattern, group needs to communicate and coordinate physical movements between the individuals. Kho saw all devis unable to follow directions that most young kids would follow immediately, creating chaos thereby, but also running like kids with everyone laughing at the end. A brief nature walk after the games got devis ready for other sessions.

Cultural session was open for anyone willing to showcase their talent. There were skits, jokes, singing etc. It was followed by a Garbha session as well. While the day started with meditation and mauna, night ended with music and dance. Even the lunch session was made interesting where while speech was not used for breakfast, sight was not used for lunch and one had to use other senses to truly start tasting what they were eating.

Logistics of the retreat were made relatively easy by the availability of hotels nearby, simple food served, CHYKs and youth contributing throughout the retreat by doing many tasks behind the scenes, such as moving chairs, baking clay, handling audio equipment, etc. Of course, planning upfront by Mrs. Meera Ravichandran and her team contributed greatly to the smooth running of the retreat. A question and comment box provided, and time to discuss at least some of them also provided a sense of completeness to the retreat.

Overall thoughts of devis and what they took from the retreat for the change they would like to make in their lives was neatly captured in the sankalpas they wrote down towards the end of retreat. They were allowed to choose whether they wanted to put their name next to the sankalpa or not. It was interesting that while the topics various groups discussed and solutions proposed by the groups were very similar, individual sankalpas were quite varied in nature.

Devi retreat in another year would be good to see how far everyone progressed in implementing their sankalpas!





Devi Retreat – Gathering Around Chinmaya Well

Priyanka Shingore

On June 14th 2013, the Devis gathered around the Chinmaya “well” at the CMWRC, Silver Spring center with the aspiration to connect with our divine self. We traveled from across the US, Canada and as far as the U.K to be there. Each one of us came from a different stage in life, and yet took away a common ingredient for the wellbeing of every soul!

Swami Dheeranadaji, in his opening speech, humorously referred to a “well meeting” of the olden days, where women would gather at a village water well and share their sorrows and complaints from daily living - what in the modern day is called, Gossip. This story set the stage for the wisdom, we were going to seek with the guidance of Acharya Vivekji and Acharya Vilasiniji, by invoking Medha Devi or Devi Saraswati - the goddess of intellect. As we returned to our respective hotels, homes, and host homes, we wrote our Sankalpa or determination, for what we wanted to accomplish from this retreat.

The mornings began bright and early with Yoga Nidra - a guided meditation led by Vilasiniji, where we learnt the art of being conscious of the observant self within us; by allowing all the thoughts in, identifying the feeling associated with those thoughts and letting them pass. As we observed Mauna or silence through breakfast, we continued to keep our minds at peace and practiced being in the present. As described by Vivekji, through Mauna we were learning to speak wisely in aspiration of sublimation and not suppression!

The framework for the retreat was built around the philosophy and teachings of Medha Suktam – a prayer to welcome the goddess of intellect to reside

in us and flow through us. Thus cleansing the impurities of our mind and reminding us of the divinity that is within us. We learnt good thoughts and practices to keep ourselves inspired, vigilant and positive, such that we maintain Sama-Buddhi-even-mindedness- as we deal with various challenges of daily living. In groups, we discussed ways to overcome our lower personality by applying Guru Dev’s four practices of achieving Self-Mastery through Self-Awareness; by introspecting, identifying our weaknesses, realizing the benefits of dropping those weaknesses, and substituting them with good practices that inspire us.

To add an element of surprise to the retreat, the Devis were treated to a blind-folded lunch, carefully and diligently organized by the volunteers such that we could relish the flavors and appreciate the unknown in life. Through games and cultural activities we were able to rejuvenate and acknowledge the talents and creativity within ourselves. It was really enchanting to see the show put together by a group of Devis without any prior practice!

In addition to ideas on practicing spiritual wellbeing we also learnt some tips on the art of prioritizing tasks in our lives and minimizing unimportant activities to enable stress free living.

As the retreat came to a conclusion, the Devis emerged empowered with the knowledge of Divya Shakti or the divinity within them. Free from their weaknesses and ready to transform themselves and those around them!

Sankalpas (Resolutions) by attendees of 2013 Devi Retreat

Sankalpas taken by Devis at Divya Shakti 2013 Retreat			
1	Practice Discipline	16	Loose the negativity, fear, anxiety, and insecurity.
2	Take this happiness/joy/peace inspired by this retreat and have it as the strength underpinning every action, every day, every where!	17	My resolution is to work on Time management skills and spend more quality family time.
3	Find ways to make the learnings' happen. If not all, at least a few of them.	18	Discipline myself more to practice meditation on a regular basis.
4	Make prayer a priority	19	Exercise regularly.
5	✚ Maintaining peace of mind by accepting world as is and by practicing Kshama, dama, titiksha... ✚ Develop humility	20	Take 5 minutes to meditate and reflect each day.
6	✚ To strive towards my ultimate goal of being completely aligned with the divinity within Me. ✚ I resolve to be a disciplined, dutiful, vigilant person who leads by example at Home and in the World outside. ✚ To be unaffected during hard or good times. Meditate and continuously cleanse the impurities within.	21	Start my Sadhana to help me bring clarity and to know myself by: ✚ Reading Scriptures everyday ✚ Meditate
7	Think before you speak by following the rules (is what you speak truth/good/useful)	22	Avoid conflict at home (of course, they are not big but still...) I have thought of changing by engaging myself with activities such as: ✚ My hobbies ✚ My health (gym, yoga, meditation)
8	Not to get upset for little things	23	Spend 20 minutes every day listening to the Vishnu Sahasranama and thinking about Lord Vishnu
9	Help me change the Impossibilities to Possibilities through my Heart. Devi! Give me the Strength!	24	Be a better person in all my roles in life, and be happy with small changes. ✚ Take time to learn ✚ Take time to introspect ✚ Take time to meditate
10	What I am taking back from the Retreat: Self assessment and Self development	25	Invest more time studying Vedanta
11	I will try my very best to give and share joyfulness to others always.	26	Experiencing the pure love within and loving the people around you, without judgment (by reducing anger and impatience in myself)
12	✚ Try to tune into inner guidance for the purpose of this life. ✚ Find that role and give the best going forward. ✚ Develop daily discipline and do not procrastinate.	27	I am going to meditate to lead a worry free life
13	✚ It is important to take the time to sharpen the saw. ✚ Continue to do good always no matter what, it will never be in vain. ✚ Be honest with myself during introspection and be ruthless in discarding "trash." ✚ Converse about what I have learned while driving with family.	28	Not to lose temper or control my temper
14	DON'T TAKE LIFE SERIOUSLY, TAKE IT AS IT GOES.	29	I will surrender and not play mind games with my spouse
15	✚ Say Prayers ✚ Do Meditation	30	To judge less, listen more and expect less. Achieving this through consistent reading (Vedanta) and knowledge
		31	My resolution is to be healthy and happy. Often, we take care of everyone in the family and forget to take care of ourselves; this affects us in the long run. I will wake up one hour early, which will give me enough time for prayers, preparation ahead of time and I am sure my day will start smoothly and end happily. I made up my mind to make it happen. I learned from Acharya Vivekji that we are given problems because we have the power to solve it. It is just that we have to identify and learn to face the problems with courage.

32	✚ Resolve to not dwell on a dead past nor worry about an unknown future. ✚ Just do my best today (which is not going to be easy, but will keep at it).		Forgive everyone more as I forgive my kids for everything.
33	Introspect daily. Don't react, be calm.	54	Take a 360° turn and change the attitude towards my family and community and surrender to Lord and offer all the worries onto the Lord. Thank you very much. Please bless me and give me the courage to achieve my goal!
34	Thank you so much for the retreat. To begin with, be mindful of my words, emotions, and thoughts all the time! Then, substitute positives by eliminating negatives in them.	55	Take care of health by exercising for 30 minutes, working on stress management (meditation/Imagery) for at least 20 minutes every day. Once a week, professional development.
35	My resolution is to pray everyday -- never miss a day of conversing with God.	56	May I find the daily wisdom to pray and converse with You.
36	✚ I will face challenges going forward knowing I am strong and that strength is intrinsic to my nature. ✚ I will not ask "why me," but will ask "why not me." ✚ I will be grateful to the thought that I am capable of handling challenges, which is why Ishvara gave them to me in the first place.	57	Talk softly with emotions in control.
37	Find Myself.	58	I would work on being mindful of the principle of "self-awareness" at all times.
38	Meditate everyday.	59	Be peaceful and patient! Give happiness to others.
39	My resolution is to not react quickly.	60	I will be more flexible and adaptable.
40	Reduce thoughts and dwellings and wonder everything.	61	Know Yourself (Myself).
41	Inspire to become a better Sevika	62	Decrease negative talk.
42	✚ Let go of PAST, just remember Every Moment spent is already PAST. ✚ Remember I as I.	63	I would like to cultivate discipline, so I can improve my personal Health, which will benefit others around me.
43	✚ Spend quality time with family. ✚ Work on life balance.		
44	I will try to be present in every moment.		
45	I would like to bring these thoughts in my Life, and the Lives of people around Me.		
46	Inspire more laughter within and around me.		
47	I will be more available to myself and my family. Live in the Present.		
48	Getting rid of the fear with Self discipline and self assessment.		
49	Sweeten my 'VACHA' (Convey thoughts with thoughtfulness)		
50	My Goal is to practice to be more acceptable and be less judgmental. Suggestion for next retreat: "Women Saints of East and West."		
51	Sadhana and Discipline: Practice Meditation 10 minutes twice a day. Read and Reflect for 20 minutes every day.		
52	Encourage the whole family and myself to practice unconditional love, and more spirituality		
53	Not expect anything from family, but be happy with what I get (receive) from my family.		

In Uttar Kashi during Uttarakhand Floods

Geetanjali Choori

We are part of CMWRC for many years and were travelling on Char Dham Yatra by Chinmaya Mission, when the disaster happened. I have tried to note our experience in few words that relates our immense gratitude to Chinmaya Mission. If possible/appropriate, please share it with CMWRC.

Divinity and Vastness: simple way to describe our Uttarakhand experience

Divinity in the space made us stay totally calm while watching the nature's fury at work and destruction. The vastness and power of nature made leftover ego vanish.

We went on a Char Dham Yatra by Chinmaya Mission. We completed Yamunotri and we were on our way to Gangotri. Our trip got delayed by a huge land slide by 6 hours; although we had a booking at Gangotri at night. As we were very late to go up, our leader Swami Chaitanyananda of Kolkata decided that we stay at Tapovan Kuti. That was the best decision. It all started that 16th early morning as we started watching the Bhagirathi swelling and roaring. It took many buildings, roads and bridges along it. We saw this nature's fury with complete calmness. Swami Tapovan Maharaj's and Swami Chinmaya Nanda's divinity in that space gave all the strength watch it with purity and calmness.

Everybody at Kuti were extremely helpful and they accommodated us big smiles, patience. They provided ample food and amenities. Over 100 people including our 20 people group were residing at the Kuti. We did not feel like leaving the place and looking forward to stay at the place again.

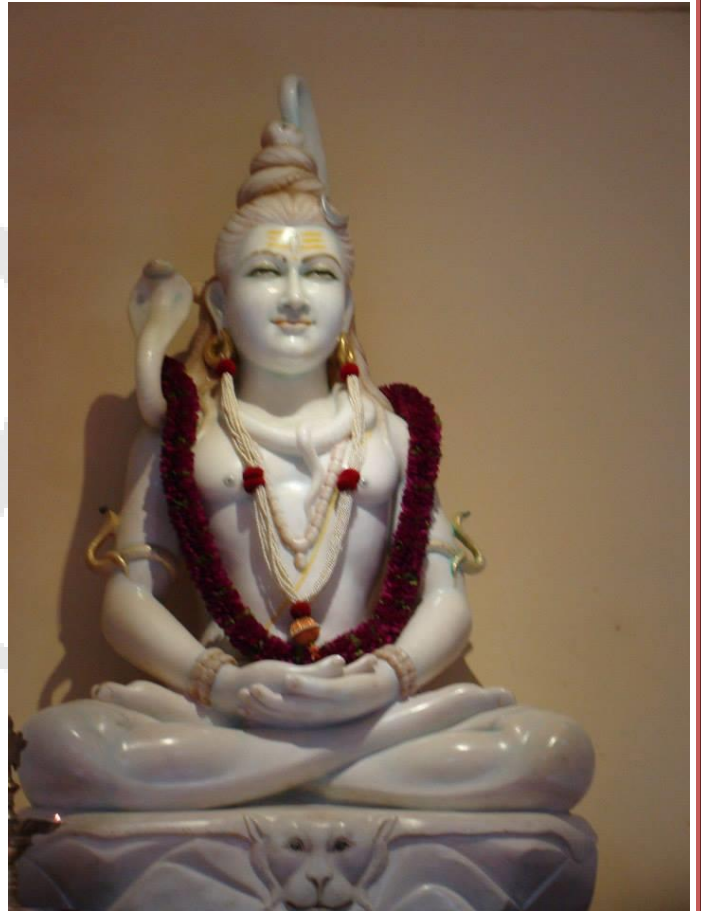
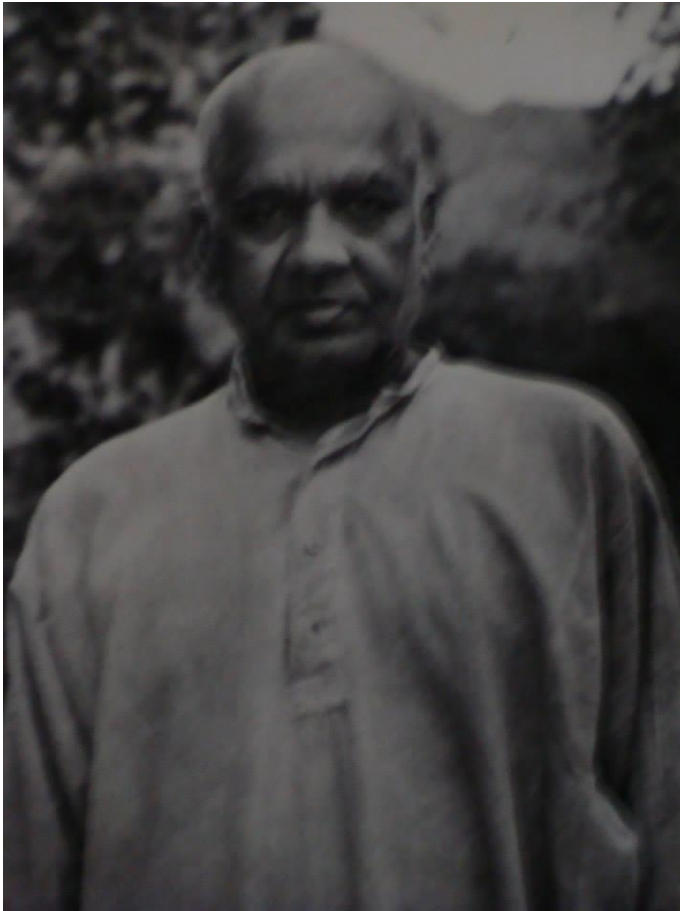
While we were stranded there, we were blessed to get discourses on Vedanta and Brahmasutras by highly spiritual our own Swami Chaitanyananda and Bramha Rishis. It was one of the happiest moments of my life. We also had a chance to serve the Saadhus in the Uttarkashi area. Everyone in the area were calm and equanimous and life was as normal as it could be in the face of extreme adversity.

The 20 youths (Age 15-25) from Noida who were part of Chinmaya Mission Youth camp returned to Uttarkashi ashram finally after stranding 7 days at the Gangotri; half of them walked down the hills and half of them by helicopter. They had only one piece of clothing that they were wearing and scarce food and shelter. We were constantly looking to see how these kids can be rescued. Eventually they all returned to Uttarkashi and back to Noida.

On our return trip, we dared to cross more than 30 landslides in the mountains and finally reached to deserted Rishikesh/Haridwar to see the what Ganga brought to its banks.

Really felt empty to leave the place behind especially for the people who could not make it like us as well as many lives who are still stuck at the mountains of Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

Our heartfelt thanks to Tapovan Chinmayam Kuti Ashram at Uttarkashi, which accommodated us in every possible way, gave us every resource to bring calm and peace within and without. Thanks everybody for your prayers and help.





Importance of Guru

Sanyogeeta Sawant

Editor's Note: This reflection was shared during celebration of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda Birthday in May 2013.

Today at the request of Swamiji, I am going to talk on the importance of a "Guru" and on the occasion of Chinmaya Jayanti, Swami Chinmayananda as a "Guru".

"I do not want to convert others to Hinduism- I want to convert Hindus to Hinduism"

When Gurudev spoke these words, he may have been talking about many people, but when I read this, the person who came to mind was me.

I remember an incident which occurred in the first few years after I had come to the U.S. One afternoon two young girls from the Church of Latter Day Saints knocked on the door and asked if I had a few minutes. When I had invited them in, they began to talk about a book which they had which they wanted me to keep. I don't recall the entire conversation but after listening to them politely for a few minutes and realizing their true intentions behind talking to me, I said I was a Hindu and we had a holy book too called the Geeta. If they were willing to listen to me I would tell them about the Geeta. They politely declined and left. Thank goodness they did not take me up on my offer! It would have only showed I did not know anything about the Geeta. Now, after 3 years of listening to Swami Dheerananda Geeta discourses I hope I know more!

All of us generally experience something or events in life which lead us to the path to spirituality. For me, although I initially started coming to Chinmaya Mission for the Balalvihar classes I started to enjoy

listening to Swami Dheeranada . That year I lost my Dad suddenly and listening to and understanding the Geeta was instrumental in my coming to terms with it. I started reading small booklets and listening to CDs in the car on my long commute to work. For someone like me who does not understand Sanskrit or was not particularly religious to begin with, to understand the scriptures is a Herculean task. Of course I need a Guru.

So what is a Guru and why is it important to have one?

According to the dictionary, the definition of a Guru is:

- a. Hindu religious or spiritual leader
- b. someone who other people respect and go to for advice about a particular subject e.g A management Guru

Derived from the Sanskrit word "Guru"- "Gu" denotes the spiritual ignorance that most of mankind is in."Ru" represents the radiance of spiritual knowledge that dispels that ignorance.

According to Swami Chinmayananda:

"Anyone who can elicit a continual feeling of faith and devotion in us is our Guru. If we expect a Guru to transform us to Godhood by a touch, we shall wait in vain".

Having a teacher to guide us in any field is invaluable. What if children were told to educate themselves in modern sciences, without any teacher or any access to prior knowledge gained over centuries? What if we had to reinvent the

wheel in every walk of life, without having access to knowledge that was already available from authorities in the field? If this were the case, we would spend a lifetime trying to educate ourselves without making much headway or perhaps even going down a wrong path.

In the same way, a guide is very much required in our spiritual journey too.

The Guru Shishya parampara is a most valued and time tested Indian way of conveying knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge was considered sacred and could not be bought or sold.

The knowledge of Vedanta and the scriptures is complex and although one can read books there is no “crash course” in it. In fact trying to market it and misinterpreting it can be detrimental and dangerous –as author Gita Mehta’s book Karma Cola demonstrates.

Swami Chinmayanada says:

“Self redemption must come ultimately from ourselves. The external props, such as temples, idols and gurus, are all encouragements and aids. They must be intelligently used to help build up inner perfection.”

“With inner purity, the student comes to be guided more and more by the intellect. In fact, the real guru is the pure intellect within; the purified, deeply aspiring mind is the disciple. The guru is nothing but pure Consciousness, absolute Bliss, and eternal Wisdom. “

How do you find the right Guru?

I remember Swamiji telling us that when one is ready spiritually, the Guru will find you. Gurudev’s life actually provides us with the best example of this.

Although he grew up in a traditional Hindu household, in his youth Balakrishnan Menon(as he was then known) was quite the rebel. However events in his life led him to question the deeper meaning of life. As most of you know while working for The National Herald, Balakrishnan decided to write an exposé on what he believed to be the bluff of the swamis in the Himalayan regions. To investigate and uncover such veils of alleged sanctity, he travelled to, Swami Sivananda's ashram in Rishikesh. However, this was not to be so, as Balakrishnan's journey to expose others ended up in exposing himself to his own spiritual revolution and evolution. Swami Sivanananda was the one who initiated him to sanyasa, but when he realized Gyan Yoga was the path for his young disciple he sent him to Swami Tapovan to study vedantic knowledge.

The rest as we know is history. Gurudev’s every breath was a teaching.

Finally,

The grace and teachings of a Guru are like rain which showers equally on the earth but it flows off the tall mountains and fills the craters of the earth. No, these are not my words, but I find the meaning inspirational. It means that, metaphorically speaking, you cannot be the mountain(which symbolizes ego), and let the rain flow off you. No, you have to be the craters(thirst for knowledge), that get filled.

On the occasion of Gurudev’s birthday what would be a better Guru dakshina to our Gurus including Swami Dheerananda than to be better disciples or students.

Hari Om!

How to Receive Guru's Grace

Swami Chidananda, Divine Life Society

We have been told by our scriptures that guru kripa is a wonderful, mysterious factor that will enable the aspirants to seek and to attain the summum bonum of life, Self- Realization, vision of God (darśan), or liberation (mokṣa). Whether the disciple does spiritual practice (sādhana) or not, whether one is deserving or undeserving, guru kripa sets aside all normal laws that operate in the spiritual plane and takes one to transcendental bliss. If we are to believe the scriptures, we should say that there is nothing except guru kripa needed for us to attain perfection in life. If it is true that the guru is an infinite ocean of mercy, that his kripa ever showers upon all seekers, whether they are qualified or not, then by this time we should all be āpta kāma. Is that so? No. We find very much to our vexation that we are caught up, ignorance is there; illusion is there; we are deceived at every turn by our own lower self.

Wherein lies the defect? If both the above statements are true and yet disciples are still very much earthbound, something else must be wrong. What is that something else? We don't have the temerity to say that the scriptures are untrue. At the same time, we do not assert that the guru is not compassionate, that the guru does not shower his kripa upon us.

If we reflect upon this, some factors come up before us that are of serious consideration. Guru kripa is undeniably a divine force that can turn even a stone into the infinite sacidānanda, let alone a conscious being. There is absolutely not the least bit of exaggeration in that statement and the fact that the guru is always gracious. But then, guru kripa has not only to be bestowed, not only to be given, but it

has also to be received. In receiving it, we immortalized ourselves, divinized ourselves.

Unlimited charity may be bestowed by a generous- hearted donor who calls upon all who are in need to come and take. But not all the wealth of the world will be of any avail to an indigent one if he will not avail himself of this great opportunity and become a receiver. And therefore it is that the great Lord Jesus said, "Seek and it shall be found; knock and it shall open unto you; ask and it shall be given" It is not as though there is any dearth of divine munificence, divine grace, or guru kripa. Light is not lacking, but then there is a law that we have to ask, we have to seek, and we have to knock and having done it, we must be ready to receive. If this is present, then guru kripa works all wonders: it will flow into us and raise us to the highest realm of immortality, eternal light, and infinite bliss.

But then, how can we receive it? How should we conduct ourselves if we are to be ready to receive this grace? By discipleship. For, the question of Guru and guru kripa arises only for the disciple. For those who are not of the category named disciple, it is said that mercy, compassion, grace and ashirvad will be given, but not guru kripa. When I say guru kṛpā, it is something special, something mysterious, something that bestows not anything merely of this earth, but gives the highest thing which human life is here for. A devotee may get the blessings of a saint, the grace of a saint. He may also be blessed and partake of the power of his compassion; but, for the attainment of the gift of guru kripa, we have first to be disciples.

How is it that one may be a disciple? It is not the Guru that accepts the disciple, but the disciple has to first accept the Guru. The disciple first of all has to render himself a sishya. Then he becomes deserving of and a rightful claimant to guru kripa . It is immaterial whether the Guru says “Yes, you are my sishya” or not.

Inasmuch as guru kripa takes us to the highest state, discipleship is qualifying ourselves to attain that highest state or the realisation of ourselves as satchidananda. Therefore, first of all, we have to feel that our present state as jiva—spirit enmeshed in a very agonizing cage of flesh and bone—is something which is not part of our real nature, is something undesirable, something which we have to get rid of so that then we shall have peace and happiness.

Let us reflect and analyze: how many of us have got this feeling? How many sincerely wish to break out of this cage? If we have this feeling, then we are trying to grow into discipleship. Then we can approach the Freed One, for the Guru is the Freed One and one capable of freeing also. Then we can approach this Freed One and pray to him: “Oh, free us from this body.” This prayer may not be expressed or articulated; but it must be recited from the innermost core of our being every moment of our life. Then alone can we expect guru kripa. If this pain and agony are not there, it is worthwhile trying to generate them. But such is the covering veil of dark maya that we are perfectly satisfied with our position.

External Practice

To feel the necessity of mukti, Freedom, Divine Consciousness, of the higher Spiritual Life, we should resort to satsang, to study of scriptures; and we should paint vividly before our mental eye the wretchedness of human life on earth. These things will generate mumukshutva (desire for liberation).

Mumukshutva is the first step if we have even to think of guru kripa.

Then we have to serve the Guru. Service is that mysterious something which pulls down the barrier that stands between us and the influence of guru kripa. Ego is the greatest barrier. Our old self-conceit and preconceived notions form a formidable second barrier. For all of this, service is the effective barrier-breaker.

What is the service of the Guru? Service of the Guru is to try our level best to carry out his upadesha, carry out the teachings of the Guru. Upon his sublime instructions we have to mould our life. We should also try to mould ourselves into that pattern of which he himself is a visible ideal. The secret of carrying out the instructions of the Guru to our humble best is a willing obedience in spirit. That is the most important thing. Readiness to bow completely down to the earth. Accept him as the leader and obey him. This obedience should be assiduously cultivated, for every aspect of our old nature, of our lower nature, our mental part, our indriyas, antahkarana, tries to see that we are prevented from developing this obedience in spirit; every time we move towards this attitude of obedience, the prompting will come from our old habit, from our preconceived notions: “Let us go the way in which we have been accustomed.” This instinct of ages has to be overcome and broken down.

There must be joy in obedience to the Guru; and there should be a real craving in the spirit that “I should obey.” To be a disciple you should obey even in dream; the idea of doing anything which is contrary to the spirit of the Guru’s instructions should never arise in our consciousness. Day and night our sadhana should be to cultivate this attitude to perfection. If this is done, we are sufficiently on the way to qualify ourselves to receive guru kripa. This is the external part of the sadhana.

Live as Divine Beings

Inwardly we have also to break down the old set of ideas which somehow or other has crept into us regarding the Guru, his grace and its functions. It is a hard task, but it has to be done. Because, to the disciple, the nature of the Guru is not human. We should be completely blind to the human side of the Guru, and we should be conscious only of the divinity that he is. Then alone will we be able to partake of this kripa which will transform us from the lower human into the transcendental divine. Our relationship with the Guru is purely divine, purely spiritual, and as long as we have not completely rubbed out the last vestige of human relationship with the Guru, we shall not be able to enter into the divine spiritual relationship with the Guru.

Being our Guru we expect that he should relieve us of small troubles, bodily ills, financial difficulties, domestic problems, little paltry matters of this earthly life. We will get all that if we pray to the Guru, but that is all that we will get. That mysterious lofty thing called guru kripa will not flow into us. Therefore, first of all we should try to efface all human relationships with the Guru. For that, subjectively we have to work out an inner transformation; until that is done; his divine nature will not become fully revealed to us. As long as we consider ourselves to be human beings, earthly beings, with all the wants, limitations and weaknesses of earthly beings, we cannot fully enter into the awareness of the Guru in his absolute, divine essence. Therefore, our sadhana should be to generate divine consciousness and shed our human consciousness. If we begin to live here as divine beings with a divine destiny, then gradually the guru kripa and the divine aspect of the Guru will begin to manifest, and we shall begin to partake of the guru kripa.

We have to make the start. From the very beginning to the very climax, all has to be got from the divine

source. Until we make ourselves fit and generate the divine consciousness that we are not human beings, but we are souls in bondage—who only need a little transforming touch of guru kripa —we will not be able to fully make use of the Guru as the divine being.

To illustrate this point: A prince, who has lost his heritage and does not know that he is a prince, happens, in his wanderings, to stand before his father's palace, being cowed down in the consciousness of a beggar. What is the maximum he will ask? He will ask: "Give me shelter for the night; give me food for the day." And that is what he will get. Supposing this very prince is made to realize: you are the heir to the kingdom. Then he will demand the whole kingdom. He will not demand food and shelter only.

Similarly, we have first of all to develop in us the consciousness that we are immortal beings, we are in essence satchidananda. Then we can demand that satchidananda consciousness from the Guru and the Guru will be able to give.

Patience and Humility

Finally, we have to take into consideration one more factor. Even if someone were to tell the prince that he is a prince, and he is to go to his father and demand the heritage, perhaps he is a minor. The king may say: "All right, give him a palace, and he will become entitled to his heritage, the kingdom, when he attains majority." Even so, there may be certain inner qualifications which are necessary for the full and effective reception of divine grace; until they are attained by the disciple, he will have to wait. Therefore, even after having seemingly attained all the qualifications of the ideal disciple, we have to wait in humility and in patience. We cannot arrogate to ourselves a perfection which is only visible to the discerning vision of a divine sight. Patience and humility in the spiritual realm may have to extend over a period of decades. We have to wait like a dog

at the doorstep of the Guru for a whole lifetime if need be. There is no loss here, for the goal is immortal life, freedom.

If we have become willing servants and willing, obedient disciples, then it is the natural law that guru kripa will flow into us unasked. But, let us not commit the mistake of dictating to the Guru how his kripa should flow into us. For we have within ourselves desires, our own ideas of what is good and bad, what is pleasant and unpleasant, desirable and undesirable; and we want guru kripa to conveniently adjust and adapt itself to our needs and fancies. Guru kripa may come in an unpleasant form. It may come in the form of a series of disappointments. We may think that the Guru has not bestowed his kripa upon us; but that disappointment itself will be his kripa . Many things may be seemingly good and pleasant, but it may be hurtful to our spirit, and that the Guru alone can perceive and judge. As a fond, careful mother, he may deny us that desire. But it will be the greatest manifestation of guru kripa, meant to remove all the obstacles and dangers that are in our path, and to take us nearer and nearer to the consciousness of satchidananda. We are not fit to judge whether we are ready to receive guru kripa or not and what form it should take.

The best thing is to humbly leave everything to the Guru: "I do not know whether I am a disciple or not. Therefore, O Ocean of Mercy and Compassion, pray make me a proper disciple. Generate in me that mumukshutva that makes me a disciple, and give me the spirit of willing obedience. Help me in trying to follow thy instructions. Help me in trying to mould myself upon the pattern set up by thee." This must be our constant prayer. And by this alone shall we be able to draw the kripa of our Guru and make our life fruitful. And the perfect way of praying is trying our best to be a real disciple.

Editor's Note: This Article is reprinted from "Mananam Series" on "Guru: The Guiding Light".

Qualifications of a True Disciple

Swami Chinmayananda

Q. What are the qualifications of a true disciple?

A. The qualifications necessary for a good disciple are exhaustively indicated in Vivekachoodamani, written by Shankara. Generally, the fit student must be sharp in intellect, rich in general knowledge, and have a ready physical and mental obedience to act according to the instructions. Apart from these, he must have a well-developed discriminative intellect to detect the play of the Changeless Existence in the world of finite things. Second, having thus detected the right from wrong, he must have the detachment to courageously walk out from the path of false values and pursue diligently the righteous path. Third, he must intelligently learn the art of economizing his mental vitalities through self-control, concentration, endurance, conviction, and inner quietude. His entire pursuit at the feet of the Teacher must be prompted by an irresistible urge- felt by him- to liberate himself from the thralldom of the imperfect matter- vestures around him.

The Scriptural literature in India indicates not only the qualifications necessary for the student, but also the qualifications necessary for the teacher. He would be a lucky student if he can discover a teacher who is not only well-versed in scriptural knowledge but also is well-established in Reality. It is, to an extent, necessary that we have a teacher who lives up to the ideals. But such ones are very rare; therefore, the student must have sufficient discriminative intellect to watch for the teacher's imperfections, and must discreetly learn to understand what he says and follow it diligently, rather than copy the teacher's activities on the outer plane. It is only the unintelligent emotional student

who will blindly follow the teacher, seeking his identification with him. A Vedic student will love only his life and not somebody's borrowed life. As far as the adoring student is concerned, he will readily overlook the limitations of the teacher, because his love for the preceptor will override mere outward imperfections. Thus, there is no tragedy between a discriminative student and a truly established teacher.

As far as others are concerned, they will always see imperfections everywhere and, therefore, are not serious students at all. They have only a crow- like intellect, which sees filth everywhere. In fact, the Purana declare and illustrate that no one is perfect so long as he lives in physical equipment. We can pinpoint a thousand defects in Lord Shri Ramachandra or in Lord Krishna. They simply indicate that the embodied can never claim absolute Perfection.

Unlike the material sciences, Vedantic sastras is not a knowledge that is gained objectively from the book; we have to practice the teachings with diligence. Students of Vedanta must have devotion to the teacher, so that they may learn to tune themselves to the right mental attitude after careful observation of the intellectual reaction of the teacher to the external world of happenings and beings. Then alone will students, energized by discrimination and devotion, be truly qualified to receive that Supreme Knowledge.

Editor's Note: This Article is reprinted from "Mananam Series" on "Guru: The Guiding Light".

Jnana Yoga and Self Realization - XIV

Acharya Sadananda

Role of the mind: The role of the mind in self-realization has to be clear. There is always a question that rises in the minds of the seekers, even after many years of Vedantic study. aham bhrahmaasmi – who realizes that or says that? Essentially, who is that aham that says I am Brahman. Brahman does not have to realize that I am Brahman. If atma or self is also sat chit ananda Brahman – it cannot become Brahman – it is Brahman all the time and therefore no need for it to realize any thing. Mind of a jiiva is limited inert entity – it cannot become Brahman or realize that I am Brahman. Then who realizes that I am Brahman? A simple answer is – the one who is asking the question is the one who realizes that I am Brahman. Who is asking the question? A conscious entity that I am, identifying with BMI, which is essentially the ahankaara or ego, is asking the question. Then that limited ego entity realizes. That realization involves an understanding that I am not the limited BMI that I am currently identifying as myself and asking the question of who that aham is, but I am the infinite eternal sat-chit-ananda swaruupam. The answer is still vague since that - I am - is still not aatma, since aatma need not have to realize neither it is really ego, since ego cannot be infinite aatma. There is some apparent contradiction here, which is inevitable. It is like ring saying I am not really a ring that I thought that I am with limited name and form, but my true nature is I am the brilliant glistering gold, the substantive for all gold ornaments in the universe. Who says that? It is ring only that says I am not the ring but gold. How can ring say that I am not the ring while being a ring? Ring realizes that the ring is only a name and form for transactional purposes but in truth, I am only gold and not a ring. Gold does not have to discover that I am gold since it is all the time gold only. However, ring has to drop the notions that I am limited by the name and form, as they are just superimpositions or adhyaasa on the substantive gold that I am. Actually, there is no ring at all and what is there is only gold but in varieties of names and forms- That one who thought I am a ring has to realize dropping all the

wrong notions about itself. If one asks - Is there really no ring at all? Well there is a ring different from bangle and bracelet, and utility of each is different– but those differences in names, forms and utilities are only superficial for the purpose of transaction only or vyaavahaarika satyam - relatively real at transactional level. However, from the point of gold, there are no rings and bangles. Well – there are rings and bangles; but gold says that is only my expression or vibhuuti or glory to be able to express myself in varieties of names and forms. Gaudapaada call this as swaabhaavikam or natural for me to exist in varieties of names and forms. Hence the contradiction is only apparent since all the distinctions exist only at transactional level, but from the point of absolute truth there are no distinctions of any kind. Krishna makes a similar, apparently contradictory, statement that ‘all beings are in Me, nay none of them are in Me– look at my glory Arjuna’. There is a plurality from the point of vyavahaara while there is no plurality from the point of paaramaarthika. Thus all contradictions are resolved once one understands the reference state from which the statements are made. The confusion arises only if one mixes the references state. That in fact is the definition of adhyaasa or superimposed error as Shankara defines adhyaasa as satyaanRita mithuniikaraNam that mixing of absolute truth and untruth, where truth is that which is not negated at any time.

Hence from the point of self-realization, the conscious entity that identifies itself with the limited BMI and takes the role of an ego or ahankaara has to recognize that I am the pure all pervading consciousness without any distinctions of any kind. The difficulty arises only because this recognition occurs in the mind only. Hence it is also called akhanDaakaara vRitti – an unbroken form of thought of oneself as I am, I am, I am...aham aham tayaa spurati hRit swayam – I am, I am, I am, ... raises spontaneously in the core of the individual, says Bhagavan Ramana.

amRitabindu Upanishad says:

manayeava manushyaanaam kaaraNam bandha
mokshayaH|

bandhaaya vishayaasaktam muktair nirvishayam sRitam |

For all human beings, mind alone is responsible for both bondage and liberation. The bondage arises with attachments to the sense objects and liberation is freedom from dependence on sense objects for happiness. prajahaati yadaa kaamaan sarvaan partha manogataan| aatmanyeva aatmanaa tuShTaH .. the one who is free from all desires for sense objects and one who revels in himself by himself is a jnaani – says Krishna. Sarvam paravaSham duHkham sarvam aatmavaSham sukham – dependence on any thing else for happiness is sorrow and dependence on one's own self is happiness – says Manu. Most of this was discussed in the previous posts but we emphasize here since this confusion is deep rooted for many seekers. In terms of summarizing comments we state the following:

1. Brahman is infinite. Therefore, by definition, there cannot be anything other than Brahman. Hence the scripture says it is one without a second, advitiyam. It is expressed as homogeneous eternal conscious-existence without any parts or properties; and therefore imperceptible. Hence it is beyond any concept including space and time, objectifications or conceptualizations.

2. Self or aatma is also existent consciousness, therefore infinite, and all pervading entity. Hence it cannot be different from Brahman. Existence-consciousness is indivisible.

3. If I do not know myself that means if I have ignorance of my true nature, then I take myself to be something other than myself and suffer the consequence of that misunderstanding. The self-ignorance caused suffering is called samsaara. The superimposed limitations on myself due to identification of myself with the limited body, mind and intellect, BMI, is bondage.

4. Liberation, moksha or freedom from samsaara, or nirvana, is then knowing myself as myself as infinite existence-consciousness which is nothing but Brahman. I do not become Brahman- I realize that I am Brahman. One

cannot become infinite; one has to recognize one is already infinite- that recognition is required since one has a notion that one is finite.

5. I know that I exist and I also know that I am a conscious entity, but I do not know that I am limitless too. I take myself as existent BMI or conscious BMI or qualified existence-consciousness (aham jiivaasmi –I am an individual) than pure unqualified limitless existence-consciousness (aham brahmaasmi). Limitlessness is a state of happiness, since any limitation causes inadequacy and unhappiness. Not knowing that I am pure existence-consciousness which is limitless, I mistake myself to be the existent-limited BMI. All my pursuits in life are to gain that limitless state of my true nature, or put it in mundane terms to gain absolute inexhaustible happiness. All pursuits to gain the limitless state or pure happiness miserably fail, since I am trying to solve a problem where there is no problem to solve. Hence Vedanta says you are not what you think you are, but you are indeed the limitless existence-consciousness which is of the nature of pure happiness. Hence the solution to the problem is to recognize my true nature or my swaruupam by getting rid of the wrong notions about myself or misunderstandings of who I think I am. Hence the tat tvam asi statement, the teacher indicating you are already that what you are longing for.

The question that is posed is who is that I that has this misunderstanding or ignorance of myself and who is the one that is going to get rid of this misunderstanding and realize I am Brahman. I cannot say Brahman has ignorance since Brahman is pure unadulterated existence-consciousness. I cannot really say jiiva has ignorance since jiiva is a notion arising due to ignorance. There is an inherently an interdependence (anyonya aashraya) like seed and tree situation in terms of which is a cause and which is an effect. Inherent problem arises because ignorance cannot have a beginning and therefore jiiva notion is also beginning-less.

At this stage, it is important to recognize that mind includes all the four components – 1. the emotional faculty, manas, 2. the intellectual faculty or buddhi, 3. the memory, chitta and 4. ego or ahankaara. We use the generic word mind to indicate any or all of the four. Mind

is the instrument for knowledge. Hence, I need the mind to gain knowledge. Without the mind as in deep sleep state, no knowledge can take place. Without the mind, I cannot even know my ignorance, as in deep-sleep state. However mind itself is inert. Inert things cannot know anything. Then how does the knowledge take place? This is the greatest miracle of all miracles. It is wonder of all wonders to the degree that everyone takes it for granted without questioning how that happens. By the very presence of the consciousness, the inert subtle body becomes sentient and dynamic. The consciousness illumines in the buddhi which is the subtlest and from buddhi, the mind and from the mind the sense organs and the rest of the gross body. Shankara says in Atma bodha –

sadaa sarvagatopyaatmaa na sarvataavabhaasate |

bhudhyaaveva bhaaseta swaccheShu pratibimbavat | |

Although the self is all pervading, it does not illumine everywhere, it illumines in the intellect like the light getting reflected by the mirror. Purity of the mirror determines the quality of the reflection. The reflectability depends not on the consciousness but on the suitability of the object that is getting illumined. Hence, consciousness has nothing to do with illumination yet in its very presence the matter becomes dynamic and becomes enlivening. It is like the sun shining all by himself, yet in its very presence life pulsates on earth, but not in other planets.

Scripture says that after gross and subtle bodies are created, He - as though - entered into it; this statement is called anupravesha statement; occurs in both Ch. Up and Tai. Up. He being a conscious entity as though entered into the BMI to enliven the equipments and make them dynamic. We deliberately used the word – as though- since He being infinite cannot really enter into anything, since He is all-pervading. It is similar to I creating the whole dream world and then I myself -as though- enter into it as a part of jiiva with a limited dream BMI that is different from the rest of things and beings in the dream. Similarly, He being one – as though – enters into every conceivable jiiva that has appropriate BMI conducive for His entrance. Hence Krishna declares – kshetrajnam ca api maam viddhi sarva kshetreShu bhaarat. Know Me as the

knower of the fields in all fields. Minds with the reflected consciousness now become local knowers or pramaatas. The reflected consciousness becomes now a source of illumination for other inert entities. It is like moon because of the reflected light from the sun becoming a source of illumination for objects in the night, although moon does not have illumination of its own.

I, the conscious entity, who has no knowledge of my true nature, identify with the mind and through the mind gain the knowledge (pramaa) of the unknown (prameya) using a well-defined means of knowledge, pramaaNaa. In addition, I, the conscious entity identify with the mind as ego or ahankaara, owns up the knowledge as an agent as I am the knower, pramaataa. That I am the knower is also a thought in the mind. Hence when the mind is awake, the jnaana prakriya or process of knowledge takes place. According advaita, knowledge is said to occur when the light of consciousness illumines the object of knowledge – just as I perceive the objects in a pitch dark room as I focus flash light on them. Flash light only reveals the objects that are there. It does not create the objects for me to see. Without the flash light no knowledge of the objects can occur, since objects being inert and are not self-shining to reveal themselves. In the same way, for knowledge to occur, advaita says, the light of consciousness must illumine the object of knowledge. Now we will discuss how this process occurs during perception. More details are discussed in the knowledge series.

Perception is the direct means of knowledge (or PramaaNaa) – as soon as I open my eyes and if all other secondary causes are conducive (my sense organs functioning and there is enough light for me to see) I cannot but perceive the objects. Senses perceive the attributes only not the substantive, since according to Vedanta substantive for all the objects in the universe is Brahman which is imperceptible. Thus eyes can see colors and forms, ears the sounds etc. To see the forms, the external reflected light from the object in front enters through eyes and forms an image on the retina. This image is transmitted to the brain via optical nerve system as an electrical signal which is now translated into an image of the object in the mind in the form of a vRitti or a thought. The last step is like a programming language

translating the electrical inputs into machine language software. Thus brain acts like hardware while mind acts like software memory. The stereographic image is formed due to presence of two eyes displaced by about 7 degrees. The current scientific knowledge is limited to un-code this process language. Traditionally, this mechanics is explained in advaita (Vedanta Paribhasha) as mind going out with sense organs and engulfing the object sensing the attributes of the object thus forming the vRitti in the mind. This is also does not explain how attributive knowledge is translated into vRitti. For the sense of smell, we know that the fragrant molecules have to reach the nose and for the sense of touch, the object has to come into contact with the skin. The sound waves have to reach the ears for cognition. In essence the processes are similar to image formation in a mirror where the attributive qualities of color and form are imaged by the mirror. In the image formation the attributes of the object (the original) are inseparable from their locus yet an image is formed reflecting the qualities of the object. The substantive of the object remains with the original. Hence we can define the vRitti as the image transformation of perceptual attributive content of the object on to the mind via sense organs. Quality of the image depends on both the mind and the senses transmitting the image. As the vRitti rises in the mind the reflected light of consciousness from the mind illumines the vRitti as it forms and by the illumination the knowledge of the vRitti takes place. The contents of the vRitti are the attributes of the object that the senses have gathered starting from form and colors. From the attributes, the mind infers that there is an object out there with the attributes as imaged in the mind. A person who is color blind will only see what he has imaged based on his sense input. Up to this is mechanics. Vedanta Paribhaasha discusses the perceptuality condition, the contribution from advaita.

Perceptuality condition: The essence of perception involves the following as per advaita. We have discussed before any object is nothing but substantive Brahman expressed as existence with the attributes characteristic of the object. Thus object is nothing but existence plus the attributive content of the object that includes form, color, etc. Sense can only image the attributes on to the mind. Existence is all-pervading. Hence vRitti that is image of the object is now existence with superimposed attributes as

gathered by the individual senses and projected on the mind screen. Thus vRitti is existence with imaged attributes in contrast to the outside object which is existence with original attributes. With the reflected light of consciousness from the mind, the vRitti or thought is now known. The knowing process is completed when the perceptuality condition is met. The perceptuality condition is met when the existence of the object in the form of the vRitti unites with the consciousness of the subject (i.e. reflected light of consciousness via the mind). That means existence expressed as the image of the object out there (the SAT part) unites with the consciousness (the chit part) of the subject (knower) then I will become conscious of the existence of the object out there. That is the essence of the perceptual knowledge. For anumana or inferential knowledge one can extend the principle where there is no direct object out there but inferred based on vyaatpi or concomitant relation. Even during perception which is direct and immediate, there is some inference involved but not via a vyaapti. For example we see only the frontal image of the object that is visible to us and mind infers by extrapolation the rest of the object. When I see a cow I see the frontal image of the cow but I infer the rest of the cow based on prior image of the generic cow. Like wise the other part of inference during perception is the assumption that there is an object out there based on the attributes that my senses have gathered. The existence of the object is generally confirmed by further transactions involving karmendriyas. Otherwise the perceived object will become hallucination.

Most interesting aspect of the perceptual process is the Brahman expressed as existence in the inert objects is combined with consciousness of the perceiver subject for one to be conscious of the existence of the objects. Without uniting with consciousness, the existence of the object cannot be established. That means world, being inert, cannot be established independent of a conscious entity. On the other hand the conscious entity can exist independent of the inert as in deep sleep state – however, its existence cannot be established without the mind, which is inert, reflecting that consciousness. It is not that mind is creating the world but mind supported by conscious entity is required to have the knowledge of the world. Otherwise the world remains as indeterminate –

that is its existence or non-existence cannot be established.

In essence – I need the mind to recognize that I am not the mind but I am that light of consciousness that is getting reflected by the mind because of which I can recognize both the mind as well as the light of consciousness that I am, that is getting reflected by the mind. It is like seeing the object in room light. As the all pervading light gets reflected by the object, I recognize both the object and more importantly the light that is getting reflected by the object. In fact what I see is only the light of reflection and not the object per se, just like the way I see myself in the mirror. In the same way every thought or vRitti that rises in the mind is seen by the reflection of the light of consciousness. The mind of jnaani shifts its attention to that light that is getting reflected by the thoughts and from that recognizes that I am not the mind but the light of consciousness that is getting reflected. Hence realization is not elimination of the thoughts but shifting the attention from the attributive content of the thoughts to the light of consciousness that is getting reflected and because of which the thought itself is known. Here is where vigilant observation is required without getting lost in the attributive (qualities) content of the thoughts but to the light of consciousness that I am.

With this we have completed the analysis of self-realization process. We will discuss next the jivan mukta status.