

# Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 24, Number 1, January 20, 2014

HAPPY NEW YEAR

HAPPY SANKRANTHI

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## Calendar and Upcoming Events

### Upcoming Events

- Sat-Sun, Feb 22-23, MahaShivaratri celebration during Bala Vihar
- Thur, Feb 27, MahaShivaratri Puja and Celebration
- Sat-Sun, Mar 22-23, 1<sup>st</sup> set of Bala Vihar Class Performances
- Sat-Sun, Mar 27-28, Gita Chanting Competition
- Sat-Sun, Apr 5-6, Sri Rama Navami Celebration
- Mon, April 14, Hanuman Jayanthi Puja & Celebration
- Sat-Sun, Apr 19-20, Spring Break, No Classes

### Study Groups

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

### Bookstore/Library

- Please contact Sri Vijay Singhji by email at [publications@chinmayadc.org](mailto:publications@chinmayadc.org) to order any books, CDs, DVDs, etc.. Browse online at [www.chinmayapublications.com](http://www.chinmayapublications.com)

### Next Issue

- Articles for the next regular bi-monthly issue - March 2014, are due by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014
- Email submissions to [smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org). Submission instructions at [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org),

### Useful Links:

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org)

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust [www.chinmayamission.com](http://www.chinmayamission.com)

Chinmaya Mission West [www.chinmayamission.org](http://www.chinmayamission.org)

Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Courses [www.chinfo.org](http://www.chinfo.org)

Washington Region – Northern VA Chapter website [www.chinmayasomnath.org](http://www.chinmayasomnath.org)

Washington Region – Frederick MD Chapter website [www.chinmayafrederick.org](http://www.chinmayafrederick.org)

Washington Region – Richmond VA Chapter website [www.chinmayadc.org/ActivitiesRichmond.htm](http://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

### सङ्क्रान्ति दिवसस्य शुभाषयाः

अद्य आरभ्य अन्तरिक्षे सूर्यः दक्षिणतः उत्तरपर्यन्तम् प्रवासं करोति ।  
उत्तरायणं प्रसिद्धम् अपि च पुण्यकालम् ।

महाभारते भीष्म पितामहः उत्तरायण पुण्यकालस्य प्रतीक्षाम् करोति स्म, अनन्तरं प्राणं त्यक्तवान् ।  
सः स्वर्गं प्राप्तवान् ।

### SankrAnti Greetings

Starting today, Sun travels from South towards North in the celestial plane. It is called uttarAyaNa (Northern travel) and is considered holy.

In MahAbhAratha, grandsire Bhishma waited for this time to give up his mortal coil. He attained the heavens.

### CMWRC Events Held

- The 2013 Annual Fundraiser was held at at Langley High School in Virginia on Saturday Nov 23. Swami Chidatmananda was the keynote speaker. The keynote speech was followed by a dance program – Chinmaya Natyam - choreographed and directed by Sri Delhi V. Krishnamoorthi and performed by Dr. Archana Shyamsunder and other local artists.
- Pujya Swami Chidatmananda conducted Jnana Yajna during Thanksgiving weekend at Chinmayam on “All Full Nothingness”, based on Adi Sankara’s Dasa Sloki.
- Tapovan and Gita Jayanthi was observed in December (14/15 at Chinmayam, 21/22 at Chinmaya Somnath).
- Pujya Swami Dheerananda conducted Gita Jnana Yajna at Chinmaya Somnath in December (27-30) on Chapter2: verses 37-53.
- New Year Puja and Celebration took place at Chinmaya Somnath and Chinmayam.

### Announcements

- Be on the lookout for 2014 Summer Camp information and online registration. The Maryland Summer Camp will be held from June 23 to July 18, 2014. The Virginia Summer Camp will be held from July 21 to Aug 15, 2014.
- The goal of raising \$1.1M towards Chinmaya Somnath and other capital projects is a bit closer as the total raised stands at \$325K at the start of 2014. Chinmaya Somnath building construction is nearing completion and estimated to be ready for occupation in April!

- The Likhita Japa books have been gathered from all the chapters and are now in the custody of Sri Prakash Soman. They will be placed in the shrine around Feb/March timeframe. Nearly \$8K was raised as part of this effort.
- Rachana – Creative Composition Competition is now underway. All members and children are invited to participate and submit their composition, be it art, photography, music, video, essays or poetry. Announcement and Registration on [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org) website. Submissions due date: February 17, 2014.
- New Sunday Noon Study Group commences at Chinmayam on Jan 26<sup>th</sup>, from Noon to 1PM. It will be moderated by Sri D.C.Raoji/Sri Vijay Kumarji, and the topic is 'Vision of Bhagavad Gita' by Pujya Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda. All are welcome. Please contact Smt Vandana Bapna or Smt Meena Sankar for more information.
- Children are invited to participate in a special dance/drama planned for MahaShivaratri. Please check with your Bala Vihar or session coordinators.
- CMWRC Web Team is looking for volunteers to help with modernization of our website. Check with your local chapter coordinators.

### Current/Upcoming CMWRC Events

- Rachana Competition – see details and registration form on the website.
- Gita Chanting Competition – March 27<sup>th</sup>. Please register and practice.
- Youth Seva Day # 1 – MLK Day Seva: Jan 19/20 – make sandwich for the homeless.
- MahaShivaratri Observation during Bala Vihar sessions – March 22/23 weekend.
- MahaShivaratri Puja and Celebration – March 27 at Chinmayam.



## Rachana: Creative Composition – REGISTRATION FORM

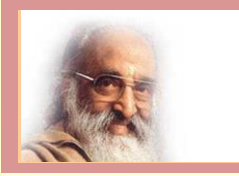


Rachana Registration Form	Example	Complete your entry as example in Word
<b>Creative Category</b> <b>CHOOSE ONLY ONE (Essay / Poem / Artwork / Photography / Audio-Video )</b>	Essay (Choose one only – for multiple submissions, submit a separate registration form with each submission)	
<b>School Grade / CHYK / Adult</b>	10th grade	
<b>Theme / Topic</b>	Favorite Gita verse	
<b>First Name</b>	Vijay	
<b>Middle Name</b>	C	
<b>Last Name</b>	Ramaprakash	
<b>e-mail address</b>	<a href="mailto:vcr@gmail.com">vcr@gmail.com</a>	
<b>Phone number</b>	301-444-4444	
<p><b><i>E-mail one completed Registration form ALONG with one submission and send to <a href="mailto:Rachana@chinmayadc.org">Rachana@chinmayadc.org</a></i></b>  <b><i>EVERY SUBMISSION CHECKLIST:</i></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION   <input type="checkbox"/> REGISTRATION FORM   <input type="checkbox"/> SENT EMAIL</p>		

Participation in Rachana is free and open to all CMWRC members and friends

Please send your questions to [Rachana@chinmayadc.org](mailto:Rachana@chinmayadc.org)

## Chinmaya Mission® Washington Regional Center



## Events & Activities @ Chinmayam



### Creative Contest 'Rachana'

#### Creative Contest: 'Rachana'

CMWRC-CHINMAYAM is pleased to offer 'Rachana' as a creative contest for expression in various categories. The categories include Essays, Poems, Artwork, Photography and Audio-Video. This contest is meant to foster and encourage creativity with flexibility in expression. It is open to all (CMWRC members and non-members) and registration will be free for 2013-2014. There are level specific themes and topics for school age children up to adults. The deadline for submission is Presidents Day, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Spend your leisure hours expressing the latent creativity. We hope you enjoy the process and find it rewarding.

Please read the following guidelines and instructions carefully prior to submissions. Please send all submissions and inquiries to Vandana Bapna at [Rachana@chinmayadc.org](mailto:Rachana@chinmayadc.org)

CHECKLIST	
<input type="checkbox"/>	REGISTRATION FORM – One per SUBMISSION per EMAIL
<input type="checkbox"/>	ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION ENTRY – One per Email (Subject: Rachana) Submission Categories:

	(Essay / Poem / Artwork / Photography / Audio-Video) Note: See instructions below for submitting Original Artwork
<input type="checkbox"/>	EMAILED REGISTRATION FORM AND SUBMISSION TO <a href="mailto:RACHNA@CHINMAYADC.ORG">RACHNA@CHINMAYADC.ORG</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May submit multiple entries, each emailed as a separate submission</li> <li>• Only one entry per creative category per participant</li> <li>• All submissions are to be anonymous –Avoid personal information in the entries so that Judges are not able to identify the submitter.</li> <li>• Six Age Groups: Grade 1-3, Grade 4-6, Grade 7-9, Grade 10-12, College to 29 years Youth, 29 years+ Adults</li> <li>• Registration is free for 2013-2014</li> <li>• Deadline: Feb 17, 2014 Late submissions will not be accepted</li> </ul>	

### Groups and Themes

Group 1: Young Children (grade 1-3) - Imagine my best friend Krishna or Hanuman or Ganesha ...one of them wishes to spend a day with you. What would you do? Where would you take him? What would you show him? Who would you want him to meet? What would you talk about?

Group 2: Children (grade 4-6) - My favorite Ramayana character and why.

Group 3: Children (grade 7-9) - Chinmaya Mission pledge: How do you apply it daily? Describe the challenges. How does it help you? Give examples from your life (e.g., your daily routine, decisions and choices, how you deal with conflict, how you behave with people, etc.) **Or** Do you think/feel God is in everyone.

Group 4: High school (grades 10-12) - Sri Gurudev **Or** Self-Unfoldment: my journey at Chinmaya Mission **Or** My favorite Gita verse and why

Group 5: CHYKs (college up to 29 years) - Inspiration from Scriptures in my daily life

Group 6: Adults (29 +) Sri Gurudev or any glorious spiritual teacher **Or** My favorite Gita verse and why **Or** Sadhana inspired by Satsang at Chinmaya Mission.

### **Categories for Creative Expression**

Different age groups have been given specific topics and themes for participation. There will be choices of different media as below to express the same theme with greater flexibility and creativity. A participant may choose to submit multiple entries-- one each of the various creative categories. For example, a participant may submit an essay, a painting and a poem, all three within their age appropriate themes/topics. Please note that only one entry is allowed per creative expression category per participant. For example, each participant can send only one each, one essay plus one artwork plus one photograph and so on. Please send one submission per registration form per e-mail.

Choose one or more from the following Creative Expression Categories:

Essay- Either Short essay or Long essay up to 1200 word count

Poem

Artwork: Drawing/Sketching/Painting/Sculpting in -- Pencil/ Pastel/ Crayons/ Water color/Acrylics/Oil *and/or* Multimedia

Photography

Audio and Video

### **Registration Guidelines**

Submission deadline will be Presidents Day, Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 by midnight. Registration will be free for 2013-2014 academic year. Registration will be open to all, members, friends and non-members. Entries must be electronically submitted and will be permitted as only one submission per registration form per e-mail to [Rachana@chinmayadc.org](mailto:Rachana@chinmayadc.org). In other words, multiple entries should be sent separately as one entry per e-mail submission. Each entry will receive a confirmation receipt e-mail. Decision on acceptance or rejection of the entry will be communicated only after review. Only one entry is allowed per creative expression category per participant. For example, each participant can send only one each, one essay plus one artwork plus one photograph and so on.

- All entries must be the original and unpublished work of the participant alone. It should be specifically created for this contest (without any other person's assistance) and not be a resubmission from another purpose.
- In order to promote maximum objectivity for scoring
  - o All submissions will be judged as anonymous entries. Please do not use any personal information or names on any entries.
  - o The expert judges have been carefully selected in consensus with our Acharyas. The judge panels will remain anonymous.
- For Essays, Poems, Audio/Video and Photography: Please complete the **Attached registration form** that will include full name and grades for school age children up to grade 12, CHYK (college and young professionals up to 29 years) and Adults 29+ along with your contact e-mail and phone number, the category of creative expression and the chosen theme. E-mail this registration form along with every electronic submission to [Rachana@chinmayadc.org](mailto:Rachana@chinmayadc.org)
  - o All Essay and Poem entries should be edited and formatted as follows: Typed double space and in a 12 point Times Roman font attached as a file in Microsoft Word format. For essays, maximum limit is 1200 words. List source of information wherever applicable (not counted in the word count).
  - o Photographs, Audio and Video files can be sent as an email entry with same guidelines as above. Avoid personal names or information to keep the submissions as anonymous.
  - o Photographs - High resolution image in JPEG or jpg digital format up to 10 MB. No print or film submissions will be accepted as entries.
  - o Audio - Size restriction up to 10 MB (about 5~10 minutes of audio recording) in MP3 format.
  - o Video files in popular digital formats such as MP4, may be placed on drop-box, google-drive, sky-drive or other online storage and link made available in the e-mail submission. Length of video recording should be limited to 5 to 10 minutes.
- For Artwork: Please complete the **Attached registration form** that will include full

name and grades for school age children up to grade 12, CHYK (college and young professionals up to 29 years) and Adults 29+ along with your contact e-mail and phone number, the category of creative expression and the chosen theme. E-mail this registration form along with every electronic submission to [Rachana@chinmayadc.org](mailto:Rachana@chinmayadc.org). Please take a digital photograph or scanned copy of the original Art for publishing in Smrithi publications. **Submit this scanned copy/ digital photograph of the Artwork electronically along with the completed registration form.** Please see details below for Original Artwork submissions.

- o Artwork Guidelines:
- o Maximum size for 2-D 16"x20" ( For 3-D 16"x20"x10")
- o All entries must be completely dry & affixed properly.
- o Entries on paper must be matted or protected appropriately.
- o Artwork on stretched canvas or canvas board need not be matted.
- o Please do not frame the artwork submissions.
- Original Artwork: Before submitting the original, please take a photograph or a scanned copy of the original for publishing in Smrithi publication and submit this as your official registration entry by e-mail as per the guidelines above. **The original Artwork may be submitted to the CMWRC Session coordinators in your session, who will give you a receipt on accepting your entry.** Please do not print your name or any personal information on the Artwork. The Artwork will be assigned an entry number and submitted to the judges as anonymous submission.
- The entries have to meet the basic quality for being acceptable. In addition, submissions that do not meet or that exceed the guideline criteria may not be considered as acceptable entries, and rejected.
- Please note that all submissions become the property of CMWRC collection and the materials may be used as deemed appropriate for publications, promotions or Mission archives. CMWRC reserves the rights to publish the submissions with the participant's name in Smrithi Newsletter and other Chinmaya Publications. CMWRC assumes no responsibility for loss, delayed or incomplete entries as a result of technical



malfunctions.

- All decisions will be final and in consensus with the judge panel's evaluations.

### **Judging Categories**

Diamond: Exceptional entries

Gold: Very good entries

Silver: Good entries

All accepted entries will become a part of the Rachana--Smrithi edition.

### **Recognition**

All accepted entries will be published in Chinmaya Smrithi Newsletter as a tribute to Pujya Sri Gurudev at Chinmaya Jayanti time, in the month of May-June.

Artwork and Photographs will be displayed at an appropriate occasion (after scanning or taking digital photographs to be published in Smrithi edition).

### **Suggestions for Entry Participants**

1. Stick to the subject and topic. Submitting in the proper format is essential, but the substance is the most important part.
2. Submit as a professional format.
3. Follow and demonstrate a clear vision. The participant can address the subject in a variety of ways. Attempt to be creative, clear and persuasive in the approach to the topic with complete, articulate and well supported expressions. Include your perspective, observations and experiences on the works. For older participants, demonstrate how this may have influenced your thinking and attitude.

### **System to Judge**

For Essays/Poems/Written work and Audio/Video: The Judge panel will score the submission for Comprehension/Clarity, Organization, Creativity, Excellence in

Formatting (for example, grammar, spelling and concise language for essays) and Adherence to Contest Guidelines.

For Artwork and Photography: The Judge panel will score the submission for Creativity & Originality, Clarity of Theme, Workmanship (Quality of Art) and Composition & Presentation.

**Unto Sri Gurudev!**

*'Chinmayam Team'*

*22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2013 at 3:30 pm*

[www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org)

[Contact Us](#)

[Annual Calendar Chinmayam 2013-2014](#)

[Chinmayam Chapter at Silver Spring, Maryland](#)



# 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.









Available  
Now on  
Mobile App Stores



Register

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

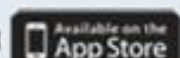
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iPhone



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Google play



BlackBerry



## Chinmaya Somnath Construction Progress

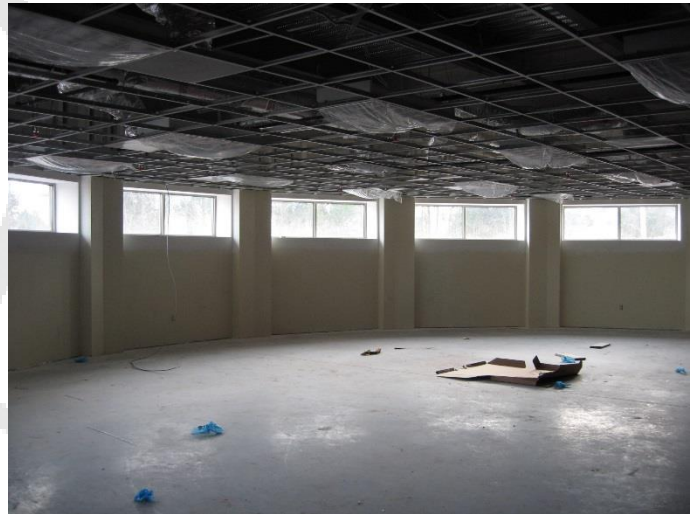
As of Dec 31, 2013

Chinmaya Somnath is a new facility taking shape in Chantilly Virginia to serve growing needs CMWRC ins Fairfax and Loudon counties (Northern VA).

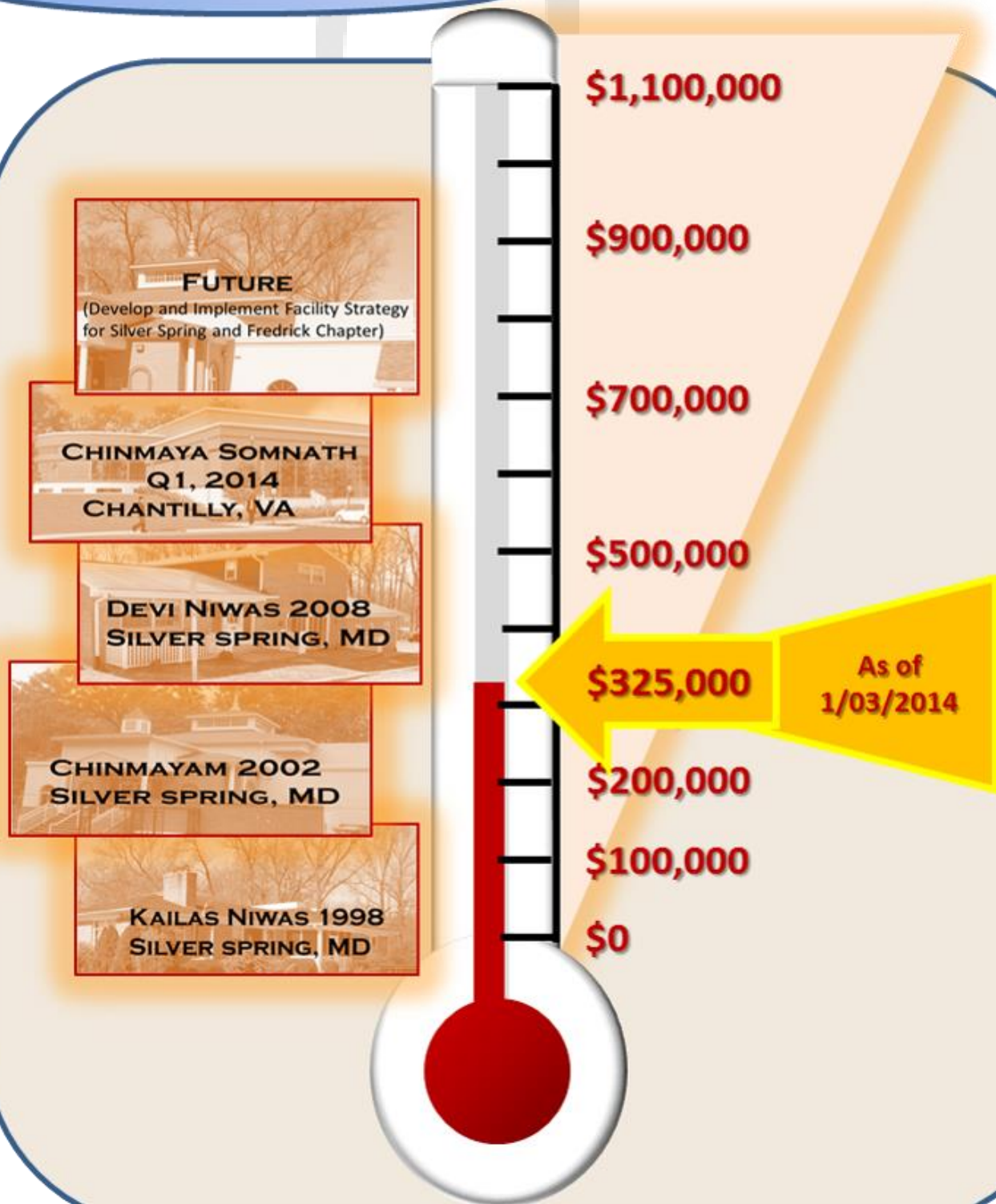
Most of the building exterior work including masonry and installation of Windows has been completed, Drywall installation in all class rooms, sanctuary hall, basement and lobby area has been completed, installation of the sprinkler system piping and sprinkler heads have been completed, Installation of metallic grids for ceiling in the basement has been completed and light fixtures in all class rooms have been installed, Elevator equipment has been received and stored, contracts for security, and audiovisual systems have been placed.

The estimated date of completion is April 2014.

Attached are some of the pictures as of December:



# Fundraising Goal: 1.1 Mil





## 2013 Annual Fundraiser

The 2013 Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC) Annual Fundraiser was held on Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> at Langley High School in Virginia. Swami Chidatmananda, head of CM Andhra Pradesh, India, was the keynote speaker. The keynote speech was followed by 'Chinmaya Natyam' dance program. The evening festivities were kicked off by Bala Vihar children attending Shloka classes. All three chapters of CMWRC were represented.



Swami Chidatmananda being welcomed with Poornamkumbham.



Swamiji settle down for the start of the festivities



Acharya Pramilaaji greeting Swami Chidatmanandaji



Invocation by Shloka class children



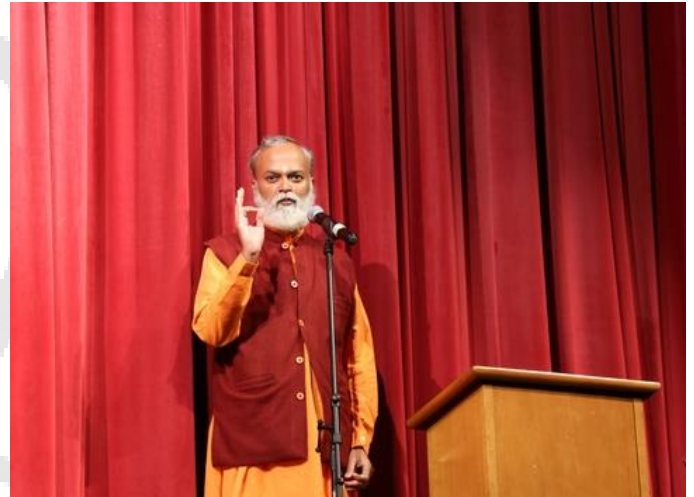




Rapt attention as children sing



Srimathi Lakshmi Linga introduces Swami Chidatmananda



Swami Chidatmanandaji's keynote address



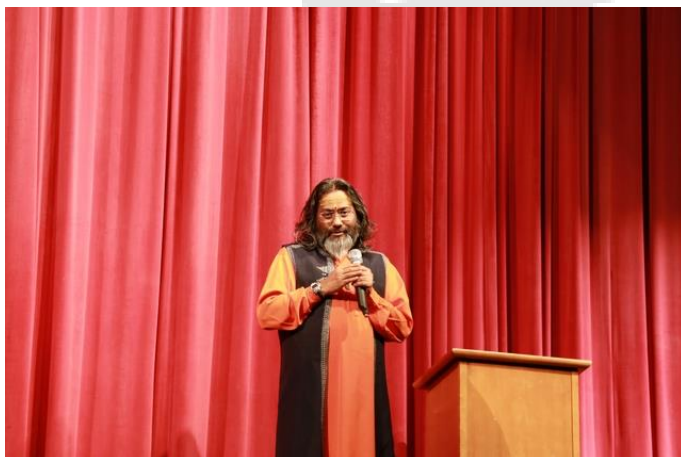
Swami Dheerananda presenting a token of thanks to Swami Chidatmananda



Delhi V. Krishnamoorthi sings as his disciple Dr. Archana Shyamsunder performs Bharat Natyam



A fundraising appeal made during intermission



Swamiji makes Fundraising appeal



Fundraising appeal by Sri Shyamsunder (Dr. Archana's spouse)





A vote of thanks by Sri Ramesh Golla

Various local artists joined Dr Archana as part of Chinmaya Natyam





## **2013 Thanksgiving Jnana Yajna by Swami Chidatmananda**

### **“All Full Nothingness” – based on Adi Sankara’s Dasa Sloki**

#### **Event Summary**

In response to a question from his guru, Sri Govindapada, Adi Sankaracharya composed ‘Dasa Sloki’, a ten verse composition on the nature of the infinite; the pure, divine self; and the relationship of the self with the infinite. This work summarizes the knowledge of the Vedas and elaborates upon the mahavakya “Tat Twam Asi” or “That You Are”. This work is considered a treatise on Advaita Vedanta.

A fifteen century spiritual master, Madhusudana Saraswathi, inspired by vision of Sri Krishna, elaborated upon Dasa Sloki in his work – Siddhantha Bindu. In the 20th century, another spiritual master, Ramaraya Kavi, inspired by Hayagriva, further elaborated on Siddhantha Bindu to compose Siddhantha Sindhu. These masters sought to make the wisdom contained in the Vedas, as captured in Dasa Sloki, become accessible and available to the all spiritual aspirants who are struggling to discover themselves, the purpose of their lives, and their relationship with the supreme divinity.

Swami Chidatmananda, who heads Chinmaya Mission, Andhra Pradesh, conducted a 3-day Jnana Yajna at Chinmayam, over the Thanksgiving Weekend, during his visit to the Washington DC Area. He delved into Dasa Sloki, Siddhantha Bindu and Siddhantha Sindhu, to explore the concept of “All Full Nothingness”. He summarized the Jnana Yajna theme as the nature of the divine self – (a) that which is all – everything in it and it is in everything; (b) that which is full – content and complete; and (c) that which is nothing – has no attributes. This divine Self is the true nature of everyone and everything around us, sentient or insentient. Over the course of three days and six discourses, Swamiji expounded on

this theme by reciting Dasa Sloki verses, explaining the commentary from Siddhantha Bindu and further elaborating from Siddhantha Sindhu.

The discourse audio and video will soon become available.





## New Year Puja and Celebrations at Chinmaya Somnath

On Jan 1, CM mission members joined Pujya Swamiji and other Acharyas to welcome the new year with grace and blessings of the Lord and Sri Gurudev. The program included invoking blessing of Lord Vishnu and Mother Lakshmi with the recitation of Vishnu Sahasranaamavali, Lakshmi Ashtottara Satanaamavali; followed by invocation of blessing of the Guru with recitation of Guru Stotram, Guru Paduka Stotram and Sri Gurudev Ashtottara Satanaamavali. We were also fortunate to have Swamini Svaprabhanananda (formerly Brni Vibhooti Chaitanya) attend the Yajna and address the attendees on New Year.





## Swamiji' Words of Wisdom

### Speak well and feel and look beautiful inside out Learnings from Sri Bhartrhari's *Nitishatakam*

*Anu Prabhala*

**Editor's Note:** This is a new column reporting on words of wisdom from Pujya Swami Dheerananda's discourses during Bala Vihar common time or special occasions observed at the CMWRC. This topic was covered during the common time in October 2013.

You may be surprised. Your best fashion statement is not likely to be your bling-covered iPhone case, the chunky gold bracelets on your wrist, or those iridescent pearls hugging your neck. Your best ornament is your speech. Not any kind of speech, but *cultured speech*, says 5<sup>th</sup> century poet Sri Bhartrhari in

*Bhartrhariviracitam Nitishatakam* (See full text below). “yā saṁskṛtā dhāryatē”. It is cultured speech alone that makes a person beautiful. Further, practicing refined speech is one of the surest ways to realize your divine potential.

केयूरा न विभूषयन्ति पुरुषं हारा न चन्द्रोज्ज्वला ।  
न स्नानं न विलेपनं न कुसुमं ना लङ्कृता मूर्धजाः ॥  
वाण्येका समलङ्करोति पुरुषं या संस्कृता धार्यते ।  
क्षीयन्ते खलु भूषणानि सततं वाग्भूषणं भूषणम् ॥

kēyūrā na vibhūṣayanti puruṣaṁ hārā na candrōjjvalā |  
na snānaṁ na vilēpanaṁ na kusumaṁ nā laṅkṛtā mūrdhajāḥ ||  
vāṇyēkā samalaṅkarōti puruṣaṁ yā saṁskṛtā dhāryatē |  
kṣīyantē khalu bhūṣaṇāni satataṁ vāgbhūṣaṇaṁ bhūṣaṇam ||

When a cultured person speaks, you love to listen. One of the names given to Sri Gurudev is Om Vaghmīne

Namaha or the one who is eloquent in his speech. As we all know, it was through his discourses that Gurudev

touched and inspired the world. Within our own Washington, DC Chinmaya mission, don't we all—kids and adults alike—warm our minds and hearts to the profundity of the Gita every weekend with Swami Dheerananda's characteristic wit and humor?

So how can one hope to cultivate cultured speech? By living a lifetime of noble values, explains Swamiji. When noble values are instilled in you, all thoughts and actions that come out of you are noble as well. Simply put, *when you are nice, only nice will come out of you.*

The Chinmaya Pledge given by Gurudev is a handy reference on how to practice being nice and cultivate cultured speech. Here's an excerpt from the Pledge: *Ever ready to fight against all low tendencies and false values, within and without us. We live honestly the noble life of sacrifice and service producing more than what we consume and giving more than what we take. We seek the Lord's grace to keep us on the path of virtue, courage and wisdom.*

Finally, practicing cultured speech is a means to realizing the divinity within yourself. Think of it as your personal journey inwards to meet Lord Shiva, seated deep within. **Swamiji reminds us, "Only when you serve, love, give, purify, meditate, and realize, you realize the divine in you.<sup>1</sup> That divine in you will shine through in your speech, effortlessly."**

So the rhinestones on the iPhone case may fall off and the gold in those bracelets may dull one day, but cultured speech will shine eternally. Your tongue will only get better with age, if you refine it and use it wisely. "vāgbhūṣaṇam bhūṣaṇam". All other ornaments lose their glitter and only the jewel of cultured speech remains the jewel of jewels.

It's no wonder, it's any day better to slip on your feet than with your tongue, Swamiji reminds us. You may have an achy arm or leg, but with your spoken word intact and noble, you will still remain beautiful in the most profound sense of the word.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a quote by Swami Sivanandaji, the Deeksha Guru of Swami Chinmayananda, who said, "Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realize! Be Good! Do Good! Be Kind! Be

Compassionate!"

## Japa, Sankalpa, and the courage to change addressed at the Chinmaya Mission New Year celebrations

*Abir Muhuri*

On January 1, 2014, the Chinmaya Mission members at Silver Spring welcomed the New Year with puja, messages and games from Bala Vihar parents and students.

The celebrations began at Chinmayam with a short invocation by Bala Vihar children attending Shloka class. Guru Paduka Puja was performed shortly thereafter.

Next, Smt. Vandana Bapna introduced the morning's keynote speakers, Sri D.C.Rao and Sri Vijay Kumar. "We are really lucky to have Sri D.C. Raoji and Sri Vijay Kumarji amidst us," she said.

Sri Vijay Kumar commenced the chanting of Sri Gurudev Ashtottara Satanaamavali (Swami Chinmayananda's 108 glorious names). With the chanting, he explained the meaning to all Chinmayam audience members. "Internally, do the sankalpa (resolution). With each name, offer a flower," he suggested.

After members chanted the 108 names with a projector screening the mantras, Sri Vijay Kumar delivered his New Year's message. Among his main points were the need to maintain a changed attitude and the courage to change within. "The intent is [that] we hope we will change our attitude and our views for days to come," he said. "The courage to change must happen within." He further elaborated the three ways in which change for the New Year must occur. "The change must be in three levels: quality (bhakti), quantity (karma) and direction (jnana)," he concluded.

To close the puja portion of the event, Naivadyam, Arati and Bhramarpanam were observed and performed.

The remainder of the morning was dedicated to resolution sharing and games. Smt. Bapna elaborated on the resolution sharing. "Now we are going to begin with the Children's program," she said. "Each child will say five to six lines about a change they'd like to make for the New Year."

Bala Vihar students spoke about their New Year's resolutions. Isha Vasist, grade eight, said her resolution

was "to be grateful to people." Pooja Arvind, grade four, mentioned her goal was to "have fewer arguments with people and help people."

After resolutions were shared on stage, Smt. Bapna introduced the game as a Ramayana-based quiz, compiled by Smt. Chetana Neerchal, for Bala Vihar students versus adults. "It's going to be coordinated by our Chinmaya Yuva Kendra kids (CHYKs)," she said. "The judges will be our Bala Vihar coordinators and Nina Beri is our scorekeeper."

After a heated competition between youngsters and their parents, Bala Vihar students won scoring 29 points as opposed to 12 points scored by the adults.

To conclude the event, Sri D.C. Rao gave an ending address on the practice of japa. He emphasized the simplicity and power of this form of sadhana. He said, "Japa is one of the most powerful and easily accessible forms of sadhana. When the mind thinks of something it becomes that. If we think of God, we are invoking those qualities into our minds." Before ending the program with shanti-nam and thank you remarks from Smt. Bapna, Sri D.C. Rao left Chinmayam attendees with this piece of advice. "Explore the possibility of mantra japa and see how it goes for you."

After placing flowers at the feet of Sri Gurudev, everyone proceeded to Kailas Niwas for prasadam.





New Year Messages from Sri Vijay Kumarji and Sri D.C. Raoji



Few children shared their New Year Resolutions



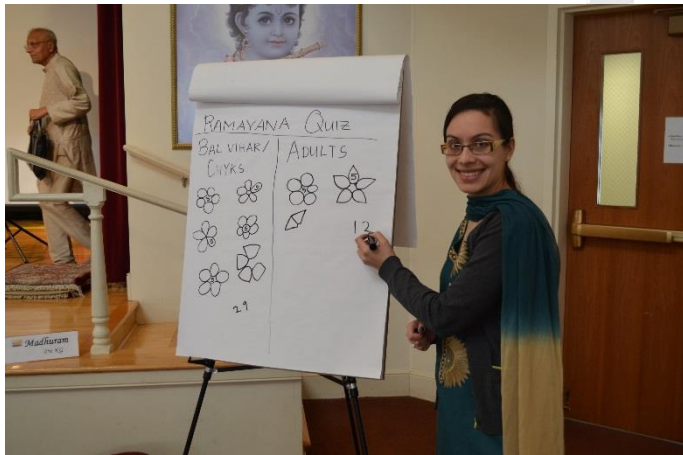




Everyone participated in Ramayans Quiz (children vs Adults): Children won. Nina Beri kept the scores, Harsha Neerchal and Srikanth Kowtha ran the quiz, and Smt Meera Kirkire and Sri Deepak Chadha judged.



Purvi's melodious and devotional bhajans ended the event



Photos courtesy of Sri Nagaraj Neerchal.



## What is my favorite Gita verse?

Several Chinmayam students took the podium to say a few words on their favorite Gita verse during the Tapovan and Gita Jayanthi celebration the weekend of December 14<sup>th</sup> at the CMWRC. Here's what two Chinmayam Bala Vihar students (grades 9-12) had to say about why these verses inspire them every day.

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*Live your own life and maintain a strong sense of individual duty*

*By Keshav Kowtha*

Hari Om. Today, I am going to talk about Chapter , verse 35 in the Gita.

*Sreyān svadharma vigunah paradharmāt svanushtithitāt  
Sva-dharme nidhanam śreyah paradharma bhayā-  
vahaha— (35)*

The English translation is:

*Better is one's own 'duty', though devoid of merit, than  
the 'duty' of another well discharged.*

*Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is  
fraught with fear!*

In his commentary on this verse, Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda says, "It is dangerous, for Arjuna, to suppress his own personality-expression [sic] and copy the activities of someone else..." A person is not meant to do other people's duties because simply put, those duties are not meant for that person. Everyone has vasanas and the way we live our lives depends on us. It's a personal choice. To take upon the duties of others over your own suppresses your own personality in favor of their own. That doesn't mean we can't help others out in their tasks. In fact, one of our duties as humans is to maintain our relationships with family and friends, which may come in the form of help in different tasks. But we cannot allow our own duty and personality to be squashed in an attempt to complete another person's duty.

I like the above verse because it addresses and solves a problem that is inherent in all people, especially teenagers. We, as a group, seek acceptance from other people around us. So we pretend to be what we are not, in order to gain and maintain that acceptance. We suppress our own personalities in order to act as our friends act. Whether this deceptive pretense is in the form of suppression of opinions or in the form of changing one's style of dress or attitude to fit it, it is wrong. So all of us have to strive to live our own life rather than take on the lives of others. In summary, what I have learned from this verse is to constantly discriminate between my duties and the duties of other people, and to not keep up any false personalities that are not my own.

Thank you. Hari Om.

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*Karma Yoga: The Art of Getting Things Done*  
*By Sashank Sadula*

Hari Om. One of the most powerful Gita verses to me is Verse 41 in Chapter 2.

*ā vyavasayatmika buddirēkēha kurunandana  
bhahusakha hyanantasca buddhiyō vyavasayinam*

The English translation reads:

*Here, O Joy of the Kurus, Kurunandana, there is  
but a single-pointed determination; many-  
branched and endless are the thoughts of the  
irresolute.*

This verse is especially powerful because it has one of the most practical messages in the Gita: a healthy practice of Karma Yoga results in the success of an individual. We as people of the modern era write books, and write books about books on success and the secret to unlocking our potential. We idolize great men such as Bill Gates, Michael Jordan, and Warren Buffet for a certain trait that results in their success, and we strive to



find what that special thing is. Our wishful thinking of understanding the key ingredient of success drives us to assume that it is as remotely available to the common man as a secret scroll guarded in a mountain monastery. In fact, the secret really is not as unattainable as people imagine. Curiously, the way that I learned the three crucial steps to practicing good karma yoga was from my former principal, a very intelligent man who spoke a lot about karma yoga, although I didn't realize at first that he was talking about karma yoga. As he put it, the essence of karma yoga is contained in three main duties: drive, perseverance, and service. The verse above specifically refers to the first duty, drive.

To have a true passion and drive for something, we require focus of the mind. A single-pointed determination is the first step to practicing effective karma yoga. Here and now we are faced with distractions, meaningless tasks, and false duties. In our hectic world of tennis matches, work, and melas, we find it hard to truly focus our mind on a singular goal. But this is the very thing the Gita teaches—that despite these superficial duties, we have the power to set our own personal goal and attain it. I am going to apply what this Gita verse specifically says to other important duties.

After focus comes perseverance. As my former principal told me, “Perseverance is the work that you put in, after the work that you have already done.” In today's world, the internal flame that drives our actions is constantly bombarded with a hectic lifestyle. The true inner passion as described by the Gita—that single-pointed determination is undeniably eternal and must be strong to face the things that threaten to weaken it. This is what perseverance is, the ability to maintain the balance of duties of life, and your personal duty to yourself to work towards a goal. The struggle sometimes becomes nearly unbearable, but always remember that any pain and suffering only lasts in your heart as long as you let it linger. Letting things be as they are, and moving forward is one of the most important messages of the Gita and it relates to perseverance.

The final duty is service. Only through service does your own resolve strengthen and only through service can you balance the inextinguishable

perseverance that you practice. Service reminds us of why we do the duties that are assigned to us, the duties we do not like, and the duties we must still fulfill. Service lifts us to a level that is higher than ourselves. That adds a physical duty to the psychological battle that we fight within ourselves to become better individuals. Helping another individual elicits an inner identity that grounds our ambitions and links our personal goals to the lives of others. In this way, service prevents us from being enveloped and obsessed with our goal by offering a mental oasis that keeps us sane despite our resolutions. Service unlocks who we truly are. It is often easy to forget our goals, but even more dangerous is being engrossed in them. Balance is important to life and to balance our personal ambitions we engage in service to remind us that our success can help the lives of others as well. An excellent example of service is the effort of Bill Gates using his remaining net worth to eradicate polio, a goal that he is very close to achieving.

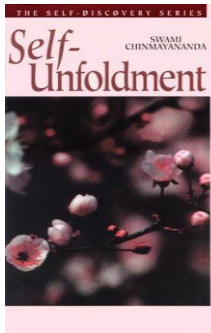
In the world we live in, it is easy to forget what is important and what things we perceive with false values. It is important to reflect on your life at least once a week. The Chinmaya setting every week provides an excellent venue to practice this. We all have the ability to be successful and to simplify what the Gita says: It's all in your head.

And if you forget anything that I've said so far, you can remember this one analogy, which contains the reason we think we can't be successful now, and the three duties that are needed to practice karma yoga: The first step towards success is realizing that the key is already in the ignition. It's just waiting for you to start-up. Keep your foot on the pedal, and remind your passengers to fasten their seatbelts.

Thank you. Hari Om.

## “Self-Unfoldment” Summaries

### Chapter 9: Mind & Chapter 10: Karma



*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 (10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> 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.*

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#### Chapter 9 – Mind

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We experience the world with the equipment of body, mind and intellect. Through these three instruments, life is constantly pulsating in and through us. When life is working through physical body, we perceive the world of objects. When life functions through the mind, we experience the world of feelings; and when life expresses itself through the intellect, we comprehend the world of ideas and thoughts. Each person has a distinct set of these three instruments, hence each person is a unique personality. Our total world of experiences is made up of our world of objects, our world of feelings, and our world of thoughts. All these constitute our field of experience.

Our age old habit is to seek and engage in extroverted experiences, and we have not yet learned to discover a richer and deeper experience that begins with in inward journey.

The art of living is to tune our three instruments properly so that through them we may have a proper experience of the world

#### Four personalities

The ancient masters saw that even though each person is physically one being, various subtle aspects of one's reaction to the objects of the world make one a composite structure of four personalities: physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. The physical personality is the grossest one and the spiritual personality is subtlest one. The mental personality is subtler than physical one, and the intellectual personality is subtler than mental

one. When an individual comes in contact with an object of experience he does so, not as an integrated whole, but as a collection of four ‘mouths’, ready to enjoy that object. Each personality has its own distinctive values and demands, as it engages in the experience. Often, that which bring satisfaction to one of the personalities, brings varying degrees of dissatisfaction to the other personalities.

While most tend to focus on satisfying the grosser personalities, the ancient sages discovered that the human being has immense capacity to sacrifice the demands of the grosser personality to those of the subtler one. Thus, the martyrs of history have made such sacrifices for the sake of an intellectual or spiritual objective.

As we learn to satisfy the subtler personality, rather than the grosser one, we will find better integration of our personalities, and our joy increases. We will learn to experience the world in a more subtly joyous way.

#### Right Thinking

We never experience the world as it is, but only as interpreted by our instrument of experience, the mind. The same object that gives us joy ordinarily, may also give us pain and sorrow in a different circumstance. We find that the world has the capacity to make us smile or weep, merely by reaching us through the mind. As we understand the process of perception and experience, it becomes clear that our lives will be filled with joy if our

minds are tuned in such a way as to give us always an experience of happiness and peace.

Positive attracts positive. The qualities that attract others are called positive qualities. When we deal with others, if we open up the sweetness of our personality, more people circle around us, love us, and are ready to support our creative programs. Such positive qualities lie dormant in us. These qualities are love, mercy, cheer, kindness, joy and courage of conviction.

We admire these as ideals when we see them in others, but often we compromise them, when we act. Mastering the mind – mental development, discipline and directing knowledge to manifest in our lives, is essential to bring out those noble qualities. Thus disciplining the mind is called yoga in Vedanta.

#### Nature of the Mind

Mind is a stream of thoughts. Thoughts as emotions is known as 'manas' or mind. Thoughts as ideas or decisions are called 'buddhi' or intellect. An analogy of the river is used to explain the mind. The flow of thoughts is like the flow of water in a river. Manas is that flow. The banks of the river direct its flow. The direction of the manas is buddhi. The quality of water – pure or muddy – gives the river its quality, so too the the quality of thoughts gives mind its quality (pure mind or dirty mind).

#### Training the Mind

Negate Negative thoughts – reject a negative thought immediately and totally.

Substitute positive thoughts for negative thoughts – replace a rejected negative thought immediately with a positive thought

Flood mind with creative ideas – to keep negative thoughts from invading the mind, fill mind with positive ideas with creative vigor.

#### Looking Within

We have to learn to go about the business of daily life while uninterruptedly watching the mind within. Post a portion of our intellect as the sentry to observe the machinations of the mind – the motives, intentions and purposes that lie behind every thought, word and deed.

Introspection – at the close of each day, order a parade of the day's activities within the mind. Stand apart and impartially review the day's events.

Detection – discover weaknesses, faults, animalisms and other less than positive qualities in each day's transactions.

Negation – inner reformation comes as a result of revelation. The moment one has detected one's weaknesses and is truly ashamed of them, that very moment, the negative traits die.

Substitution – for each weakness and fault negated, substitute with an opposite, positive quality. A new virtuous character becomes one's nature.

Self-analysis is the open door of welcome for all spiritual aspirants. This practice of personal rehabilitation offers assurance against future melancholy feelings of futility and failure.

Introspect Daily – Detect Diligently – Negate Ruthlessly – Substitute Wisely

#### Inner and Outer

Physical pose and poise can generate a corresponding attitude in the mind. For example, the physical movements of rituals were conceived on the basis of the interaction of the outer and inner. A puja (worship) ritual provides – the feeling of freshness after the bath, the reserved space for prayer, the burning of fragrant incense, the sandalwood paste on the forehead, the sparkling lamps, the decorated alter, the hymns sung, the mantras chanted – helps bring about the correct bhavana (attitude) of the mind for spiritual practice.

Conversely, glowing, optimistic thoughts, heroic ideals, and divine ideas have powerful and uplifting effect on the body. Hopeful plans lend a spring to our stride and an attractive buoyancy to our dash into daily fields of work.

Constant and alert vigilance over our thoughts and actions is the price we have to pay for the greater prize of a happy, accomplished life. Patient self-application, in full enthusiasm and in a joyous mood of healthy optimism, is the plan of action of all great achievers in this world.

## Chapter 10. Karma

The human being has the unique capacity to stand apart from his surging desires, which are caused by unmanifest tendencies - vasanas, and exercise self-effort (purushartha) to choose actions despite his vasanas. By consistent self-effort, he can successfully eradicate his vasanas and transform his life.

### The Law of Karma

We are the product (effect) of our own past actions or karma. This is the principle of destiny (Prarabdha), one aspect of law of karma.

To live out the reactions of our past actions, we need to experience certain joys and sorrows, and in order to bring forth these required experiences we must have a definite field of our experiences. We have to come into this world to enjoy and suffer for certain of our past actions (karmas) through the circumstances ordered by our Prarabdha.

Yet, we have the freedom to discriminate and act nobly and in a wholesome way in any situation that arises. Although we have taken a certain form to live out a given prarabdha, we can apply our pure motives and intelligent discrimination to harness the freedom allowed us from moment to moment.

### Self-Effort

Two distinct paths are available at each moment – the path of Sreyas (good) and Preyas (pleasant) {Chapter 4 – Balance}. By choosing preyas, we gain immediate but short-lived results and satisfaction. By choosing sreyas, we gain long-term goals of permanent, unadulterated happiness.

Each thought that occurs in our mind leaves an impression. When similar thoughts repeat, the impression becomes a canal for flow of future thoughts. If the canal is made of good thoughts, a good character is maintained and strengthened by subsequent thoughts that irresistibly flow in that direction. The path of sreyas helps to pave way for our upliftment.

Instead of one falling to self-pity of their prarabdha, they can carve out new canals in their mind with repentance and noble thoughts.

### Cause and Effect

The laws of causation (Logic of Spirituality by Sri Gurudev):

- There can be no cause without an effect
- The effect is none other than the cause in another form
- When the cause is removed from the effect, nothing of the effect remains

Therefore, the cause is concurrent with and inherent in the effect.

Another aspect of law of karma is that we are architects of our future. Our current choices and actions determine our future. By applying self-effort, we become architects of future of our choice. The sum total of our self-effort is purushartha.

- What we meet in life is destiny
- How we meet what we meet is self-effort

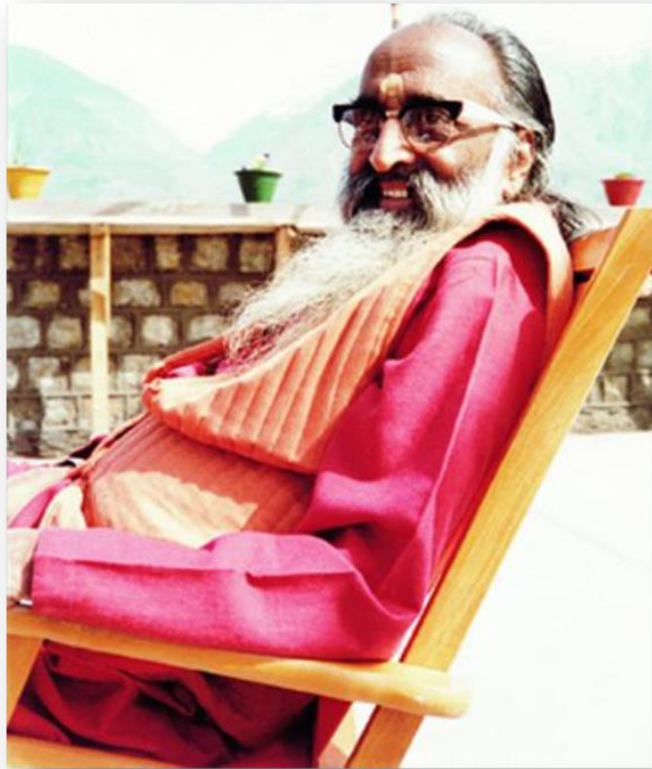
By choosing every moment, the path of sreyas, we can create a future that is better than our present. The future, therefore, is the continuity of the past modified in the present. As we apply self-effort against the background of our destiny, the future is no longer solely determined by the past.

### Creating the Future

The law of karma, when properly understood, is a great vital force. We are not helpless pawns in the hands of a mighty tyrant. By living rightly today the divine values of love, kindness, tolerance and mercy, we will ensure a nobler pattern for our future.

The law of karma not only applies to an individual, but also to communities and nations. Logically extended, it applies to human birth. The Indian rishis formulated the idea of rebirth, concluding that all of us pass through countless births, lives, and deaths. The repeated passing of an individual soul through cycles of reincarnation constitutes samsara, the endless cycle of births and deaths we all experience until we realize our identity with the supreme reality.

Let us not look back, even for a moment, but march forward dynamically, creating a glorious future of magnificent achievements by exercising self-effort.





## I was 'bored' at Jnana Yajna

### Event Summary: Gita Jnana Yajna 2013 by Swami Dheerananda

We in Chinmaya Somnath got to open our Christmas gift of a wonderful Jnana Yajna for 4 days delivered by our beloved Swami Dheeranandaji, from December 27, 2013 through December 30, 2013 at Dulles South Multipurpose Center in Chantilly, VA. For those 4 days the building had a serene atmosphere in the evening between 6:30 and 9. Sri ji would promptly start the program on time everyday by chanting the Bhagavad Gita along children, instantaneously transforming the cold dull building to a reverberant place, welcoming hundreds of guests every day.



Swamiji has a knack of boring Vedantic knowledge into our minds without us realizing. Like a molecular scientist breaking down material into particles to understand the true nature, Swamiji would break down each verse and explain the meaning of each word and the verse as a whole. He would chant each verse with precise pronunciation, while we repeated after him. He has a great ability to connect with kids and adults alike. He gets children's attention by saying words like "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" and asking them to say it as fast as he did or cracks a joke for adults about how a wife who has a Tat

prapthi upaya can make a 200 lb husband come to her by moving just one finger!

Day 1 got off to a great start with more than 100 people attending, along with many children, in spite of it being a weekday.

By the end of the first day, the captive audience came to know from Swamiji that there is a place in Arlington where people don't have any problems - Arlington Cemetery ☹. Everyone in the world has problems, and the only place on earth where there are no problems is under the ground.

Swamiji, with funny and simple examples explained that one should be balanced in joy and sorrow. Before doing any action it is important to be balanced. Attitude should be without Raga and Dvesha. 90 minutes seemed very short, while listening to Swamiji's witty comments.



On day 2, Swamiji's main message was about discipline and intelligent work. One should not be lazy, and one should not let the motive of any action be only the fruits. We have a choice of action, but not

the fruit. Mere action is not work, but intelligent action is called work. Swamiji's explanation of Buddhi Yoga and Karma Yoga was simple enough for the children in the room to understand. While explaining Karma yoga, he told us how one could purify oneself by actions of Serve, Love and Give (SLG), and if one does so, one will automatically Do Good, Be Good, and Be Compassionate.

During days 3 and 4, it was quite evident that the audience was clearly "bored with information". You could see more children attending and adults smiling and applauding. In the midst of all the casual talk Swamiji was conveying the powerful message from all the verses of the second chapter of the Gita -- Do your obligatory duties, do not engage in desire prompted actions, be even minded in success and failure. What is dexterity in action – Act in such a way that your existing vasanas get exhausted and no new vasanas are accumulated. He said SEVA can be thought of as an Acronym:

S - Service

E- Eliminates

V - Vasanas

A - Accumulation

By the end of day 4, Swamiji's discourse had left us wanting more and painted on our minds the glory of Lord Krishna and Swami Chinmayananda.



## The Rotten Things We Pat Ourselves For ...

### (Our Erroneous Zones)

*Aziza Meer*

If I'm in the business of transporting pigs to the butcher house, I will make sure that the truck is large enough to fit them all without overlapping one over the other (so they are not mangled by the time they reach), I will layer my truck (for maximum capacity), and I will make sure that each layer has windows for ventilation (so the pigs stay alive till we reach the butcher and the meat is fresh). Preventing overlaps, layering the truck, and providing ventilation—I can count these as kindness of my heart, or be honest and say these are my selfish business reasons, and have nothing to do with respecting the life force that runs in these bodies.

My friend and I started this practice together—at the end of each day, we watch our days like in a slide show and be honest about what we truly did, rather than what we want to think we did. And of course, like Gurudev pointed out, in the first few days of this exercise, we decided that we are saints. And then bit by bit the layers of illusion started to drop. My goodness, how much I gave myself praise for the most rotten of things I did!!!

Sure I didn't kill anyone, nor did I not help anyone who came to my attention. But while I helped, I expected a response. I did not expect a return, and that is good, but I expected a response. Why? Ego. Again, to my credit, I didn't expect a response from everyone; I expected a response from those who claimed to be close to me. I justified this need in me for many years. I'm so glad now I don't. Incredible freedom. Otherwise, I was doing a lot all around, and was at the end causing them and myself distress. I would argue and fight on just one point—that they did not respond. That happened repeatedly with a few people and when something is happening repeatedly to me, where does that point to? Me. The fault lies with me. With that one leak, I was not building that dam which can otherwise be a great asset for many. It is very sad because when the other person starts to trust and feel like I'm unconditionally there for him/her, I start to

bombard them with my expectation of response, and disappoint and dishearten them. They came to me in the first place because they needed help. I showed them promise, and when they reached out, I took it away, and on top of it, I then blamed them for not being grateful for the unconditional love I shared.

Imperfect giving that is more harmful than not giving.

My friend said she always felt like every individual has a personality trait that is faulty. And she always picked that out in all her friends and stayed offended at these faults. To give her credit, she also pointed to her own flaws just the same way. She said, by letting go of her need to point to other's leak muscles, she became more accepting of herself. She realized that her focus was so much on the flaw that she did not enjoy why they were friends in the first place. Now that she recognized and addressed this trait about her, this translated into enjoying herself and her friends a lot better. She said, from her habit of focusing on others' flaws, she did the same towards herself and her family and the incredible damage she did to her close ones and to herself makes her feel ashamed of herself.

Wrong focus that undermines everything we could be feeling blessed for.

Hearing about how good I feel since I started my daily self-appraisals, another friend joined in. She said she kept resenting many things about her spouse, and felt like she needed to find a different love. But every time she met someone she liked, she knew that she was not ready to leave her marriage. So she would continue teasing the other individual and keeping him in hope that she will someday respond, till the other person got tired and dropped her. When he dropped her, she would blame him and curse the world for its lack of integrity. She justified her behavior saying that she badly needed love.

Then, upon introspection she found out that she was a cheat all around, the cookie thief in every bonding she broke. She created and maintained false hope for the other individual, leave alone not being fair to her spouse. She said, “What a rotten thing to do!! And I was feeling the misery of a martyr. No one was happy in the process.” And I chimed in—Exactly, I felt the same way about myself on several accounts. Our friend echoed, “My words. I feel the same way!!!”

The cookie thief story—There once was a woman who thought very well of herself (that’s not how the original story starts, but I like saying “There once was ...”). This woman was sitting in an airport waiting to be boarded. She was reading a book and had her bag of cookies next to her that she just bought. She reached into her cookie bag and got a cookie to eat. A man was sitting next to her, also waiting to be boarded. He also reached into the bag of cookies and started to eat. She was very offended at his gumption and started eating faster, and he did too. Now there was the last cookie left in the bag. He reached in, took that cookie, split it into half and gave her one half with a smile. She was so offended, she was beside herself. Just then, the plane started boarding. Once in the plane, settled in her seat, the woman wanted to resume her reading. Reaching in her bag, guess what she found: Her own bag of cookies. Yes, she was eating the man’s cookies all the time and was highly offended and offensive to him.

Moral of the story: Give the benefit of the doubt. You are not perfect and in fact you could be the offender and not the other party.

Knowing this the woman lived happily ever after. (I like saying that too. Feels complete and happy)

## Jnana Yoga and Self Realization - XVII

Acharya Sadananda

## Obstacles for spiritual progress - I

We have discussed some aspects of this before. We present here some of obstacles that have been identified in the scriptures as well as by other aachaaryaas. Krishna says in Gita- 4<sup>th</sup> chapter that there are three main obstacles for spiritual progress: - 1. **avidya** (ignorance) 2. **ashraddha** (lack of faith) 3. **samshaya** (doubts about the goal and the means).

**ajnascha ashraddadhAnascha samshayAtma  
vinashyati|**

**nAyam loko2sti na paraH na sukham  
samshayAtmanaH|| 4-40**

Again in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter He mentions:

**ashraddhadhAnAH puruShA dharmasyAsya parantapa|**

**aprApya mAm nivartante mRityusamsAravartmani|| -  
9:3**

Shankara explains the **ashraddadhAnAH** as the ones who do not have shraddha on the aatma jnaam, that is, the one who does not have faith in the knowledge of the self that includes both in understanding its nature, means of gaining that knowledge and the result of that understanding. Krishna says they will never reach Me; instead they will be born again and again. Those who have doubts about the nature and the means of reality will neither gain the highest nor can they enjoy the benefits in the material worlds. Hence lack of Shraddhaa or faith and having doubts about the nature of the truth, nature of the means of gaining that knowledge (doubts about pramaaNaa) will go down the drain that involves taking lower and lower births. Implication is they will be living life trying to fulfill only the sensuous enjoyments, and in the process accumulate more vaasanaas where they will

be taking life forms that live at sense level only to exhaust those vaasanaas.

In the above sloka, ajnAnam stands for mUla avidya – the fundamental ignorance – which is the lack of knowledge of my own nature. That is ignorance that I am complete or pUrNam, or I am of the nature of pure unqualified happiness or ananda swaruupa. I know that I am a conscious entity. I also know that I am existent entity – no scripture is needed to teach me those. However, I do not know that I am of the nature of happiness too or ananda swaruupa or limitlessness. Hence, I am not looking for existence, nor looking for consciousness, but looking for my happiness all the time. Limitlessness is happiness. It is not qualified happiness which I get when I find I am happier with the object of my desire and otherwise not. This is desire fulfilled happiness or qualified happiness. Everybody's happiness, including that of the first born, the Hiranyagarba, is qualified happiness only, which is experiential happiness, as discussed in Tai. Up. In the happiness scale, the Upanishad says Hiranyagarbha's happiness is  $1 \times 10^{23}$  times that of an ideal human being, who in his prime youth and who owns the whole world. This experiential happiness is still limited. However, pure happiness is limitless, unqualified, and it is my intrinsic nature, says Vedanta. Nevertheless, all human efforts can be reduced to gain one essential thing -absolute, inexhaustible, permanent happiness. That can be accomplished only by gaining infinite limitlessness. Limitlessness cannot be gained by any effort or pursuit. It can only be gained by knowing that I am already the limitless. Due to ignorance of my true nature, I take myself that I am limited being. Even though I know I am existent, I take myself to be of limited existence – although existence by nature is limitless. Limited existence involves taking existence itself as a qualified existence, that is, I exist as this; this being primarily the gross body, sthuula shariira, which is most tangible, and next I take myself as I am the mind and then the intellect, put together as the subtle body, and finally I take myself



as I am the causal body, kaaraNa shariira. By taking myself that I am a limited body, mind and intellect, BMI, the limitations of the body, mind and intellect become my limitations. This is the error of superimposition where the limitations of the BMI are superimposed on the limitless existence-consciousness that I am. Since my true nature is limitlessness, I cannot readily accept the limitations, since they are not intrinsic to my nature. With the identification of the limitations of the BMI, I take myself to be a mortal, as the birth and death is related to Body, and I consider myself to be unhappy due to the likes and dislikes associated with the mind, and I consider myself to be ignorant of the world of objects. BMI by nature is limited. The limited BMI can never become unlimited by any process, as the process by themselves are limited. Hence all the pursuits in life, expressed in terms of 1. PravRitti – efforts to gain all that I do not have and like to have and 2. nivRitti, efforts to loose all that I have and do not like to have, will fail miserably. The specific efforts may be different from individual to individual, due to the differences in the likes and dislikes; but in essence the life struggles are essentially remain the same; the combination of pravRitti and nivRitti. Hence we pray – **asatoma sadgamaya** – Oh Lord please lead me from non-existence to existence, **tamasoma jyotirgamaya**, Oh Lord please lead me from ignorance to knowledge, and **mRityorma amRitam gamaya** – Oh Lord please lead me from mortality to immortality. In essence, all these prayers by themselves are useless, since we are requesting the Lord to solve a problem where there is no problem to begin with. That which is born has to die, declares the Lord, **jaatasyahi dRivo mRityuH**. Therefore, the body that is born has to die someday or the other. Hence that which is mortal can never become immortal. Thus the prayer – Oh Lord, please lead me from mortality to immortality cannot be fulfilled. That I am a mortal is only a notion arising due to identification with the body. All notions arise because of ignorance. Hence the prayer – **mRityorma amRitam gamaya** – lead me from mortality to immortality should imply that Oh Lord| please lead me from the notion that I am mortal to the truth that I am immortal. Thus all prayers are ultimately for the elimination of ignorance about oneself. No ignorance can be removed by prayers; it can only be removed by appropriate knowledge. Therefore ignorance of the self

can only be removed by the self-knowledge. Since it is not objective knowledge the normal means of gaining the knowledge will not work. Why do I need self-knowledge? It is because I am looking for eternal, inexhaustible or limitless happiness, which cannot be gained by any effort.

In addition, since all our efforts, pravRitti or nivRitti, by definition, are finite; they cannot give infinite results. Limitless or infiniteness alone is fulfillment of life and it is freedom from all limitations and is therefore moksha. It can not be gained by any effort, neither can it be given. Hence all human struggles to solve their limitation problem remain useless. One cannot become limitless by any, or sum of all limited efforts. The compassionate Lord, out of compassion, has to come in some form, to teach the devotee to redirect his mental attention from all his efforts of pravRitti and nivRitti to obtain clear understanding of ones own true nature. Hence Krishna declares that of all efforts or yagnas, the effort to gain the knowledge of ones own self is the highest, since by gaining the knowledge one looses the wrong identification of oneself. To gain that knowledge, Krishna says, one has to approach a proper teacher who is well versed in the Shaastras, able to communicate that knowledge and who himself is well established in that reality.

**tat viddhi praNipaadena pariprashnena sevayaa** | 4-34.

Shankara gives the meaning for praNipaata – as the one who prostrates falling at the feet of the teacher – **pariprashnena** by asking the appropriate or relevant questions to the teacher such as -what is bondage? What is liberation? What is the nature of ignorance, and what is the knowledge required, etc. For such a prepared student who asks relevant questions, the teacher is obligated to teach the knowledge, since he himself obtained that knowledge by approaching his teacher.

Hence limitlessness or moksha is not something that can be gained, or can it be given. It is not that some place that I have to go after the death of this body, such as **vaikunTa** or **kailaasa** with some pure saatvic material body different from this, etc. These are all concepts of dvaita-based philosophies where there are differences and hierarchies among jiivas, with Lord and inert world existing as different from jiivas. With inherent limitations

I cannot have limitlessness or freedom from all limitations. Moksha is, then, recognition of my own true nature, which is limitlessness or *puurNam* or *ananda swaruupam* – which is Brahman. The scripture defines Brahman as ***satyam, jnaanam and anantam***. These are not properties of Brahman but intrinsic nature of Brahman.

Hence the greatest obstacle for moksha is ignorance which can be removed only knowledge and by nothing else. Knowledge does not depend on individual effort; that is one cannot will the knowledge. It requires a frame of mind conducive for gaining the knowledge. Hence Shankara says – a prepared mind for this is that which has ***saadhana chatuShTaya sampatti*** or the mind which has the four fold qualifications; *viveka* (intellect that can discriminate that which is eternal from ephemeral), *vairagya* (dispassion to reject the ephemeral), *shamaadi shatkasapaati* (mental and sense control, faith, commitment, equanimity, etc), and *mumukshutvam* (strong desire for liberation). There are preparatory of the mind in order for it to appreciate the *mahaavaakya*, *tat tvam asi*, statement of the Vedanta.

We will discuss next role of *shraddha* in the self-knowledge.