

Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 24, Number 5, September 30, 2014

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Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

honoring

Pujya Swami Dheerananda on July 11 2014

*Pujya Swami Dheerananda has been serving Chinmaya Mission
Washington DC Since July 11 1989*

Calendar and Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

- Thu Oct 2 – Thursday Satsang with Pujya Swamiji at Kailash Niwas. Topic: Taittiriya Upanishad
- Sat Oct 4 at 5 PM – Pujya Swamiji Silver Jubilee Celebration at Chinmayam
- Sat & Sun Oct 11-12 – Columbus Day Spiritual Camp “Muni Kanda” from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with Acharya Sadanandaji at Chinmaya Somnath
- Oct 10-15 – Sanskrit classes conducted by Swami Ramakrishnananda at Chinmayam
- Sat Nov 1 – Annual Fund Raising Program at Chinmaya Somnath
- Sat Nov 8 – Deepavali Celebration at Chinmayam
- Sat & Sun Nov 29-30 – No Bala Vihar Classes (Thanksgiving Weekend)
- Sat & Sun Dec 6-7 – Celebration of Gita and Tapovan Jayanti during Common Time

Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Vijay Kumarji by email at 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 to order any books, CDs, DVDs, etc.. Browse online at www.chinmayapublications.com

Next Issue

- Articles for the next regular bi-monthly issue - November 2014, are due by November 1st, 2014
- Email submissions to smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org. Submission instructions at www.chinmayadc.org.

Useful Links:

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center www.chinmayadc.org

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust www.chinmayamission.com

Chinmaya Mission West www.chinmayamission.org

Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Courses 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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BV students – Nishant Carr, Siri Neerchal, Ananya Krishnan, Priya Tandon, Megha Karthikeyan, Abir Muhuri, Usha Konduri, Atman Panigrahi & Vishnu Dharmaraj,

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

News, Notes and Flyers

CMWRC Events Held

- Children Summer Camp were successfully completed at the new Chinmaya Somnath by Northern Virginia chapter during July and August.
- Devika Retreat was conducted by Acharya Vivekji, Aug 8-10 at Chinmaya Somnath.
- Chinmaya Somnath reverberated with the glorious chanting of Ekadasha Rudram on Sunday Aug 24th.
- A spiritual camp - "Inspiration", was conducted by Acharya Vivekji in Frederick, Aug 26-28
- National CHYK Junior Camp, titled 'Past, Present, Potential', was conducted by Acharya Vivekji at Chinmayam during Aug 30 – Sep 1 weekend.
- The 2014-15 Bala Vihar Sessions started during September 6-7 weekend with Ganesha Puja.

News

- **Pujya Swami Dheerananda's 25 Year Celebration at CMWRC will be on Oct 4 at Chinmayam**
- Chinmaya Somnath is abuzz with activities. There are spiritual programs being held on a daily basis. In addition, during August, Acharya Vivekji
- CHYK DC youth leadership transition. Vinay Mallikarjun and Sreehima Gadamsetty are stepping in to Chinmaya DC Youth leadership as Rasshmi Shankar and Ramita Dewan bow out. CHYK DC has become vibrant from its modest beginnings just a few years ago. Thanks to Rasshmi and Ramita for their part in growing CHYK-DC.

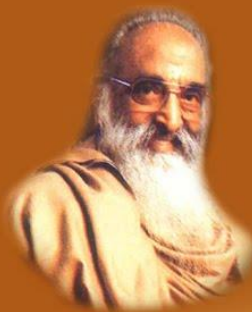
Announcements

- Visit Gift Registry webpage to take advantage of new ways to donate to CMWRC Capital Projects
- Be on the lookout for Sanskrit Classes by Swami Ramakrishnananda in October.
- Srimati Pramodini Rao of Chinmaya Naada Bindu will be in our area in early November and enchant us with her devotional music and bhajans. Her performance is the highlight of 2014 Annual Fundraiser at Chinmaya Somnath on Nov 1. She will perform at Chinmayam the following day.
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Current/Upcoming CMWRC Events

- Thu Oct 2 – Thursday Satsang with Pujya Swamiji at Kailash Niwas at 7 PM. Topic: Taittiriya Upanishad.
- Sat Oct 4 at 5 PM – Pujya Swamiji Silver Jubilee Celebration at Chinmayam
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22nd Mahasamadhi Family Camp New Jersey 2015



July 29th to August 3rd 2015



Upanishad ganga

Ancient wisdom, limitless strength

With

H.H. Swami Tejomayananda

H.H. Swami Swaroopananda

and Acharyas from North America

Camp Highlights:

- Chinmaya Vishwa, bird's eye view of Chinmaya Movement
- Chinmaya Jeevan Darshan
- Meditation / Yoga
- Special Balavihar / Chyk / Sethukari program
- Sumptuous vegetarian food

Location:

DoubleTree by Hilton
Somerset, NJ 08873



Chinmaya Mission Tri-State Center

Our Acharyas: H.H. Swami Shantananda
H.H. Swami Siddhananda

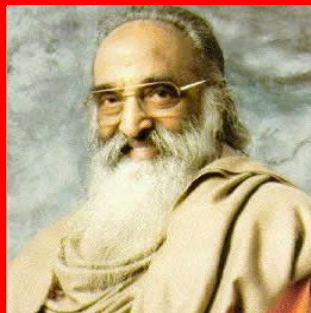
For further information

Write to: msc2015@chinmayavrindavan.org

Website: www.chinmayavrindavan.org

Ph: 609-655-0404

Come discover yourSelf...!!



Chinmaya Mission® Washington Regional Center



Cordially Invites You To Our
2014 Annual Fundraiser
Saturday, November 1, 2014

4:30 - 9:00 PM

An Evening of Devotional Music and Dinner

Venue: Chinmaya Somnath

4350 Blue Spring Drive, Chantilly VA 20151



Smt. Pramodini Rao is an accomplished singer, composer, lyricist and teacher who has been associated with Pujya Gurudev and Pujya Guruji through her entire life. She is the Director at Chinmaya Naada Bindu, a Gurukul for Indian Performing Arts, located at Chinmaya Vibhooti, Pune. She is also the co-founder of Chinmaya Swaranjali, the music wing of Chinmaya Mission. Popularly known as the Nightingale of Chinmaya Mission, Pramodini has performed at Chinmaya Mission events from the age of 7 and has numerous recordings to her name. Pramodini and her husband are full time Mission sevaks, dedicated to serving Pujya Gurudev's Mission. Indian devotional music is her forte and she offers every song at the altar of the Lord.

Separate Program with entertainment for Children Grades Pre-K to 12

Tickets

Adults - \$50 (50% Tax deductible)

Child - \$20 (Grades Pre-K to 12)

Contact: tickets@chinmayadc.org

Ashish Tikhe 202-247-7629/Sudesh Nimishe 202-492-4930/Saravanan Parandapalli 301-305-4438



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Mailing address: 4350 Blue Spring Drive, Chantilly VA 20151

www.chinmayadc.org

www.chinmayasomnath.org

www.chinmayafrederick.org



Dasara Celebration

Nishant Carr



Bala Vihar children as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, accompanied by other children singing Mahishasura Mardhini stotram as part of observation of Dasara Festival at Chinmayam on Sep 21, 2014

Chinmayam Celebrates Pujya Guruji's visit

Abir Muhuri

Chinmaya Mission Celebrates Silver Jubilee and Pujya Guruji's visit

On July 11, 2014 the Chinmayam chapter of Chinmaya Mission of Greater Washington D.C. celebrated the joint occasions of Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda visit and Pujya Swami Dheerananda's Silver Jubilee at the center.

To begin festivities and the incoming gathering of sevaks and devotees, a tent was propped in the Chinmayam parking lot along with a television projection of the shrine's interior.

Following the welcoming festivities, the Chinmaya Yuva Kendra (CHYK) members of Washington presented a number of devotional bhajans. Among the musicians were Purvi Nanavaty (voice), Vani Ravichandran (voice), Vinay Mallikarjun (table) and Vishnupriya Krishnan (violin). Bhajan selection included Achutam Keshavam and Sadguru tumhare pyar hai. The bhajan portion of the program concluded with Hanuman Chalisa.

After welcoming songs, Bala Vihar teacher and devoted member, Aniket Sidhaye introduced Pujya Guruji to the audience. Aniketji introduced Guruji with the mission's overflowing love and devotion for him. "Unto him our best because he gave us our best," Sidhaye said. "We are at your feet and most happy to be here."

Guruji began his discourse with the topic of the direction of our goals and our essential natures. He emphasized the purpose of yoga and how to acquire ones essential nature. "The goal of yoga and the goal of our life is the abidance of the mind in the self," he emphasized. "There must be some identification but

we must not lose objectivity." Guruji concluded that suffering comes from this identification. Therefore, we must distinguish constantly between our essential nature and our acquired nature.

After Guruji's graceful discourse, CHYK member Amol Mehta thanked Pujya Guruji for his introduction of Chinmaya Somnath and Swami Dheerananda. Finally, Anil Kishore thanked Guruji for gracing Chinmayam and giving Swami Dheerananda to us.

To conclude the auspicious occasion, CHYK members continued with bhajans as devotees lined up to receive Pujya Guruji's blessing.

After a brief ceremony after Guruji's discourse, Pujya Swamiji cut the 25th anniversary cake to mark his 25 years in Washington DC in front of his enthusiastic and devoted congregation. The cake was then brought outside to the parking lot area for cutting and serving along with samosas and prasadam.

2014 Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)

Nirav Shah

Sri Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, must have blessed me to apply for the second batch of YEP America held in Piercy, California. “YEP” is short for “Youth Empowerment Program” and the name reflects its purpose. Sri Gurudev knew that the youth has enormous potential to spread the precious knowledge of Advaita Vedanta. As He saw, the only task needed to be done was to empower the youth.

(Guruji Purna-Kumbha)



This two-month course can only be described in words by describing the people, environment, and overall experience. I made strong bonds with almost everyone at YEP including my fellow YEPsters, the acharyas, the visiting acharyas, the kitchen sevaks, and the Batch #1 Yuvaveers. These were honestly the most down-to-earth people I have ever encountered. In actuality, all 7.125 billion people on this planet can be considered “down-to-earth”. Though in two months, when the false delusions of money, reputation, and lustful temptations are removed, people show their true, divine nature. For instance, I have a severe allergy to certain kinds of nuts. Without asking, the kitchen sevaks selflessly pasted a large sign in the kitchen that read, “WARNING: NIRAV IS ALLERGIC TO ALL NUTS, EXCEPT FOR ALMONDS”. During my end-of-the-

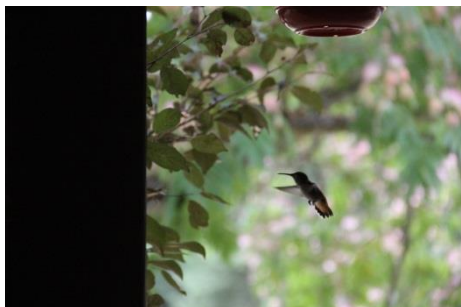
course speech, I asked everyone, “Where else will you receive this kind of hospitality?”

(YEPsters & Acharyas on Guru Purnima)



The environment was serene. The ashram is surrounded by miles of enormous redwood trees and rocky hilltops, and the ashram is far from the delusions of samsara. The river, “Eel Ganga” as named by Sri Gurudev, encompasses the rear half of the ashram. Speaking of Sri Gurudev, He spent many of His summers in the Piercy ashram. His kutia, located at the front of the ashram, was open to us for meditation in the evenings during the course. The experiences many people have had inside of His kutia are indescribable. Some will tell you that they’ve heard his voice; others will tell you that they’ve felt His presence. Along with the kutia, Krishnalaya has two volleyball courts, a basketball court, a large satsang hall, amazing meals (prepared by the awesome kitchen sevaks), state-of-the-art bedrooms, and a Krishna altar (a.k.a Krishna Grove).

(Hummingbird at the ashram)



The experience beats everything else. I used to think that Chinmaya Mission was just a community of Indian people. I realized that this is not true. There is a key called “knowledge” and there is a keeper-of-the-key called Sri Gurudev. At YEP, I was fortunate enough to receive this key through studying almost twenty different texts with several different acharyas from around the world. I learned who Sri Gurudev really was and why he wanted to spread this knowledge to the world so desperately. He sought to help all of us who are walking a path in life with a blindfold on. Many of us are chasing the unreal; whether it’s after an object, money, or fame, such a path always ends up clumsily tripping us over obstacles. Sri Gurudev started Chinmaya Mission as a means for a group of blindfolded individuals to guide each other towards what should be sought in life: Self-realization.

(Walking Blindfolded, But As A Team)



“Embrace, Absorb, Radiate”: Reflections from Chinmaya Mission’s First Devika Retreat *Vishnupriya Krishnan*

With the grace and blessings of Sri Gurudev, Chinmaya Mission held its first CHYK “Devika Retreat” from August 8th-August 10th, 2014, at the new Chinmaya Somnath center in Virginia, for Devikas aged 17-28. In addition to the opportunity to learn from our spiritual teachers, Swami Dheeranandaji, Acharya Vilasiniji, and Acharya Vivekji, we were given time to learn from each other in smaller discussions, and from ourselves, practicing creative self-expression in meaningful ways, whether line-dancing, tie-dying, or performing spoken word poetry.

I will admit that I came to this retreat craving answers to my questions that would be simple and that would validate my emotions. But from the very first discourse, it became clear that tackling topics such as “What are the attributes of a true Hindu woman?”

and “Why are women barred from participating in certain Hindu traditions?” were not so black and white! As our Acharyas reminded us, and as I came to realize, I needed to approach these topics with an open mind, a willingness to be an active listener, and, even more than that, I needed to have a personal investment to better myself as a Devika to the fullest of my potential, rather than just to prove a point or to dismiss explanations with disdain or indifference.

Throughout the retreat, I was constantly encouraged to embrace, absorb, and radiate the virtues that are already present in a Devika, virtues that perhaps only we as Devikas are capable of bringing to the world,

such as our capacity to nurture or our immense potential for *titiksha*. I came to realize that the process of developing the Devika in each of us is of vital importance for our spiritual growth. I felt so fortunate to be in an environment where each Devika was so passionate about bettering herself, and I saw this passion evidenced by the fact that even between time specifically structured for discourse and discussion, there was always a steady stream of inspired conversation, anywhere and everywhere.

Our Acharyas provided us with a particularly beautiful example from the Mundaka Upanishad, in which two birds perch upon the same tree. One bird flits about constantly below, while the other, on a higher branch, simply views the activities of the lower bird. Both of these birds, the “doer” and the “observer,” exist



within every individual, though many are often unaware of the upper bird’s existence altogether – and suffer as a result. As the retreat progressed, I felt that I was slowly gaining a clearer picture of the bird on the higher branch. To put this into practical terms, I realized that rather than dwelling on the unequal treatment of women that is the consequence of an imperfect society (created by imperfect people), I should heed Gurudev’s tireless reminders not to identify with the body and instead, I should consider questions such as “What qualities of a Devika do I want to develop?” and “How can I cultivate these qualities?” Acharya Vilasiniji suggested that each of us identify and commit to a daily sadhana (for example, japa or meditation) so that we could be better equipped

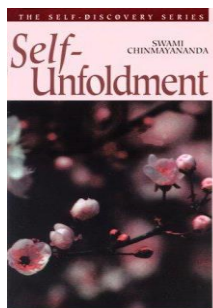
to respond, with a calm mind, to the challenges we as Devikas face daily, rather than reacting based on strong emotions.

I have emerged from the retreat reinvigorated, inspired to continue the quest for self-discovery, and determined to work with my fellow attendees to continue the momentum of the Devika “movement,” drawing on the ageless wisdom of Vedanta to better ourselves and the world around us.



“Self-Unfoldment” Summaries

Chapter 16: Maya



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.

Chapter 16 – Maya

Our real nature is Brahman or Pure Consciousness. Brahman is the supreme reality that which is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and the state of which is absolute knowledge, peace and bliss.

Yet we feel limited, finite, and riddled with pain and sorrow. How did we “fall” from the heights of our real nature? Vedanta declares that we are none other than our true nature, but due to non-apprehension of our divine nature, we “fall” from that reality. As long as we are alive, we move through three states of consciousness – waking, dreaming and deep sleep. In each state, we experience its respective world – the waking world, the dream world and the deep sleep world. These three worlds are unreal from the perspective of the pure consciousness. Each of these three worlds is described as relative reality. For example, the reality of the dream state vanishes upon waking.

Snake and the Rope

A person walking on a dark forest path sees a curving, thin shape in front of him and steps back in fright: a snake! His heart pounds and his palms sweat. Another traveler stops by and shines a flashlight – it turns out to be a mere rope!

The rope alone is real. But the **non-apprehension** of the rope gives rise to the **misapprehension** of a snake. The snake is an optical illusion. To the person, the illusion became relative reality and caused terror.

The non-apprehension of our own true nature, pure consciousness, creates misapprehension of the reality in each of our three states of consciousness.

Thus, non-apprehension of Brahman leads to misapprehension of the phenomenal world which leads to our sense of limitation and our agitations (our “fall” from reality).

Maya

The non-apprehension of the brahman is called avidya or ajnana or ignorance, and is the cause for the perception of the pluralistic world. While at the individual level it is called avidya, at the macro level (the total of all avidya) is called maya. Since misapprehension is caused by non-apprehension, the world is said to be created by maya.

A limited individual is then the Self (pure consciousness) + avidya. Similarly, the lord of all creation is Isvara: Brahman + maya. Just a heat is inherent in fire, so too are Brahman and maya, together the seed of all creation.

Play of the Gunas

Maya manifests itself in the world as three qualities or gunas (See Chapter 12 of Self Unfoldment). Brahman has no quality nor expression. When Pure Consciousness is reflected by a 'thought pool', it manifests itself as intelligence or knowledge. A Sattvika mind (pure, calm and clear mind) reflects Pure Consciousness as God-Principle. An agitated mind, rajasa guna, reflects Pure Consciousness brightly but in a disturbed manner. A dirty mind, tamasika guna, is able to reflect Pure Consciousness dimly, at best.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva represent Sattvika, reflecting God Principle, overseeing creation, maintenance and destruction, respectively. Destruction and Creation go hand in hand: a tree is maintained by a continuous process of birth and death of the stages of flower, fruit, seed, seedling and full grown tree. (A flower dies to give rise to a fruit. A fruit dies and give rise to seeds. A seed dies to give rise to a seedling. A seedling dies to give rise to full grown tree).

The power of the three deities – Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are represented by Saraswati, Lakshmi and Uma. Saraswati represents knowledge, Lakshmi represents wealth and Uma represents matter, primal energy and power.

At the rajas level, maya causes 'viksepa' agitations (example – fear/flight, palpitations or even death, all caused by mistaking a rope for a snake). At the tamasik level, maya causes 'avarana' or veiling of the Truth. The avarana is explained as 'I don't know', 'I don't understand' and 'I don't have experience'.

To overcome our tamasik and rajasik tendencies, we can remove 'I don't know' by 'sravanam' or listening [intently] to a spiritual master. To remove 'I don't understand', reflect on what one has listened to – 'mananam'. Once the faith in the Truth is firm from listening and reflection, it is time for meditation, 'nidhi dhyasanam', to overcome 'I don't have experience'.

Thus removing the ignorance, we will come to rediscover that our Self is the Pure Consciousness.

Relationship to OM

Those with strong identification with the body, they live for the body and strive for the body, and know no other missions in life other than sensuous enjoyments. To those, **separateness** describes relationship to the Supreme Reality.

Those who recognize that they not just mere bodies but are also endowed with mind and intellect. To them, a human is not just a perishable worm, but a sacred creature who possesses almost godly powers. They are aware of the victory man has so far gained over mighty nature, and the great achievements in science and poetry. Thus they see themselves as **a part of the whole** (an evolution from a sense of separateness).

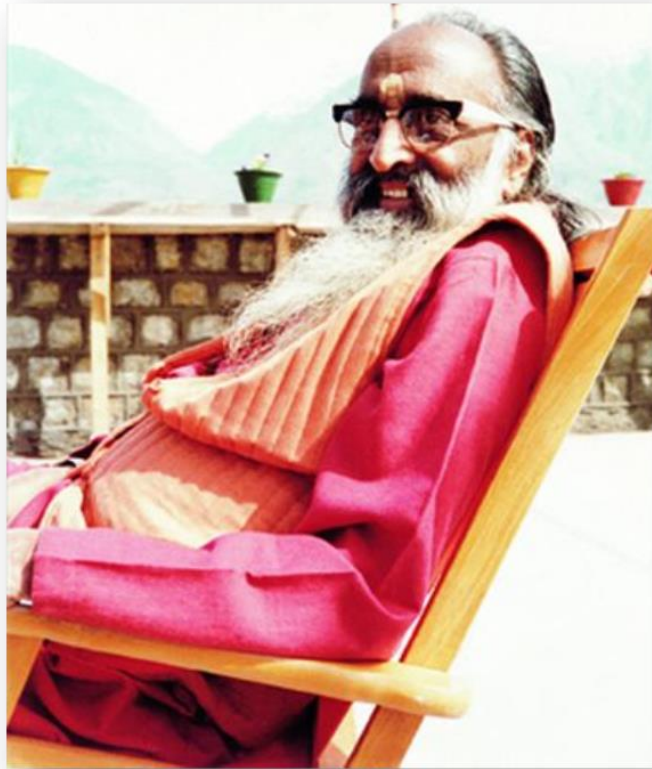
Dualism: (Dvaita; main exponent Sri Madhvacharya) concludes that the Lord and His devotee will ever remain as two distinct entities. The relationship of the devotee to the Lord is one of complete surrender in love and reverence. The supreme goal of human kind is to reach His feet and remain there eternally, ever in His service.

Qualified Non-dualism or Monism (Visitadvaita; main exponent – Sri Ramanujacharya) contends that the devotee is part of the whole, the Lord, not separate from Him.

Non-Dualism or Monism (Advaita Vedanta – main exponent – Sri Adi Sankaracharya) says: Man is in essence God.

Hanuman, in Ramayan, describes the three relationships to Sri Rama: "O Lord, at moments when I am steeped in my body consciousness, I am your slave (or servant). When I identify myself with my mind and intellect, I am a part of You. And when I am one with my own nature, as the spirit, I am yourself."

Thus the three relationship reflect the state of our mind. In our journey through maya, the first stop is a visit to Madhvacharya, then to Ramanujacharya and finally when one is ready to cross maya, visit Sankaracharya.



Vittala Pandharpur

Nirmala Limaye

Ganesha is the principal deity especially in Maharashtra. Next to worship of Ganesha, two other sites of pilgrimage are Vittala Pandharpur and Shirdi Saibaba.

Millions of devotees visit Vittala Pandharpur each year. It is considered south Kashi. The main yatra to Pandharpur is on Ashadhi-ekadashi and Kartik-ekadashi. Pandharpur is located near Sholapur (2 hours drive) and it is also accessible by railway from Pune or Mumbai.

The main deity is Vittala who is a form of Vishnu or Krishna or Venkatesha, and his consort is Rukmini. The temples are separate for each other. Badves are the priests for Vittala and Utpats are for Rukmini temple.

Every year 5 – 6 lakhs pilgrims visit this temple. River Chandrabhaga is semicircular in shape as the name suggests and is part of river Bhima. Bathing in Chandrabhaga is considered to wash away all the sins.

Origin and history of temple.

Originally it was a Shiva temple. There is a mention in Skanda Purana. The legend of Pundalika explains origin of Vittala. Pundalik had elderly parents who lived with him. After getting married, he started neglecting them. So, parents decided to go to Kashi. Pundalik decided to go as well with his wife. He rode on horse while his parents walked! They stopped at an ashram of Kukkutswami. Pundalik was awakened by some noise so, he got up and observed few young beautiful women cleaning the ashram. He followed them to the temple in ashram when they were emerging out of temple, they appeared happy and

clean. He asked them who they were and they replied that they were Ganga, Yamuna and all famous rivers. They got dirty as people bathed in them to wash of sins. Among the sins, they mentioned neglect and disrespect of parents. Pundalik felt terrible and went to his parents to apologize and started to serve them with all love and devotion. Devotion in any form reaches the Lord very quickly. He got so engaged in their service that Lord Vishnu was pleased and came to visit Pundalika. When the Lord called out his name. Without looking he told him that he had to finish feeding his parents. He threw a brick towards the Lord, to stand and wait till he can see him. As he got free, he turned and saw Lord Vishnu standing on the brick with his arms on waist.

He was overcome with love and held his feet. The Lord asked him to ask anything and he said please stay here for all devotees standing as you are now. Mention of this is in Skanda Purana in 6th century. Other version is Pundalik was instrumental in coaxing Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana and requesting him to build present temple. The inscriptions carved on the temple wall go at least to 11th century.

There is a Shivlinga on the head of the murti. The devotees come from many states such as Karnataka, Andhra, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Gujarat.

The uniqueness is for 2 reasons.

The temple is unique for two reasons. The first is the murti. It is standing on a brick with arms akimbo. One hand is blessing devotees and another holds conch. He has pearl necklace and Vatsalanchan (a mark left on Vishnu when rishi Bhrgu kicked Bhagwan). Vit is brick and thala is sthana (a place or a seat). The

temple architecture is by a famous architect Hemadpant. Even the Muslims rulers did not desecrate this temple. The east gate is called Namdeo step where he used to dance and sing Bhajans.

Vittala is also called Vithoba (vit- ba is father) Panduranga. Pandharinath, Rukmininath, Vitthala, a feminine name as Vithai, Mauli (mother).

The second reason is the 2 yearly pilgrimage, which was started by saint poet Dyaneswara in 12th century. He was a realized person who wanted to promote Bhagwat sampradaya which emphasizes Bhakti and spirituality. He wrote commentary on Bhagwat Geeta in Marathi so, common illiterate people could understand Geeta.(this was not appreciated by Pundits) not only that, he started a pilgrimage to Pandharpur. Dyaneswara called his pilgrimage as "Wari", and the people in the procession were called Warkaris. He would assemble people from all walks of life then walk from his town Alandi and reach Pandharpur on ekadashi day even if pujari,s did not allow untouchables inside the mandir, he would tell them to bathe in Chandrabhaga, sing kirtanas (songs glorifying the Lord) and take darshan of the spire of V ittala Mandir. This was changed in 1947 when a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi did fasting for few days and the temple was opened to untouchables.

Vittalas – Saints from all walks of life

Visoba khechar was orthodox Shaiva, Sena was a barber, Savata was a gardener, Narahari was a goldsmith, Gora was a potmaker, Kanhopatra was a dancing girl, Chokha Mela was Mahar (untouchable), Sheikh Mohammad was a Muslim, Namdeo a tailor, Janabai his house servant, and Tukaram a grocer, They considered Vithoba as maayi baap (mother and father), Pandharpur as Maher(maternal house of a bride). Others included, Haridasa from Karnataka and Purandara Dasa from Karnataka, a poet saint.

The Wari, that started during Dyaneswara time is going on even today. The warkari panth is strong. Farmers and people of trades join this pilgrimage. They take a vow of wari, they wear tulsimala (a garland of holy Basil Leaves). They do not smoke , drink, become vegetarian, and live a moral life. With an attitude of bhakti (devotion) and singing kirtana (chanting lord's name), they join Wari. The preparations start 15 days earlier. 1st honor is given to Alandi which carries Saint Dyaneswara's padukas which is later joined by Tukaram maharaj's padukas in palaquin called Dindi. On the way many farmers, grocers wait to feed them. This pilgrimage is the most peaceful, full of bhakti, deeply spiritual, and well disciplined. Everyone joins to help. Many foreigners join them too. Every few miles they stop for rest, then walk 25 –30 KM/day with constant bhajans with cymbals, pakhwaj(drum) they wear white dhoti, white shirt and white cap. They look like army of bhaktas (devotees). Some women carry Tulsi plants on their heads throughout the journey. At places they have horses riding in a circle called Ringun. Each dindi carries in front a representation of a particular saint.

These are such disciplined processions. No fights, arguments happen. Everyone helps everybody. Nowadays each group carries medical personnel with them. Social media follow them. Upon reaching Pandharpur, they take a bath in the river.

There are a few chantings like "pundalik varada hari Vittala", "Dyandev Tukaram", etc. The famous one is Nivritti dyanadev sopan Muktabai (siblings of dyaneshwara) Eknath Namdev Tukaram' these are sung many times.

Anyone who witnesses this procession gets spiritual feelings.

Such is Mahima of Lord Vittla, Maharashtra's most sacred place, an abode of Bhakti and Love.

Pudalik Varada hari Vittal.

Guru Bhakti

Sitaram Kowtha

Our family had a rare opportunity to offer breakfast bhiksha to Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda and partake satsang on Guru Purnima day, July 12, 2014. The Bhagwat family hosted Guruji during his visit to Washington DC, and graciously organized the breakfast bhiksha also at their residence.

After breakfast, Guruji invited questions from those present. one question was about Guru Bhakti: how does one develop and abide in it. The question was prefaced with an anecdote Guruji had cited during adult satsang at Chinmayam the previous evening. In summarizing the Vedanta message conveyed in Upadesha Sara, Guruji had mentioned an incident from Mahabharata. Sage Narada described to Yudhishtir the steps involved in spiritual growth, ultimately ending with Self-realization. Upon completion of Narada's discourse, Yudhishtir asked if there was an easier way. To which, Narada replied that there is indeed an easier way, and that is through Guru Bhakti.

Pujya Guruji answered that three things are involved: Guru Seva, Guru's Sishya and Guru Prem. The first is to do seva to the Guru – that is do work of the Guru. His work becomes the disciple's work and His mission becomes disciple's mission. The second is being a disciple – learn and assimilate thoroughly what Guru is teaching. Lastly, it is to be devoted to the Guru in complete faith. He is the mother, father, friend, knowledge and everything.

He encouraged studying and understanding Sri Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda's works, biography and glory; contemplating on his nature; singing his glory; and keeping him in the mind every moment as we go about doing our duties. Offering our best to Him, since He has showered us with His best.

Guruji also mentioned that the theme of his bhajan that he sang during adult satsang on July 11 was also the same (see box "Unto Him our Best").

Unto Him our Best

श्री गुरुदेवको करेऽन मनहम
स्मरणहि जिनका प्रेरक प्रियतम

भक्त शिश्यया सेवक जनहो
जीवन सबका धन्य धन्य हो

श्री गुरुदेवने अपना उत्तम
बाट दिया सबको समसत्तम

कृतज्ञता से हम करते प्रण
उत्तम अपना करेंगे अर्पण

*Sree Gurudevako Karena Manahama
Smaranahi jinaka prerana priyatama*

*Bhakta shishyaya sevaka janaho
Jeevana sabaka dhanya dhanya ho*

*Sree Gurudevane apana uttama
Baata diya sabako sama-sattama*

*Kirtajnata se hama karate prana
Uttama apana karenga arpana*

The theme of 100th birth anniversary of Swami Chinmayananda, Sri Gurudev, is "Unto Him Our Best". The centenary celebrations will start May 8, 2015 leading up to the 100th birthday on May 8, 2016. He gave His best to us, so unto Him our best. Pujya Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda, composed this prayer song: *The very remembrance of Him is very sweet and inspiring. All devotees, sevaks and disciples feel blessed and fulfilled. He gave His best to us, and we promise to give our best to Him.*

As I reflected on this message, I recalled the story of mother Sabari from Ramayana. She awaited arrival of Sri Rama, day after day, year after year, decade after decade. Each day was a day full of hope, preparation and expectation that this was the day Sri Rama would come. For her there was no disappointment. She had full faith in the words of her Guru, Matanga Muni. There are many other examples one can cite. We also have our own Acharyas and lead sevaks at Washington Regional Center who have not only dedicated their lives exclusively to the work and mission of Sri Gurudev, but are also ardent devotees of Him.

It was the grace of Lord and Sri Gurudev that a bhiksha opportunity opened up and we were able to participate. An auspicious day, a satvik setting at the Bhagvats residence, a rare satsang on Guru Punima Day, an inspiring question, and a most wonderful and inspiring answer. It was an experience and inspiration that we will cherish and hope to draw from for years to come.

Jnana Yoga and Self Realization - XXI

Acharya Sadananda

Obstacles for spiritual progress - V

We are discussing about the madhyama adhikaari, who has sufficient four-fold qualifications, saadhana chatuShTaya sampatti, to have clear understanding of Vedanta, but not sufficient enough to have the jnaana phalam or the fruits of the knowledge. Most of us fall into this category. Thus he has jnaanam but not jnaana phalam to be a jivan mukta. The mind is still habitually entangled in the changing diversities of the world. To change continuously is the nature of the world. To expect the changing world to remain conducive all the time to ones likes and dislikes is inherently faulty. Not to be affected by the changing world requires a disciplined frame of mind that can witness the events happening in the world objectively, without emotions getting on the way. Even though jnaani understands he is pure existence-consciousness-limitless, due to lingering vaasanaas or habitual notions due to praarabha, emotional transformation of the mind is incomplete. In effect, the emotional mind does not abide in the knowledge of the intellect or the habitual notions come in between the mind and the intellect. For such a person only nidhidhyaasana is prescribed by Vedanta. Hence nidhidhyaasana is not for gaining any new knowledge but for making the emotional mind to abide in the knowledge that has already been gained through shravana and manana. Nidhidhyaasana is not for manda adhikaari. For manda adhikaari who has saadhana chatuShTaya sampatti at the lowest level, karma and upaasana yoga are prescribed. Nidhidhyaasana is not needed for uttama adhikaari since he gets both jnaana and jnaana phalam by shravana and manana, since his mind has already been purified by saadhana chatuShTaya sampatti. Hence Nidhidhyaasana is required for madhyama adhikaari who has half-baked with four-fold qualifications. He gains the knowledge but not the fruits of knowledge due to lingering vaasanaas. How do I know that I have jnaanam but not jnaana nishTa. After the study of Vedanta under a competent teacher and understood the essence of

Vedanta without an iota of doubt then I have learned what needs to be learned. In principle, that is all what is needed. However for many of us, the mind seems to get agitated whenever we are transacting with the world. This is due to emotional involvement with the world due to attachments to things and people. This implies that the saadhana chatuShTaya sampatti needed is incomplete. Hence nidhidhyaasana is prescribed by the scriptures to internalize the learning that has already been taken place. It is like current switch is on and the bulb is in good condition, but still no light is coming. The brighter and brighter light will start beaming forth as one starts rotating the rheostat switch slowly. Thus knowledge is there but for it to express in all its glory, the obstructive emotional attachments or raaga dveshas have to be reduced further.

What is to be done in Nidhidhyaasana: Nidhidhyaasana is defined as dwelling upon the teaching that has been gained via shravana and manana, by remaining in the teaching, as often as possible, as intensely as possible, as long as possible, as repeatedly as possible. It is essentially living in the teaching itself. This dwelling on the teaching can be done by selecting any or all of the methods listed here. These include: 1. Repeated listening to scriptures – shravana – mind to dwell on the teachings. 2. Repeated reading of the Shaastras or reading the notes prepared. 3. Repeated writing, while the mind dwells upon the teaching 4. Discussions of the Shaastras with those who have shraddha on the teaching (advaita-list-serve comes in handy in this regard) 5. Teaching of the Shaastras to others, if one can manage to get someone to listen to. 6. Contemplating on the teaching in a secluded place (essentially meditation on the teaching). In all these saadhanas, mind is essentially dwelling on the Vedanta teaching. Since the teaching is centered on the Self-itself as Brahman or the totality, whatever is not aatma (which then is anaatma) is slowly reduced to mithyaa that includes the likes and dislikes. In the nidhidhyaasana, the physical posture is of secondary consideration as it is

predominately a mano vRitti, i.e., a contemplation using the mind. Therefore mind should be awake and available without getting high-jacked by any other thought. Any physical posture that keeps the mind conducive for contemplation on the teaching without falling asleep is the right posture. In essence, the posture should be such that mind should not be dwelling on the posture or become conscious of it during contemplation. In this regard, one can also employ aShTaanga yoga meditation stages to keep the mind alert and contemplative. Shankara discusses the application of the ashTanga yoga steps for Self-knowledge in his aparokshaanubhuti text. Here chitta nirodha involves only withdrawing the mind from the extroverted pursuits and investing in the teaching of mahaavaakya gained through shravana and manana or enquiry of the nature of the self.

Therefore nidhidhyaasana is not silencing the mind, but involves mental inquiry or vichaara on the essence of the advaitic teaching – Brahman satyam- jagat mithyaa and jiivaH bhramaa eva na aparaH, Brahman alone is real and the world is just apparent projection on Brahman and jiiva is none other than Brahman. To abide in this understanding, any or all of the above methods can be practiced at the seat of meditation. One can even meditate on anaatma that is a worldly object with name and form to see the truth behind that object. When I meditate on anaatma, I have to see the mithyaa aspect of the name and form and shift my attention to the Brahman or pure existence as the reality that lends existence to the object.

The next question is how one should meditate? Bhagavaan Ramana gives illustrative examples. He says in Upadeshasaara- **aaJyadhaarayaa srotasaa samam, sarala chintanam virala tatparam**. He says the contemplation should be – like a flow of ghee or flow of river. The ghee example is to illustrate sneha bhaava or love for the goal, just as ghee sticks to the fingers, the mind has to stick to the goal. The river example is given to emphasize the persistence to reach the goal, in spite of small or large obstacles that invariably come on the way. For small obstacles the river joyfully jumps over with gurgling joyful noise, and for large obstacles she gracefully goes around, even taking few steps backward, without losing sight of the ultimate goal to reach, namely,

the ocean where its identity with name and form gets dissolved. The mind should be constantly dwelling in the understanding of the truth, in spite of any incidental obstacles that arise. Hence Bhagavaan Ramana says it should be continuous flow of thoughts (sarala chintanam) rather than with starts and stops (virala chintanam). Initially it will be of the later type but as the mind gets absorbed more and more it becomes continuous flow of thoughts. Abhyaasa (constant practice) and vairagya (withdrawal from attachments) that Shree Krishna emphasizes again and again are the essential ingredients - **abhyaasenatu kounteya vairagyena ca gRihyate**. Obstacles do arise, since the nature of the world is to change. Changing set-ups will never be all the time conducive to one's mental liking. However their impact is reduced by understanding that they are all mithyaa or have no absolute validity. This recognition becomes increasingly factual as the mind start abiding in the knowledge of the self. Thus by recognizing the higher nature of oneself and recognizing the lower nature or the falsity of the worldly objects and people, one slowly transcends the emotional attachments so that the mind does not get affected by these local interactions as it becomes immune to them. It is similar to how one regards the incidents in the dream after one is awake. The effect of this mental modification is whatever that comes in the course of the time is intrinsically accepted as part of either praarabha or Iswara prasaada. Externally the jnaani's BMI will act as required but internally one gets established as saakshii for all the external happenings. Emotional involvement will decrease leaving intellectual or objective actions needed for the changing circumstances. This is an evolution rather than a revolution, just as a flower-bud slowly blossoms into a beautiful fragrant flower with all its glory. In nature every beautiful creation evolves into perfection. Therefore, it is not like I become jnaani on one day and jiivan mukta on the other day. I discover my real nature and abide in that knowledge as the mind slowly evolves until I discover that all are in me but I am not in them.

We recognize that nidhidhyaasana does not give any new knowledge or new experience. It removes the obstacles in the mind arising from deficiency in the saadhana chatuShTaya sampatti so that jnaanam that is acquired will give rise to jnaana phalam. Moksha is not a result of

any meditation – it is our very swaruupam or intrinsic nature. Knowledge is nothing but recognizing and owning my nature. Nidhidhyaasana is not for expectation of moksha, but to remove any expectations of moksha. Vedanta is very clear that knowledge can be gained by only through 6 sources of knowledge. Meditation is not a pramANa or a means of knowledge. The source of knowledge is guru-shastra upadesha shravaNam. If shravaNam so far has not given knowledge – then continue some more shravaNam until doubt free knowledge takes place. If this does not happen in this life nothing is lost, since shravaNam will continue in the next birth. Once I am exposed to Vedanta, that knowledge can never get lost. Therefore, samaadhi abhyaasa or practice of meditation is not meant for giving any extra experience confirming Vedantic teaching. The people think that there is some kind of advaita anubhava or experience to be gained after study and some aachaaryas seem to endorse or encourage such an idea. There is no experience which is going to validate this knowledge. Meditation is not meant for extra knowledge. Patanjali, the master of nirvikalpaka samaadhi, did not seem to have gained the knowledge, since in the end he subscribed to dvaita as reality. Therefore nirvikalpaka samaadhi is not a proof for advaita. Everyone, including the stanch dvaitins, experience advaita during the deep-sleep state, but nobody gets up from sleep as jnaani. In fact after experiencing advaita in deep sleep state, a dvaitin vehemently argues in the waking state that the truth is not advaita. Therefore, the purpose of nidhidhyaasana is to firmly abide in the advaita jnaanam that is gained by shravana and manana, so that mind is under control without any distractions due to emotions. As the mind dwells on the teaching more and more, the teaching get absorbed to the core and expresses itself in terms of jnaana phalam.

Q. Is it necessary for a jnaani to take sanyaasa for Nidhidhyaasana?

Shankara provides exhaustive discussion of sanyaasa in his introduction to 5th chapter. This chapter entitled karma sanyaasa yoga starts with the Arjuna's question - which of the two, karma yoga or sanyaasa, is better. This question follows after Krishna's discussion in Ch. 4 of vidvat sanyaasa that a jnaani can take. Karma yoga being

a pre-requisite for jnaanam, an objector says the choice between vidvat sanyaasa and karma yoga is redundant. Shankara agreeing with the objection says that therefore the choice is not for jnaani to have vidvat sanyaasa or karma yoga. The choice is only for ajnaani or ignorant person between vividhiShaa sanyaasa vs karma yoga. ajnaani is the manda adhikaari discussed above. For such ajnaani, Krishna says karma yoga is better in terms of its efficacy to gain the saadhana chatuShTaya sampatti. We will discuss the attitude or bhaavana of a karmayogi separately; but from the point for our discussion, the question therefore pertains to, is vidvat sanyaasa necessary for jnaani for embarking nidhidhyaasana. According to tradition, the vidvat sanyaasa is necessary for nidhidhyaasana. The pramaaNam for this is Br. Up. Wherein Yagnyavalkya proposes to take sanyaasa for nidhidhyaasana, even though he is a jnaani, and is able to impart that knowledge to his wife, Maitreyi. Implication here is that what is good for Yagnavalkya should be good for everybody else. With two wives at home, he might have felt more urgent need to take up sanyaasa for nidhidhyaasana. Whatever is the reason, it forms a pramANam for the traditional view. The fact is traditional sanyaasa system itself is not there anymore. Discussing purely on the basis of the issue, Nidhidhyaasana involves manovRitti or mentally regurgitating the teaching that is already received to get firmly established in that understanding. Hence what is needed is a conducive environment to facilitate the process. From that perspective, while external sanyaasa will be helpful, but what is needed is internal sanyaasa or reduction of possession, obligations, relations and transactions, PORT. There is a change in the bhaavana or attitude towards the world and transactions with the world, as one firmly gets established in the knowledge. Thus there is a shift from triangular format involving jiiva, jagat and Iswara to binary format of aatma and anaatma, where everything other than aatma is anaatma, which is understood as mithyaa. Whatever problems that arise during the course of the remnant life are reduced to anaatma or mithyaa, and therefore they have no lasting value. Alternately the jnaani understands that the pleasures and pains come and go due to praarabda, and they are taken as vibhuuti of the Lord. Praarabda is what one experiences and where one does not have any control. Conversely whatever

circumstances or events that one faces during one's life where one does not have any choice (that covers all the past and all the future), can be taken as praarabda. Due to this, BMI will undergo the pains and pleasures that come and go because it is part of the prakRiti, but jnaani can stand apart and watch the drama of life. Hence Krishana says – **duHkheShu anudvigna maanaH, sukheShu vigataspRihaH, viita raaga bhaya kRodhaH, sthitadhiH muniruchyate-**, ups and downs at the body level will not affect the jnaani. It is taken as bhagavat prasaada or vibhuuti of the Lord. All prakRiti is His maayaa only. Hence there are no emotional reactions other than wonder at the beauty that permeates in all. Such a jnaani, who firmly abides in that knowledge, Krishna says, is His greatest Bhakta. That is the very fulfillment of life itself.

Next we will discuss the obstacles in the Nidhidhyaasana as discussed by GouDapaada.