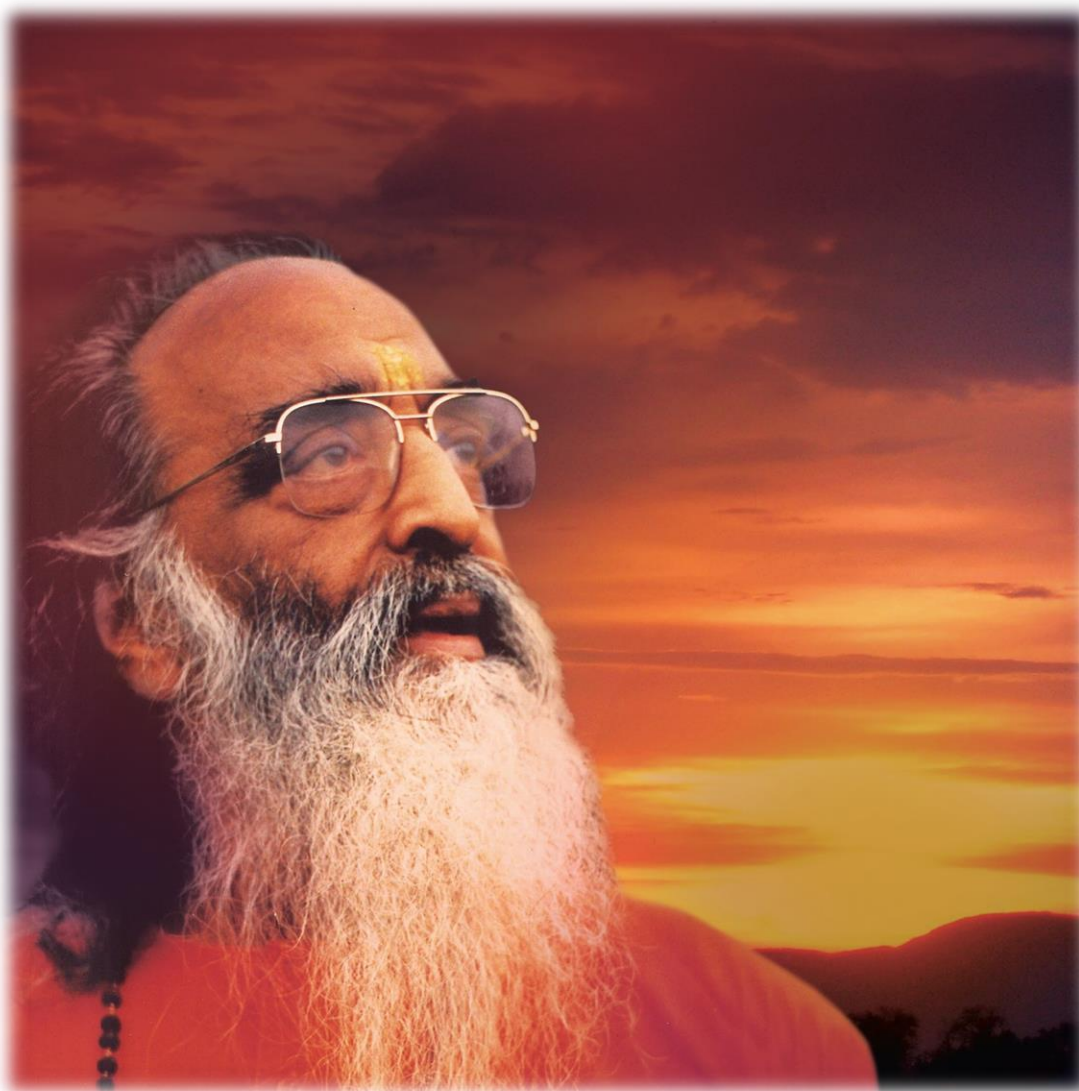


Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 25, Number 4, July 30, 2015



CELEBRATING BIRTH CENTENARY OF SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

Calendar and Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

- Sadhana Diwas, Aug 3rd, 7-9 PM at Chinmayam and Chinmaya Somnath
- Swami Swaroopanandaji Visit to CMWRC – Aug 3 & 4 at Chinmayam, Aug 5 & 6 at Chinmaya Somnath
- CHYK-DC Retreat at Chinmayam, August 14-16
- 2nd Screening of 'On a Quest' movie, on life and vision of Pujya Gurudev, on Aug 16
- Junior CHYK Retreat with Acharya Vivekji at Chinmaya Somnath, Aug 17-21
- F.E.A.R. Workshop by Acharya Vivekji at Chinmaya Somnath, Aug 17-21
- Start of 2015-16 Bala Vihar Session: Sep 12-13, 2015
- Grand Carnatic Music Concert on Sep 19 at Chinmaya Somnath
- 3rd Screening of 'On a Quest' on September 26
- Divya Shakti Retreat by Acharya Vilasiniji and Acharya Vivekji at Raleigh NC, Oct 9-11.

Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Kishore Bala ji by email at kishorebk@hotmail.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 - September 2015, are due by September 1, 2015
- 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 DC – Chantilly VA Chapter website www.chinmayasomnath.org

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

Washington DC – 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, Usha Konduri, Thara Konduri, & Vishnu Dharmaraj,

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

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News

Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebration Commenced

May 8th 2015 marked the beginning of celebration of the birth centenary of Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda. Starting with the celebrations led by Pujya Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda, in Kerala, and special commemorative coin release by India's Prime Minister, Sri Narendra Modi, all centers worldwide joined with their own local celebrations. Special celebrations were held at Chinmayam and Chinmaya Somnath under the guidance of Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji and CMWRC Acharyas. Please see article by Shanti Shivaya on the celebration at CM St Augustine.

2015 Bala Vihar Graduation Tilak Ceremony

The 2015 Bala Vihar Tilak Ceremony (Graduation) was held on May 16 at Chinmayam. A separate Tilak ceremony was held at Chinmaya Somnath later in the month. Pujya Swamiji, Acharyas, Bala Vihar Teachers and CM members joined the families and friends of Bala Vihar graduates on this special and auspicious occasion. A special edition of Chinmaya Smrithi - Tilak Ceremony souvenir is online at ChinmayaDC.org website with the profiles and reflections of our graduates.

2015 Geeta Chanting Regional Competition

The special Geeta Chanting competition, at the regional level for Washington DC Metro area, was held on May 16 and May 17 to determine the top performers who qualify to compete at the national level. The main competition was held at Chinmaya Somnath on May 16 and a tie-breaking round was held at Chinmayam on the 17th. The top 5 winners

from four age groups were identified along with the top two winners (shown in italics) who will represent CMWRC at the national level competition to be held at Chicago Badri Ashram in September. The winners are:

Group A: *Vedha Vembar, Medha Valluri*, Sahana Komanduri, Smhitha Nemani, Vishnu Kannan, Tanmay Deshpande.

Group B: *Sridhanya Thirumala, Rhea Sharma*, Mythili Menon, Shivani Tadikonda, Sumukha Shastry

Group C: *Anagha Shastry, Abhirama Rachabattuni*, Nandini Pisupati, Amulya Puttaraju, Jahnavi Kirkire

Group D: *Srijay Kasturi, Madhura Managoli*, Madhulika Nallani, Marali Harikar, Vedant Gandhi

Satsang With Gurudev

As part of Birth Centenary Celebration of Swami Chinmayananda, a Vedanta program, 'Satsang with Gurudev', started on May 18 and ran through June 19, at Chinmayam. Held Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the attendees watched a video excerpt on Pujya Gurudev's discourse on Upanishads (particularly Katha Upanishad, a few verses from Kaivalya Upanishad). The next session of this program will commence in September. Be on the lookout for more information on this.

Memorial Day Weekend Spiritual Camp

Acharya Sadanandaji conducted Spiritual Camp at Chinmayam during Memorial Day Weekend on Bridaranyaka Upanishad – Muni Kanda. The audio

recordings of his discourse are posted on ChinmayaDC website under Audio navigation.

Let us pray together to invoke the Divine Lord's Grace and Pujya Gurudev's Blessings to give the family solace during this difficult situation.

Understanding Marriage - Retreat

Acharya Vilasinji and Acharya Vivekji organized a retreat on “Understanding Marriage – The Joy of Giving” at Chinmaya Somnath during Memorial Day Weekend, May 22-25. See Article by Deepika Allana.

Screening of “On a Quest” Movie

The movie on the vision and life of Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, was screened in Fall Church VA on June 13th to a house-full audience. Two additional screenings are now scheduled at the same venue for August and September. See announcements, and check website for latest details and tickets.

Shraddhanjali

It is with a heavy heart, we are conveying the sad news of passing away of Sangeeta Wahie Purcell after a long battle with cancer, on Monday, July 13, 2015.

Sangeeta and her family have been a long time Chinmayam members, they regularly attended the Bala Vihar, initially on Saturday mornings and then Sunday afternoons. Sangeeta was a regular attendee of Pujya Swamiji's thursday classes.

Sangeeta is survived by her two children Simran and Kiran, two brothers and her parents Shashi Uncle and Saroj Auntie.

Announcements and Flyers

Announcements

- Sadhana Diwas, August 3rd, at Chinmaya Somnath and Chinmayam, 7 PM – 9 PM, See Flyers.
- Swami Swaroopanandaji's Visit to Washington DC, August 3-6, See Flyer.
- CHYK-DC Retreat, Chinmayam, August 14-16. Details at: <http://chykwest.com/dcretreat2015>
- Next Showing of "ON A QUEST", August 16 and September 26. Details at: <http://chinmayasomnath.cmwrc.org/onaquest.html>, Flyer.
- Junior CHYK Retreat by Acharya Vivekji at Chinmaya Somnath, August 17-21. Details at: <http://chinmayadc.wix.com/jchykretreat>
- F.E.A.R. Workshop by Acharya Vivekji, August 17-21 at Chinmaya Somnath, Flyer.
- Bala Vihar 2015-2016 Session commences locally at all chapters with Ganesh Puja – September 12-13 Weekend. Bala Vihar Registration Underway.
- Grand Carnatic Music Concert and Fundraiser, September 19 at Chinmaya Somnath. See Flyer.
- Divya Shakti Retreat by Acharya Visaliniji, Acharya Vivekji, hosted by CM Ralieg NC, Oct 9-11, Flyer

Chinmaya Mission® Washington Regional Center



Events & Activities @ Chinmayam

Join Us to Observe
'SADHANA DIWAS' ON CHINMAYA MAHASAMADHI DAY
with Puja and Satsang
in the presence of Swami Swaroopanandaji from Australia
Monday, August 3, 2015
LOCATION: CHINMAYAM
46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring MD 20905



Dear Chinmayam families,
Hari OM

Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda attained Mahasamadhi on August 3rd 1993 in San Diego, CA and his mortal remains were placed in a Samadhi on 19th August, 1993, at the Sidhabari Ashram in the Himalayas. All Chinmaya Mission centers around the world observe August 3rd as Sadhana Diwas in loving memory of the selfless spiritual service of Pujya Gurudev, one of the few great masters to come down from the Himalayas to spread the message of immortal Vedic scriptures and motivate the masses.

Please join us on Monday August 3rd evening, as we observe the 22nd anniversary of Pujya Gurudev's Mahasamadhi as Sadhana Diwas at Chinmayam, 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD and strengthen our resolve in the spiritual sadhana as described by our teachers. We will have a special guest, Pujya Swami Swaroopnanda from Australia with us. Swamiji will be conducting the Paduka Puja, followed by a glorious talk on "Swami Chinmayananda - Through the Eyes of the Heart". We hope you all can join us.

PROGRAM

7:00 PM to 7:30 PM Sri Gurudev's Paduka Puja

7:40 PM to 8:40 PM Talk by Swami Swaroopananda

8:40 PM to 8:45 PM Preparation for Meditation

8:45 PM to 9:00 PM Meditation led by Swami Swaroopananda

9:00 PM Chinmaya Arati & Maha Prasad

Please sign up for helping in decoration, puja arrangements and clean up. The decoration starts at 5 PM. Please RSVP to todeepakrishnan108@gmail.com or kirkire.meera@gmail.com by August 1st with your name and phone if you would like to help or sponsor a puja.

Puja Sponsorship as Yajaman - \$108

Arati Sponsorship - \$51

Prasad Sponsorship - \$25

Let us invoke the grace and blessing of the Master who inspired countless to walk the path of courage and wisdom.

~ Chinmayam Jagadeshwaram Pranamaamyaham ~

Hari OM!

In the service of Pujya Gurudev,
Chinmayam Sadhana Day Sevaks



CHINMAYA MISSION WASHINGTON REGIONAL
CENTER (CMWRC)

Chinmaya Somnath



Join us to observe Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Day
with Puja and Satsang
in the presence of Swami Dheerananda and CMWRC Acharyas

Monday, August 3, 2015

LOCATION: CHINMAYA SOMNATH

4350 Blue Spring Dr, Chantilly VA 20151



Hari Om:

Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda attained Mahasamadhi on August 3rd, 1993. We observe this day each year as Sadhana or Aradhana day. As per Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda's guidance, we also observe this day with Paduka Puja.

PROGRAM

Evening: 7.00 - 9.00 PM

- Paduka Puja
- Video Satsang with Gurudev
- Smt. Lakshmi Reddy's message**
- Acharya Anantji's Message
- Sri Vijay Kumar's Message
- Silent reflection/Meditation
- Concluding Message from Swami Dheerananda
- Arati & Offering



CHINMAYA MISSION WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

46 Norwood Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20905

(A nonprofit religious organization registered in Maryland)

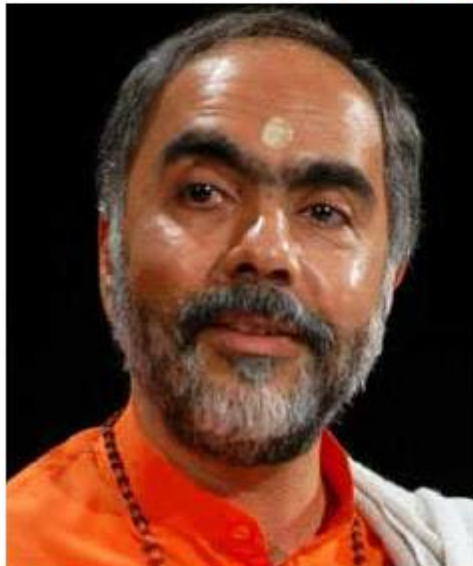


SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES BY

Swami Swaroopananda

(Regional Head of Chinmaya Mission, U.K., Australia and Far East)

August 3rd through 6th, 2015



Swami Swaroopananda is one of the foremost teachers of Chinmaya Mission. Inspired by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's discourses and lofty vision, Swami Swaroopananda left a successful business career in Hong Kong to join the Sandeepany Sadhanalaya. Swamiji received Sannyasa diksha from Swami Chinmayananda in 1992. Swamiji has traveled widely, is a world-renowned public speaker and author of several dozen books, as well as the **Make It Happen™** self development course. He has inspired many successful business leaders and guided countless spiritual aspirants. He is the Director of Chinmaya International Residential School, Coimbatore. Swamiji's discourses, seminars and retreats span a range of subjects combining the ancient spiritual truths with fast paced modern life style. He is well known for his insightful seminars on contemporary issues such as harmony in relationships, fulfillment at work and maximising one's potential. Swamiji will present a series of discourses in Maryland and Virginia during his visit to CMWRC.

Discourses in Chinmayam, 46 Norwood Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20905

'Swami Chinmayananda - Through the Eyes of the Heart'

August 3rd, Mahasamadhi Day Message

'LOVE – CAN IT BE FOREVER?'

August 4th, 7.30 – 9.00 PM

Discourses in Chinmaya Somnath, 4350 Blue Spring Dr, Chantilly, VA 20151

'MIND – CAN IT BE TAMED?'

August 5th, 7.30 – 9.00 PM

'SIMPLICITY IN MEDITATION'

August 6th, 7.30 – 9.00 PM

All discourses are free and open to everyone. For more details and directions, visit
www.chinmayadc.org www.chinmayasomnath.org

ON A QUEST
Film on a Visionary's Life & His Mission

Produced by: Chinmaya Creations
Director: R.S. Prasanna

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: JITHIN THORAI | DOP: SIDDHARTHA NUNI
MUSIC DIRECTOR: NAVEEN ARRORA | CO-DIRECTOR: ANAND KRISHNAMOORTHY
SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR: KUNAL RAJAN | ART DIRECTOR ARUMUGASAMY
COSTUME DESIGNER: PREETHI KANTHAN | EDITOR: ANILKRISHNAN
5.1 SOUND MIXER: STEPHEN TIBBO | COLORIST: BALAJI GOPAL | LINE PRODUCER: RAGHURAM
EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY: EKAVALYA PRODUCTIONS

Swami Chinmaya Jada 100 1916-2016 UNTO HIM OUR BEST

CHINMAYA MISSION

Cent



Chinmaya Mission® Washington Regional Center

Chinmaya Somnath

4350 Blue Spring Dr, Chantilly VA, 20151

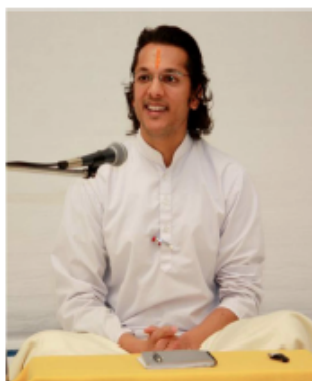


Face Everything And Rise

By Acharya Vivekji

(Head Acharya Chinmaya Dhara, Niagara, Canada and Chinmaya Sanjeevani, Pittsburgh, USA)

A four-day workshop engaging in the philosophy and practice of developing fearlessness



Acharya Vivekji still sought more from life, even after studying at the Ivey School of Business, traveling to almost fifty countries, and managing family businesses. In 2005 he decided to turn his journey within. For two years he studied and lived under the guidance of Pujya Swami Tejomayananda at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya. He now finds his every day joy in sharing the very same knowledge with other seekers. In this walk he already reached out to an array of community groups, academic forums, professional associations, medical departments and religious organizations around the world (i.e. The Office of the Pentagon in Washington, Regional Mental Health Care Hospital in London, etc.).

❖ **Monday, August 17th to Thursday, August 20th**

❖ **Daily 7:30pm – 9:00pm**

❖ **Location Chinmaya Somnath, Chantilly, VA**

❖ **Adults, CHYKs, and High Schoolers (none younger due to topics covered)**

❖ **Materials needed: Notepad, Pen, Blindfold/Sleeping Mask**

❖ **Bhiksha Opportunities are available**

Let us celebrate Gurudev's birth centenary with at least 100 participants

**Registration and full Attendance is required • RSVP
via email to fearworkshop@chinmayadc.org**



**CHINMAYA MISSION
WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER**



cordially invites you to

Grand Carnatic Music Concert

An evening of enchanting music that will fill your heart with divine melody!

Saturday September 19, 2015 @ 5 PM



**Coming to Northern Virginia
for the first time
the melodious Trio!**

“Sangeetha Kalanidhi”

Dr. Trichy Sankaran

and the Legends of
the Lalgudi heritage

“Sangeetha Kalasagara” Duo
Lalgudi GJR Krishnan
and
Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi



Venue: CHINMAYA SOMNATH,
4350 Blue Spring Drive, Chantilly, VA 20151

Contact: tickets@chinmayadc.org

www.chinmayadc.org or www.chinmayasomnath.org

Tickets: \$100, \$50, \$20

(Amount above \$20 tax deductible)

Proceeds benefit CMWRC Capital Projects

Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC) is a non-profit tax exempt 501c3 organization.



CHINMAYA MISSION Raleigh (RDU)



HOSTS AN EXCLUSIVE

"Finding Your Balance" Divya Shakti Camp for Women

Uniquely inspiring & holistic weekend retreat !



Acharya Vivek
.....
CM Niagara Falls

Retreat guided by

&



Acharya Vilasini
.....
CM WRC

Discourses

Meditation

Workshops



Where : 111 Realtors Way, Cary, NC 27513

When : Oct. 9, 10 & 11 2015

Audience : All Women 25+

Registration : <http://chinmaya-rdu.org/divya/>

Cost : \$150 (until 8/15/2015) \$175 (8/16/2015 onwards)

Call/Text : 919-670-5795

Email : cmrdudevi@gmail.com

Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebration

At Chinmaya Mission, St. Augustine, FL

Shanti Shivaya

When I first walked in to the Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebration on the afternoon of Saturday, May 9, the beauty of the newly erected altar to Gurudev brought me to a full stop – I had to pause to take in the awe and gratitude that rushed into my heart. The multipurpose room of the Jacksonville Hindu Society of NE Florida had been transformed by an amazing group of Chinmaya devotees into an ancient temple filled with echoes of devotion, prayers of yearning, answers of hope and the Presence of our sweet Gurudev.

To my right was the bountiful bookstore set up by volunteers, offering just a few of the over 90 titles that Swami Chinmayananda wrote in his lifetime. Puja Gurudev offered the truths of God to all people with books for every age and of every size, from children's books to teenage guides to deepest philosophy, from the simplest, shortest books on Vedanta you'll ever find to lengthy in-depth explorations of reality itself.

To my left was a corridor of 20 life-sized panels depicting the life and legacy of Swami Chinmayananda, which everyone was able to read as they lined up for Prasad and full dinner following the program. Nearly 200 people, many of them new to Chinmaya Mission, attended the program and were given free booklets about Gurudev and the Souvenir that was published for the occasion.

During the program, Swamini Radhikananda told of Gurudev's calling to bring the fulfillment of the scriptures and the experience of God to all people. After he had studied for many years with his guru, Swami Tapovanam, in the Himalayas, he was sitting in meditation next to the river Ganges, and the holy river spoke to him and told him he must take this sacred knowledge to share with humanity. Gurudev knew that he could not keep the fulfillment he had received from God to himself, but that it could only truly be fulfilled by sharing it with others. Thus began his lifelong mission to demystify the mystical

Oneness with God that is every human's natural birthright.

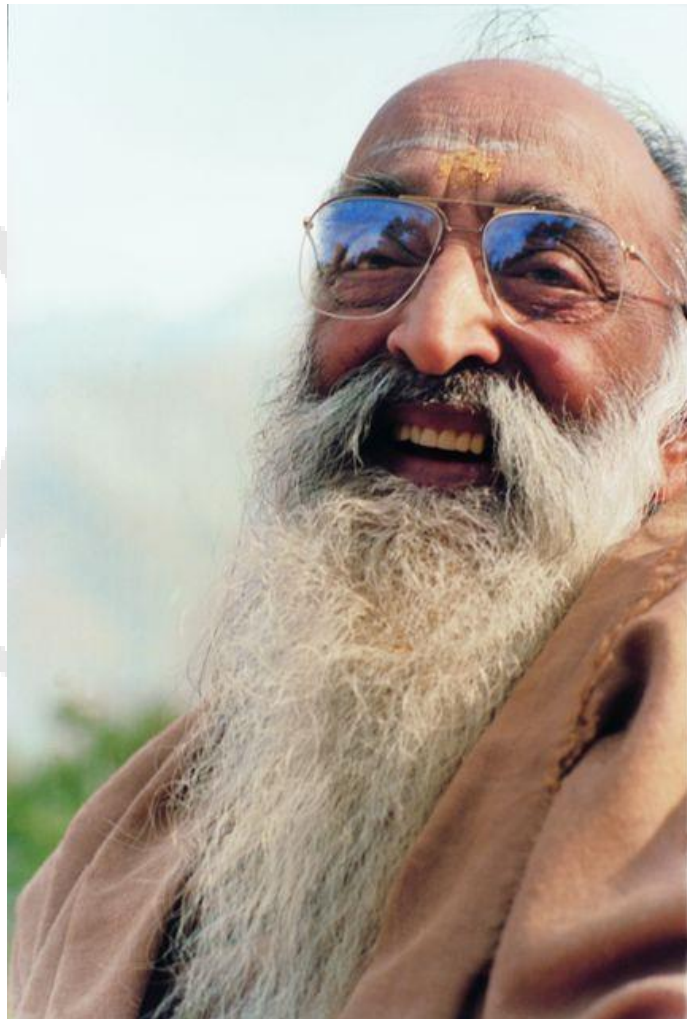
The celebration was lovingly prepared and presented by Acharya Vilasiniji and Swamini Radhikanandaji, with the help of Pandit Sri Kadambi Srinathji who performed the Paduka Puja and Rajopachara Puja. All three of them spoke lovingly of Gurudev impact on them. The opening puja honored Gurudev and created a sacred space of bhakti. Later, about 20 children comprising the most precious children's choir I've ever heard sang a song about Gurudev by a long-time devotee, Sheela Kirpalani, "O Swami Chinmayananda, You give your love to everyone..." and broke everyone's hearts wide open. A teenage Bharat Natyam dancer, Rhea Bansal, presented a beautiful dance to a song about Supreme Brahman's infinite presence within and without us. Gurudev's beautiful devotees, Sw Radhikanandaji and Vilasiniji, shared with us about his life and passion for bringing the most happiness to the most people for the most amount of time. We heard how Gurudev was the first Indian Swami to teach the ancient Vedic Scriptures in English, a revolutionary act that changed not only India, but the world. How else could the wisdom of the East ever have found its way to the West?

Vilasiniji told how Gurudev's passion for teaching was with him in every moment and he always wanted to help every person, no matter how brief the encounter. Gurudev told a story about walking along the road and coming across a man waiting at a bus stop. The man yelled out, "Swamiji, what is Vedanta?" As the bus pulled up and the man was getting on, Gurudev yelled out "Detachment, Attachment!" as the secret to happiness. Even if he only had a few seconds, he wanted to give something of great value to this man – as we detach from our worldly desires, we attach to the Divine and find bliss.

As a special treat, Vilasiniji presented a 15-minute video of Gurudev's life and we saw the trailer for the upcoming biographical movie, On a Quest. Through the video clips and the heartfelt stories told by his devotees, we all got a sense of who this joy-filled, brilliant, humble and loving saint was and is.

The pujas and devotional chanting throughout the program created a space for deep meditation and communion with Gurudev, whose Presence filled the room with such tenderness and love that no heart could remain untouched. I sat in deep gratitude as I received healing and reconnection, feeling transported to the Himalayas. The beautiful voices of Shweta Kamat and Kavita Sutaria rendered Sanskrit verses to the Guru in soulful melodies that penetrated our hearts. I felt my soul coming together into the wholeness of the present moment, I felt Gurudev holding me and coalescing within me, bringing me into a deeper understanding of the Sadguru that is speaking to me in every moment, bringing together all of my experiences of this lifetime and of past lifetimes. As my soul was uplifted and deepened by his presence in the ceremony, I could feel an eternity of loving God and yearning to know the truth of the Self. And I could feel Gurudev's deep joy at the continuation of his life's work of bringing fulfillment and happiness to so many.

Jai Gurudev! Hari Om! Om Shanti Shanti Shanti!



UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE: THE VEDANTIC PERSPECTIVE

Deepika Reddy Allana

“If you always do what you always did, you’ll always get what you always got.” This is a quote from Acharya Vivekji at the 2nd annual Understanding Marriage Retreat held at Chinmaya Somnath in Chantilly, VA over Memorial Day weekend, 2015. A version of this sentiment must have gone through each of the 40 or so attendees’ minds as they made the decision to attend the retreat. This quote is universal, and applicable to anyone, and in any context. The retreat’s theme, “The Joy of Giving,” also included topics spanning universal subject matter, which promised to serve as enriching lessons for navigating any human relationships, not just through marriage.

Married couples and singles alike gathered together for their own deeply personal reasons—perhaps taking their marriage to the next level by learning tools to help overcome recent conflicts, finding inspiration to strengthen their existing relationship, taking advantage of a rare opportunity for a meaningful weekend away, or maybe investing in self-development to offer their best self to a future partner. The learning was multi-dimensional with spiritual discourses, communication exercises, and small group discussion on insightful questions. The weekend’s intensive learning was interwoven with opportunities for relaxation through a ballroom dance lesson, a picnic lunch “date,” a playful game of soccer and entertaining bhajans. Participants were blessed to have the presence of five acharyas: Swamiji Dheerananda (by videoconference), Acharya Vilasiniji, Acharya Vivekji, Acharya Priyaji and Acharya Rahulji. While the participants were enjoying the retreat, many of their children were having fun in another room, enjoying games and activities organized by dedicated sevaks.

Acharya Vivekji, brought alive the Vedantic interpretation of the meaning of marriage with his trademark, lucid discourses carefully crafted to resonate with the challenges encountered in the modern day. He interweaved examples from the sacred texts, pop culture and his own life to make his message accessible, entertaining and informative—the perfect trifecta. Vivekji helped participants to understand that marriage has a deep purpose—to exhaust vasanas (conditionings from the past). Marriage is training; an opportunity to develop virtues. How does one develop such virtues? By giving, giving, giving, “more than what we take.” “It is not that the grass is always greener on the other side, the grass is greener where we water it.” By bringing these concepts into laser focus, one is inspired to dig deeper and find the motivation to water the grass every day!



Acharya Vilasiniji had a warm and inviting manner that enveloped the room as she invoked both her Vedantic scholar side and her counselor side to skillfully pair the best of Vedanta marriage philosophy and mainstream best practices for optimizing communication in relationships. Many participants reported back as having forged into new territory with their spouses regarding style and depth of communication. The general sentiment was that these exercises provided a worthwhile and golden opportunity for one to venture beyond one's comfort zone.

To quote Gurudev, "What we have is God's gift to us. What we do with what we have is our gift back to God." Thank you to the Acharyas, volunteer organizers and participants, who gave their time, expended their effort and shared some of themselves, for the benefit of all.



Thus was born a Sevak ...

(Based on an interview with Sri Vijay Kumarji)

Meera Seth

Vijay Kumar has been a member of Chinmaya Mission Washington DC since 1987, where he started and nourished Chinmaya Study Groups. He also started a Study Groups in Kabul, Afghanistan while on official duty for a year. He works with the Department of Defense.

It was in early 70s. Vijaykumarji was working with the Navy in Mumbai. He had heard of Swami Chinmayananda, read several books of Gurudev, felt a sharp interest hit him, but work reined him in. He was not able to run free with his attraction for Vedanta, because his defense job kept him on the move. '

But whenever Gurudev came to Mumbai, Vijaykumarji went to attend his discourses. Not only to hear, but to see him as well. .

In the early 70s, Vijaykumarji had a close encounter with Gurudev, an encounter that sort of zoomed in and bookmarked itself, with a promise to come back again many years later. And this is what makes his story unforgettable.

Vijaykumarji had gone to attend a Jnana Yajna in Mumbai, at a huge maidan, a public ground. Bombay of those days too was a city of large scale. Yajnas could not be held in the confined small halls of schools or colleges. The public attendance was invariably overwhelming and hence Gurudev's talks were held in huge grounds.

This was a very large crowd of over 1000 people. Vijaykumarji saw Gurudev's pictures hoisted on pillars and posts. There were ads everywhere in the city, announcing the Swami's lectures. He sat in this

audience gripped by the mesmerizing demeanor of the saint, exactly as he had sensed it every time he had heard him.

When the talk ended, the people filed out and some filed towards Gurudev. Vijayji also moved forward, almost propelled by his joy, wanting to get a closer look.

Gurudev came down the steps of the stage. Already some 20 people waited to smile at him, see him, prostrate to him, greet him... Even as Gurudev climbed down, they inched closer and formed a neat circle around him. Says Vijay ji, "Swamiji was now in their circle and I slowly pushed myself to become a part of the circle." The circle now grew bigger. But while each one in that circle was talking to Gurudev, introducing themselves, praising his talk, ... Vijay ji simply gazed at Gurudev, "I was looking at him, I was not hearing him, I was drinking him... all the way starting from his padukas."

All too suddenly somebody cut into the circle from outside; he ran inside the centre of the circle and cutting through, cut out of the circle as if Gurudev and the people around did not even exist.

Vijaykumarji was startled first, then angry. His eyes now left Gurudev and followed this silly person who had cut through. The man was still running. What was wrong with him? Did he not see that Gurudev was standing there talking to devotees? Says Vijaykumar ji, "Everybody was still looking at Gurudev. But I was looking at this man, thinking, 'Does he not know that Gurudev is standing there? No Hari Om, no reining in... How can he be so careless? He was near the stage working at

something.... My eyes were completely following the running man and I was annoyed. May be it showed on my face.

"As I plucked my gaze from the man and brought it back to the circle, I was stunned: Gurudev was looking directly and only at me. And now, he smiled at me." That eloquent smile.

"That smile confused me," continues Vijaykumar ji. Why was Gurudev smiling? I didn't know if I had done right or wrong looking at the running man. A little sheepish, I smiled back and nodded and said Hari Om. After the chat ended people left and Gurudev left too. I was glad that I had met him."

That was early 70s. In 1982 Vijayji moved to Dubai and started attending Study groups there. He assisted other sevaks in arranging Gurudev's Yajna in Dubai in 1986.

In 1987, Vijay ji had moved to the US and although he had not yet found a job, he quickly went and started a Study Group as his anchor point. "All else will follow, I felt," he says.

The very next year, there was a Camp in American University - Washington DC. I was so glad to see Gurudev again," says Vijayji dragging the 'so' with effect. "But there was no Mission center in Washington then. We were a small group of people. Because members were few, each one had to multi task: receiving Gurudev, setting up bookstall, organizing camp, setting up the stage and so on. I was helping with the bookstall and also the stage arrangements. ... "

On the day of the lecture, the hand full of sevaks tied themselves in knots, running between tasks, ensuring every detail and to perfection. Grace was high, the lecture went off well. Now in Vijay ji's words: "When the lecture ended, Gurudev came down the stage. A circle formed near the stage. The circle was small, about 10 people. Someone was

introducing his relative, someone was telling about himself.... Again Gurudev was part of the circle, Akhanda mandalakaram vyaaptam yena sacharaacharam ...more people were joining.

"I was in a hurry. The talk had ended, the University premises had to be handed back. I had to take the microphone and things off the stage and hand them over. The University had clear rules. We had to hand back the premises exactly as they had given it to us - no litter, no nothing. Oh the bookstall had to be wrapped up, at the same time, books gathered and tucked into crates and the makeshift stall folded up, the stage decorations to be removed.... And the posters had to be peeled off ... there was so much to do, I was all over the place. I had to run over to the other side where the book stall was. I hit the circle of people and realized I had no room to go to the other side. Gurudev was near the stage, the other part of the circle was flush with the wall. I could not have done anything but cut across the circle.

"And I did just that.

"I cut across, through the middle of the circle, and went past the crowd and Gurudev. After 5-6 steps, a sense of Deja vu seized me. Oops! I cut across! I remembered a long time ago somebody had also done the same and I had thought it was incorrect, disrespectful to Gurudev. Now I had done the same. Oh dear!

"I stopped and looked back in very slow moves, only my head moved I remember. I felt something is happening. Eight or nine steps later I stood there my back to the circle as I had come out of it by then ... I stood there for a few seconds. Something made me look back.

Gurudev was looking at me.

"I froze. He smiled the same smile he smiled 15 years ago. I also smiled at him. People are wondering why Gurudev is looking outside the circle. For he had to

turn fully to look at me. I too was looking back turning my head. My steps became slow and I stopped finally.

"He smiled and I smiled.

"It was a devastating moment. Was it the same Mumbai thing happening again, I was asking myself. The only difference was 15 years; then it was Mumbai, now it was Washington DC. Then it was somebody else, now it was me. Then I had felt angry with the running person. But now I remembered Gurudev had not taken cognizance of that running man, but I had. He had not been disturbed, but I had been.

"Then, Gurudev knew exactly what was going on in my head, my annoyance and so on. And he had smiled at me.

"Today too he was smiling at me, maybe telling me, you remember the person who crossed the circle, 15 years ago? That person, a sevak of Mumbai Chinmaya Mission, running to complete the yagna work, to wrap up the yajnasala, to hand back the grounds exactly as he had taken charge of it. Mumbai too then did not have enough hands to help. Fifteen years hence in Washington we all had to run because we did not have enough sevaks. .

"Thus a sevak was born in me, initiated and blessed by Gurudev's great smile.

"A sevak runs, he may have to cut across, he may or may not see Gurudev, but he will have to run and keep working without saying Hari Om. For an outsider looking on, it will seem like Vijaykumarji ran across without saying 'Hari Om', without touching Gurudev's feet, without any respect ... but that was how I had felt 15 years ago about the running sevak."

In these actions alone lies Hari Om, lies Gurudev, and lies the very action of touching his feet! The Guru lies in the seva. Vijaykumarji's mind had encapsulated all

this in a fraction of a second and delivered the realization to him in a moment. He recalled Gurudev's yajna talk: ***Karma bhakti and jnana are in the action and all are rolled into the seva which you do.***

Vijay kumarji continues, "Tears came because other than Gurudev none can remember with such precision what happened 15 years ago. Only a realized master can bring that learning by bringing about action replay. .

"He was teaching me the signs of a sevak, the life of a sevak and the value of a sevak of Gurudev. He taught me with a smile. The lesson had begun years ago in Mumbai. It ended in the University grounds in Washington DC.

"After the yajna we sevaks normally sit together and have bhiksha with Swamiji. Again he smiled the same smile. Swamiji thank you for the lesson."

"I cried that day," says Vijay ji, "I cried because he taught me in silence, with a simple smile, and it took many years for me to understand what that really meant!

Starting 8th May, 2015, Chinmaya International foundation (CIF) has been presenting the memories of variety of people who interacted with Gurudev, served him, worked with him, looked after him, and remain captivated by his divinity to this day, or simply heard him, or saw him move about and were left breathless, or read his works and never turned back ever again.... people who were so deeply impacted by Gurudev that their lives were never the same again.

These are people of all kind; big, small, known, unknown, seen, unseen, and all kinds. but the common thread that knits them all to us is the One love of the One Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, that they recall with such precision every nuance of their experience, itself, is as if retold to us by Gurudev himself. This article is the 55th one in the series. And you can read all articles at : <http://chinfo.org/cbcc/> and click on "Read Story"

Faith, Knowledge and Devotion - Together

Sitaram Kowtha

The following is a reflection after having prepared, hosted and immersed in the program “Satsang with Gurudev” at Chinmayam Hall during May/June 2015 as part of the birth centenary of Pujya Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda.

Faith, knowledge and devotion are the three essential elements for success in any field of endeavor, and particularly so in the path of spirituality. The interdependence and synergy among these three fascinated me. I will first explain what each means as I best understand it and then describe why they are essential, and lastly cite examples from Ramayana, Bhagvatam and Upanishad to illustrate the interplay of the three elements.

What are Faith, Knowledge and Devotion?

Faith is that we project to be true, and are also able to validate through a combination of reasoning, acquiring new knowledge and gaining new experiences. In contrast, blind belief is that which we project to be true, but hold on to it obstinately even when reasoning, knowledge and experiences debunk its validity. Complete faith indicates that all doubts have been satisfactorily cleared – in other words, completely validated to one’s satisfaction.

Knowledge is that which allows us to “see” and explore the world around us with greater and more rounded understanding. Complete knowledge indicates that we have thorough understanding of a subject matter. In contrast, incomplete knowledge indicates that there are gaps in understanding, and we have a lot more learn and grasp.

Devotion or love towards an object or a subject indicates that we are willing to withhold, suspend or give up attention, interest or priority to other objects and subjects which otherwise we hold very dear to our heart. In devotion, we seek and realize identify with the subject or object. Also, in devotion, our mind is able to gain a singular focus or attention towards an object or subject. Imperfect devotion means that the mind remains restless and shifts focus to other thoughts or objects. Pure love or devotion means complete identification with the object or subject, and we totally give up our sense of self, the ego.

Why are these Essential?

Without faith, gaining knowledge or becoming single-pointed in devotion are not possible. Faith serves as the first spark for directing our mind towards devotion and our intellect towards better understanding. Faith also serves as backbone for gaining knowledge and faith establishes the subject or object of one’s devotion. Opposite of faith is doubt. In a sea of doubt, one cannot learn because nothing is trusted. If the trust is not complete, how can anyone begin to have devotion?

Without knowledge, faith can devolve into blind-belief. The pursuit and process of gaining knowledge serves to strengthen faith, because at each step of learning and experiencing, one or more tenets of the faith are confirmed. For example, if I have faith that Big Bang was the cause of the universe, then through knowledge, experimentation, one can confirm that age, material composition, size, location of planetary systems, stars and galaxies conform to the tenets and consequences of the Big Bang. Each piece of knowledge gained or validated, continues to

scientifically assure that the Big Bang theory effectively describes the causation of the universe. Without such knowledge, the theory would be just that, and one among many others that seem equally rational and credible. Also, without knowledge the devotion does not become firm. While faith offers a point of devotion, knowledge makes that devotion unshakable.

Without devotion, it is not possible to deepen the faith or to be able to translate the knowledge gained through listening, studying and reflecting into practice, denying success in any endeavor. As an example, if I want to learn music from a teacher, I have to first believe that the teacher is trained and competent in the music and is able to teach. If I don't believe in the teacher's ability and knowledge, I will not be able to put forth any serious attention or priority towards what the teacher is teaching or how the teacher is teaching, thus impeding my learning. On the other hand, if I have faith in the music teacher, the doubts about the teacher's knowledge and ability to teach will be muted, allowing the learning to commence. Over the course of time the student may discover the need to move to another teacher to continue learning and/or refining musical skills. If the teacher turns out to be a master and an exponent of a particular style of music, the student's belief will turn into faith and the attention given to the teacher starts to transform into devotion. In the Mahabharatha, Arjuna was convinced that Drona Acharya, the master warrior, would teach him archery so that Arjuna can become the greatest archer. With faith and devotion to this master, he persevered and indeed reached that lofty height. If Arjuna was not devoted to Drona Acharya, he would have remained a mediocre archer.

In Spiritual Endeavor

As I understand, there are three components that help define faith in the divine. The first is the awareness that something greater than the

individual exists. The second is to then to accept that this greater presence is the very source of creation, the foundation of the continued existence and well-being of individuals and the creation, and is full of compassion and love for the creation. The third component is that over a time span of individual life experiences, inquiry, study and contemplation, one will be able to validate the first two. It is this third aspect of faith that separates it from 'blind faith', superstition, mythology or mere intellectual philosophy.

The search for the Truth is the journey of gaining spiritual knowledge, expounded in the scriptures, which promises to end in the realization of oneness with the divine. This journey is possible under the guidance of a realized master who has realized that oneness, the Sadguru. The key to this search is the understanding about what is eternal and what is ephemeral. The result of this quest is an alert and vigilant intellect that discriminates every moment between the Truth and mere projections.

The pure devotion in this quest is to that realized master, the Sadguru, whose grace alone will ensure success in the journey to the Truth.

Examples

There are a few examples from Ramayana that signify faith, knowledge and devotion and highlight the need for all three.

The first example is that of Mother Sabari. Sabari had full faith in the words of her Guru, Matanga Muni. The Guru assured her that one day the Lord in the form of Sri Rama will surely come. With faith in Guru's words and devoted to the Lord, she prepared every day for the arrival of Sri Rama. Days turned to weeks, weeks turned to months, months turned to years, years turned to decades – yet she prepared anew every day for the arrival of the Lord. Such was her faith and devotion. Sri Rama finally arrived one day. She welcomed him, fed him and sought

knowledge from him and asked for moksha (liberation).

Lakshmana was extremely devoted to his brother Sri Rama in the role of a servant, guardian and minister. While Rama was in exile for 14 years, Lakshmana served Rama in those roles. With his full faith in Rama and performing exemplary service, he became pure hearted. Lakshmana was also witness to many discourses on the knowledge of scriptures that Sri Rama had with many a sage during those 14 years. Yet, he remained restless since he had not yet awakened to the Truth. With Sri Rama as his Guru, he sought that knowledge which will deliver him to the Truth. In Sri Rama Gita, Sri Rama guides Lakshmana to meditate upon the Truth, so that Lakshmana can see that Rama is not merely his elder brother and a King of Ayodhya, but the immaculate divinity.

Hanuman received knowledge from his Guru, Lord Sun. Hanuman was also informed that his master is Sri Rama and that he should devote his life to him. While Hanuman served as a wise minister to Sugriva, he developed devotion towards Sri Rama. One day when he finally met Sri Rama, his wait was over, and he became Sri Rama's servant. He was already a Jnana Guna Sagar – an ocean of knowledge and piety. Now as a servant to Sri Rama, he came to fully translate his vast knowledge into complete devotion and dedicated service to his Lord. Hanuman is the embodiment of faith, knowledge and devotion, with Lord Rama and Mother Sita gracing his heart.

In Bhagvatam, there is a story of Uddhava, a highly intellectual minister of Mathura, who was an embodiment of knowledge. Uddhava was of the opinion that devotion was for those who were less endowed with intellectual capacity. Sri Krishna sends Uddhava on a mission to Brindavan to pass on his message to the simple folks there. The Gopis of Brindavan make little of Uddhava's knowledge and rationale, but demonstrate their pure hearted

devotion to Sri Krishna. Witnessing that, Uddhava reports back to Sri Krishna that he bows not to Brindavan, not to Gopis of Brindavan, not to the feet of Gopis of Brindavan, but to the dust of the feet of Gopis of Brindavan. They had shown Uddhava the way to pure devotion towards Sri Krishna.

Lastly, in Kaivalya Upanishad, Lord Brahma is the Guru to the disciple, Asvalyana, a great teacher of Rg Veda. In answer to the quest by the disciple for guidance to arrive at oneness with the Lord, Lord Brahma says that using faith as one wing and devotion as the other, one can soar at the seat of meditation and glide into oneness. For a Jnani (one with knowledge and fully developed sense of discrimination between Truth and not Truth) as Asvalyana, and being pure-hearted, a Guru like Brahma can no longer help with the final step in meditation. Asvalyana needs to take the final step himself - fly with faith and devotion.

Thus faith, knowledge and devotion come together to guide one to success in any endeavor. May the Lord and Pujya Gurudev grace everyone with faith, knowledge and devotion to the Self within.

Sri Gurubhyo Namah

Hari Om!

What is Absolute Reality?

Acharya K. Sadananda

Vedanta defines the absolute reality as that which can never be negated at any time, trikaala abhaaditam satyam. As an example, let us analyze a chair made of wood. Is that chair really real (styasya satyam) or only transactionally real? When I dismantle the chair or break it into pieces, it is no more a chair. What was there before and what is there now is only wood. Hence wood is more real than chair. Chair is only a name for a form of wood arranged in some fashion to serve some purpose, and gets negated when the form got destroyed. I can do this without breaking the chair into pieces. I can cognitively say that there is really no chair there but what is there is only wood currently in the form of a chair. Chair is only transactionally real but not really real; and what is more real than chair is wood, the material cause for the chair.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says every object is nothing but just a name for a form with some function (naama, rupa and kriya); and it has no substantiality of its own. For example, if one looks at the wood carefully, it is just assemblage of organic fibers; and there is really no wood there. Thus chair is dismissed and wood is considered as more real and wood is dismissed and organic fibers are considered as more real. Organic fibers in turn are assemblage of molecules which are just the assemblage of atoms, which in turn are assemblage of electrons, protons and neutrons, etc. At each level the name and form or naama rupa resolves into something else which is much more real than the previous state. The search for fundamental particles is still going on. In essence, we still do not know what chair really is as one form resolves into the next form. Vedanta says there is no real material substantive for any object. However, in these investigations what remains non-

negatable that seems to fulfil the definition of the absolutely real is that which is present all the time, and without which no investigation of any object is possible. That non-negatable one is the very inquirer, who is a conscious entity, without whom no investigation of reality can take place.

Vedanta says I negate the whole waking world, when I go to dream state, and negate both waking and dream states, when I go to the deep-sleep state, and negate that state when I am awake. Each state negates the other. However, I can negate each state but cannot negate my own presence in each state. The states can change but I remain changeless. I play the role of a waker in the waking state, dreamer in the dream state and deep-sleeper in the deep-sleep state. The roles that I play keep changing, but 'I' remains the same, like an actor who is playing different roles in different scenes. Vedanta says I am the only one in the universe who is absolutely real; where 'I am' should be understood as pure existent-conscious entity, and not the role that I play in each state. Thus each role has relative reality in that state but I am the absolute reality independent of any state or experience in any state. I am the subject, conscious entity that cannot be objectified. Hence I cannot know myself as an object of my inquiry, since I am the subject in all objective knowledge.

The analysis of the perception discussed above shows that I am that light of consciousness that illumines every thought which is locus of the object that I perceive. In the waking state, the waking world of plurality forms the object of my knowledge, in the dream state the dream world of plurality forms the object of my knowledge, and in the deep-sleep state the homogeneous absence of knower-known duality

forms the object of my knowledge, which also expresses as absence of any suffering or as reflected happiness.

Recognition of Myself

While I play the role of waker in the waking state, and dreamer in the dream state and deep sleeper in the deep-sleep state, and I am neither a waker nor a dreamer nor deep sleeper since they are only roles in each state. Then who am I that is independent of the roles that I play? This forms the fundamental inquiry and Vedanta says I am pure existence-consciousness, which is limitless, and which is pure happiness since any limitation cause unhappiness. I can only experience the three states, waking, dream and deep-sleep states, where I am playing the roles of waker, dreamer and deep-sleeper. As long as I am in the BMI (body, mind, Intellect), I cannot but play the roles. I have to discover my true nature by negating the superficial roles that I am playing, while still playing, as neti, neti or not this and not this, since any this is only name, form and function; and thus arrive that I am pure existence-consciousness-limitless (sat-chit-ananda). Logical analysis also indicates that the happiness that I am seeking comes from myself only. Yet, I mistake myself, with the limited body, mind and intellect, as I am this, in each state, and suffer the consequence of that identification. Hence Vedanta, as a science of absolute truth, analyzes the fundamental human problem, and declares that by identifying myself with what I am not, I take myself to be mortal, ignorant and unhappy as I am. While Vedanta points out that being pure existence, I am eternal or unchanging; being consciousness I am pure knowledge (without qualifications) that we said is undefinable; and I am of the nature of pure happiness since I am infinite or limitless or full as I am. In all human pursuits, I am trying to solve these three problems – I do not want to be mortal, I do not want to be ignorant and I do not want to be unhappy – which cannot be solved by any pursuits. At the

same time I cannot give up the pursuits. All the rat-race is fundamentally to achieve these three. In essence, I am trying to solve a problem where there is really no problem to start with, and that every effort to solve a problem-less problem has become a fundamental human problem. Only solution to this problem is to recognize that there is no problem to start with by claiming myself to be pure existence-consciousness-limitless or as Bri. Up says – aham brahmaasmi.

Hence Vedanta becomes absolute science of reality, since it reveals the absolute truth that transcends time and space. Hence, Bhagavatpada Shankara says this in cryptic way,

brahmasatyam, jagan mithyaa, jiivobrahmaiva naaparaH|

anena vedyam tat shaastram, iti Vedanta dindimaH||

In essence he says that, a) the absolute reality is Brahman or infinite, b) the world is only transactionally real and not absolutely real and c) and I am that Brahman. That by which all these three can be known is the real science (tat shaastram) and this is what Vedanta declares.

Finally, Vedanta also says knowing this one knows, in essence, everything. On the other hand, in the relative knowledge or in any objective science, strange it may sound, the more one knows the more ignorant one becomes. The reason is obvious. In the example of chair, we still trying to find out what chair really is; and this is true with any object in the universe. In any objective field of science, the more one inquires about the truth, the more it opens up with the result that I discover that what I know is very little compared to what I do not know. My ignorance grows more than my knowledge. My area of specialization becomes narrower and narrower, the more I enquire into the nature of reality. Thus my ignorance of the subject grows faster than my

knowledge. Every scientific paper ends with the statement that lot more study is required to understand the problem. That is the nature of all objective sciences. On the other hand in Vedanta, a student asks his teacher – Sir, please teach me that knowledge knowing which I will know everything – kasminno bhagavo vijanaate sarvam idam vijnaatam bhavati?. The teacher is happy to teach that absolute science of Vedanta knowing which one feels that he knows the very essence of everything. Hence Vedanta forms the absolute science, while all other objective sciences reveal only relative truths. Bri. Up says all objective sciences come under the umbrella of avidyaa or ignorance only, since the ignorance increases with knowledge in any given field. These objective sciences however play an important role in the transactional world for the proper transactions. However, considering these relative sciences as absolute and the absolute science as belief system only reveals our ignorance.