

# Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 26, Number 4, July 31, 2016



BIRTH CENTENARY YEAR OF SRI GURUDEV, SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

## Calendar and Upcoming Events

### Upcoming Events

- Mon July 25 – Fri Aug 19 – Children Summer Camp at Chinmaya Somnath
- Wed Aug 3 – Chinmaya Sadhana Day
- Aug 22-26 – JCHYK Residential Retreat at Chinmaya Somnath by Acharya Vivekiji and Swami Dheerananda
- Aug 26-28 – CHYK Retreat at Chinmayam by Acharya Vivekji
- Aug 26-28 – Vedanta topic discourses by Acharya Vivekji at Chinmayam for youth, young adults and adults
- September 10/11 – Bala Vihar 2016-17 academic year begins at all three chapters

### Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Kishore Bala ji by email at [kishorebk@hotmail.com](mailto:kishorebk@hotmail.com), if you are interested in forming or learning more about study groups.

### Bookstore/Library

- Browse Books, CDs, DVDs, etc. online at [www.chinmayapublications.com](http://www.chinmayapublications.com) Contact Sevak to order (Vijay Singh at Chinmayam, Subbarao Kari at Chinmaya Somnath and Bijay Dash at Frederick)

### Next Edition of Chinmaya Smrithi

- Articles for the next regular bi-monthly edition - Septmeber 2016, are due by September 1, 2016
- Email submissions to [smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org).
- Browse Past editions at [www.chinmayadc.org/Smrithi/Smrithi.htm](http://www.chinmayadc.org/Smrithi/Smrithi.htm)

### Useful Links:

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

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

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

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

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

Washington DC – Richmond VA Chapter website [www.chinmayarichmond.org](http://www.chinmayarichmond.org)

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

### Please Note

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

### Editorial Staff: ([smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org))




*Advisers: Sri Raju Chidambaram, Acharya Vilasiniji, Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji.*

*Sitaram Kowtha, Kodanate Lakshmanan, Krishnan Allampallam,*

*BV students – Nishant Carr, Siri Neerchal, Ananya Krishnan, Usha Konduri, Thara Konduri, Dakshesh Nimishe, Varsha Krishnan, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Bhavya Devarsu and Bhuvan Devarsu*

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

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## Announcements and Flyers

### 2016 Junior CHYK Retreat

CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

PRESENTS...



Swami Dheeranandaji



Acharya Vivekji



### CONFIDENCE: In One's Self, In One's Faith

Who: JCHYKs (Rising 9<sup>th</sup> graders through rising college freshmen)

What: A residential retreat under the guidance of Acharya Vivekji

Where: Chinmaya Somnath | 4350 Blue Spring Drive, Chantilly, VA 20151

When: August 22<sup>nd</sup> – August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

How: Register at <https://tinyurl.com/2016jchkydcccamp>

\$201 Early Registration | until August 7<sup>th</sup>

\$251 Regular Registration | until August 15<sup>th</sup>

Registration includes lunch and dinner. JCHYKS will stay with families.

Contact us at [jchyk@chinmayadc.org](mailto:jchyk@chinmayadc.org)

Let us celebrate Gurudev's birth centenary with at least **100 JCHYKs** at the retreat!

*"UNTO HIM OUR BEST."*



Instagram  
@jchkydc



CHINMAYA MISSION ® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER & CHYK WEST D.C. PRESENT...

# From Ordinary to **Extraordinary**: BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH VEDĀNTA

**Who:** CHYKs (young adults 17-40 years of age)

**What:** A weekend residential retreat under  
the guidance of Acharya Vivek Gupta

**Where:** Chinmayam

46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

**When:** August 26<sup>th</sup> – August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**How:** Register at <https://www.chykwest.com/dcretreat2016/>

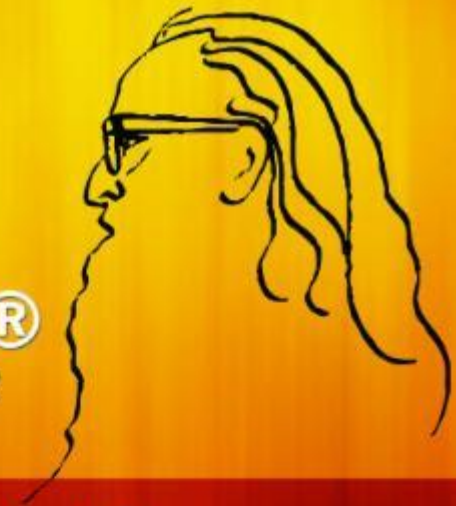
\$108 Early Registration by August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016

\$151 Regular Registration until August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Contact us [chykdc@gmail.com](mailto:chykdc@gmail.com)



**CHINMAYA MISSION®**  
WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER  
hosts a spiritual weekend retreat



# **Divya Shakti Finding Your Courage**

with



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**SWAMINI VIMALANANDA**



**ACHARYA VIVEK**

Inviting women 21 and older to Engage, Energize, Evolve and

Discover your Devi **Oct 7 - Oct 9, 2016**

Save the date & stay tuned for more details

**Discourses | Workshops | Discussions | Garba**

**Homewood Suites, Laurel, MD. Residential or Day Options**



## Jyoti Yatra at Washington Center

On May 30, 2016, Chinmaya Jyoti arrived from Pittsburgh to a grand welcome at the entry to Kailas Niwas, home to Washington DC Regional Center that comprises Chinmayam (Silver Spring Maryland), Chinmaya Somnath (Chantilly Virginia) and Frederick (Urbana Maryland). Puja Gurudev had sown the seeds for CMWRC 30 years ago and appointed Swami Dheerananda to shepherd its growth. It was at Kailas Niwas that Gurudev spent the final day in his physical body before heading to San Diego.

The yatra brought celebrations, joy, love, gratitude and worship among our families across Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC. See summaries and pictures in the following pages.





## Jyoti Yatra at Frederick Chapter



CMWRC Frederick Chapter 2016 Balavihar Graduates, Siddharth Vanam, Onkar Konnaraddi, Raveena Arora & Raveesha Arora celebrate Gurudev's birth centenary by conducting Guru Paduka Puja.

Hari Om !

I am glad to inform you all that Chinmaya Jyoti yatra in Frederick was well received and we all had a wonderful opportunity to host Gurudev. Jyoti visited 11 families and also [Sri Bhakta Anjaneya Temple]SBAT temple.

-Shiva Vanam, Frederick Chapter Director



## Jyoti at Chinmaya Somnath

Acharya Priyaji: The sun shined brilliantly as a sea of festively dressed, spirited devotees welcomed Gurudev's Jyoti at Chinmaya Somnath on June 18th. Zestful dancing and chanting by Bala Vihar teachers, students and hundreds of sevaks brought an elated sense of celebration in honor of this momentous occasion. The week continued with an enthusiastic rhythm, several programs being conducted as a part of the celebration. The Jyoti visited the several homes of devotees, including prominent temple in the area - the Durga temple, with special messages from Acharya Anant ji, Pramila ji and Vijaykumar ji. Nightly talks on Kaivalya Upanishad were conducted by Acharyas Rahul ji and Priya ji, followed by several family programs such as a melodious Jugalbandi performance by CHYKs, Puppet Show, Bhajan Satsang and Garba night. The Jyoti was bid farewell from Chinmaya Somnath with a grand Samashti Paduka Puja and Bala Vihar program. The immense feeling of devotion filled everyone's hearts as they bid farewell to the Jyoti.



### Jyoti Arrival at Chinmaya Somnath















### Durga Temple Visit







Kaivalya Upanishad Jnana Yajna by Acharya Rahulji and Priyaji



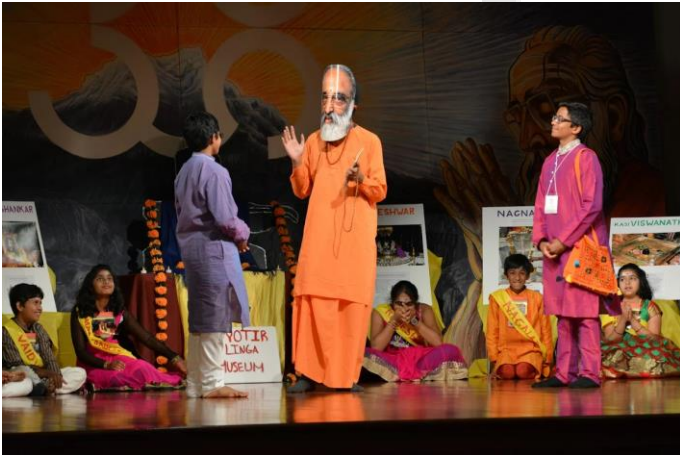




### Jyoti Farewell on June 25







## Jyoti at Chinmayam Chapter

### Jyoti Welcome

On Monday May 30, as Memorial Day Weekend was winding down, Chinmaya Jyoti Yatra arrived at Kailas Niwas. Sri Gopalakrishna and Jaya had transported Jyoti from Pittsburgh.

Pujya Swami Dheerananda, flanked by Acharya Vilasini, Senior Vedanta Teachers (DC Rao, Sankaran Nayar and Vijay Kumar) and CHYKs welcomed the Jyoti and led a procession that inched towards Chinmayam Hall. Some of the founding members of CMWRC were also on hand and joined the procession. Children, CHYKs and adults participated in the welcome. There were dances, bhajans, samashti paduka puja, and Swamiji expounding on the meaning of Jyoti and connecting it to the light of consciousness, Chinmaya. Everyone felt that Gurudev was with us in the form of Jyoti and the air was filled with joy, reverence and gratitude. Many of those present had never met or seen Gurudev in person, and yet they also felt the same sense of presence of Gurudev that those touched by Him had felt.

### Jyoti at Chinmayam

During Jyoti stay at Chinmayam, a show involving Bala Vihar children, youth (CHYKS) and adults on the theme of Jyoti, Padukas and Gurudev's glory brought out hidden talent and joy. The Jyoti traveled to homes of mission members in Maryland and Washington DC – 'Ghar Ghar Mein Gurudev' and also visited Sri Siva Vishnu Temple. Ghar Ghar Mein Gurudev was like Sathyanarayana Puja, in that members invited Jyoti into their homes, invited their family, friends and neighbors to join in the paduka puja and share maha Prasad. Senior Vedanta Teachers used the opportunity to describe Sri Gurudev's glory and meaning of the Jyoti, and the significance of Paduka Puja.

### Jyoti at Chinmayam Summer Camp and Farewell

Upon Jyoti return from Chinmaya Somnath, Swamiji made Jyoti integral to Children's Summer Camp he was conducting at Chinmayam. On July 1st, Swamiji, summer camp children, parents and sevaks gathered to bid farewell to Jyoti. One of the Junior CHYKs dressed up in sanyasi robes and put on a face-mask with Gurudev's

picture. The summer camp children had their eyes closed awaiting a surprise. The JCHYK quietly entered the hall. When they opened their eyes, the children were stunned to see Gurudev sitting next to Swamiji. The children sang 'Chinmaya Mahima' and 'Chinmaya Naamastotram' and sang along 'Gurudeva Tava'. Pujya Swamiji, flanked by children and CHYKs, led a procession to a car waiting outside Kailas Niwas. Joy and excitement was in the air. Gurudev was leaving us, but He never leaves us!

On July 2nd, CHYKs from Washington DC center transported the Jyoti to a midway rendezvous point in the state of Tennessee, and handed Jyoti over to sevaks from Dallas Texas center.

### Jyoti Arrival





























## Jyoti at Sri Siva Vishnu Temple

The Jyoti visit to SSVT was a blessed event. Our Senior Vedanta Teacher, Sri Vijay Kumarji, represented CMWRC along with a number of our sevak families. The Jyoti was received by SSVT authorities that included founders, trustees, board members and priests. Dr. Siva and Sri Narayana Char welcomed the Jyoti at the gopuram entrance. Led by Sri Narayana Char, the procession moved through all the sannidhis and arrived at the SSVT auditorium.

The Jyoti and padukas were placed on a beautifully set up altar for paduka puja. With Sri Ramu and Srimati Uma Potarazu as yajamans, and Sri Srikumar Gopalakrishna as the pujari, the audience of 50+, participated in the paduka puja.

Dr. Siva recalled Sri Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, blessing SSVT and mentioned that association of SSVT and Chinmaya Mission go back to the founding days of SSVT. He also recalled his own meeting with Sri Gurudev as a 9-year-old growing up in Coimbatore. He observed that Jyoti visit was a blessing to SSVT.

SSVT Bala Vidyalaya children, under the guidance of their teacher, Srimati Aparna, sang slokas, bhajans and a few verses from the Geeta, Sthita Prajna Lakshana.

SSVT Study Group member, Sri M.G. Menon, recalled glory of Gurudev. Finally, Sri Vijay Kumarji, addressed the audience. He expressed gratitude to SSVT for welcoming the Jyoti and highlighted the fact that two of the founders were on hand. He then touched on the significance and the journey of Jyoti and the places visited thus far, and finally on the glory of Sri Gurudev.

Amar Chitra Katha books on Sri Gurudev were distributed to the children and prasada pustikas to adults. SSVT made an offering on this occasion to CMWRC.

We are grateful to Uma Potarazu and SSVT for coordinating the visit and for wonderful preparations and setting up the altar/stage. We are also thankful to Umaji for accepting to serve as Yajmans for the puja. Thanks go to many CM families who helped in a number of ways to make it a memorable and blessed event.









## Jyoti Farewell

A wonderful program, nicely integrated into summer camp day by Pujya Swamiji, that flowed into a procession bidding farewell to Chinmaya Jyoti.

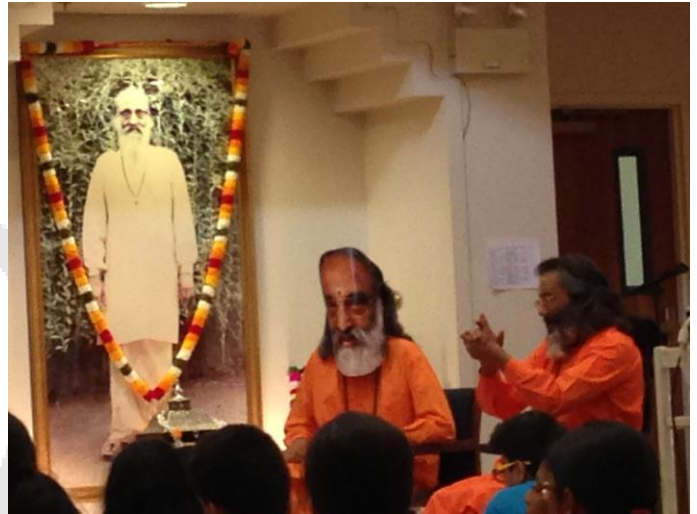
The center piece was Rohan Krish, a Bala Vihar student at Chinmaya Somnath and a JCHYK, dressed up as Gurudev. Swamiji asked everyone in the hall to close their eyes as children sat down for prayers at the end of the day. Lathaji guided her son, Rohan, and they quietly entered the hall and Rohan sat next to Swamiji.

Swamiji asked everyone to open their eyes. They saw Gurudev sitting next to Swamiji. The words of surprise reverberated. Swamiji led the Children in singing Chinmaya Mahima song, Chinmaya Naamamrutam, first few verses from Geeta Chapter 3 the children are learning in summer camp, and everyone sang along a couple of bhajans with Usha Amma.

All the children received ring-pop prasad from Gurudev and all the adults also received prasad from Gurudev.

Swamiji selected seven children to carry the flags that Lathaji brought from Chinmaya somnath and six youth volunteers carried the decorated poles as the procession left the hall to a car waiting outside. Everyone joined the procession with Swamiji in the lead. Chants of "OM CHINMAYA SADGURAVE NAMA" and "CHINMAYA SADGURU MAHARAJ KI JAI" filled the air.

It was a joyous experience as everyone bid farewell to Chinmaya Jyoti.







## Kaivalya Upanishad Jnana Yajna, June 18-24

*Arya Kalathil*

*Acharya Rahulji: Recently Priyaji and I had the Kaivalya Upanishad Yajna for the Chinmaya Jyoti Yatra at Chinmaya Somnath from June 18-24.*

*As part of the Yajna we had an essay contest for the Bala Vihar children. 12 children, ranging from 8 years old to 16 years old submitted essays. Prizes were given to all the children; and the writers of the top three essays were given a special prize: Riya Patil, Ravi Kosaraju, and Arya Kalathil.*

*Arya Kalathil's (14 years old) essay did an excellent job of capturing the essential ideas as well as the thought flow of the 7 lectures. Arya and her parents (father: Jay Kalathil) came to all the lectures.*

*I have attached Arya's essay to this email. I would like for Arya's essay to be published in the next edition of the Chinmaya Smrithi magazine and wherever else you feel may be appropriate.*

When I came to the lecture hall in Chinmaya Somnath on June 18th, I had absolutely no idea what Kaivalya Upanishad was or what I was going to learn. After 6 days, I have learnt so much about how the Upanishads will help me lead a happy life.

There are three parts in all Upanishads: Karma Kanda, Upasana Kanda and Jnana Kanda. Karma Kanda and Upasana Kanda will be helpful to bring purity of mind and concentration. The one who follows Karma Kanda will go to heaven and come back after exhausting punya. Upasana Kanda will take the devotees to Brahma Loka and they have to wait millions of years to attain liberation when Pralaya happens. Through Jnana Kanda we will be able to know and experience our true Self. Knowledge of Self will take us to liberation while living. We will not be affected by sorrows and miseries when we understand we are not merely this body and mind; we are the witnessing consciousness.

Kaivalya Upanishad is a teaching by Brahmaji to Rishi Asvalayana. Rishi Asvalayana prays to Lord Brahma to teach him on how to attain moksha.

I learnt that Shrivana, Manana, and Nididhyasana will lead us to Yoga Samadhi. Shrivana is listening with faith, Manana is truthful contemplation over the ideas discussed, and Nididhyasana is regular practice to

transform these ideas into experiences. You cannot attain the blissful state by action, relations, or wealth. Slowly renouncing our mental attachments to the worldly interactions brings more happiness and peace into our life.

Regular meditation will help us to remind and retain the blissful state throughout our daily activities. When I am feeling unhappy or disturbed, this is a way I can remember that I am not the body, mind or intellect. I am that Brahman, substratum of everything. Brahman is self-shining, ultimate bliss, unmanifest, unthinkable, formless, eternal and all pervading.

There are two types of meditation: Nirguna Upasana and Saguna Upasana. Nirguna Upasana is formless meditation, Saguna Upasana is meditating on a form and its qualities. Formless meditation requires Chitta Suddhi and Chitta Ekagrata. This is hard for beginners so Brahmaji provides steps for meditating on a form.

To do meditation, I learnt that I needed to be in an undisturbed place and time, free from distractions. I should be comfortably seated, because sitting will bring Satvic qualities, whereas standing is Rajasic and lying down is Tamasic. My head, neck, and spine should all be in one line so the blood flow to my head is efficient. I should be clean in three ways: clean surroundings, fresh body, and positive mind. After shutting my senses off, I should adopt the attitude of renunciation (Sanyas), and bow down to the guru with humility.

In Kaivalya Upanishad we will be meditating on the form of Lord Siva. It is easy to imagine Lord Siva sitting in a meditative pose with calm face and Mother Parvati next to him. It was very interesting when Priyaji was describing Mother Parvati's golden ornaments and sparkling nose ring. I was imagining Mother Parvati in Mahadev TV serial and it helped me to feel Lord Siva and Mother Parvati more intimate and lively.

Lord Siva is Purusha and mother Parvati is Prakrithi. Prakrithi is inert matter in this universe including our body, mind and intellect. Purusha is the vitality which brings life to inert matters. Without Purusha, Prakrithi has no life and without Prakrithi, Purusha cannot manifest. Lord Siva's third eye represent the seat of self-knowledge. By opening the third eye all the ignorance will be destroyed.



Rahulji's explanation on AUM was very helpful for me to understand why we chant OM. According to Mandukya Upanishad, the sound "A" represents the waker, "U" represents dreamer and "M" represents deep sleeper. While we chant "Aa..." we should leave all our experiences in waking state and body, chanting of "Uu..." should take us above all dream experiences and mind, "Mm..." chanting should lead us above all deep-sleep experiences and ignorance. Finally, we should focus on silence after the chant. Silence is permanent. All sounds are appearing, disappearing and supported by the silence. The soundless form of Om is Amatra. Like vapor from hot tea dissolving to thin air, our ignorance should dissolve to the Brahman.

Jiva (individual) does everything to be happy. But Jiva never gets the full happiness it is looking for. When we are in waking state, we feel a subtle emptiness even in the happy moments. We create our own world in dreams. This dream world is exclusive to the dreamer. When the dreamer slowly goes to deep sleep, there is only ignorance. I am the witness (Sakshi) of these three states of experiences. Sakshi is like the sun, for it is never affected or changed by what it witnesses.

I learnt about the four Mahavakyas from the four Vedas. They are: Prajnanam Brahma (Awareness is Brahman) from Rig Veda, Ayam Atma Brahma (Brahman is self) from Atharva Veda, Tat tvam Asi (You are that) from Sama Veda, Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman) from Yajur Veda.

Kaivalya Upanishad's Mahavakya is tat tvameva tvameva tat - Brahman I am, I am that Brahman. Brahman is the witness and substratum (support) for this universe. Everything is in Brahman and Brahman is in everything. My true nature is Brahman. When we understand and experience this, we will not have any sorrow or disturbances in life. Sarvatma Bhava takes us to Jivan Mukthi. Why should I fear if everything is me? This realization will liberate us from the cycle of life and death forever.

Thank you Rahul ji and Priya ji for all your effort in explaining these concepts and making it useful for our life. I will try to use the meditation techniques you have given to us. I can also explain to my friends what OM stands for and how to meditate when chanting OM.

Hari OM!

## Shloka Class Celebrates Centenary Year

*Submitted by Sri Gopalakrishna*

This past year 2015-2016 was celebrated world-wide as Sri Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's birth centenary year. Among the various programs organized, the Chinmaya Shloka class syllabus for the 2015-2016 Bala Vihar year was dedicated to the Guru. The children learned Chinmaya Ashtakam, Tapovan ji Maharaj's Arati, Kritajnata and the entire Guru Stotram. For each of these stotrams, the meaning was also provided in the transcript and the teachers covered the highlights of each verse during the class time.

Children in Virginia and Maryland had the opportunity to present these stotrams at the following events:

- 20 minute recitation during Gita Chanting Competition Trophy Distribution
- Chinmaya Jayanti weekend, May 7/8th 2016 in Common Time in all three sessions
- VA Annual Day Invocation when the entire Guru Stotram was recited
- MD Saturday Session Annual Day where all the Stotrams were recited
- Jyoti Yatra visit to Durga Temple where children recited these stotrams as they circumbulated the temple
- Welcome of the Chinmaya Jyoti in Chinmayam when children recited Chinmaya Ashtakam and Kritajnata
- Welcome of the Chinmaya Jyoti in Chinmaya Somnath when children recited entire Guru Stotram when the Jyoti arrived
- 30 minute Stotra Parayanam during the Jyoti Yatra Samashti Puja celebration on June 25th in Chinmaya Somnath

At the end of the academic year, a few children presented their thoughts on Guru, which are summarized here.

### The Significance of Guru

*By: Sneha Rajaraman*

Here are a few things I learned about the Guru while learning the Guru Stotram:

- He closed the cover of ignorance and opened up the world with the ointment of knowledge
- Guru is the sustainer, creator, and a destroyer, and is the entire universe
- He is limitless and a teacher for everyone
- He is the Sun to the lotus of Vedanta
- Guru is eternal and full of peace
- He is full of knowledge and power
- He has the greatest truthfulness in him and he also spreads the Upanishads
- He is the Lord and Teacher of the Universe
- He is the Self in all Beings and represents the flow of wisdom
- He is the beginning and the beginning-less
- He is the highest Deity and there is none more superior
- He is everything
- Guru is always willing to do whatever is supposed to be done, and never gives up!

### The Significance of Guru

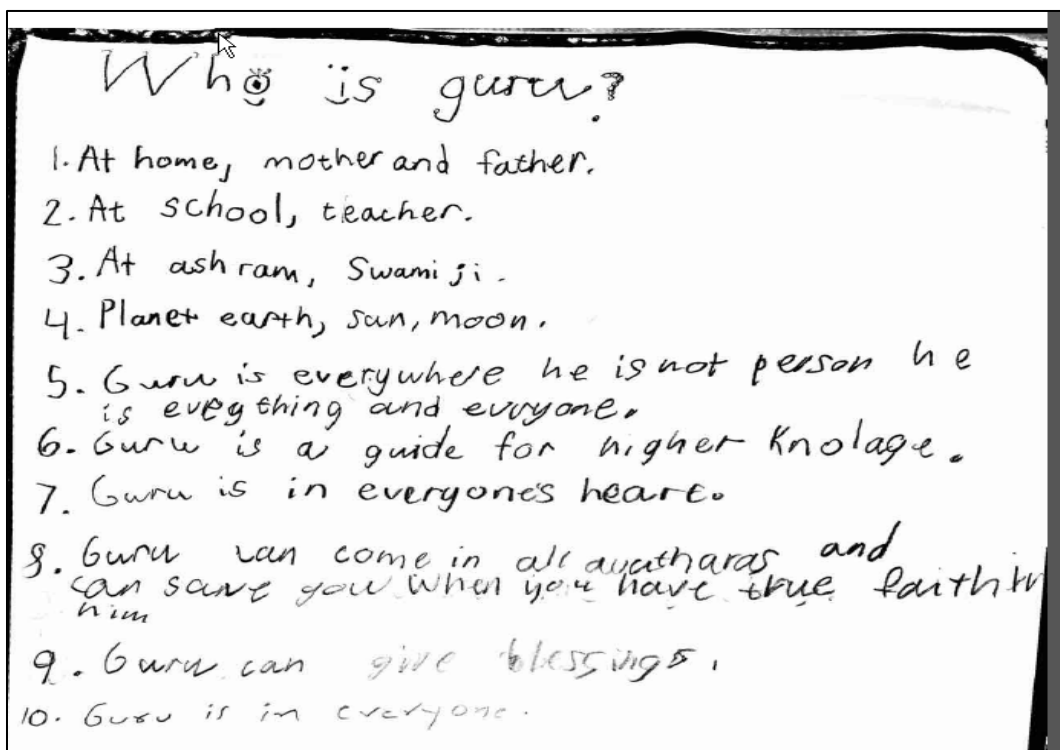
*By: Lakshmi Sastry*

"Having a Guru is like a key. It opens up a part of the world. They help you see the world in a new light. Once you finish your lessons with a Guru, you will be more smart and thoughtful. That is why I like my Guru."



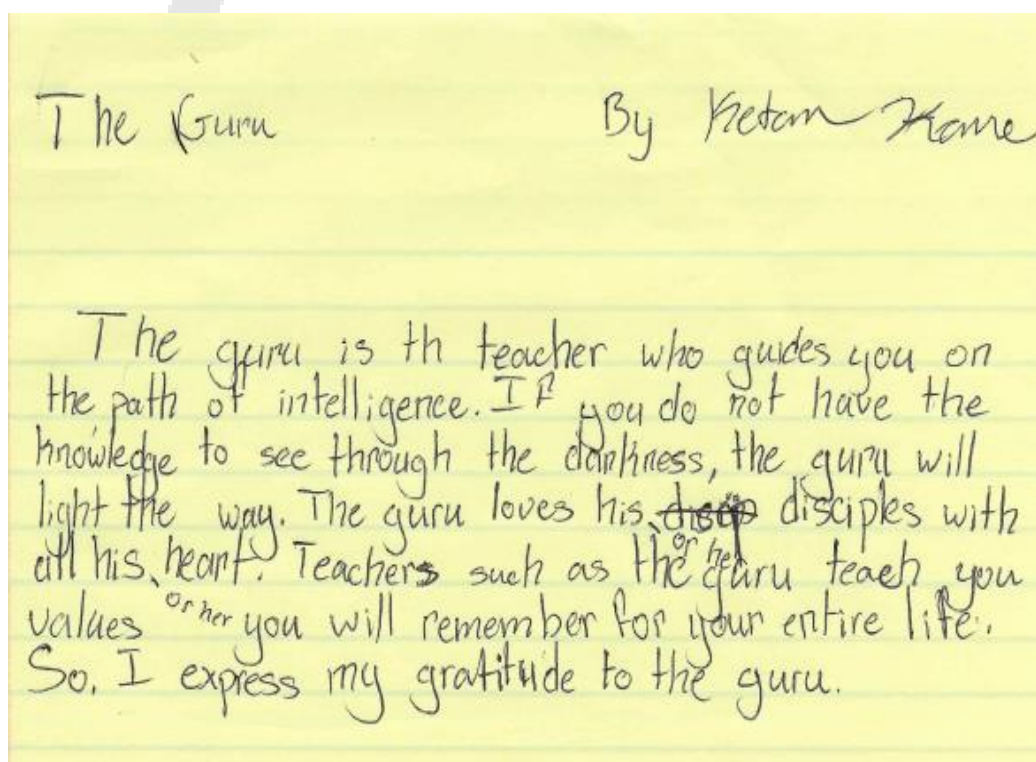
### Who is a Guru

By: Devya Adi



### The Guru

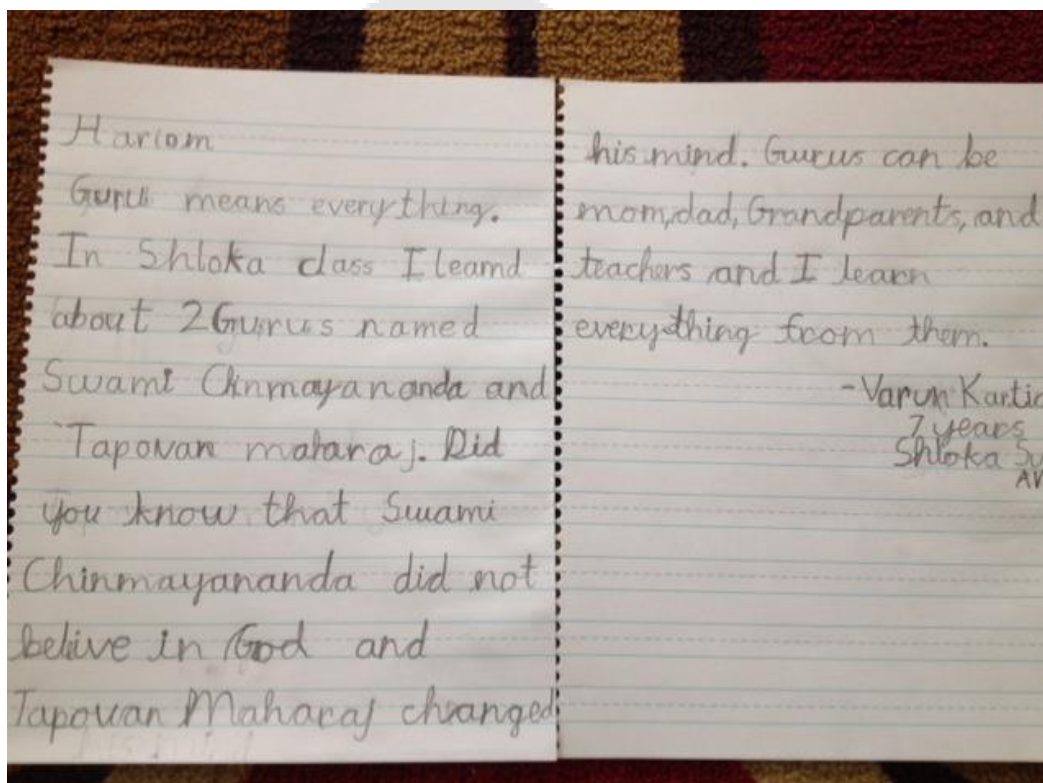
By: Ketan Kane





## The Guru

By: Varun Karthik



## Guru Stotram

By: Rhea Sharma

Guru Stotram is a prayerful glorification of the Spiritual Teacher. This is collection of prayers taken from Upanishads and has 14 stanzas.

The prayer is salutations to the GURU who reveals us the truth, knowledge, peace and radiance. The stotram describes GURU as the best of jewels of Vedas.

I like this stotram because it says that there is

- No higher truth than the Guru,
- No higher penance than service to the Guru, and
- Nothing higher than the teachings of the Guru.

Guru is teacher of the entire universe and is the highest deity. Guru is in the form of mother, father, brother, friend, guest and GURU is GOD to me.

## What I learned about a Guru?

By: Aparna Peri

Hari OM, Sri Gu-ru-bhyo na-mah

The Guru I am going to talk about is Swamy Chinmayananda Swamy ji. I have joined Chinmaya mission in March of this year. During the last few months I learned little about Guru ji. His way of teaching with interest and willingness to spend more time with his students. Before joining Chinmaya my father told me who should be considered as Guru.

A person who is very positive and has a happy face all the time, who teaches us by coming down to our level of understanding and also who teaches us lot of values in life and about sanatana dharma.

I have seen Guru ji only in the videos but seeing his picture in the class I learned "Kritagnata, Raja Rajeswari,

Chinmaya Aastakam, Geeta Chanting” from our teacher Shri ji. Under the able guidance of Shri ji I learnt chanting Geeta. I was able to memorize it in just 4 weeks, I got the highest score which is Diamond Star.

I wish I will learn a lot more from shri ji with blessings from Swami Chinmayananda in the years to come.

### Our Guru – Sri Gurudev

By: Varshitha Kasiraman

Every year I look forward to learning the different chapters of Bhagavad Gita. I wouldn't have had this opportunity if not for Gurudev. I learnt that during Gurudev's time, only very few knew the Gita by-heart, and even fewer could actually understand the meaning. People worshipped copies of the Gita blindly, with no knowledge of it at all. Many saints who knew the Gita did not share their knowledge, but Gurudev taught the meaning of the Gita to many, enlightening their lives by encouraging them to apply the values in their daily life. I hope to get a deeper understanding of the verses of the Bhagavad Gita that I have learned, in order to guide me into becoming a better person.



## Redefining Difficult

*Atman Panigrahi*

As I prepared to begin my college journey last August, I found my mind in a tumultuous state. Excitement and joy, fear and confusion, these and many more emotions cluttered my thoughts. But I quickly quelled negative feelings in an effort to motivate myself to start the school year off strong. I grew fairly confident in my ability to tackle the challenges ahead of me, mainly due to my solid academic foundation and the support system my family provided me. It seemed simple enough – school might get tough, but I was well equipped to handle the new rigor, and college would be smooth sailing thereafter. But as the weeks went by, classes began, and I immersed myself in a new environment, I slowly lost confidence in my preparedness for a new domain. College presented not just academic challenges, but a host of trials and tribulations common to most students' first semester at school: learning to live (relatively) independently, adjusting to being away from family (especially difficult for someone attached to home, like me), endeavoring to find a niche in a drastically different social scene, and learning to balance meaningful extracurriculars with studies. College, it seemed, wouldn't be so easy.

As I found myself feeling burdened, my first instinct was to remind myself that I was not alone – scores of students shared these challenges with me and were also figuring out how to navigate the whirlwind that is college. Furthermore, there were people facing far more significant hardships in their lives – who was I to complain about something so trivial? But acknowledgement of this shared burden or dismissal of its importance wasn't enough for me to overcome it. I needed something more compelling to lift me from my slump. It was then that I truly began to appreciate my time at Chinmaya Mission.

Since school began, I had kept my copy of the Gita on a shelf next to my bed. Naively, I didn't feel that I would actually need it – I had always been a calm and stoic person and I had handled challenges in high school without feeling particularly overwhelmed. But as I quickly realized when the semester picked up, this was no longer the case, and the Gita was the best means of improving my frenzied state of mind. As I leafed through its pages, I recalled all of our lessons in Bala Vihar as we studied the text. I found concrete guidance as to how to calm my mind and address the obstacles in front of me, and I

relived the feeling of incredible joy and curiosity that I had experienced reading the Gita in Chinmayam.

As soon as I began – or resumed, I should say – my journey through the Gita, I saw just how meaningful it could be. The third verse of Chapter Two jolted me out of my immobilizing trance. As translated:

*Yield not to impotence, O Partha! It does not befit thee. Cast off this mean weakness of heart! Stand up, O Parantapa!*

As the image of Krishna imploring Arjuna to act played itself in my mind, I felt that his piercing words were directed towards me as well. I had no reason to be paralyzed by my difficulties – it was my responsibility to face them head on and bear the consequences. Just as Arjuna's duty was to fight a battle for good, mine was to learn and be the best student possible. I couldn't allow simple worries deter me from this. I remembered the high standards I set for myself during high school, and I strived to rekindle my desire to surpass them.

Perusing through merely Chapter Two ended up doing me more good than I could have imagined. For instance, I came across another powerful verse:

*The contacts of senses with objects, O son of Kunti, which cause heat and cold, pleasure and pain, have a beginning an an end; they are impermanent; endure them bravely, O descendant of Bharata.*

This, I recalled, had been a subject of an essay of mine one year earlier, and the intricate message I had so closely examined came rushing back to me. Here was the hallmark of my approach to life during my junior and senior year of high school, an ideology which I endeavored to embody in everything I did. Life is a ceaseless range of emotions with alternating waves of happiness and sorrow, and I had learned to steadily navigate these ups and downs. But the new challenges I was facing forced me to redefine just how choppy those waves were – the lows were now lower and to some extent, the highs were higher; "difficult" had an entirely new meaning. This verse from the Gita reminded me of the critical need to remain calm and poised no matter how daunting a task seemed, and renewed my commitment to addressing hardships with composure. As the weeks went by, a constant effort to improve my mindset in this manner eventually paid off.

Delving deeper into the Gita, I continued to encounter a number of relevant and illuminating ideas. I stumbled across concepts which had aided me through high school, but that I had seemingly since forgotten. But beyond any specific verse, simply the act of reading the Gita and Gurudev's insightful commentary left an impression on my mind. Immersing myself in the holiest words I knew of worked wonders, helping me approach tough times in the same manner that I approached happier ones.

As I observed the profound impact of the lessons of Chinmaya Mission on my mental condition, I began to reflect more carefully about its role in my life. When my family first started our weekly trips to Chinmayam in 2001, I viewed it as a chore – I would have much rather spent my Sunday afternoons at a friend's home or in my living room watching TV. But over the years, I gradually learned to appreciate the precious time spent in Silver Spring. The teachings of Bala Vihar unequivocally shaped my character and internal compass, guiding my thoughts and actions. While my inherent traits may lend themselves to my current personality, without a doubt the safe and stimulating environment of Chinmayam, the loving and dedicated instruction of my Bala Vihar teachers, the kind guidance of Swamiji, and the refreshing ideas of my peers each Sunday had a profound impact on who I am today. I'm not sure any words can express how thankful I am for that.



## Bhagavad Gita on the Secret of Happiness

*Ram Chandran*

Happiness is the universal aim of life. Happiness depends on the modes that dominate our nature. When we were kids, we thought that we could buy happiness in the toy stores. Now we are grown up kids and we seek wealth, power and pride to get our happiness. Simply speaking, we tend to focus our attention on illusionary happiness through material objects. The more illusionary happiness we get, we are eager to venture for more! Nevertheless, we get to a decisive point when we reach the dead end street of pain and misery. We fall into this vicious endless cycle of happiness followed by disappointment without recognizing our true nature! We don't seem to recognize the fact that one of the greatest obstacles to happiness is to look for more and more happiness.

One of our real problems is that we don't know what is true happiness? The sages of the Upanishads recognize that true happiness can't come from human action. Result from any action is transitory where as true happiness is omnipresent and can neither be created nor be destroyed. Only understanding one's own SELF will enable the realization of true happiness. True happiness is free from sufferings and disappointments! The Secret of real happiness is within inside us but we look for it in others' pockets! Happiness is our true nature when we see our-self in all beings and all beings in our-self. The Secret of true happiness is to keep positive thoughts within and erase the negatives once for all. Pain is an illusion which will disappear instantaneously with the emergence of eternal joy and freedom. True happiness implies peace. Peace requires freedom from conflicts and conflict arises with plurality. Subjective beliefs and notions of the world cause plurality around us. Such notions will unplug our mouth and plug our mind and ears! We start our conversation without thinking by closing our mind and ears. Such conversations inevitably take us into intense arguments. The moment prejudice gets in, patience evaporates, peace gets disturbed and conflict takes over! We can remove plurality by freeing our mind from prejudiced notions. The Secret of true

happiness is to eliminate subjective beliefs and perceptions on others. Happiness can enter only when we open our eyes, ears and mind.

Sukham in Sanskrit is a more precise word to explain happiness. Sukham implies the combined presence of joy, calmness, mental balance with rhythm, a state of freedom from doubts and free from fear. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, he suggests that the human goal is to reach Shtira Sukham – Stable Happiness. A stable happiness can only be achievable with a stable mind and the entire teachings of Bhagavad Gita focused on this subject matter. In the Verses 15 and 66 of Chapter 2 Bhagwan Sri Krishna states;

***Yam hi na vyathayantyete purusham purusharshabha;***

***Samaduhkha sukham dheeram so'mritatwaaya kalpate. 2:15***

That firm man whom surely these afflict not, O chief among men, to whom pleasure and pain are the same, is fit for attaining immortality!

***Naasti buddhir ayuktasya na chaayuktasya bhaavanaa;***

***Na chaabhaavayatah shaantir ashaantasya kutah sukham. 2:66***

There is no knowledge of the Self to the unsteady, and to the unsteady no meditation is possible; and to the unmeditative there can be no peace; and to the man who has no peace, how can there be happiness?

True happiness can only be reached with perfection when we free ourselves from the duality of pleasure and pain. Without stable mind we can't maintain peace and serenity and we can never be happy under those circumstances. Any desire causes the mind to dwell on the duality of pleasure and pain. A desire is an expression of the feeling of incompleteness or unhappiness about the present situation. An unfulfilled desire will inject pain and anger whereas a fulfilled desire will bring pleasures at that moment but ultimately will lead to greed. This is the reason why contentment is so elusive. Realization of the

Self gives the wisdom to know that we are always complete and happy.

What has been stated here in the above two verses have been emphasized authoritatively with greater clarity in Bhagavad Gita through 17 more verses in chapters 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16 and 18. The Secret of happiness is to undertake the progressive steps suggested in the above 17 verses. It requires: mental balance with undisturbed rhythm, free from doubts and fear, free from pairs of opposites and contentment. We should keep the mind free from anxiety by surrendering to the Divine and by the practice to transcend sensual pleasures. We should cultivate the feeling of being liberated from sin, passion, and desires. We should study and follow the injunctions of the scriptures in order to acquire the secret of the supreme. With dedication, devotion and by disciplining our mind we will attain the wisdom to realize we don't need to seek happiness because we were never unhappy! The quotation from Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) beautifully summarizes happiness: "Happiness is as a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but which if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you."

*Note: Feel free to contact me at ramvchandran@yahoo.com if you have questions.*



## Discussion Topics: Advaita Vedanta

### On Prayer: Bhakti to Prapatti

*Acharya Sadananda*

*Question from a student of Advaita Vedanta:*

*Namaskaram Sada-ji,*

*I understand your guidelines in general. However, the word "Lord" is giving me some trouble as to how to interpret. You see Lord as the life-principle of living beings, and you want to see the Lord everywhere. We can perhaps also understand the Lord as the essence or nondual Consciousness-substratum of all dualistic perceptions.*

*What I understand in this view is that the Lord is understood impersonally, and not as the personal Being. If this is the case, what is the point of "praying" to the Lord when we do not regard Him as having a mind, knowing us personally, etc? To make prayer purposeful to our minds, don't we have to superimpose further personal connotations on the Lord, which makes the process seem hypocritical and unappealing?*

*How do we resolve this? What is the pramana by which you see more in this "Lord" than the typical scientist? The scientist may recognize substratum even, or natural laws or forces in operation, but not the personal dimension where our prayer will receive corresponding response from the Lord – except in the way our minds become conditioned by the process of praying itself.*

**Sadaji's Reply:**

First about the objective scientists: The so-called scientist you are referring to are objective scientists who have a limited understanding of what science really means. I have discussed this before and also in my introduction to the Matreyee Brahman where Shakara points what a true science means.

Science means knowledge; and the objective sciences are limited by objective tools. Therefore, they come under incomplete or relative science; valid only in the relative or transactional world. We call them as vyaavahaarika satyam and not absolute science or satyasya satyam.

Veda also means science, but it is more an absolute science, since it includes the analysis of subject, object and interrelation between the two. Hence, it is a complete science. The problem that the objective scientists face is that the objective tools are not valid for the analysis of the subject. Hence for these Vedanta alone becomes a pramaana, or means of knowledge. There is no way to get around that problem.

Now about Sadhana.

There are three aspects involved in the evolution of the mind, in understanding the mahaavakyas; or before one goes into aatma-anaaatma vichaara.

As long as one's mind is in the triad state, namely, jjiiva - jagat - Iswara, we have an evolution of the mind from

1. Eka rUpa Iswara to
2. aneka rUpa Iswara to
3. arupa Iswara
4. Ultimately leading to the aatam - anaatma vichaara.

1. Ekar rUpa Iswara involves the IshTa devata - where seeing the Lord in a particular form for the mind that is otherwise dissipating in unnecessarily pursuits in the world of objects. Prayer to the Lord in the form of Ishta Devata helps to focus on the Lord, who is the creator - sustainer - and annihilator of the Universe. Hence, the Lord is defined as in Brahma suutra - Janmaaddyasya yataH, the one who is the creator, sustainer and annihilator of this universe of multitude of names and forms.

At this stage, all the rituals and the prayers are involved with the recognition that Lord is also a karma phala daata, that is, he is a giver of fruits of actions. He is the protector as well as the punisher too. Some claim that they are God-fearing people. Any problem comes; they run to the temple or to the Lord or pray to help them to overcome

their problems. Krishna calls them as aarthaH and artharthii bhaktas, as they think of the Lord when they need something, since they recognize that the Lord is giver. This is important step and is needed for the mind that is restless. One has to have attachment to the higher to get detached from the lower. Hence this bhakti although of lowest form helps the mind to become calm, so that actions can be done better to solve a given situation. An agitated mind cannot act. With the prayer, the mind becomes problem and is in a position to solve the given problem.

In this earlier stage, Bhakti is invoked at the altar of the Lord in the temple or in the puja room. Minds of many people fall in this range, where they want to run to this temple or that temple, or do this puja or that puja, to make sure that the priest chants the gotram correctly and include all the names of all the people, whom they want the Lord to bless, with all the goodies. At this stage, the Lord is still controller or sustainer; and the daily payer to that Lord becomes important to insure one is on His good-list than black-list. All rituals become important and have to be done as per the rules prescribed. Rituals are kaamya karmas or for gaining particular favor from the Lord. Following the rules and rituals in order in exact form help the mind to refocus on what one is doing. First it helps the mental disciple needed to do any vichaara or inquiry. Second it takes the mind off of the problems that one is facing. Third it helps to recognize that there is higher reality who is the controller and protector. Slowly Vedanta teaches to that individual to inquire in to the nature of that reality and one becomes jignaasu or seeker of the knowledge of this higher reality.

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