

# Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 26, Number 5, September 30, 2016



BIRTH CENTENARY YEAR OF SRI GURUDEV, SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

## Calendar and Upcoming Events

### Upcoming Events

- Wed-Thu October 5 & 6 – Jnana Yajna by Swamini Vimalananda, “More Mantras for Success”, at Chinmayam
- Thu Oct 6 – Workshop by Acharya Vivek at University of Maryland, College Park; Topic: “Investing in Balance”.
- Sat Oct 1 – ‘Diwali Mela’ at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Lanham Maryland, organized by CMWRC and United Hindu Jain Temples organization
- Sat Oct 1 – Dandiya Raas at Chinmaya Somnath
- Sat-Sun Oct 1-2 – Dussera, observed during Bala Vihar common time
- Fri-Sun Oct 7-9 – Divya Shakti Retreat, conducted by Swamini Vimalananda, Acharya Vilasini and Acharya Vivek, at Homewood Suites, Laurel MD
- Sun Oct 9 – ‘Sundarakanda’ by CHYK at Chinmayam
- Sat Oct 22 – ‘Swami Chinmayananda’ – a musical at Chinmaya Somnath
- Sat-Sun Oct 22-23 – Deepavali observed during Bala Vihar common time
- Sun Oct 30 – Deepavali Celebration at Chinmayam
- Sat-Sun Nov 26-27 – Thanksgiving Holiday – No Classes
- Sat Dec 3 – Annual Fundraiser, Keynote Speech by Swami Iswarananda, Silver Spring MD

### 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 - November 2016, are due by November 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)  
Chinmayam Chapter – Silver Spring MD website <http://chinmayam.chinmayadc.org/chinmayam-chapter/>  
Chinmaya Somnath Chapter – Chantilly VA website [www.chinmayasomnath.org](http://www.chinmayasomnath.org)  
Chinmaya Frederick Chapter – Urbana MD website <http://www.frederick.cmwrc.org/>  
Chinmaya Richmond Chapter – Richmond VA 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***

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Sitaram Kowtha, Kodanate Lakshmanan,

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

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## From the Desk of the President

*Acharya Anant Sarma*

Date: September 6, 2016

Hari Om!

Dear Chinmaya Family,

Ganesh Chaturthi Greetings!

As we commence the 2016-2017 Bala Vihar session, I wish to take this opportunity to inform you on the strength and growth of our center, some changes and exciting programs.

### **Growth**

Due to the depth and breadth of our Bala Vihar program, exciting children's summer camps, youth retreats, and multi-faceted Vedanta study programs, our overall membership across all three chapters continues to increase on a year to year basis. The Mission's holistic approach to spiritual education, as envisioned by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, and led by our well trained and experienced Acharyas and Senior Vedanta Teachers, clearly separates us from other spiritual organizations.

In addition to our Acharyas (Swami Dheerananda, Acharya Anant Sarma, Acharya Vilasini, Acharya Pramila Poudel, Acharya Sadananda, Acharya Rahul Maini and Acharya Priya Kumar), we have recently added three Senior Vedanta Teachers - Sri DC Rao, Sri Sankaran Nayar and Sri Vijay Kumar.

### **Financial Strength**

The auditors have completed their independent and thorough analysis of our 2014 and 2015 finances. The financial statements are available for your review on our website ([chinmayadc.org/financials](http://chinmayadc.org/financials)). I am happy to inform you that CMWRC is financially sound and

we are now gearing ourselves to pay down our debt at a faster pace.

### **Organizational Changes**

Let me draw your attention to some organizational changes that are underway.

DC Rao, who has served CMWRC wearing many hats and continues to serve, has decided to step down from the Board of Trustees and also transition other roles. He will remain our Senior Vedanta Teacher and continue study group activities. Please join me in expressing our gratitude to his leadership and seva.

Sethuraman Balan has decided to step down from the CMWRC Secretary position. Balanji will continue to serve on the Board of Trustees. Balanji may best be described as the backbone to the growth of CMWRC: because of his energy, experience and dedication, he has been the 'go-to' person for the past 25+ years on all matters of running a complex operation across all our chapters. Please join me in saluting a devoted servant of Swami Chinmayananda.

Ramesh Golla has stepped down as the Director of Chinmaya Somnath after 8 years of stellar leadership. Ramesh ji helped to grow the Dulles Chapter for many years and subsequently worked diligently worked to combine two Northern Virginia chapters (Springfield and Dulles) into a single chapter that is currently called Chinmaya Somnath. Additionally, he provided leadership on the Building Committee that was instrumental in design and construction of the new Chinmaya Somnath facility. He helped mentor many sevaks who currently have leadership roles at Chinmaya Somnath. We owe a debt of gratitude to Rameshji for his seva.

Sitaram Kowtha, who has been active in the Mission for over 10 years as editor of Chinmaya Smrithi, websevak and more recently as CMWRC Joint Secretary, has agreed to join the Board of Trustees and serve as the CMWRC Secretary. Sri Suresh Ramakrishnan, who has been very active in Chinmaya Somnath, particularly in Geeta Chanting and Study Group coordination, has agreed to step into Director role to lead Chinmaya Somnath chapter. Please join me in welcoming them to CMWRC leadership roles.

As a result of these changes, the structure of the BOT and the Executive Committee are as follows:

The Board of Trustees (as of Aug 21, 2016)

- Swami Tejomayananda (Permanent Trustee)
- Swami Dheerananda (CMWRC Resident Acharya)
- Acharya Anant Sarma (CMWRC President and Resident Acharya Chinmaya Somnath)
- Acharya Vilasini Balakrishnan (CMW Bala Vihar Regional Director and CMW Board Member)
- Sitaram Kowtha (CMWRC Secretary)
- Prakash Soman (CMWRC Treasurer)
- Jay Sriram (CMWRC Joint Treasurer)
- Sethuraman Balan (Senior Advisor)
- Sukanya Sathyanarayana (Frederick Chapter)

The CMWRC Executive Committee (as of August 21, 2016)

- Acharya Anant Sarma
- Sitaram Kowtha
- Prakash Soman
- Srikumar Gopalakrishna (Joint Secretary)
- Raja Kirkire (Director, Chinmayam Chapter)
- Suresh Ramakrishnan (Director, Chinmaya Somnath Chapter)
- Shivalingam Vanam (Director, Chinmaya Frederick Chapter)
- Anil Kishore (Bala Vihar and CHYK Coordinator)

One other change of note is the appointment of Richa Agarwala as the CMWRC Outreach Coordinator. In this role, Richaji continues the 'Dharma Ambassador' and other outreach efforts that DC Raoji previously headed.

The current BOT was constituted on July 13, 2014 and will continue its three-year term through July 12, 2017. The CMWRC EC term of one year was approved on August 21 2016 and will continue through August 20, 2017.

### ***Upcoming events and programs***

For Fall 2016, we have lined up five special events: (1) *Carnatic Music Concert* (by Trichur Brothers at Chinmaya Somnath on Sat Sep 24); (2) *Devi Retreat* (October 8-10 in North Laurel MD), led by Swamini Vimalananda (a commanding and inspiring teacher and a senior Swamini of CM, Director CM Residential School in Coimbatore); our own Acharya Vilasini and Acharya Vivek Gupta; (3) an exciting and *inspiring musical* (Sat Oct 22 at Chinmaya Somnath Auditorium) *on Swami Chinmayananda* performed by our own children, youth and adults; (4) *Annual Fundraiser* (Sat Dec 3 at downtown Silver Spring MD) and (5) Puja Swami Dheeranandaji's *Geeta Jnana Yajna* (Dec 27-30 at Chinmaya Somnath) on Chapter 3 of the Geeta.

I am excited to share with you that final preparations are underway to open a preschool at Chinmaya Somnath. The school, 'Chinmaya Blossoms', will provide a professionally run and conducive environment for providing Dharmic value based education to preschoolers. You will hear more about Chinmaya Blossoms in the coming months.

Lastly, the response from our membership has been tremendous for fundraising towards CM-LAP\*\*. We have received nearly \$850K in pledges. At this point, we are pressing ahead with negotiations to enter into a land contract with the seller.

In this year of the birth centenary of our Pujya Gurudev, we already had an exciting spring and summer full of honoring and remembering Him through Chinmaya Mahima celebrations and Jyoti



Yatra. With His grace and blessings, we continue to strive to be stronger as we work to inspire every member of our community as envisioned by Him.

Hari Om!

Acharya Anant Sarma

\*\*\*

**\*\* CM-LAP Update**

- a. Our CM-LAP fundraising has crossed 850K from about 175 families
- b. CM has entered into a 'land-contract' for the 17.81-acre property with Morse Trust towards launching a formal feasibility study, assessing community sentiment and securing preliminary county approvals, which may take up to one year. The agreed upon settlement price is \$900K for a 9-month study period; and \$950K if additional 3 months are needed.
- c. Before we enter into a settlement for acquiring the land, (i) we will ensure that we have at least 12 contiguous acres of buildable land; (ii) concerns relating to forest preservation, watershed concerns, endangered species, environmental, flood plain, as well as geo-technical analysis are resolved to our satisfaction; (iii) county preliminary approvals are secured; and (iv) neighborhood community concerns, if any, are addressed.
- d. Our fund-raising will continue towards the goal of \$1.5M to be able to cover such things as closing costs, costs for conducting engineering and environmental studies; costs of engaging zoning attorney; costs for engineering and architecture work to submit formal documents to Montgomery County for preliminary approvals.

## News

### **Children Summer Camp**

Children summer camps were conducted by Frederick chapter (June 27-July 8), Chinmayam (June 27 – July 22) and Chinmaya Somnath (July 25 – August 19).

### **Sadhana Day**

Swami Chinmayananda Mahasamadhi day, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, was celebrated as Sadhana day at Chinmaya Somnath, under the guidance of Pujya Swami Dheerananda, and at Chinmayam, guided by Senior Vedanta Teacher, Sri Sankaran Nayar.

### **Acharya Vivekji Spiritual Camp**

Acharya Vivekji conducted spiritual camp, sponsored by Frederick Chapter, at Sri Bhakta Anjaneya Temple, Urbana Md, Aug 8-11.

### **JCHYK and CHYK Retreats**

Acharya Vivekji conducted National JChyk retreat at Chinmaya Somnath, August 22-25, followed by National Chyk retreat at Chinmayam during August 22- 28.

### **Janmashtami**

Janmashtami was celebrated at Chinmayam on Saturday August 27 in the presence of Acharya Vivekji, in the midst of National Chyk retreat.

## Announcements and Flyers



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Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center

46, Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

### *Jnana Yajna* in CHINMAYAM



## More Mantras of Success With

**Swamini Vimalananda**

Evening Lecture Series

October 05 and 06, 2016

7.30 pm – 8.45 pm

Complimentary Light Dinner:

6.45 – 7.15 pm in Kailas Niwas

Children above 10 years of age accompanied by parents are welcome!

- For *Bhiksha* sign up email: [swaminivisit2016bhiksha@chinmayadc.org](mailto:swaminivisit2016bhiksha@chinmayadc.org)

(Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Snack and Dinner slots available)

- For Additional Information and Volunteering Opportunities-  
Email: [swaminivisit2016volunteers@chinmayadc.org](mailto:swaminivisit2016volunteers@chinmayadc.org)

An architect before she renounced, Swamini Vimalananda is now a senior Acharya of Chinmaya Mission and best-selling author. Swaminiji travels extensively giving animated discourses in English, Gujarati and Hindi that are clear, entertaining and full of wit, making the most profound topics easy to follow and apply in daily life.



*Mantras* are not just for chanting, but are also inspirational words which can motivate us to reach the heights of success in our daily lives. This series of talks covers a few such *mantras* selected from the *Bhagvad Gita*. Swaminiji will explain to us in her inimitable style how to apply these formulae for success in our daily lives.



Swamini Vimalananda is a member of the Educational Cell of the Central Chinmaya Mission Trust (CCMT), which has over 80 Chinmaya Vidyalayas and Colleges. She is the Director of the Chinmaya Vision Program. She has introduced the program in over 2500 schools and colleges in India and is actively involved in its implementation in all the Chinmaya Educational Institutions.

She has authored many books including the very popular books '**In Indian Culture – Why do We?**' and '**Conflicts & Confusions in Indian Culture**'.

She is presently in charge of Chinmaya Mission, Coimbatore and is one of the Directors of Chinmaya International Residential School. She has traveled widely and has conducted many Gyana yagnas (spiritual discourses) in English, Hindi and Gujarati and camps for children, youth and elders all over the world. Her simple style of talking has captivated the intellectual and faithful alike.

Chinmaya Mission®  
Washington Regional Center  
and CHYK West D.C. Present

# *Investing in Balance* **With Acharya Vivekji**



Having experienced much of what the world has to offer, from studying at the Ivey School of Business to traveling to almost fifty countries, Vivekji still sought more.

In 2005 Vivekji was accepted to the intensive residential Vedanta Course at Chinmaya Mission's Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in India. There he studied and lived under the guidance of Pujya Swami Tejomayananda for over two years.

Through his inspiring, innovative and insightful style, Vivekji makes Vedanta relevant, relatable and reachable.

**On: 7-9pm, October 6, 2016**

**At: Grand Ballroom Lounge, Stamp Student Union,  
University of Maryland, College Park**

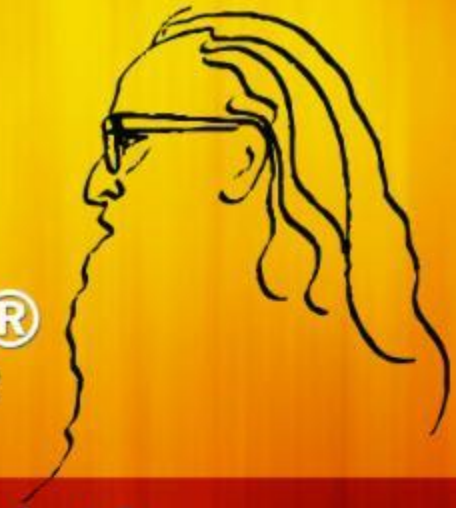
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**For more details on event and location, visit  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1764916890427072/>  
Questions? Contact [kkowtha@terpmail.umd.edu](mailto:kkowtha@terpmail.umd.edu)**





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**ACHARYA VILASINI**



**SWAMINI VIMALANANDA**



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CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER PRESENTS

# Sundara Kāṇḍa

THE STORY OF HANUMAN CROSSING LANKA TO FIND SITA

(ORIGINAL RENDERING IN TELUGU, WITH SUBTEXT AND TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH)



AN EVENING OF MUSICAL OFFERING BY CHYKs

**Krishna Bhamidipati, vocal**  
**Swetha Narasimhan, violin**

**Ajay Ravichandran, percussion**  
**Vinay Mallikaarjun, tabla**

Sunday, October 9, 2016, 5-8 PM  
Chinmayam Auditorium  
46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

ALL ARE WELCOME  
EVENT NOT TICKETED

[tinyurl.com/chykdc9oct](http://tinyurl.com/chykdc9oct)

KINDLY RSVP FOR FOOD COUNT

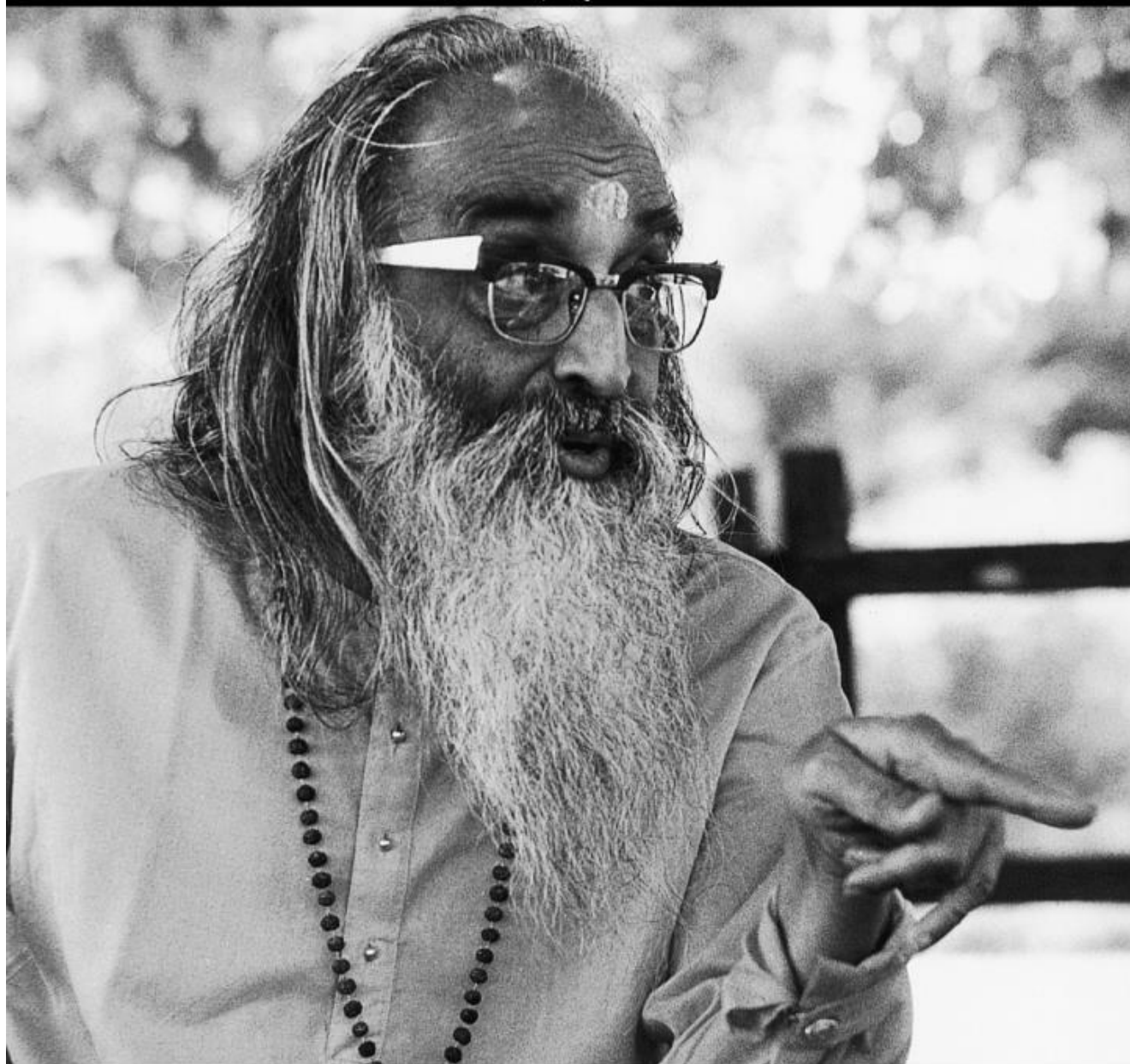
LIGHT DINNER TO BE  
SERVED AFTERWARDS



Chinmaya Mission® Washington Regional Center

# SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

*The Musical*



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2016 AT 5:00PM

CHINMAYA SOMNATH AUDITORIUM

TICKETS: \$10, \$20

Sponsorships: [chinmayamusical@chinmayadc.org](mailto:chinmayamusical@chinmayadc.org)



## New Families Welcome Evening at Chinmayam

*Divya Vydhanathan, Madhulika Nallani and Vandana Bapna*

### Overall Summary – Vandana Bapna

On September 17th, 2016 evening, a welcome and orientation for new families was beautifully organized at Chinmayam by Medha and Arvind Bhagwat from 4 to 5:30 pm. Our Pujya Swami Dheerananda and several lead volunteers inspired everyone with their loving warmth by sharing their heartfelt experiences.

The program started with melodious chanting by Shloka class children with pure pronunciation. We are into the fourth year of monthly classes on chanting of shloka and various stotrams and prayers. They are conducted by Srikumar Gopalkrishna who makes this special trip from Chinmaya Somnath as an extension of his love and passion of chanting, sharing and teaching.

Arvind Bhagwat gave a brief introduction of Chinmaya Mission and its worldwide presence and works. He emphasized that participation at Chinmaya Mission is a family affair, with special satsang and activities/events for everyone. When entire family is involved wholeheartedly, it is truly beneficial for all. The presentations progressed from Bala Vihar parents, Bala Vihar children, past students and now Chinmaya Youth, i.e., CHYKs as young professionals, adult study group members, social awareness of Hinduism in the society to finally address by Swamiji.

We had Nea Maloo, a current Bala Vihar parent talk about the positive impact Bala Vihar and Bhiksha time with Swamiji has had on everyone in the family. Nea was raised with a Jain philosophy. She asserted that studying and applying principles of Vedanta and Bhagavad Gita makes one a better human being irrespective of religious, cultural, linguistic and national backgrounds.

Another parent, Shanthi Shankar spoke about the ongoing impact on her children who are now young adults and have graduated from Bala Vihar. Rasshmi

Shankar missed the weekly Sunday satsang and joined as the first CHYK (Chinmaya Yuva Kendra) Bala Vihar teacher about 8 years ago. She also became one of the first coordinators of CHYK program at CMWRC where young adults have an extension of Bala Vihar through study groups on college campuses, community seva projects, yatra in India with our acharyas, CHYK retreats & satsang with Acharyas, social evenings such as movies with spiritual messages and discussions, and worldwide network of CHYK family. Shanthi could see the tremendous positive impact that Chinmaya Mission has had even after the children have left Bala Vihar and are out in the world as young adults.

Next, two Bala Vihar students, Madhu Nallani and Divya Nilkanthan gave a moving account of how Bala Vihar has helped them learn about their culture, heritage, religious philosophy and make some wonderful friends. Both of them felt they were better persons now and are confident and better equipped to deal with the peer and cultural pressures with a clear set of values.

Neha Mehta, a CHYK since 2008 spoke about how deeply Bala Vihar has helped her navigate and make decisions in the adult world as well as made her a better human being. She spoke about the CHYK activities and the support and camaraderie within the friends that gives a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Two Study group members Meena Sankar and Srikanth Nallani spoke about the clarity they have gained by attending study groups. How they are able to discuss their doubts and gain practical tools to apply these vedantic principles to their daily life. Both of them have benefitted from these discussions and learning together as a study group.

Richa Agarwala spoke about how Chinmaya Mission has become an ambassador to educate and enhance the understanding of Hindu culture, philosophy,

history and other facts at school/college level, during interfaith dialogues, during community projects by presenting clear facts and removing prejudice and misunderstanding that are prevalent.

Our Pujya Swamiji gave the concluding message that everything we do is like a family. He encouraged that the parents should attend the Adult sessions so that the entire family can apply the teachings in their daily lives. He gave the acronym for the word Family- F (father) a (and) m (mother) i (I) l (love) y (you).

The session concluded with welcoming everyone into our CMWRC family and encouraging all to make a commitment to be involved as a family. All families were given a book on parenting, a CD on Swami Chinmayananda and a copy of Centennial Chinmaya Mahima souvenir. All the families proceeded to Kailas Niwas for refreshments arranged by Medha Bhagwat and Richa Agarwal and mingled together. A hearty welcome to all new families!

#### **A talk by Divya Vydhanathan, Bala Vihar student**

Hari Om. My name is Divya Vydhanathan. Currently I am in 8th grade in the Shivanandam class and this is my 6th year attending Chinmaya Mission. When my family first found out about and joined Chinmaya Mission I was in 3rd grade and since then I have learned a lot about Chinmaya Mission.

Here in Chinmaya Mission, you get to reconnect with our rich & diverse Hindu culture to learn many things about our holy scriptures, important lifelong values, spirituality, and many deeper topics about Hinduism that most people may or may not already know. Kids also get to learn about Hinduism by attending Balavihar.

Balavihar is for kids from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade to learn about Hinduism with activities, stories, lessons, and more. During Balavihar, over the years I have definitely learned a lot more about Hinduism and my culture and heritage that I wouldn't have learned outside of Chinmaya Mission.

At Chinmaya Mission you will definitely, with no doubt, make new friends as you get to know the

people in your session better just as time goes by and by attending events such as the celebrations of Hindu festivals. Chinmaya Mission I can definitely say has helped me to make so many new friends that I wouldn't have met otherwise.

Celebrations of Hindu festivals at Chinmaya Mission are a big part of here because you get to learn more about that particular culture with food, prayers, bhajans, sometimes dances, speeches, and more. Certain festivals that are celebrated here are Navaratri, Diwali, New Year's Day, Makara Sankranti, Shivaratri, Janmashtami, and many other festivals.

Another interesting thing about Chinmaya Mission is the Summer Camp here. For 4 weeks every summer there is summer camp here for kids to come and learn more about Hinduism that even Balavihar might not teach: prayers, bhajans, physical education, art, robotics, dance, field trips, and more fun activities. Chinmaya Summer Camp is a good way to keep your kids busy during part of the summer and to send them to Chinmaya Mission for even more time to meet new friends from all 3 sessions of Chinmaya Mission. In Summer Camp, one thing we do is Geeta Chanting for the next year's Geeta Chanting Competition.

Every year, a designated few verses from a certain chapter in the Bhagavad Geeta have to be recited if you choose to register and participate in the Geeta Chanting Competition. Based on how well you do, you will get a reward for your chanting. The competition is usually around March or April and is open to everyone of all ages.

Every week the daily routine in all 3 sessions is the Hanuman Chalisa, Vedic Aarati, Chinmaya Aarati, in both English and Sanskrit, 5-minute meditation; Common Time with Swamiji where we hear stories, jokes, lessons, and more; announcements, and then dismissal to our respective Balavihar classes. After Balavihar, you come to the main auditorium to get prasadam from Swamiji and continue with whatever other program you have whether it is Language class or Performing Arts class or going home or Bhiskha with Swamiji.

I got many things out of Chinmaya Mission. I got more knowledge and understanding and appreciation of my Hindu culture and religion,

amazing friends that I wouldn't have met if it weren't for coming here, and values that will help me become a better person as I apply them to real world situations.

That's pretty much what Chinmaya Mission is about, so thank you for coming and listening to this speech, thank you to Swamiji for letting me speak today, and I hope that this was helpful in getting a better understanding and feeling of Chinmaya Mission.

Thank you. Hari Om.

### **A talk by Madhulika Nallani, Bala Vihar student**

#### **Balavihar: My Strength**

Hari Om everyone, my name is Madhulika Nallani. I am in the Chinmayam class in the Sunday afternoon session.

I want to start out by saying that through Balavihar I have been able to become friends with so many people, be active in our Chinmaya Mission community through service, and increase my appreciation of our religion and culture. Balavihar is an important and major part of my life, and is definitely my strength.

I am fortunate to be a part of an organization that helps me further my understanding of my roots and my practice of Hinduism. I find it to be incredibly rewarding to attend it, allowing me to start off my week on a high, positive note. In Balavihar classes, we start off simply by learning small songs and shlokas, learning the Bala Ramayana, and the Hanuman Chalisa. Then we start to analyze the characters of the Ramayana and learn the symbolism behind the idols and practices of our religion, through the books Symbolism of Hinduism and the Hindu Culture. We also understand the fundamentals of living a dharmic life through the Vibhisana Gita, when Lord Rama explains that with the right values, one is invincible to any evil. As the curriculum evolves we strive to understand to look beyond the body and look within ourselves to identify our true nature, through the book Self-Unfoldment, and finally, we learn the words of Shri

Krishna himself when he removes all doubts and fears of Arjuna, compiled in the Holy Bhagavad Gita.

It's one thing to learn and memorize shlokas and to chant them everyday, or perform a puja everyday. However, it's another thing to be able to understand the meaning of what you are saying, and the symbolism behind the steps you take to complete the puja. I am fortunate to attend Balavihar as it has answered so many questions of mine, and has helped me apply knowledge that is thousands of years old to my everyday life. Balavihar has improved me as a daughter, a sister, and a student, the main roles of my life at this point, and that is why Balavihar is my strength.

## Open House at Chinmaya Somnath

*Sudha Bhat and Anant Somalwar*

Chinmaya Somnath conducted an Open house on August 27. There were 3 sessions, each 1 hour long, and approximately 40-50 families attended the sessions.

The sessions were intended for people who are not familiar with Chinmaya and would like to learn more about Chinmaya and Bala Vihar programs. The new families who already joined Chinmaya for the first time were also welcomed to the sessions.

The open house provided information about the Chinmaya Mission, CCMT, and CMWRC. Families were made aware of the different activities of Chinmaya Mission in general and the specifics of all the different programs within CMWRC and Chinmaya Somnath, for all age groups and for the entire family. Detailed information about the visionaries and Gurus of Chinmaya mission (Swami Tapovan Maharaj, Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Tejomayananda) were provided to the audience. The discussions included the information about the CMWRC Acharyas, Bala Vihar Curriculum and Chinmaya pledge structure. The Open house concluded with a walk through of the facilities for the attending families. Comments from one of the families summarizes it all, "We never knew there was so much opportunities for Spiritual and overall development available for our kids and us here in our backyards at Chinmaya Somnath. Attending Chinmaya would definitely help us as a family to learn more about our religion, scriptures, and how to prepare for life".

*[Editor's Note: Some of the slides from the presentation are included here.]*



**Open House**  
**(information Session)**  
**Aug 27, 2016**

### About Chinmaya Mission and Vision

- Chinmaya Mission® is a world wide organization established in India in 1953 by devotees of Spiritual Master Swami Chinmayananda.
- Over 300 centers worldwide across all major continents
- Organization currently encompasses a wide range of spiritual, educational, and charitable activities

Our Motto:

To give maximum happiness to maximum people for maximum time

Our Mission:

To provide to individuals from any background, the wisdom of Vedanta and the practical means for spiritual growth and happiness, enabling them to become positive contributors to society

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### Chinmaya mission teaching and activities

- Teaches Advaita Vedanta, knowledge of universal oneness and tools to realize the wisdom in one's life
- Vedanta inspires seekers in understanding our own faith better.
- Follows the Vedic teacher-student tradition (guru-shishya parampara)



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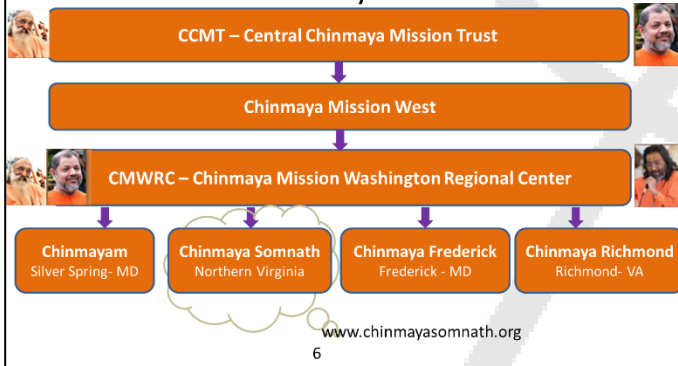
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## How does Chinmaya Somnath Fit ?



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### Chinmaya Somnath

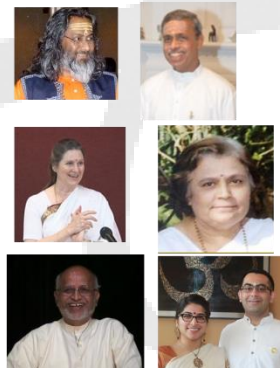
- Northern VA Chapter of CMWRC
- Chinmaya Somnath started in this facility – June, 2014
- Completed two year of operations in this building.
- Membership is grown to 420+ families, 620 children



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## Our Acharyas

- Swami Dheerananda - CMWRC Resident Acharya
- Acharya Anant Sarma – Chinmaya Somnath Resident Acharya & President, CMWRC
- Acharya Vilasini
- Acharya Pramila
- Acharya Sadananda
- Acharyas Rahul and Priya
- Senior Vedanta Teachers
  - Sri D.C. Rao, Sri Vijay Kumar, Sri Sankaran Nayar



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## Our Coordinators



Suresh Ramakrishnan  
Chapter Director



Muktha Thyagarajan  
Bala Vihar Director

**Bala Vihar Coordinator:**  
Saturday Morning – Vibha Kulkarni  
Sunday Morning – Muktha Thyagarajan  
Sunday Afternoon – Beena Nair

**Other coordinators:**  
Shloka – Sri Gopalkrishna  
Language – Raju Muscu  
Art/Performing Art – Anu Pajjur

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### Bala Vihar

- Essence of Hinduism
- Puranic stories, discussions and Bhajans

### Shloka

- Geeta Chanting and Advanced Stotrams
- 5- 8 Shloka recitals per year across DC metro area

### Language

- 8 Indian languages (Includes Sanskrit)
- Emphasis on spoken language

### Art

- Visual Journals
- Techniques/Skills

### Performing Art

- Carnatic Music
- Bhajans
- Tabla

### Yoga Classes

- Hatha Yoga

### Youth Leadership Program

- 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grader
- Event management, public speaking

### Chinmaya Somnath Toastmasters club

- Public speaking and personal development

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## BALA VIHAR

***"Children are not vessels to be filled, but lamps to be lit."***

***- Swami Chinmayananda***

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### Chinmaya Bala Vihar Classes: Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade

- Bala Vihar classes are for 60 min right after the assembly
- Classes are assigned based on school grade.
- Class curriculum covers incredible breadth of knowledge on Vedanta
- Children are imparted cultural and ethical values through singing of devotional songs, chanting of scriptures, puranic stories discussions, craft and other delightful group activities
- Curriculum provides structured forum to develop a proper understanding of Dharmic culture.
- Bala Vihar classes are conducted on every Saturday and Sunday in three separate sessions for the academic year Sept to June.
  - Saturday Morning – 9:55 am – 11:30 am
  - Sunday Morning – 9:25 am – 11:00 am
  - Sunday Afternoon – 12:00 pm – 1:35 pm
- 2016-2017 Bala Vihar session starts on Sept 10<sup>th</sup>/Sept 11<sup>th</sup>

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### Why Chinmaya Bala Vihar ?

- Bala Vihar Enhances overall development personality of a child at all levels.
- Through fun and play, with their friends, children discover answers for:
  - "Who are the Gods?"
  - "Where did I come from?"
  - "Who am I?"
  - "What makes me a Hindu?"
  - "How can I live a happy and successful life?"
  - "What is important in life?"
  - "What should I do when I face failure?"
  - "What comes after this life?"
- Learn about development within, preparing them for the Life's ups and down. **Invest in the child, not just on the child.**

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### Program Offerings for Adults and Family at Chinmaya Somnath...



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### Bala Vihar Curriculum:

Bala Vihar Class	Activities / Text	Bala Vihar Class	Activities / Text
Madhuram ( Pre - K)	Arts and Crafts, Shlokas, Stories, My Prayers	Shivanandam ( 6th - 7th)	Vibheeshana Gita Symbolism in Hinduism
Setyem ( K - 1st)	Chinmaya ABCs Bala Bhagavatam	Tapovanam (8th - 9th)	Hindu Culture Ageless Gurus/Mahabharata
Shivam (2nd - 3rd)	Hanuman Bala Bhagavatam	Chinmayam ( 10th - 12th)	Self Unfoldment The Holy Gita
Sundaram ( 4th - 5th)	Krona,Krona Everywhere My 24 teachers		

WHILE CHILDREN ARE ATTENDING BALA VIHAR CLASSES, CLASSES ARE AVAILABLE FOR PARENTS. SPIRITUAL GROWTH COMES FROM LEARNING ABOUT SCRIPTURES AND PRACTICING THE LEARNING. PARENTS ARE THE ROLE MODEL FOR CHILDREN. ATTEND ADULT CLASSES WHILE KIDS ATTEND BALA VIHAR

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## Programs for Youth

***"Youths are not useless, they are "used" less"***

**- Swami Chinmayananda**

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- CHYK Programs – 17 to 25 year age group
  - Weekly Study Groups
  - Happiness Hours w/ Acharyas
  - Retreats- local, national and global
  - Seva Projects
- JCHYK Programs – grade 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>
  - Talks and education retreats through out the year
  - Series of programs such as JCHYK camp during summer
  - Guest speakers to guide children for academic development

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## Tribute to Balanji and Sucharitraji

*[Editor's Note: Sethuraman Balan served as Secretary of CMWRC for over twenty-five years, until August 2016. Under his steady leadership, the Washington center blossomed into a spiritually rich organization serving members of all ages across Maryland, Virginia and DC. Balanji had rock-solid support from Sucharitraji, so that he can carry out his duties to the mission.]*

*Balanji and Sucharitra Amma were felicitated at Chinmaya Somnath on September 4 2016, on the occasion of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.]*

### Acharya Vilasini

Hari OM! Swamiji, Family Members, Friends, and Balanji. I am honored to share thoughts about Balanji and his tenure in Chinmaya Mission. I am even more honored and fortunate to have known and worked with Balanji for decades, as are many of us. I interviewed several longtime members for their comments on Balanji to share with you today.

Starting with his children, Balanji's children are very proud of the fact that their father came from a modest family, whose father was a dedicated school teacher. Balanji put himself through college while working, and he found his first job on his own in an unfamiliar part of country. As the oldest of five children, Balanji took responsibility for educating and settling the rest of his siblings, particularly his younger brothers.

Those of you who know Balanji from his early life and professional life know more about him than we in the Mission. He didn't share much with us about his profession, other than to say, any success he's had is all Lord's Grace, not his. Suresh and I met Balanji in 1986 when he signed up for a Chinmaya Study Group. He, as well as Prakashji, and the Limayes, met for a study group in our tiny apt in Falls Church.

Suresh remembers what a wonderful study group member Balanji was, because he was always able to take the highest philosophy and find a way to make it practical and actionable. Prakashji recalled how Balanji said in study group, "I don't really know how I can serve Chinmaya Mission. But one day I would like to!" Little did we know how prescient that was!

Former President Sreekumarji recalls meeting Balanji in 1988: "When Gurudev conducted the camp in DC, I was in charge of booksales. I used to squeeze the books into my VW rabbit and take them back at night. On the third day an unknown person approached me and told me that

his car has a large trunk that can accommodate all the books. He introduced himself as Balan, and to prove his credibility, he said he is part of Vilasini's study group in Falls Church. That was the beginning of Balanji's foray into CMWRC activities across the Bridge and of a lasting friendship. If I keep on with all my memories, my fingers will wear out!"

Another past President of CMWRC, Nanikji Lahori, remarks: "Balanji's ordinary life is in itself extraordinary. I remember in our first fundraising drive, we mailed out 800 letters. Balanji used to come from his job to my house in Chevy Chase and work till late evening before driving home to Falls Church. I've always admired his selfless devotion to work. His organizational approach to complete every job, whether big or small, in a methodical way is the key to his achievements. He is a true Karmi Yogi, supported by Jnana and Bhakti. We can add 108 adjectives in his tribute, still it will not be sufficient. And Balanji says, 'Whatever I do, all credit goes to Gurudev's teachings!'"

During Balanji's tenure as CMWRC Secretary, he shouldered the main burden of Mission work and responsibility. Serving as Swami Dheeranandaji's righthand, he handled all the administrative work of the Mission. He was behind all major activities like the National Camps, the Banquets, the setup of the chapters. He is able to recruit and delegate jobs to just the right people. DC Raoji remembers that when Balanji was coordinating the National Camp in 1995: "What impressed me is how relaxed he was when he was the camp coordinator -- getting everybody else to do the work smoothly requires great skill!" When we found out Balanji worked in the World Bank in Human Resources, we understood why he was so adept at delegating, and even more, encouraging people to serve.

As Secretary, Balanji practically ran CMWRC---but none of us felt that he was making the decisions. No, he is never heavy handed. Balanji is a great team player, a consensus builder, and he is brilliant at consulting with many people, getting everyone's input, finding the most practical decision, and then convincing everyone else to go along with it. He was never heavy handed. Long winded maybe--when Balanji calls, you can be sure you will be on the phone for at least half an hour! ---but never heavy-handed.

Whoever has had the privilege of working with Balanji over the years will know how kind and positive he is about everything. We have never seen him even once lose his temper or show frustration, never once over years of interaction! As CMWRC Secretary, he has always been patient, respectful, and humble. He could calm anyone with his calm demeanor.

We pick up abilities from our work and from our hobbies. Most people may not know this, but Balanji had a very unique hobby. When he lived in Falls Church, he was a bee keeper! That means he had hives of swarming bees in his backyard! This speaks volumes about his ability to enter into the most heated environment, and come out bringing peace and harmony to all, with no bee stings! This ability can come only to people who are detached from name and fame. Only from people who are truly attached to the Higher Values. So I am sure his success as a karma yogi is due to his deep jnana and bhakti.

Of course, all of us who know Sucharitra Mami, realize that much of Balanji's credit goes to her. She has always supported all his involvement in Chinmaya Mission. His whole family has been an amazing support to him and the Mission. Without their blessings, he could not have done so much for CMWRC. And all of Balanji's qualities we see in Mami too, her loving and selfless nature is appreciated by all of us.

Many Gita verses come to mind when thinking of Balanji. In Chapter 14:24, Arjuna asks Srikrishna to describe a gunatithah, one who has transcended the three gunas.

Samaduhkhasukhasvasthah, Samaloshtashma kanchanah  
Tulyapriya priyo dheerah, Tulyanindatma samstutih.

Always even minded when facing sukha or dukha, Self-abiding, looking equally on gold, stone, or earth, the same towards agreeable and disagreeable experiences, always calm, and the same when facing praise or blame. This is our Balanji.

I recall several years ago that his name came up for President of CMWRC, but he wouldn't hear of it. He said absolutely not, he prefers the role of Secretary. Balanji never seeks name or fame in his seva. He is the most selfless, behind-the-scenes sevak. Even so much behind-the-scenes that he continued tirelessly serving CMWRC even when he had to move to Arizona for a family emergency! But he was so much in contact by email and phone that we felt he was always here. It is really too bad that now that he is moving back to this area, is when he is stepping aside as Secretary. We hope and pray that he will still be as involved as before, and supporting our

next Secretary, Sitaramji, as he steps into very large shoes.

Many sevaks have come and gone and will come and go. But only a few become part of the folklore of an organization. Such people etch their being on people's minds and hearts and this impression never diminishes. It gets shared with others and passed down. I am quite sure Balanji will be one of these such people decades from now. People will remark in the hallways, you know, there was one Balanji who reminded everyone of Hanumanji in his humble Seva Bhav. I am sure decades from now Balanji will be such a person in CMWRC's future folklore, because he already is!! We cannot express enough, Balanji, our gratitude to you!

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**Ram and Shanthi Chandran, Cary, NC 27519**

Namaskar

It is a great privilege to write few words about our good friends Balanji and Sucharitraji whom we know from 1991 when we moved from North Carolina to Virginia. Along with Balanji and Sucharitraji, we have seen the growth of Chinmaya Mission in Northern Virginia during the past twenty years. During this time Balanji was the secretary of CMWRC and also was the general coordinator of programs in various centers in Maryland and Virginia. At one time, I was the coordinator for the Burke center and Balanji (as always) was the key contact to get things done. Virginia program was filled with volunteers who included Sadaji, Mrinaliniji, Rajuji, Shobaji, Sureshji and Nirmalji, Prakashji and Poornimaji, Sushilji and Meenaji, Nilkantji and Meenaji, Vijaykumarji, Sriji and Jayaji, Nayuduji, Indiraji, Vikramji, and others. All those I mentioned above had the dream twenty years back about establishing a permanent Chinmaya Center in Virginia which became a reality now. Both Balanji and Somanji were quite instrumental from that time on and made the dream a reality with support and blessings from Swami Dheeranandaji, Acharya Vilasiniji from CMWRC.

Balanji and Sucharitraji have shown invisible energy and enthusiasm to make their presence indispensable. The very first Chinmaya Study Group started by Acharya Vilasiniji in Northern Virginia (NV) got transferred to Sureshji's residence when she moved to Maryland. Nilakantji used to lead the Gita Satsangh at Sureshji's residence and we along with Balanji and Sucharitraji were part of that study group. When Nilkantji left NV to Richmond, Balanji became the leader. At the Satsangh, we always had a bhajan before the discussion which was

invariably sung by Sucharitraji. The satsangh begins with an introduction by Balanji summarizing the previous meeting, then a discourse by one of the study group member to explain assigned Gita verses followed by an open discussion. His approach was quite simple but he was very effective in communicating the essence of Gita. We had many interactions with Balanji and Sucharitraji on other mission and family events. We have visited them and also Raja and Karpagam. Balanji and Sucharitraji treated their friends as one of their family members and they go out of their way to offer help and support. As Swami Dheeranandaji stated most appropriately that Balanji maintained balance while undertaking any activity or interactions with others. Interestingly Balance separates as Balan and ce (see) or what Balan see is balance!

We left NV and went to Cary, NC during 2009 after my retirement. It was our great pleasure see and pay our salutations to Balanji at the Chinmaya Mission Reception. We were thrilled to see the great classical music performance by the granddaughters.

Here is a special poem in honor of Balanji and Sucharitraji:

*Great friends are such a pleasure and treasure,  
they are often difficult to find and easy to preserve.  
Your friendship brought us the blessings of God,  
and we always count on great friends, like you.*

*All of us relish loving families and true friends  
who are virtuous, compassionate and full of wisdom,  
bring happiness within, around and everlasting  
with invisible energy and indispensable excitement.*

*So we want to thank you for your friendship,  
and we also thank God the almighty for finding you  
we cherish your friendship and like your kindness  
our satang Namaskar to the seer of thousand moons!*

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#### **Vasantha and P. Balasubramanian (aka Balu)**

My friendship with Balanji goes back to 1955 -- yes, to that distant past! Balanji and I, just like many others, went to New Delhi, obviously in search of jobs not only to support

our parents and our siblings but also to sustain ourselves. None of the three of us were born even with a good wooden spoon, if I may say so.

Both Balanji and I are the eldest in our families. Despite the love and affection showered on us by our respective parents, in those good old days, the expectation of the heads of the families, was always, I believe, how soon their eldest sons would enter the job market and support their parents and the other children. College education was ruled out for many school going children after passing the twelfth standard, purely due to economic reasons. In a few families, the father's earnings might have helped to educate one or two children. And no more.

Late Sri Venkataraman and I were fortunate to receive an undergraduate degree. Venkataraman was a very hard working student and, to the best of my knowledge, he added two more University degrees as a correspondence student and also qualified as a Cost & Works Accountant. Balanji added a B.A. degree and I obtained a Law Degree from the Delhi University.

Thinking about those days, life was not difficult to face, especially for anyone who was willing to work hard, remain honest and absolutely incorruptible in life. God helps those who helps themselves, as the saying goes.

Balanji was such an unbelievably hardworking guy. If my memory serves me right, he has changed jobs two or three times before he joined the Ministry of External Affairs, GOI. He was always a very religious person and was drawn to H.H. Chinmayananda Ji from his very young days. Balanji has done yeoman service to the Chinmaya Mission both in raising a large number of devotees and also in collecting donations to the Chinmaya Mission. He was the Secretary of the Washington Chapter of the Chinmaya Mission for several years. May be, he may be still doing this job living in Phoenix. I do not know.

I also became a Life Member of the Chinmaya Mission on account of my close proximity to Balanji. From the Ministry of External Affairs, GOI, days, I have seen my friend Balanji's unfailing diplomacy. Balanji, in my view, is a born diplomat and his natural skills, if I may add, without annoying him, were honed by his close association with some of the fine diplomats with whom he was fortunate to move in his long career with the Ministry of External Affairs, GOI.

Such was the influence and talents of Balanji, who has been always a true Karma Yogi. He is like Hanumanji, not knowing his talents unless someone takes the trouble of pointing these out!! I did only that and Balanji found the solution to our problems. Balanji has been always a



workaholic and always planned his work well and discharged his duties with great commitment and devotion. While he went out of the way to help his relatives and friends, in my opinion, he cannot tolerate any lazy folks. For him work is worship. As everyone knows, living in countries like USA, where the life and work style demand that people are motivated to become multi-task oriented. A great majority of Americans and also many Indo-Americans, lead such lives.

This reminds me of an occasion, when I was staying with Balans in their sprawling house. After a sumptuous breakfast, I was relaxing and watching the TV. It was a Sunday and after allowing me a few minutes of resting, he called me to meet him in his backyard garden. He was a keen and good gardener. He made me to help pick up the vegetables. A little later, he assigned me to paint the back deck. And a little later, I was assigned to do vacuum cleaning of an allotted area of the house!

Sucharitraji is the woman behind the man. She was an extremely talented cook -- and still remains so, despite her health issues --. She always received the guests visiting them with a smile and courtesy due to them. Amongst many, who must have visited and stayed in their house, I am not embarrassed to state that we/I might have over exploited the privilege given to us. Our visits to USA have come to an end due to our health status. But that has not deterred us from bothering them, when they visit India from NOV to FEB every year!!

They have raised three very good children and educated them well. We know every one of them well. We were quite close to his late mother, who was an extremely energetic lady. We also know all his brothers well and their families. Balanji and my sister Sucharitraji are, by nature, religious. They are not orthodox, but quite spiritually inclined. To meet a couple like them in US environment, where Hindu traditions are meticulously followed, must be only in small numbers.

As far as my family is concerned, my only child and son, who is a medical doctor in Chennai and his wife know them well. That their eldest son Raja Balan & his wife Karpagam (along with their siblings' help and support) conducted their "Sadhabhishekam" in a befitting manner, recently in their house in VA, gave us immense pleasure while going through the picture album.

Before ending my "titbits", we would like to wish Balans a very long, healthy, happy, peaceful and prosperous lives. May Balans continue to serve the Chinmaya Mission with great commitment and devotion, as they have been doing hitherto.

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### "Balanji – Embodiment of True Seva" – Vijay Kumar



CMWRC is blessed with our great Swamiji and also several Acharyas. What makes the center really stand apart is the dedicated sevaks that we have. In that we do have youngsters as well as the senior leads who pave the way for others to follow.

And among them is our shining star shri Balanji. Many have written about him, and talked about him at the Shatabhishekam ceremony we had recently at Chinmaya Somnath. In any organization, it takes little more than mere "seva" to be a real sevak. To understand the pulse of the people, to understand the different fiber each one is made of, to work with the differences and finally to make all of them work together and make them feel that there was no difference, is not an easy task. It requires an extra skill and qualities like Titiksha- Balanji is a great example for Titiksha- Forbearance

Even though we have been in the mission for several years, and have heard Vedanta several times, many of us still have that little "ego" piece left in us and pops its head up occasionally. Only a great leader like Balanji can make it go away, and thus to bring the best in us.

Met Balanji in 1987 and had several occasions to work together, after that, in Gurdev's camp in 1987 and 1988. He was not in EC or trustee that time, but it was very interesting to work with him. Whenever you hear Hari om on the phone and mostly it is Balanji is on the other side those days, and it is pretty much sure that some work is coming. I used to be lazy person, like many others, and



will try to avoid taking any task. But Balanji will make it sound like a simple task, even though in reality it will be much bigger than you ever imagined; Here is his words: “Yaar, isme kuch nahin , kardo yaar. Not only that, I discussed with Swamiji, and you are the best person to do it. Dusre ko dega tho, they will mess it up” Make a guess, how you will feel, after listening to Balanji’s words. The next moment, I am like Hanuman, ready to jump the ocean. Not sure whether he uses the same trick on others, but he gets the work done.

Balanji and Sucharitraji are also a family friend of ours and we know Raja and Karpagam almost 25 years ago. I used to take Lakshmi and Maya for dance classes to their home in Great Falls. The Shatabhishekam ceremony, which Karpagam and Raja put together last week, was awesome. Memories of last two decades flashed in my mind. Raja works here in the same office with me, in DISA, Ft. Meade, Laurel, MD.

CMWRC needs more sevaks at the senior level who can inspire and motivate others. People who imbibed the values they heard from Gurudev, only can do such magic of bringing different caliber people under one roof.

My hearty congratulations to Balanji and Sucharitraji for reaching this milestone - we call as 80 years. But the actual seva he did for Chinmaya Mission cannot be measured. Hari Om!

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### **Sukanya and BK Sathyanarayana**

The first time we ever came into contact with Sri. Balanji was when we approached the main center requesting their help to start a new center at Frederick, Maryland. This was in the year 1999. Sri. Balanji immediately got back to us and suggested that he can come to Frederick and meet and discuss with some key people who are interested in starting a chinmaya center here in Frederick. At that time we had a small bajan group which was regularly meeting at different people house on a rotation and we invited Balanji to come to one of such bajans. It was at Ram and Surekha Randad's house in Frederick Sri. Balanji came along with Acharya Arpithaji and met our bajan group members and explained the greatness of having our own center for Balavihar and how it will

benefit our kids. Arpitaji sang some beautiful bajans on that day. Then if I remember well, Balanji came personally to inaugurate our Frederick chapter and we are so grateful to Balanji who put the seed of knowledge which has grown to a large chapter catering many families in and around Frederick.

Later many sundays Balanji regularly visited our center and took adult classes also and I still remember how he explained to us of how to deal with the dual life that our Hindu kids had to balance in and out of the home. He is still our advisor helping our center and our current director Sri. Shiva Vanam. He constantly checks how we are doing and asks us how the main center can be helpful. He has that power of explaining things in a very clear way and also suggesting of what to do in some difficult situations.

Our Frederick center will always be grateful to Sri. Balanji for starting this chapter and also for his constant help all through these years. May God and Gurudev's blessings be on him for a wonderful and blissful years ahead. I still remember in one of his recent emails, he has beautifully said that he has got everything in the life and nothings else to ask from God, except if the rest of the life be healthy and happy. We pray God for the same for Balanji Uncle. He is such a noble karma yogi and we bow down to his simplicity and modesty.



## Clinton or Trump?

*Raju Chidambaram*

No, I am not going to tell you who to vote for.

It is an unusually tough choice this time around for many millions and I or the Smrithi editorial staff cannot make your life easier by making that choice for you. But I have long believed that our national Presidential elections held every four years offers a unique opportunity to put in practice what we have learnt over the years in the Vedanta class. I have written about it previously, but believe it is worth repeating it now, given the many new members from four years ago and the unparalleled circumstances surrounding the candidates in running in 2016.

First and foremost, let us remind ourselves of one basic fact: Several hundred million voters will express their individual will in the election, but the final outcome depends on the total samashti will, which in Vedanta is synonymous with Isvara. I say this not only because our so-called personal will is subject to Isvara's Will, but also because Isvara decides the many "chance" elements affecting election results such as inclement weather in regions of the country, health or other issues that prevent some voters from casting the ballot, and even man-made or machine made faults in the voting system. "Thy Will be done" is the rule that applies in these elections. The future of the country is in Isvara's hands. This fact should give us great comfort.

But this in no way relieves us of our civic responsibilities. We will do well at this time to remind ourselves of that famous injunction found in Gita, Ch. II, v. 47:

*karmanyeva adhikāraṣṭe mā phaleshu kadācana*

*mā karma phala hetur bhu, mā te sangostu akarmaṇi*

The four declarations in these two lines neatly summarize how we are to approach our duties as a citizen. Take the second phrase in the second line: *mā te sangostu akarmaṇi* meaning we must not be given to inaction. Gita frowns upon inaction. Lord Krishna wants us to get up in the morning of Nov 2nd

ready and determined to vote, unless we have done so earlier. Voting is our civic duty and cannot be sidestepped under any excuse.

An excuse often offered is based on the false contention that our vote does not really count. Sometimes the odds favor one candidate so heavily that we may know the likely winner. But even in this case, if a large majority was to stay home using this faulty logic, it will undermine the credibility of the elections if not upset the very results. More to the point, abstaining from voting under this excuse contravenes the other commandment in the second line: *mā karma phala hetur bhu*. We cannot let the anticipated results determine our action.

The first line with its two commandments is ringingly true in the context of democratic elections. *karmanyeva adhikāraṣṭe: As citizens our right is only to cast the vote. This sacred right (and duty) is guaranteed under the U.S. constitution and expected to be freely exercised by all eligible voters in order to make the whole process legitimate and meaningful. But, this right must be qualified by the admonition mā phaleshu kadācana: We have no right whatever to demand that the candidate we favor wins. The winner will be decided by Totality, Isvara.*

Let Gita make our life's choices clearer and easier.

Hari Om! Jai Gurudev! Hari Om!

## Travelogue: Journey to Mount Kailash and Manasarovar

*Ramdas Jadhav*

### **I wish I were there (DREAM)**

During an educational tour in college, I travelled to Haridwar, Rishikesh, Simla and Masoori. These are the hilly cities of northern India. We saw the picturesque view of snow covered mountain peaks and the majestic Himalayan mountains were touching the sky. The view was pleasing to the eyes and the chanting from nearby places was soothing to the ears. The winds were caressing over the skin. Fresh fragrances were everywhere. They were pleasing my senses and making deep impression on my mind. My friends claimed that mount Kailash beyond those peaks is the most beautiful and divine place among all. At that moment, I found myself wishing I was there.

### **Favorable circumstances make it possible (OPPORTUNITY)**

Pratima had been contemplating and collecting information about various adventurous and divine places including Vaishno Devi, Manasarovar and mount Kailash. And then last year she brought the news that Chinmaya Mission had arranged a tour to Kailash, her mind was set. Moreover, the icing on the cake was Swami Ishwarandaji and Swami Durgeshananda ji would be leading the tour. The opportunity was too great to miss. It must be the blessings of Gurudev, Swamiji and other great souls. We decided to register for the tour. This was Lord Shiva calling.

### **What is the destination? (GOALS)**

- Dip into Manasarovar
- Do a Parikrama around Mt. Kailash

### **Physical and mental fitness (PREPARATION)**

The Mt. Kailash Parikrama of three days would be physically challenging and the altitude reached 19,200 feet at some peaks. Physical fitness would be necessary for walking on the long rough and uneven path; and coping with the high altitude aspects of

low oxygen levels. In addition, mental fitness is important to stay calm under not so convenient surroundings.

The group was comprised of 110 members mostly from Chinmaya Mission centers in the US, and few from India and other countries. CMWRC was represented by four families, Jadhav (Pratima, Ramdas, Piyusha), Kulkarni (Anita, Raj, Rushmee, Priya), Krishan (Deepa, Vishnupriya), Parameshwar (Meena, Shankar) as well as Sri Gopalakrishna, Prasad Bhamidipati and Prabha Dhage.

Most of us practiced mountain hiking together almost every week for four months leading up to the trip. Regular walking, exercise and pranayama was the routine during this period.

### **Departure from Washington DC (BON VOYAGE)**

The group planned to meet in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. The tour company arranged for the Chinese visa and Tibet permit. To get to Lhasa, group members took different routes. Due to age restrictions, our daughter Rishika and Anisha Shankar could not register to go on the tour. Fortunately, summer Music classes were available at Chinmaya Vibhooti at Kolwan near Pune during our journey period. So three young friends Rishika, Anisha and Jahanvi Kirkire enrolled in music classes. Therefore, we went first to Chinmaya Vibhooti first. We met two more CMWRC students there, Purvi Nanavati and Krishna Bhamidipati.





### Departure to Lhasa (THE BEGINNING)

Kolkatta was our starting point. We went from there to Lhasa via Kunming, China. We met some more group members who shared the Tibet permit with us. When we left Kunming airport we started breathing heavily and felt light-headed due to the high altitude. At the Lhasa airport, the Sherpa from the Tour Company greeted us. The bus took us to our hotel where we met most of the other Group members. On the way, we saw a simple but beautiful temple next to a gigantic carved Buddha, Nietang Buddha.

### Days 1-4 (LHASA TO MANSAROVAR/MT. KAILASH)

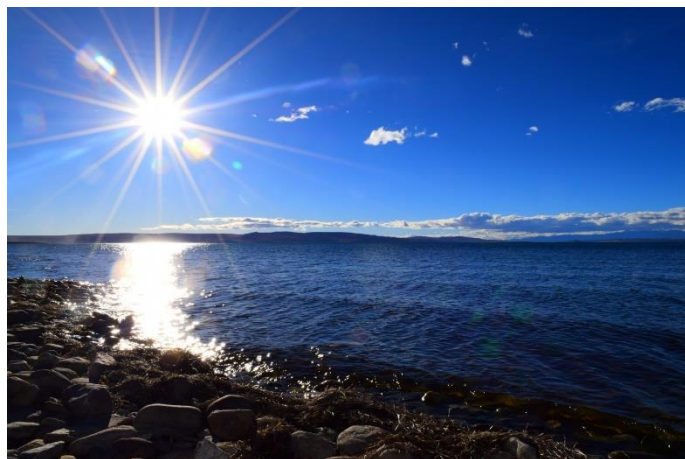
This was the beginning of the transition from daily life to spiritual journey through stages. With Swami Iswaranandaji leading us, we received the instructions and the program of our journey to Manasarovar and Mt. Kailash. We did sightseeing in

Lhasa, which was also part of getting acclimatized to the high altitude. Lhasa is Tibet's capital and has modern features of a smart city. It is also spiritual center as it has managed to retain its ancient Palaces and monasteries. Being the spiritual center of the holy land, it is where we got insights into the fascinating history, culture and life of the Tibetan people.

The distance to Mt. Kailash from Lhasa is approximately 1400 km, which is a long journey. On the way, our buses travelled along Bramhaputra river and sometimes through the valley between huge mountains. On the way, we visited some cities and towns that are stunningly beautiful and some so old that you can learn old ways of living and art. On the way to Mt. Kailash, we went across the windswept Tibetan plateau, saw cliff-top monasteries, and encountered wild-looking but hardy and hospitable Tibetans. We experienced yak caravans journey on rough roads, and appreciated the majestic peaks of the Himalayas.

### Days 5-6 (MANASAROVAR)

This was the day of lifetime, as you had the first sight of Holy Mt. Kailash and Holy Lake Manasarovar. On Guru Purnima day, we reached Manasarovar, the world's highest freshwater lake. Manasarovar was an intense spiritual experience. We did Bus-Parikrama around this this fabulous huge lake. The water was so crystal clear; we could see the snowcapped mountains reflecting on its surface. We took a dip into the breathtaking Manasarovar lake with Swami Iswarananda ji with spiritual chanting and his blessings. That was memorable moment. Later in the evening, we went to lake again and stayed until 2AM in the morning before going to bed. Some of us had individual meditation sessions. The next morning Swami Ihwarananda ji & Swami Durgeshananda ji led the Chinmaya mission Puja and Lord Shiva Puja in a tent at Manasarovar facing Mt. Kailash. We were so lucky that during the Puja the clouds had moved away from Mt. Kailash and we had crisp clear view and darshan.



### Days 7-9 (MT. KAILASH PARIKRAMA)

The fabulous vistas and the serene landscape of Manasarovar instantly lifted our spirits and we were ready to start a Parikrama of Kailash the next day. We had very much a needed good night rest at Darchen. Before the Parikrama started, we had a satsang and instructions from Swamiji and Sherpa.

The Mt. Kailash is the icy abode of Shiva and Parvati and thus in reverence, we performed a Parikrama, walking clockwise around the entire mountain. The buses dropped us off at the starting point of the parikrama. Just a barren, inhospitable valley with a pebble-laden trail. But the divine was all around us and within us.

Most of the members hired porters to carry our small backpacks that held only essentials for the day. Some hired a pony to ride on. Some of us decided not have either of the help. The organizers arranged for yaks and porters to carry our kitchen stuff. The Sherpa walked with us and carried emergency medical supplies and oxygen canisters. The folks who did not go on the Parikrama were to stay back at Darchen hotel.

At the start of the parikrama, there is a little archway, called Yama dvar (Yama's doorway). According to tradition, by passing through Yama's doorway, we go through death and are reborn into a pure of body and ready to perform the parikrama. While the first day's trail is magnificent to hike in fine weather, it can be quite dangerous if the wind or weather turns on you unexpectedly in such a high altitude of 16,000 feet. We reached Deraphuk, which was 12 kms trekking and took around 7 hours. We had a

beautiful view of Mt. Kailash from the resting place.



Early next morning, after a quick breakfast, we continued the parikrama. This was a journey through rough terrain, cross-streams and steep trails. Additionally, some slopes were quite steep rising over 1,000 feet per mile for miles. Without physical or mental relief, we jumped from boulder to boulder and went through highest point of parikrama, called dol mala pass, which is at 19,200 feet. The elevation was slowly taking its toll and had to make very frequent stops just to catch the breath. The climbing down had the same degree of difficulty. The second day weather was all over us. Every weather condition was covered; the rain, hail, cold, wind, snow and sunshine. It was one of the most tiring hikes, we have ever done. We trekked 22 kms distance in 11 hours and reached at Zuthulpuk. The second day was treacherous but the third and final day was relatively easy. After breakfast, we trekked down 10 km on the gradual winding down track. We were again back to our bus transportation.





### **Days 10-12 (The RETURN JOURNEY)**

With the beautiful everlasting memories, we started the return journey. On the way back, we again enjoyed the land of great nature with splendid beauty of sky touching mountains, snowy surfaces, tranquil lakes, beautiful rivers and ancient culture.

### **Spiritual Journey (REFLECTION)**

We completed our most amazing and blissful Mt. Kailash Parikrama. The Mt Kailash's beauty is overpowering and from a spiritual point of view, it possesses a subtle magnetic vibration of a supremely high order. By the ardent attitude of faith and reverence, we can make ourselves fully receptive to the inflow of the spiritual vibrations of the holy place. These powerful spiritual currents enter and purify all the sheaths, gross and subtle, help destroying bad Vasanas and Samskaras. The ancient Hindu knew and taught us that walking around sources of positive energy would charge one with the same positive energy.

The Mt. Kailash Parikrama meant giving up many dear articles and comforts to which the mind is attached. You develop patience and endurance putting up with various discomforts in the sun or rain or cold. You have your mind freed from all thoughts and you are absorbed in the one idea of the Divine presence. We noticed there were moments when the mind is thoughtless and the body is senseless. You know you are divine. The Mt Kailash Yatra with Swami Isawarananda ji & Swami Durgeshananda ji was a life changing experience!



## 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:**

*[Editor's Note: This is 2<sup>nd</sup> of a three-part reply. 1<sup>st</sup> part was published in July 2016 edition.]*

**Bhakti to Prapatti: II**

As one evolves and recognizes that Lord is not just a means to gain something that I love, where the love is not for the Lord but for the goodies that I love, it is called 'means love' that is the 'Love for God' is only as a means to get what I really love. My love for God is there as long as I get what I love from Him.

Higher than this is the Love for the Lord himself, it is love for God-sake and not for the Goodies-sake. I love the Lord himself, as the very essence of myself, and then we are going from a prayer for individual benefit to the collective benefit. I love myself absolutely where as I love anything else (or any person) because (that because comes) that thing or person brings happiness to me. Hence what I really love is not the thing or person but the happiness that comes with it or with that person. If that thing brings unhappiness or misery, I will try to get rid of as fast as I can - teaches Yagnavalkya to his wife Maitreyee ( arE maitreyee- aatmanastu kaamaaya sarvam priyam bhavati - Oh! My dear Maitreyee, I love anything and everything only from my own happiness; and I do not love the object for the object sake – Bri. Up.).

To Love God for God-sake, and not to get any goodies, I should have complete dispassion for all things (and beings) in the world. For the mind to arrive to this stage, it has to become mature. This is where the saadhana or spiritual discipline becomes important – which is essential role of a religion, where seeing the Lord in me as the Lord in all. Then, I see the Lord everywhere and in everything - therefore I love everything, since Lord is expressing himself in everything. My attention, then, shifts not to the superficial differences between things and beings, but to the essence that pervades everything and being. Hence Krishna says a yogi is the one who has samatvam – equanimity; it is equanimity arising from understanding that everything IN ESSENCE- is nothing but the Lord. Hence Krishna says – vidyaa vinaya sampanne brahmaNe gavi hastini, sunischaiva swapaakeca panditaah samadarshinaH- a wise person sees oneness in the cultured Brahmin, in the cow, in an elephant, in the dog and even in the dog-eater- since his vision is in the essence and not on the transactional attributive content. At the transactional level there is no confusion in differentiating a human versus a cow, an elephant, a dog or a dog-eater. A scientist sees that all matters are

fundamentally the same (made up of electrons-protons-neutrons) yet at transactional level he has no confusion in differentiating garbage vs delicious food. Seeing oneness in spite of apparent differences is yoga – says Krishna – samatvam yoga uchyate (Geeta 2-48).

Such a mature mind now prays not for selfish benefit for the benefit of all - sarve bhavantu sukhinaH, let all be happy, etc. Now individual gotrams and names are no more pertinent, since I am slowly moving to the second level from eka ruupa Iswara to aneka ruupa Iswara. One can still give gotram and other things when priest asks, but in his mind prayer is not for something but to see the presence of the Lord only in all. Priest may chant his normal mantras that you are doing this puja for health, wealth etc., but in mind of this mature person recognizes that he gets what he is due to his praarabha, and the prayer is only to invoke His presence in everything that one sees or transacts with. Hence Krishna say: yo maam pasyati sarvatra, sarvancha mayi pasyati tasyaaham na praNasyaami, sa ca me na praNasyati –(Geeta 6-30). One who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me, he is never away from me, nor I am from him. All religions say He is omnipresent, Vedanta provides the logic of how and why. Krishna emphasizes clearly – maya tatam idam sarvam jagadvyakta muurtinaa – I pervade the whole universe in unmanifested form (Geeta 9-4). Krishna says later that – I am residing in the heart of everyone – IswaraH sarvabhutaanaam hridyeshArjuna tiShTati – Geeta 18-61). Heart hear means the essence – as in heart of a problem or program. In the Cha. Up. sat vidya (6th Ch.) it says – aitatatmya idam sarvam – tat satyam – saaatma. The essence of everything in the universe is that which is Sat (the topic of the Chapter) – that is the truth and that is the self.

Thus spiritual sadhana now slowly shifts to the Lord from a Ishta devata form or a personified form to the very life principle in everyone – that because of which one is alive and without which one is not – the very essence of any person. Now prayers and rituals are done with this understanding. Bhakti now evolves to universality with compassion to all live forms. As the mind becomes purer, the Vedanta Sharavana has to be done along with this vision to understand the nature of Lord that I love – Krishna calls him as jignaasu or seeker of knowledge of

who is Iswara. At this junction, this vision itself becomes a prayer than any specifics - but specific prayer also turns into this universal vision, with this practice. In this process, the mind gets purified from raaga and dveshas. One who is in pursuit of knowledge, jignaasu and one who is knowledgeable, a jnaani are also considered as Bhakta with Jnaani as supreme bhakata – says Krishna; charturvidhaa bhajantemaam .. aartho jignaasu artharthee jnaanee cha bhatarashabha; tesham jnaani nityayuktaH ... –Geeta 7:16-17.

.... Continues in next edition....