

Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 27, Number 1, January 30, 2017



Pujya Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda, after having served as Global Head Chinmaya Mission Worldwide since 1993, passing the baton to his successor, Swami Swaroopananda on Jan 19, 2017

EVER IN HIS SERVICE, EVER AT HIS FEET

Calendar and Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

- February 24th – Mahashivarathri
- March 19 - 26th – Visit to CMWRC by Swami Bodhatmananda
- March 18th & 19th – Annual Geeta Chanting Competition, held locally at all three chapters

Study Groups

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

Bookstore/Library

- Browse Books, CDs, DVDs, etc. online at 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 – March 2017, are due by February 28, 2017
- Email submissions to smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org.
- Browse Past editions at www.chinmayadc.org/Smrithi/Smrithi.htm

Useful Links:

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust www.chinmayamission.com

Chinmaya Mission West www.chinmayamission.org

Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Courses www.chinfo.org

Chinmayam Chapter – Silver Spring MD website <http://chinmayam.chinmayadc.org/chinmayam-chapter/>

Chinmaya Somnath Chapter – Chantilly VA website www.chinmayasomnath.org

Chinmaya Frederick Chapter – Urbana MD website <http://www.frederick.cmwrc.org/>

Chinmaya Richmond Chapter – Richmond VA website www.chinmayarichmond.org

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center 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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Please contact us if you are interested in joining the editorial staff!

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News

Momentous Transition

Soon after the annual Sun transition to the Northern Hemisphere in January marked by Sankranti festival, Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda passed the baton of overseeing and guiding Chinmaya Mission Worldwide to Swami Swaroopananda on January 19, 2017.

Pujya Guruji had stepped into the role of leading Chinmaya Mission when Sri Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda left his mortal coils in 1993. Pujya Guruji will continue to serve by conducting Yajnas and camps at several locations in India. Swami Swaroopananda, who will be known as 'Mukhya Swamiji', has already made his presence felt across the globe combining scholarly knowledge of Vedanta with devotion to Guru and expertise in management. Many are attracted by his warm demeanor, assuring voice, lilting devotion and inspiring talks. CMWRC will be hosting Mukhya Swamiji from July 22 through 27 at Chinmaya Somnath.

Geeta Jnana Yajna

Swami Dheeranandaji (Resident Acharya, CMWRC) conducted a 4 day Geeta Jnana Yajna on Chapter 3 (Verses 1 through 21) at Chinmaya Somnath, Virginia from December 27th through December 30th.

New Year Day

The new year was ushered in with prayers at both the Silver Spring and Virginia chapters on January 1st. The event was led by Swami Dheeranandaji at Virginia and by Dr. Sankaran Nayar at Silver Spring.

Annual Fund Raiser

CMWRC conducted the annual fund raising event at the Veterans Plaza in downtown Silver Spring Maryland on December 3rd. The highlight of the event was the inspiring and thought provoking lecture on "Mindful

Work – Mindless Meditation" by Swami Ishwaranandaji (Resident Acharya, Los Angeles). Almost all of the 300 adult tickets were sold and funds were raised to the tune of \$95000 to support CMWRC capital outlays and operating expenses. Some older children joined their parents in listening to the keynote address by Swami Ishwarananda, while other children took to skating at the onsite ice-rink.

Geeta and Tapovan Jayanti

Geeta and Tapovan Jayanti were celebrated during the weekend of December 10 and 11 at all three chapters. Chanting of Tapovan Shaktam to honor param guru Swami Tapovanam and chanting of sampoorana Geeta or portions of Geeta were the highlights. At Chinmayam, students of Chinmayam class who are studying Geeta spoke on their favorite verse in presence of adult audience.

Acharya Rahulji talk on 'Veda'

Acharya Rahulji conducted weekend session at Chinmayam on January 8th. Bala Vihar children from Shivanandam, Tapovanam and Chinmayam classes joined their parents and other adults to listen to Rahulji describe the treasure that every Hindu should cherish – the Vedas. The audio and video of this important talk is available at www.chinmayadc.org.

Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth –

The University for Sanskrit and Indic Traditions

On January 16, 2017, Government of India issued a final approval for establishment of Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth. The university will now be formally established to offer degree programs. It will be based in Veliyanad (Kochi) Kerala and Kolwan, Maharashtra. This is another manifestation of Gurudev's vision.

Obituaries

Sri Rahu Nath



We express our deepest condolences on the sad demise of Dr. Raghu Nath Ph.D. (69 years) on December 31, 2016 11:45 pm at Inova Fairfax Hospital. Raghu ji was a scholar par excellence, an avid reader, and a very active community member who selflessly volunteered and helped numerous organizations in the Washington DC metro region. He was closely affiliated with Chinmaya Mission's Springfield chapter and played an active role in its formative years. He took end to end responsibility for all aspects of the annual registration process for several years. He also served as the President of Nair Society of Greater Washington for multiple years. Raghuji served as a Director Board member at Rajdhani Mandir and also volunteered and supported many organizations including KAGW and World Ayyappa Seva Trust among others.

He is survived by his wife Leela Nath and son Gopal Nath.

Dr. Raghu Nath completed his MS from Baroda University and received his Ph.D. from University of Houston. He also completed his post-doctoral fellowship at Baylor University. He worked at Covance and Georgetown University before joining the research team at the US Environmental Protection Agency, where he was last employed.

Sri Rajiv Thakkar



We express our deep condolences, on the sad demise of Dr. Rajiv Thakkar (48 years), who passed away unexpectedly on December 28, 2016. Thakkar family has a long association with Chinmaya Mission, Silver Spring chapter.

Rajiv was a regular attendee of Sunday session; he had volunteered as a substitute teacher. Rajiv was a music lover and a painter. The backdrop on the stage for 2016 Banquet was Rajiv's creation. Rajiv was a person full of life who was very compassionate, selfless and always willing to help. His motto was to help others without expecting anything in return.

Dr. Rajiv Thakkar was a faculty member, hospitalist and a vascular medicine specialist at Johns Hopkins University. He focused his talents on high-value care and reducing unnecessary lab draws, becoming an expert in the field and presenting his work in various publications and conferences. His research led to significantly more efficient utilization of blood draws in medical testing.

Dr. Rajiv was born in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, India, to Natvarlal and Induben Thakkar. He grew up with limited resources, studied hard and graduated with an M.B.B.S. and residency in General Surgery from B.J. Medical College. He later went on to receive an M.B.A. from the Carey Business School at Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Rajiv Thakkar is survived by his wife Dr. Vaishali, sons Soham and Amogh, as well as his father Sri Natvarlal Thakkar and three siblings: Ashok, Bimal, and Nilima.

Handover Ceremony

January 17, 2016 at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai, India



Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda passed the baton of overseeing and guiding Chinmaya Mission worldwide to his successor, Swami Swaroopananda at an auspicious handover ceremony at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in Mumbai on January 19 2017



Announcements and Flyers



**Maha Shivaratri – Friday February 24 – Celebrated 24th and through the weekend locally
at all CMWRC Chapters**



Chinmaya Mission®
Washington Regional Center
www.chinmayadc.org



2017 Geeta Chanting Competition

“Chant Geeta, Enchant Krishna, Celebrate Chinmaya”



EVERYONE IS INVITED

To participate in the competition

CHILD – YOUTH – ADULT

Geeta Chapter 3: Verses 1-21
Karma Yoga: The Art of Action

Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC) is pleased to announce the 2017 Geeta Chanting Competition. The aim of Geeta Chanting is to inspire everyone to chant, study and live the essence of the Upanishadic knowledge that Sri Krishna divulged to Arjuna. We encourage you to chant these verses that explain action and liberation. Swami Chinmayananda is synonymous with Geeta Jnana Yajna. He carried the message of the Geeta to kindle the knowledge of the Self in millions world-wide! So “Chant Geeta, Enchant Krishna, Celebrate Chinmaya!”

2017 CHAPTER COMPETITION

Dates and Locations:

- Chinmayam (Silver Spring MD)
 - March 18th 2017 1:00- 5:00 PM
- Chinmaya Somnath (Chantilly, VA)
 - March 18th 2017 12:00-4:00 PM
- Chinmaya Frederick (Urbana, MD)
 - March 19th 2017 1:00-2:30 PM

PARTICIPATION CATEGORIES

- Memory
- Memory & Comprehension
- Reading
- Reading & Comprehension
- Writing (Reflection)

Go to <http://cmwrc.chinmayadc.org/geetachanting>

for information about the competition, registration and for audio & visual practice materials

CHINMAYA MISSION WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

JNANA YAJNA

July 22- 27, 2017

Chinmaya Somnath Auditorium

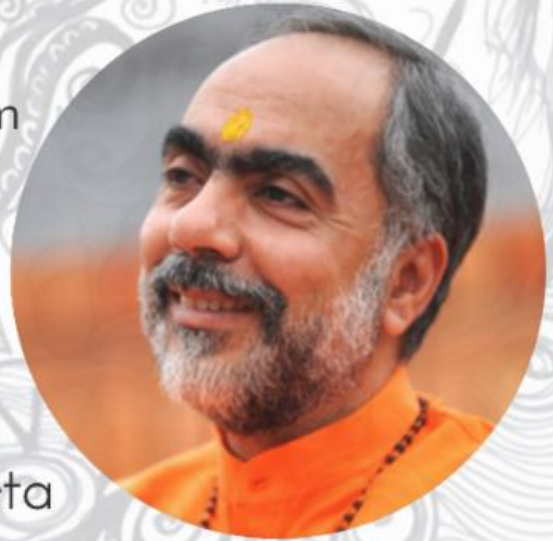
4350 Blue Spring Dr.
Chantilly, VA 20151

Gayatri Mantra &
Chapter 4, Bhagavad Geeta

by

MUKHYA SWAMI SWAROOPANANDA

GLOBAL HEAD, CHINMAYA MISSION WORLDWIDE



SUMMER CAMP

This year's theme:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

ARISE! AWAKE!

Conducted by
Swami Dheerananda ji

with Acharyas

For rising 1st to 8th graders
as of September 1st, 2017



Registration will open sometime
between mid Jan to mid Feb, 2017

Check website for information

<http://cmwrc.chinmayadc.org/summercamp>

Chinmayam, Silver
Spring MD

**June 26th – July 21st,
2017**

~ * ~

Chinmaya Frederick,
MD

**July 31st – August 11th
, 2017**

~ * ~

Chinmaya Somnath,
Chantilly, VA

**July 31st – August 18th,
2017**

CHINMAYA
NAADA
BINDU
GURUKULA FOR
PERFORMING ARTS



7th NAADA BINDU FESTIVAL

A Chinmaya University Initiative

3-Day Residential Arts Retreat
7 Performances, 2 Art-Talks,
Spiritual Discourses

FEBRUARY 10-12, 2017

Chinmaya Naada Bindu Gurukula, Kolwan, Pune

SPECIAL FEATURE:

Music concert by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda,
Head of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide & Chancellor of Chinmaya University



**Come, Experience
the Arts as a Lifestyle!**

Buses available from Mumbai and Pune at concessional rates

Also join us for "Science of Happiness", a camp in English with
Swami Advayananda, from February 5 - 9, 2017 at Chinmaya Vibhooti, Kolwan.
For further details, email cvswagat@chinmayamission.com or call +91 9689891959



CHINMAYA
VISHWAVIDYAPEETH
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FOR SANSKRIT & INDIC TRADITIONS

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CHINMAYA
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Chinmaya University

invites you for



Bhoomi Poojan

Foundation-laying ceremony of the
new **Chinmaya Naada Bindu Gurukula (CNBG)** campus
during the 7th Naada Bindu Festival
on February 11, 2017 (3:00 pm onwards) at Kolwan, Pune

In the presence of

Swami Tejomayananda

Swami Swaroopananda

Swami Advayananda

Swami Advaitananda

Here is your opportunity to be among the first patrons
of a futuristic world-class university!

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Vidyalaya	Academic Block	₹ 10,000/-
Kartavyalaya	Administrative Block	₹ 5,000/-
Ashrayalaya	Residential Block	₹ 1,000/-

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To register for the event & for details
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TARA CULTURAL TRUST
SANDEEPANY SADHANALAYA, POWAI



Organizes

NAISHKARMYASIDDHI Part - I CAMP
(In English)

Starting on Auspicious Guru Poornima Day on 9th July 2017
And
Culminating with Shiva Sahasranama Archana on 23rd July 2017

Timing: 7:00 am to 8:00 am
4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

At Saraswati Nilaya, Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai
By

Pujya Swami Bodhatmanandaji

Camp Highlights

- Vedic Chanting
- Easy Sanskrit Lessons
- Stotrams
- Satsang with Acharyas
- Visit to Chinmaya Pradeep



For more details & registration contact Email Id tct@chinmayamission.com
or Phone No: - +91-022-28570368/2427/5805. Tara Cultural Trust,
Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Chinmaya Mission, Saki Vihar Road, Powai, Mumbai
400072.

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Mananam Series of Books These are inviting and engaging series of books that go into depth into one selected spiritual theme per edition (Truth, Compassion, Education, Fear- face it, Science of Sciences, and so on) and bring perspectives on it from different thinkers, writers and traditions of the world. The recent editions of Mananam have focused on the life, teachings, inspiration and legacy of Sri Gurudev, in honor of his birth centenary.

Subscription: please write to editor@mananam.org. Current and past editions can be purchased at our bookstores.)

Tapovan Prasad Subscription (print version or E-version). Tapovan Prasad brings out each month - excerpts from teachings of Swami Tapovan Maharaj, Sri Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda and CM acharyas. In addition, it captures the pulse of Chinmaya Mission world-wide with reports on happenings and upcoming events.

Tapovan Prasad Subscription Instructions:

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4. Choose the required subscription package and then Click on 'Add to Cart' and then 'Go to checkout'
5. Please provide username, password, email...details, etc...and proceed.
6. When you click on Axis Bank / CCAvenue payment gateway, enter details and complete the process. (Do revert in case of any problem)

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- *Bala Vihar magazine* for children, parents and Bala Vihar teachers. subscription link: http://www.chinmayamission.com/balvihar-subscription-overseas/#.WE_LYvkrJhE
- *Chinmaya Udghosh* - magazine for youth - appropriate for 13-30 year olds subscription link: http://www.chinmayamission.com/our-magazines/chinmaya-udghosh/#.WE_MBPkrJhE

Sevak Training Camps

In English

at Chinmaya Vibhooti Vision Centre, Kolwan

By Swami Tejomayananda & supporting acharyas & faculty

11th to 14th May, 2017

Camp for Bala Vihar Sevaks & Sevikas

18th to 21st May, 2017

Camp for Chinmaya Yuva Kendra Sevaks & Sevikas

25th to 28th May, 2017

Camp for Study Group & Vanaprastha Sevaks & Sevikas

"Service in this world is the highest prayer."
Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda

Each camp will begin at 4.30 PM on the starting day, and conclude by lunch time on the concluding day (three nights)

Suggested Donation:

Rs 2100/- per person per camp

Inquire for details on twin-sharing & single occupancy non-AC rooms & AC or Non-AC cottages



Registrations to:

cvsawat@chinmayamission.com / +91-9689891959

Chinmaya Vibhooti, Post Kolwan, Taluka Mulshi, District Pune 412108

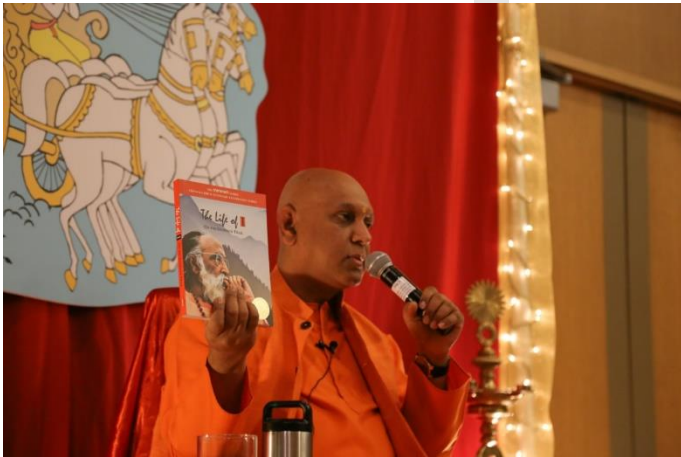


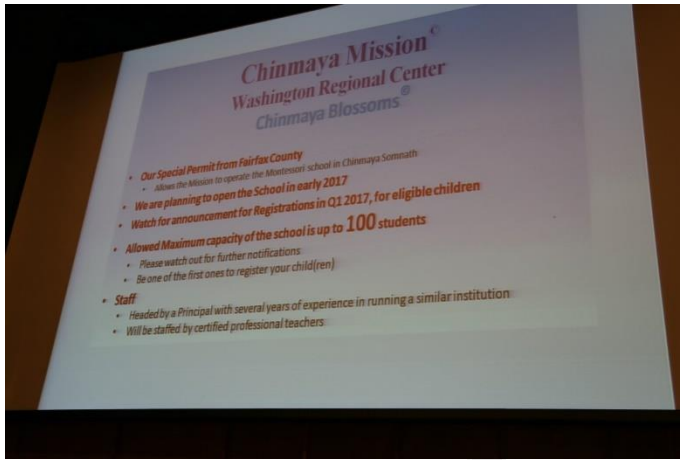
CMWRC Annual Fundraiser 2016

December 3rd at Veterans Plaza, Downtown Silver Spring Maryland

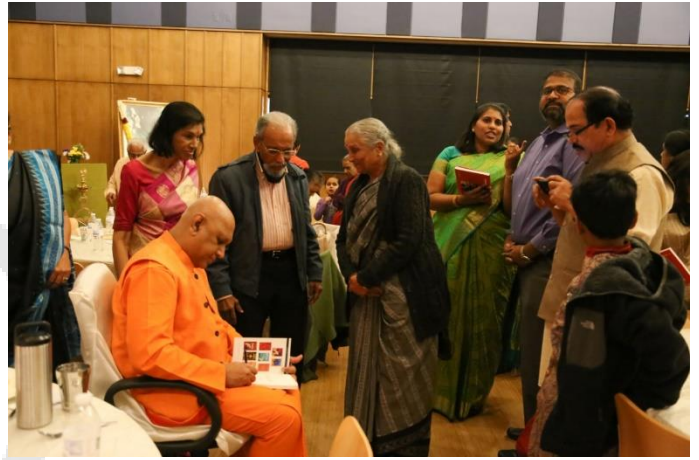












New Year Day 2017 at Chinmaya Somnath

Bala Vihar Children at Chinmaya Somnath

Adithi Ramakrishnan:

A “New Year” spells out new possibilities. A time to set goals to carry us through our hopes and dreams over the next 365 days. A time to smile a little wider, laugh a little harder, and make a commitment to live a little brighter. I decided to start this year by attending the New Year Puja at Chinmaya Somnath on January 1—a decision that neither I nor my 2017 will regret.

The event consisted of a Ganesha Puja to take blessings from the remover of obstacles, a recitation of the 108 names of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, a Vishnu Sahasra-Namavali Puja, and the Mahalakshmi Ashtottara-Shata Namavali Puja. Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji gave us some wonderful words of advice, we conducted Arati, and Prasadam was distributed. But what touched my heart during this puja was what it made me feel. Instead of stumbling to greet 2017 bleary-eyed, I was confronting it head-first with confidence in my guru and in myself. I felt empowered by the connection to my roots that was strengthened by this puja. As I chanted the 108 names of Gurudev, the 1000 names of Lord Vishnu, and the 108 names of Goddess Lakshmi, I not only found myself immersed in the chanting, but also somehow linked to each individual name, feeling each evoke something different within me.

After the chanting, Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji told us the story of the two wolves within all of us: the good wolf, and the bad wolf, waging a war in our thoughts. He told us that the wolf that wins is the one that we feed. From his story, I decided to make my own commitment to this new year. I want to feed my good thoughts, but more than that, I want to turn my thoughts into action. I want to pursue what I wish to achieve and not shy away from what is important to me. I want to stay connected with my culture and my religion and have both stay beside me as I confront what life might have to offer us in 2017.

After the puja, Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji called to the stage five young boys who had held their Upanayanam ceremonies in the past year, and they shared their own spiritual experiences in the forms of short talks or poems. Their experiences are presented below.

* * *

Arjun Ramakrishnan:

U – Upanayanam which is vision through knowledge

P – Phase as Upanayanam marks the beginning of the Brahmacharya phase in the life of a child.

A – Auspicious meal during the Kumarabhojanam ceremony – I ate with my cousins, already Brahmacharis, and after this, the formal ceremony began.

N – Naandhi which is a ceremony performed to obtain the blessings of my family’s ancestors before the festive occasion

A – A ritual called Udagashaanti – where sacred water was poured on my head to purify the mind, body and protect me

Y – Yagnopaveetam, when my father placed the sacred thread across my left shoulder. The three strands of the sacred thread represent knowledge, duty, and devotion

A – Alms or BhikshaKaranam, when I symbolically asked for alms of rice from my mother and other women to teach me humility

N – New birth in the spiritual world leading to higher knowledge according to the Vedic traditions.

A – Aashirvaada, where I learned to recite my lineage before bowing to the elders and seeking their blessings

M – Mantra, the Gayathri Mantra that protects those who recite it. My father whispered the powerful mantra into my ears during the ceremony and I have been reciting it every day since

* * *

Nayan Iyer:

My Upanayanam was a very enriching experience but it was very hard work leading up to it. The first thing is you need to have a bath every day before you do the Pooja in the morning called Sandhyavandanam in order to cleanse your body and help you get fresh. You have to do Sandhyavandanam before you eat breakfast so the first thing you do is pray to God. Then in the afternoon you do Madhyanikam which is done before you eat lunch and in the evening you Sandhyavandanam again. So you have to

always remember to do all of them before and after school. That alone is a very big responsibility.

My Upanayanam was done for me when I showed my parents I had enough responsibility. I had to take a bath every day in the morning for 2 years before my parents decided I could do it. So we went to Kerala to have my Upanayanam. My Upanayanam was held in a hotel in Guruvayur. All my friends and family came so it was a lot of fun being with all my cousins at the same time.

The Upanayanam function lasts about two days. On the first day, Nandi Day, I had sat with my parents listening to my Dad chant along to the Vadhyar, honoring our ancestors. On the Morning of the Poonal Day I was not allowed to eat until half the Pooja had gone on. Then I got all my hair cut and went completely bald. I had been growing my hair for a year for this event.

The hair cutting signifies losing your personal apparel to become a Brahmachari so you are not thinking about your looks, you are only thinking about god. I also had to do Bhavati Bhiksham Dehi which signifies starting the life of a Brahmachari with humility in accepting what is given. Then near the end of my ceremony I got my Poonal put on me by my Dad.

The Poonal is the thread you get when you start your life as a Brahmachari. He also chanted the Gayathri mantra in my ear. Then I got my pictures taken with my family. I also got on the most precious gifts I had ever gotten, a little charm made of gold with Guruvayurappan which was meant to be fitted on my Poonal so I could also always worship Guruvayurappan anywhere in the world.

Those are some of my amazing experiences from my Upanayanam.



* * *

Jayanth Krishnamurthy:

What is Upanayanam?

1. Upanayanam is one of the traditional saṃskāras and is widely discussed in ancient Sanskrit texts of India.
2. Yajñopavītam is received by the boy during this ceremony. It is a thin cord composed of three cotton strands which the boy continues wearing across his chest thereafter.
3. Upanayanam means "the act of going to a teacher to learn" or Learning with "Yajna spirit".

With all said here is MY experience

I had my Upanayanam on August, 29th, 2016 in Chennai, India. On the first day we did Uthaka Shanthi. This is to purify the body the mind and the Intellect. I also did a pooja to invoke my ancestors and the gods. On the second day, I first invoked lord Ganesh to remove all obstacles from my mind. Then, I purified my BMI by taking a bath and getting some of my hair cut by a barber. After that, I prayed to the Agni the fire god to give me a long life, intellect, courage etc. Forth, my father put my sacred thread (yajñopavītam) around me on instruction of the guru. This thread consists of three strands that signify Brahma the creator, Vishnu the protector, and Shiva the destroyer and god of all gods. Then I was fed lunch with other brahmacharis. After that, my father taught me the almighty Gayathri Manthra by whispering it to me so that no one would know it other than me and my father. This

mantra is to introduce the concept of the almighty Brahman. 6th, I carried a Pipal tree twig outside because it signifies Bramha, Vishnu, Shiva and their wives Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati. I prayed to Surya, the sun god, to protect me by clasp my palms in such a way that there was only one peephole that I could see the sun through. Following that, I begged for alms first from my mother then all other mothers because it is supposed to me to be humble, control my ego and control my senses. Finally, I learnt abhivathanam and first told it to my mother. Overall my experience was phenomenal and fun. My favorite part was when my uncle carried me up to the room where I had my pooja and other things. This was my experience.



* * *

Vijay Mahimtura:

My upanayanam was at Chinmaya International Foundation in Veliyanad, Kerala. The facility was very clean and beautiful. The area was surrounded by palm trees too and looked like a forest. All of my family and friends came to the ceremony. This occasion took place in gurudev's memorial hall which was surrounded by four temples. The ayyappa temple facing the hall had its walls made up of lamps or dias. When I was there, CIF was managed by Swami Sharadananda who is a renowned scholar. My favorite part of the upanayanam was when a bucket of water was poured on my head. All my family and friends enjoyed their time at CIF.



Shyam Krishnan Sangameswaran:

Upanayanam is the second birth for a boy, birth into the spirituality.

My Upanayanam was a two-day function/event at the hometown of adishankara, Kalady.

On the first day, I did Naandhi- I prayed to my ancestors for blessings and guidance. There were up to 11 small priests chanting with the main priest.

On the day of the punool, I met many of my relatives and friends. I remember sitting with my friend Bharath to eat food for kumara bhojanam. I was very happy to see all elders there with my Dad and Mom present to bless me. Everyone was happy for me.

I recollect being in front of a roaring fire, chanting next to my dad with the guidance from the priest.

Then the yagnopaveedam (sacred thread) is worn by me through special manthras. During the Upanayanam the boy receives his first lesson of reciting the 'Gayatri Mantra' from his father who becomes his first teacher.

The sacred thread is given to the me as a reminder to the commitment that I would stay completely committed to learning and education, avoiding all distractions.

The prayers which we do daily is called Sandhyavandhanam and it is to bring good and avoid evil. It protects one from bad things around us and helps the community, country and mankind.



New Year Resolutions – Chinmayam Bala Vihar Children

Happy New Year

2017

New Year Resolutions of Bala Vihar children:

Jahnavi Kirkire

1: to think before I speak

2: not injure myself and not to use crutches again

3: eat as much chocolate and candy as possible

Mohnish Mahajan

not to get upset with my parents easily

Alisha Mahajan

to get more organized especially in school

Swami Chinmayananda on New Year (an excerpt from Tapovan Prasad, January 2012):

Renew Yourself

Time as such is ever pure, ever new – nava, nava – ever new, never old. It is not enough just to change the number of the calendar year[say] from 1992 to 1993 – it is you and I who have to change. We have to stop poisoning the times with our base urges of lust, greed, anger, etc. We are the ones who spoil it and then we say that the times are bad. Times are never bad; times are always good. Nowadays the trend is to say, “I don’t know what kind of a time this is now a-days, a very sad time. Everywhere around the world there are wars, destruction and life being taken ...” But carefully examine and question just who has committed these atrocities. Who is to blame? Is it Time? Has Time killed anybody? Time never did it! You and I, prompted by our false values of hatred, jealousy, greed, passions and lust, act on in the world outside. The quality of those very actions is our contribution to Time,

making or marring it, just as the Ganges is made impure or polluted by our own act of dumping rubbish into it.

So the greeting ‘Happy New Year’ is actually a wish that one and all may discover more happiness for themselves in the coming year, by renewing not the year, but oneself. The year cannot be changed! This is a time for renewal. This is the reason so many people make New Year resolutions. Year after year they do it. “I’ll get up early in the morning.” “I must meditate regularly.” “Read the Gita everyday...” Not even for three days are they kept.

Courage to Change

If the courage to change is absent, no progress is possible. Buddha truly experienced a ‘Happy New Year’ when he became Buddha. One day he decided that he wanted something else out of life, and having decided, he worked towards it consistently. Thus Siddhartha blossomed into Sri Buddha.

Even two communities or nations can mend their relationship if they decide to do so and work on it. Though most politicians talk about change, they don’t really mean it. What is wanted is a renewal of attitude. This courage to change is essential in a spiritual student. One may exhibit spirituality and strut about pretending to have changed, but unless one actually changes, one will not experience the benefits. People complain: “Swamiji, I have been in your ashram for the last four years; I cleaned the place, cooked the food and washed your clothes, but ... Swamiji, no change!” We never promised that the ashram would change for you! It is not the ashram, nor the Guru – you have to change! You can certainly take help from the Guru and from the quiet ashram, where you meet like-minded people. Being in that company, you do not feel like over-indulging. You do not visit the night club which may be there in the vicinity. You put a halt to all such indulgence, thereby bringing about a change in yourself.

You Change, the World Changes

When the mind is changed, you are changed. When you change, the year becomes new! You don’t have to wait for the first of January! The day you change, it is the ‘New Year’ for you. You are the master of your life.

[Editor: Read Tapovan Prasad Jan 2012 for the entire message]

New Year's Day at Chinmaya Somnath in Pictures

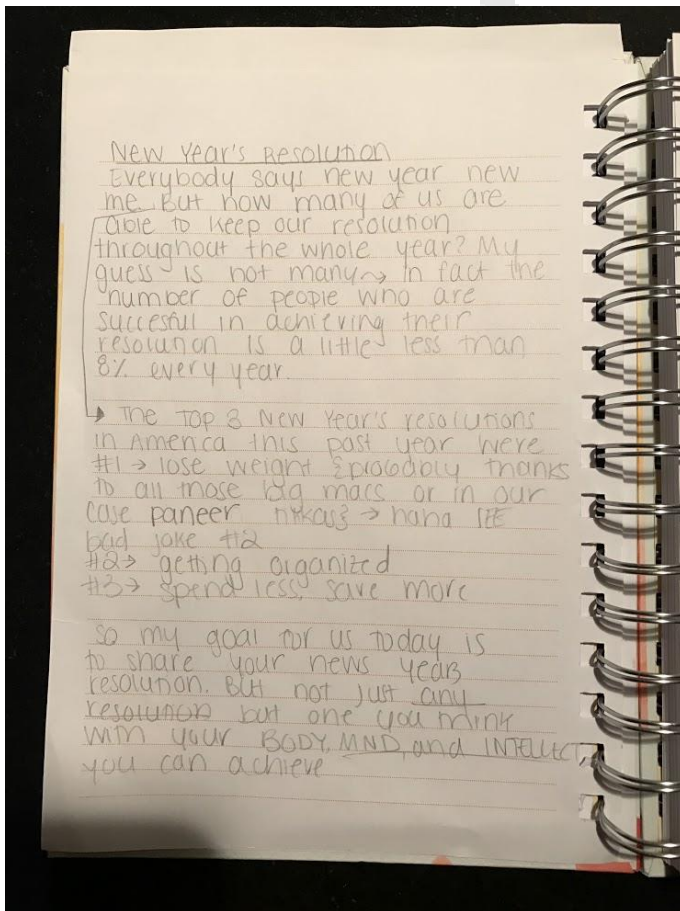
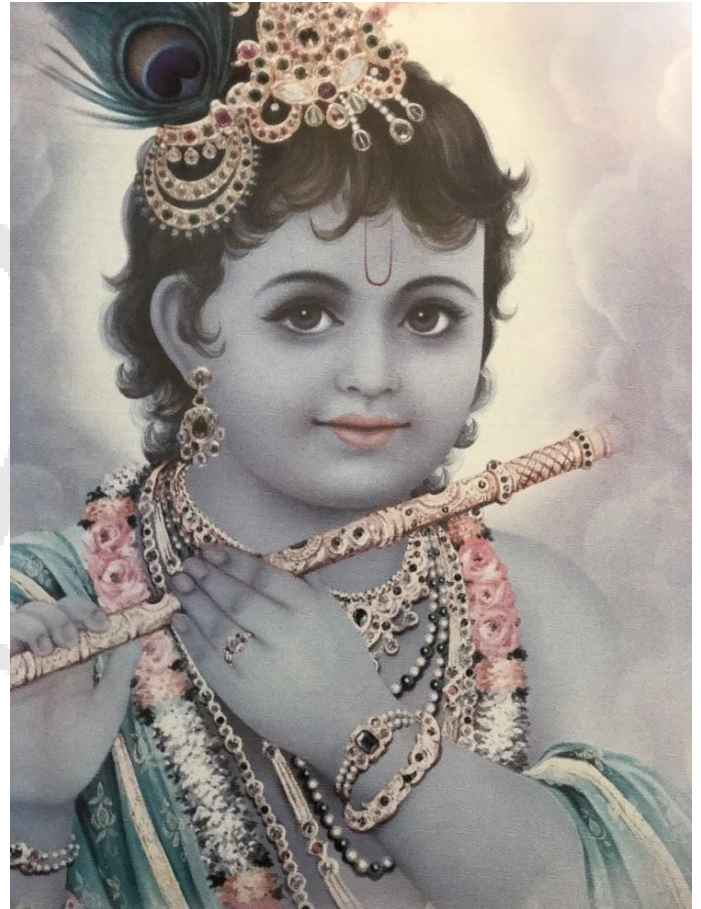




New Year's Day at Chinmayam







ThanksGiving and ThanksLiving

Sundaram Class, Sunday AM Session at Chinmayam

We were delighted that Swamiji read out the lovely compositions of the wonderful children in our Sundaram class. It was inspiring to hear the thoughts of gratitude and sharing from these young minds. [Editor's Note: See slides below.]

Yesterday (December 4, 2016) we began the first of two classes on Lord Vishnu. In the first class, we talked about the symbolism associated with the Lord - the meaning of the conch in his hand (sound of creation, Om); mace and chakra (gentle reminders to be on the path of righteousness and to rid ourselves of ego) and the lotus (to shine beautifully and gracefully no matter how muddled our surroundings are and not to let any negative thing stick to us). We also spoke about why Lord Vishnu is seen resting on Adishesha (the serpent). The serpent with many heads symbolizes the many thoughts - good and bad- in our unfocussed and cluttered minds. By facing the Lord, the symbol of Adishesha reminds us to focus on God and to be calm. We noted that Lord Vishnu is sitting calmly and focused on his work and next steps and not 'resting' as is commonly perceived. Furthermore, the picture of Goddess Lakshmi at his feet is not meant to conjure up service by the Goddess, but rather to remind us that to be on the path of righteousness we need wealth - of values and character - which is what Mahalakshmi symbolizes.

We reviewed the dhyana shloka of Vishnu Sahasranamam where the form of the Lord is described.

Shanta Karam Bhujaga Shayanam,

Padmanabham Suresham.

Vishvadharam Gagana Sadrusham,

Megha Varnam Shubhangam.

Lakshmi Kantam Kamala Nayanam,

Yogibhir Dhyana Gamyam.

Vande Vishnum Bhava Bhaya Haram,

Sarva Lokaia Kanatham

peaceful form) and Sarvalokaikanathan (Master of all the worlds). Children drew images of the ocean, trees with swings, meadows, Lord Vishnu as well as musical instruments to depict peace. We then showed pictures of how Mahavishnu is worshipped in India and how the murti looks in these different Vishnu temples. We showed pictures of murtis in Tirupathi, Mathura, Guruvayoor and Parthasarathy temples (Chennai). We connected their pictures with these by saying that God is one and God invokes different things in all of us, but we are on the same path to be one with our inner light.

Thanks as always and Hari Om!

Sudha, Mangala and Gopal

Bala Vihar teachers



**SUNDARAM CELEBRATES
HAPPY THANKSGIVING
AND
HAPPY THANKSLIVING!
Letters from BalaVihar Students
to
Swamiji**

We asked the children to draw picture of whatever comes to mind when they hear the phrase (Shanta Kaaram -



Letter # 1



Hari Om Swamiji,
Thank you for teaching me so much. Today I learned lots about Thanksgiving. I am so thankful for what you teach me. It has helped me in many ways in my life! Thank you again.

Your student,

2



Letter # 3



Hari Om Swamiji!
I am writing this note to express how grateful I am to get to come here every week. I especially love the stories I hear during common time.

3



Letter # 2



Hari Om Swamiji,
Today we learnt about Thanksgiving in class. I am thankful that I can come to Chinmaya Mission to learn about topics like this and understand how to lead a better life. Chinmaya Mission teaches me to be selfless and kind so that I can improve the lives of others.
I am also thankful for my family, my friends, and all the luxuries I have. Many people do not have a safe house, warm clothes, and other things. It is important to give to others so that they are more comfortable as well.

3



Letter # 4



Dear Swamiji,
Have a happy thanksgiving. Thank you for providing us all your fun stories. I enjoy common time a lot. Thank you for the spiritual knowledge you give us. Eat some corn!

6



Letter # 2



Furthermore, I am very thankful for the sun, which plays a major role in the survival of all living things. Sunshine also represents happiness, joy, life, and other positive traits.
Thank you for providing us with meaningful lessons at Chinmaya Mission, so that we become better people.

4



Letter # 5



Hari Om Swamiji,
We reviewed the importance of Thanksgiving and what it can represent during class today.
I will always "give more than what I take" and remember to view life gratefully in the best way I can.
During the night when I pray, I usually reflect over life and look at it in various perspectives. And even though we have a designated day for Thanksgiving I know that every day can be full of love and being thankful for what we have.
I am really grateful for the lessons you've taught us through stories, conversations, etc. Thank you so much for providing us the knowledge that will guide us through life.
Happy "Thanksgiving".

7



Letter # 6



Hari Om Swamiji,
I like your common time. I also like your stories.
Thank you.

8



Letter # 9



Hari Om Swamiji,
I am thankful for the wonderful stories you tell.
Please keep telling them. I am thankful for my
friends and I made them because of Chinmaya
Mission. I am very thankful for this center so I
can learn many good things. I am very thankful
to have a Swamiji like you.

11



Letter # 7



Hari Om Swamiji,
I am thankful for my parents because they let
me go to school and give me whatever I want. I
am also thankful for Chinmaya Mission because I
learned so many things, language, Gods and
more.

9



Letter # 10



Hari Om Swamiji,
Thank you for telling me funny stories and
telling us how to live our lives!! Happy
Thanksgiving! or as you say Thanksliving!

12



Letter # 8



Hari Om Swamiji,
I am thankful for the knowledge and teachings
you have shared with me for the wonderful
years I have been going to Chinmaya
Mission.

10



Letter # 11



Hari Om Swamiji,
Thank you for this great atmosphere and all the
knowledge you give me. Chinmaya Mission is
changing my life because of you. Thank you and
happy Thanksgiving.

13



Letter # 12



Hari Om Swamiji,
Thank you so much for taking your time to speak to us every Sunday. Your stories are funny and very enjoyable. I am very thankful for being able to come to Chinmaya and be enlightened by you.

14



Letter # 15



Hari Om Swamiji!
Thanks for whatever you do for us and teach us. I love the stories you tell me and they are really inspirational. It helps me throughout the days of my life. Thanks, Hari Om.

17



Letter # 13



Hari Om Swamiji,
For thanksgiving we are making cornucopias. This note is to mention that I am very thankful for all of the knowledge you have given to me.

15



Letter # 16



Hari Om Swamiji,
Thank you for your guidance it has really helped me now I am a matured person.

18



Letter # 14



Hari Om Swamiji,
I thank you for all the stuff you taught me. I really like your story that you told us. Thank you.

16

Summaries - Sunday AM Chinmayam Class at Chinmayam

Submitted by Chinmayam Class Bala Vihar Teachers

Amitha Anmalsetty

Geeta Chapters 1 & 2

October 16, 2016

Today during class, we watched a video created by Chinmaya Somnath in Houston. We watched 3 parts of the video. In those three parts, the video talked about Arjuna's turmoil and how it applies to our lives. It also referred to the Steps To A Life of Smiles...

Steps To A Life of Smiles

1. Understanding the Problem of Mankind
2. Keeping a Holistic Vision of Life
3. Understanding How to Live our Life
4. Keeping a Value System
5. The Result: A Person of Wisdom

We also read from Chapter 1 - The Yoga of Arjuna's Grief. In this chapter, Arjuna is talking to Krishna, and Arjuna feels as if he cannot fight his family, the Kauravas, and his gurus. Gurudev explains Arjuna's dilemma as "Arjuna Disease". Arjuna Disease is when someone is in a situation where they have to choose between right and wrong. Gurudev then explains that the next seventeen chapters of the Geeta are to teach how to cure this "illness". We also read and discussed verses forty-five through forty-seven and near the end of class we skipped ahead to Chapter 2 and read and discussed verse 3.

Lastly, we referenced the 7 Steps To A Positive Attitude...

7 Steps To A Positive Attitude

1. Broaden Our Vision of Life
2. Do Our Duty, Our Dharma
3. Enjoy Life, Subject To Dharma
4. Be A Team Player
5. Work For A Higher Cause
6. Surrender The Actions To God
7. Do Not Be Attached To The Results

My take-home message from this class was, we cannot be attached to the results of our actions. It makes what we did, less satvic, and more rajasic or tamasic.

Vivek Nathan

Geeta Chapter 2

October 23, 2016

We began as usual with the opening prayers, and Gita chanting. After a few announcements about upcoming events and reminders, we started class by reviewing last week's message. This message was about how Krishna told Arjuna to start fighting and stop being lazy. "Get up, face the challenge". Following this, we started diving deeper into the meaning of defeat the defeatist. When people feel they can't do something, it simply means that they are taking little to no effort to bring about change. Also, getting out of your comfort zone is always painful, but it necessary to progress as a better person. This concept relates to Arjuna, as he did not want to fight in a war with people near and dear to him. We then reviewed chapter 2 verse 3, and talked about how we should never judge a person by how they look, but by how we connect with them. Before wrapping up class, we looked a little bit into the reincarnation theory. Vasanas accumulate throughout ones life, and when we die, they try to fit the best body. Then, Vikas has told us to read the book "The Egg" to get a better look at viewpoints of the true meaning of reincarnation. After this, we concluded class as usual with the closing prayers.

Pranusha Karedy

Geeta Chapter 2

November 6, 2016

To begin class, we reviewed the lessons from last week. From Chapter 2 Verse 17 and 18, we learned that we should "be ever ready to fight against all low tendencies within and without us". In other words, if we live in the past or focus on future, it is difficult for us to face and solve the problems in the present. If we live in the present, we can be at peace. We looked at an example

by our own classmates. During common time, Vivek and Sid played the table very well. They were able to do so by improvising, which only takes place in the present. It's important that we aren't distracted and that we focus on the present instead. Only then we can work happily.

Then, we started the next portion of Chapter Two and began with Verse 47 which states:

Thy right is to work only, but never to its fruits; let the fruit-of-action be not thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to inaction.

The *Geeta* explains that it's almost impossible for us to act without expecting anything in return. In that case, we have to set goals without being attached to the outcomes. If you have expectations and you fail to meet them, you unnecessarily become sorrowful. The verse contains the words, 'fruit-of-action'. The *shastra* describes the term as an action that is done in the present and is conditioned by a future-time. The action fulfills itself within its own reaction, so the reaction is no different than the action. Thus, when we worry about the fruits-of-actions we are escaping the present and living in "a future moment that is not born yet".

In addition, the *Geeta* states that we must immerse ourselves in the activity that brings out the best in us. This concept can be found in persons of achievement. Leaders, such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., have reached a point where they find joy in the work itself. This can also be defined using the Japanese term, kaizen. Kaizen means continuous improvement and is found in persons of achievement as they needed kaizen in order to find joy in their work. In our daily lives, we always need to find ways to improve ourselves and eventually reach kaizen.

At the end of class, we read our take-home message: "Bring your best to each moment. Work joyfully HERE and NOW. Don't let your thoughts about the future distract or discourage you from your work."

Ananth Shastri

Geeta Chapter 2

November 13, 2016

We began class with opening prayers and then a summary of last week's class: one should live neither in the past nor in the future. Goals are good tools but one should not dwell on their outcomes. More important is that one dedicates oneself to constant improvement. In that sense

failure is beneficial because it spurs self-improvement while also demonstrating that most actions' outcomes are outside of one's control.

We then moved on to verses 62-66 of chapter 2, which detail the Ladder of Fall. The Ladder begins with attachment, which leads to desire, then to anger, then to delusion, then to loss of memory, then to loss of discrimination, then finally and catastrophically to self-destruction. Anil uncle illustrated the Ladder with the metaphor of a worker who wants a car too expensive for their means. That worker's anger at their inability to buy the car immediately would cause them to focus disproportionately on it (delusion) and to neglect their other responsibilities. In this case, the first step towards a solution would be for the worker to recognize the unimportance of a car in the long run.

Next we discussed the Ladder of Rise (Bhaja Govindam, Adi Sankaracharya, verse 9): the company of good (Satsang) leads to non-attachment leads to freedom from delusion leads to the immutable Reality and thence finally to liberation in life. Satsang — good company and good discussion — is a prime factor in helping one's journey up the Ladder of Rise, and we concurred that good ideas are often better received when suggested by a friend. Since according to Anil uncle you get even less of what you want as you get older (he laughed at this, to our consternation!) non-attachment is extremely important throughout life. All sufferings are egocentric misconceptions and by renouncing desires we can find peace. But it is false to physically remove oneself from the world of desires and claim spiritual achievement. That comes only by exposing oneself to desires and temptations, but then rejecting them.

Before closing prayers we watched a 6 minute video on chapter 2. Some of its key points are that self-knowledge is salvation; death is not sad because our inner consciousness can never die; silent suffering leads to self-knowledge; and that one should perform action but not for its fruit. We are by now familiar with all these concepts, a sure sign of year-by-year progress.

Bhaja Govindam – A poem

Srikanth Kowtha

Pursuit of freedom, peace, and happiness
Does not exist in pages of a book
Your journey takes you searching far and wide
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

Not wealth nor seeking more can peace provide
For what we have is only what we've earned
Preoccupations of the mind distract
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

Attraction is a temporary urge
Enchanting then deluding all of us
Why pay attention to the flesh and bone?
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

Life itself is such a fragile thing
Ephemeral, imperfect misery
The Infinite alone can hold the key
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

The bonds of kinship break so easily
Dependent on your current state of wealth
See how they leave you when you lose it all
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

Alive, you are the center of their world
But dead, you are an object to be feared
So focus not on wife and son alone
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

First games, then love, then focus on the past
Control the minds of children, youth, and old
Does God have claim to any thoughts of ours?
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

What is our nature? How did we get here?
The ties we have will soon be distant past
Reject inconstant labels of ourselves
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

Converse with greater minds than just our own
To move toward the underlying truth
For *satsang* is the surest way to peace
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

What purpose serves a lake no longer there?
What purpose serves the chase of something lost?
When truth is known, frivolities will fade
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

No good can come from boasting of our deeds
Since nothing stands the tests of time to last
The truth, not Maya should be what we seek
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

The wheel of time will churn so endlessly
The sun will rise and set forevermore
Desire will not ever go away
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

Turn thoughts to God who rules our daily lives
Not wealth nor kin nor every useless thing
Commune with God to cross the sea of change
The answer lies in seeking Govinda

[Editor's Note: This is from an 'assignment' given by Acharya Vivekji during his weekly satsangs where Chyk groups from across North America join. Srikanth is part of New York City Chyk group Bhaja Govindam is the text they are studying.]

Study Group Inquiry: Samatvam

Compiled by Sunday AM Study Group that meets at Chinmayam

In one of our sessions in our Sunday Morning Study Group that meets weekly at Chinmayam, we found ourselves discussing the meaning of 'Samatvam' at length. As part of our study, we gathered the following.

Samatvam has meanings as 'same' as noted in Nirvana Shatkam (Guruji's commentary); balanced, having equilibrium or understand the value of things, experiences, or people; and 'evenness of mind'

In a YouTube video of Guruji on Practical Application of Bhagavad Geeta in Daily Life. Guruji says Bhagavad Geeta references samatvam with respect to things, experiences, and people. In his talk, samatvam's meaning depends on its association with things, experiences, or people.

1. With respect to things, samatvam means to understand the value of things -- Example gold is useful for ornaments, a stone for hitting--we cannot use one for the other's purpose; both are valuable or useless, depending on the intended purpose. When we do value the things for what they are, the likes (Raaga) and dislikes (Dweshas) are lessened and in the process, we exhaust our Vasanas and do not create new Vasanas.
2. With respect to experiences, samatvam means having equilibrium. Equilibrium with respect to bodily experiences (sheeta ushna), mental experiences (sukha dukheshu) and intellectual experiences (maana apamaana). Bodily experiences are voluntary as well as involuntary. In practical terms, we should not dwell too much on experiences that cause pain, or seek experiences that cause pleasure.
3. With respect to people, samatvam means acceptance, not expectance.

Adopting this approach would strengthen non-identification with BMI. Samatvam with respect to other sentient and non-sentient beings would strengthen compassion, or that feeling of oneness with all.

In the Bhagvat Geeta Ch 2 verse 48, the term Yoga has been used in the sense of the Samatvam - 'evenness of mind' through work.

Bhagvat Geeta Ch 2 verse 48 –

*yogasthah kuru karmani
sangam tyaktva dhananjaya,
siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva
samatvam yoga ucyate.*

'Perform action O Dhananjaya, abandoning attachment, being steadfast in YOGA, and balanced in success and failure. Evenness of mind is called YOGA'.

In Gurudev's words - 'Evenness of mind' is the tranquility of mental composure in facing all pairs-of-opposites' is defined here as Yoga.

In other words (Gurudev's)- The Great Yoga means to work thus, with equipoise in all situations.

Reflections – What is Normal?

Sitaram Kowtha

When the topic of spirituality comes up, “I am looking for practical advice” is a commonly repeated refrain in study group discussions and among family members and friends. Many say that the teachings from Geeta and other scriptures, and the many pravachans, are all too exotic and distant to be of use in their normal everyday living. I pondered about what the word ‘practical’ means. To some, the wisdom imparted in Bhaja Govindam is ‘practical’ and to others it is merely a ‘theory’ that still needs further elaboration and decomposition into logical and actionable steps before it can be practiced. So why is one set of guidelines practical to one, but theoretical to another? It occurred then that each of us has a sense of what ‘normal’ for us is, and the advice being given to us has to align with this sense before we can readily integrate it into our daily living. If the advice aligns then it is practical, otherwise it is not. So, I realized I had to reflect on the word ‘normal’.

What exactly is ‘normal’? When does a current ‘normal’ become a ‘new normal’? If any two people compared their notes honestly, would they fully agree as to what actually constitutes ‘normal’? Is there a ‘normal’ at the personal level, another one at a ‘family’ level, and so on? Is ‘normal’ bound to time, place and circumstances? Does ‘normal’ even exist or is it a figment of one’s imagination?

The dictionary definition of ‘normal’ is:

- (a) As adjective: conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected;
- (b) As noun: the usual, average, or typical state or condition

As I recollected a typical day in the recent past, which has a mix of home, work and community obligations and interests, and contrasted that with something similar from a more distant past, it is clear that there are many types of ‘normal’ at play. An old normal of the distant

past has given way to a new normal in the recent past. There is ‘normal’ at home, which is different from ‘normal’ at work, which again is different if I do office work from home, and so on. It seems that we have a sense of ‘normal’, but it is time, place and context dependent. The sense of normal is just as much about expectation as it is about a habit, an established ‘routine’ or ‘order’. This sense of normal involves sometimes only one individual, and at other times, more individuals. Thus, we have differing sense of normal at individual, family, community, nation and even global level. And this sense of normal is ever changing. There is no doubt that we hold a sense of normal, even though it is contextual and changing, and our engagement in the world around us is influenced by this sense. In other words, the sense of normal we behold is a mere projection and non-existent. If it is just an illusion, then what value does it bring?

The sense of normalcy provides greater predictability, a comfort zone and an opportunity for us to take certain things for granted so that our attention can focus on other ‘more important’ needs or endeavors. Normalcy provides the rhythm and foundation upon which human ingenuity potential can be unleashed. We strive to translate our repetitive activities among our endeavors and interests to first establish a normal; then we tweak it again and again to redefine our normal. We do this with an eye towards bringing greater efficiency, comfort and dependability. The sense of normalcy manifests through our ‘routines’, ‘habits’ and are the underpinnings of our expectations. We even come to believe that this is our ‘nature’. The sense of normalcy is not only an agent of stability, it also an agent of revolution or change.

For some of us, normalcy drives our attitude and selections, and in many ways we become wedded or even enslaved to it. For others, this sense of normalcy can be boring, stifling or even depressing. There are

those who 'rebel' against normalcy at individual, family, societal or national level and sow seeds of rebellion or revolution. At an individual level, when we seek to bring a purposeful change to our sense of normalcy, we find it to be disruptive and even energizing! Establishing a sense of normalcy not only brings a semblance of stability, it also serves as a basis for needed or desired change.

Spiritual study inspires to bring about a purposeful change within us. It is necessarily disruptive, but uplifting. The more we are open to such inspiration and change, the more we will find the wisdom imparted by our great Masters to be 'practical'.

From a Vedantic perspective, it is possible that three factors are at play as we project a sense of normalcy, at all levels of our being. These factors are vasanas, raga-dwesha and gunas.

The first factor is the influence of Vasanas (impressions, tendencies). As our vasanas manifest as thoughts, words and actions, our sense of normalcy that we projected immediately prior to that manifestation is subtly perturbed and settles to a revised sense of normal. This continual tuning of our sense of normal is what we think of as 'normal' at the individual level. The changing sense of what is normal, aids in the process of exhausting our vasanas, because vasana manifestation is a cause for its exhaustion. When we live and work in a family or community environment, in those contexts we tweak our combined sense of normalcy to suit us and our engagement with others. Thus, within a family or community context, our combined vasanas influence our sense of normal at that moment in time. This sense of combined vasanas can be extended to describe the sense of normalcy we feel as a community, society or a nation. An example of community vasana is that a host when bidding farewell to their guests, requests a note that they reached their destination safely. It used to be in India that the hosts would ask them to drop a postcard about their safe arrival. Later, when telephones became popular, people asked their guests to call them that they arrived safely. Today, the trend is to ask our departing guests to text. We no longer have the patience to drop a card in the mail, and the host doesn't

want to be disturbed by a phone call, so a text message serves as a quiet and almost instant indicator that the guests have reached their destination safely.

The second factor is the influence of Raga-Dwesha (likes and dislikes). In the course of living, we lean our thoughts, words and actions in the direction of those that give us greater pleasure, sense of safety and perceived happiness. These are 'raga' influences. Similarly, we shift our thoughts, words and actions to move us away from those that give us displeasure, decrease our sense of safety, or otherwise distract us from pleasure and perceived happiness. These are 'dwesha' influences. These two influences adjust what we consider to be normal. For example, if it is very cold outside, I may choose to wear a sweater all the time when indoors, even when the indoor temperatures are quite comfortable. Wearing a sweater is now an adjustment to my normal, as long as it is very cold outside. Similarly, if I tasted a new flavor of coffee, I start drinking an extra cup of coffee, because I liked it so much. Now, every day, I drink an extra cup of coffee – a new habit and an adjustment to what was my previous normal. Our society, through culture, politics, economics and technology, showers us with many opportunities to further discover and enhance our raga-dweshas, resulting in further revision of our normal.

The third factor is the influence of Gunas (texture, color, character of our thoughts, words and actions, performing actions blindly or in pursuit of full knowledge): The texture, attitude of thoughts, words and actions are characterized by these factors - degree of inertia or energy; purposelessness or purposefulness; selfish motive or selfless attitude; restlessness or calm-demeanor and acting blindly or acting with knowledge and clarity. We individually and collectively let our gunas texture our thoughts, words and actions, which then reflect in our daily routines, engagement and interactions with the world around us. When a community is tamasic (inertia, selfishness, purposelessness, agitated and blind), the surroundings and activities mirror that attitude/texture. Same is true when a community is rajasic or sattvic. As an example, Jnana Yajnas conducted by Chinmaya Mission centers are purposeful programs and all the volunteers work

together (in a sattvic manner) to ensure everything is orderly, on time, efficient and uplifting for all involved. In contrast, when a major snow storm comes to town, a typical family might sleep in late anticipating road closures, school cancellations and may tune in to local TV station for hours to get updates on snow accumulations and storm movement, and eventually get out to clear out their front yards – a nice mix of rajas and tamas.

In summary, we are constantly defining and redefining, and projecting a sense of normalcy based on our individual and collective vasanas, raga-dweshas and gunas in an attempt to bring regularity, dependability and predictability to our lives. This sense of normalcy allows us to gauge if we are doing well relative to others (individuals, families, communities, societies and nations), as well as relative to ourselves – how we used to be before we set in some purposeful changes. We may either become slaves to our habits, routines and let the sense of normalcy dictate our lives or we can employ it to better ourselves. We can work with gunas and raga-dweshas to seek improvement: shift our gunas, shift our raga-dweshas, or in other words bring a change to how we conduct ourselves today. We have to be careful, we are not changing for the sake of changing. Vedanta asks us to make a choice – ‘Shreyas’ (good) over ‘Preyas’ (pleasant). The choice enables us to move towards higher gunas (towards greater consistency in being sattvic) and move towards reducing raga-dweshas (accepting everything the way it is and not rendering judgment that something is ‘better’ and something is ‘worse’). This shift to the better, will bring greater stability and consistency in our sense of ‘normalcy’. Over time, with better understanding of Vedanta, we can also come to realize that our ‘sense of normalcy’ is only a projection and has only relative use. In the context of absolute, there is no such a thing as ‘normal’. In other words, we will “wake up” one day to a ‘normal’ where we no longer need to project or adjust our sense of normalcy. Everything is the way it should be. Vedanta is the practical guide that takes to this moment of awakening.

Iswara Darshanam -I

Discussion of the 11th Chapter of Geeta – Acharya Sadanandaji

The 11th chapter of Geeta is called *viswarUpa darshana* yoga – The yoga of the vision of the whole cosmos. We normally see the universe every day, when we are in the waking state. However, the vision of universe becomes a yoga when we see it without our attachments, or the raaga and dwesha goggles, that we normally have. It involves the yoking the vision of the mind to the absolute truth, while seeing the universe of names and forms. Hence viswarUpa darshanam or vision of the universe becomes Iswara darshanam or vision of the Lord, since Iswara pervades this entire universe. In fact, scriptures say Iswara himself became both the inert and the sentient beings in the universe. Hence, all that is seen is nothing but Iswara only, but in various names and forms. However, we are getting carried away only with the vision of superficial names and forms and ignore the substratum that pervades the universe. Iswara darshanam involves looking at the world of verities of names and forms and still see or recognize the oneness that pervades the universe. For that one needs what Vedanta calls it as viveka or intellectual discrimination to overlook the apparent names and forms but see the truth that pervades these names and forms. For that only, scriptures provide the means of knowledge or pramANa. Scriptures say that Iswara is one from which the whole universe of things and beings are originated, sustained and go back into. The vision of Iswara is similar to seeing the varieties of ornaments with different names, forms, utilities, etc., and still recognizing the substratum gold from which they came, by which they are sustained and into which they go back. Seeing the gold in and through every ornament is the vision of all pervasive gold. Similarly seeing the all-pervading Iswara, from which all the beings came, by whom they are sustained, and into which they go back, in and through the world of plurality is the viswarUpa Iswara darshanam, seeing the Lord in the form of the world of plurality. It forms a yoga to start with for a sAdhaka, until he recognizes that as a fact.

Question: If Iswara is the substratum for the world of plurality, then why we do not see Iswara while seeing the world of plurality. In the case of gold example we can see that it is gold while still seeing the various names and forms.

Ans: The gold example is only relative example to show that ornaments and gold are ontologically belong two different order of reality. Gold is perceptible, but exists in different forms for one to see and use it. It undergoes transformation-less transformation called vivarta to become ornaments. Ornaments are called vAchArambhanam vikArAH nAmadhEyam – only names for forms, but no substantiality of their own other than the gold. This analogy is provided by the scriptures to indicated that Iswara became many and this transformation is also transformation-less transformation, with Iswara remaining as Iswara yet appearing as many things and beings. In contrast to gold, Iswara is imperceptible since He is infinite. Hence one cannot perceive Iswara using sense organs, and yet whatever perceived is nothing but Iswara only, based on the scriptural pramANa or basis. If our vision is only at the sense level, then one cannot see the substantive Iswara that pervades all the names and forms. From the point of Gold, the entire ornaments can said to be its vibhUti or glory. In addition, Gold became particular ornaments sold in the jewelry shop, only because there is a demand for those forms; demanded by the desires or vaasanaas of the enjoyers (customers) of those ornaments. I should have gold vision, when I perceive or transact or utilize the particular forms of the gold. The real value of the ornament depends on the content gold. That vision is obvious since I safely protect it compare to rings and bangles made of say iron.

Perceptibility, transactability or utility of a particular form based on its attributes may not have anything to do with the Gold. For example, the attributes such as the inner or outer diameter, ID or OD, its utility, its date of birth, etc., have nothing to do with gold that pervades

the ring. Gold can declare, 'All ornaments are in me, and yet truly no ornaments are in me; I am pure gold unaffected by these names and forms – na cha aham teshu avasthitaH – look at my glory'. In the last Chapter (10th), Krishna elucidates many of His glories taking examples that Arjuna was familiar at the time. In the end, out of despair, Krishna declares that every manifestation in the universe is nothing but Him only. His vibhUti or glories are endless or limitless. All things and beings are in Him; and yet He is not in any particular thing or being. He is the very supporter for all. Without

His presence, nothing can exist independent of Him. Hence He says – nAntO2sti mama divyAnAm, vibhUtInAm parantapa|Esha tUddhEshataH prOkTo vibhUtEristarO mayA|Arjuna! There is no end for my divine glories. I have only indicated briefly here, only some of my glories that you are familiar...

To Be Continued...
