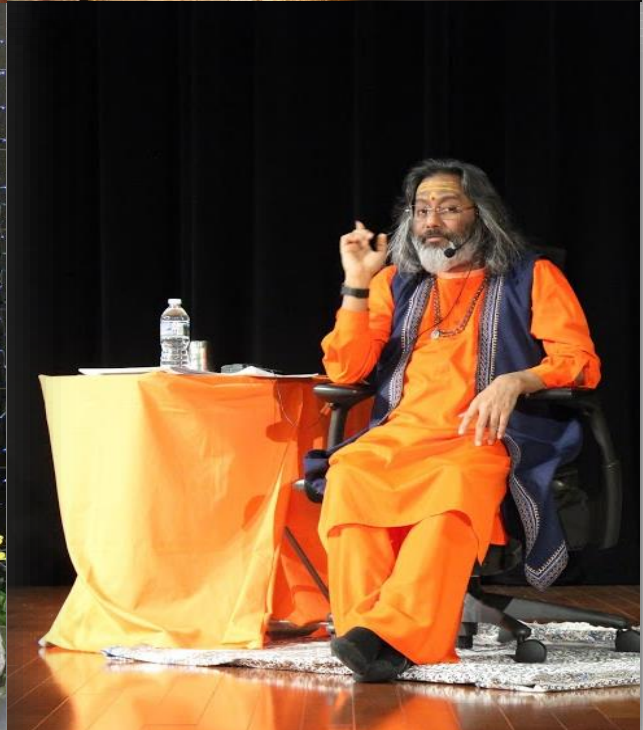


Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 28, Number 1, January, 2018



New Years' Pooja

Foreword: Swamiji's Message on New Years' Day 2018



Editor's Note: [Our beloved resident Acharya Swami Dheerananda provided an inspiring message to the CMWRC community during the New Years' Pooja. The editorial team is honored to present a summary of his message below

Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji addressed the families who were in attendance at the New Years' Pooja on January 1, 2018 at Chinmaya Somnath and conveyed a beautiful message on love and respect.

Swamiji observed that only on January 1st and possibly for a few days longer, people greet each other with "Happy New Year" wishes. Swamiji advised that we should greet and wish well of others not just on New Year's Day, but all the time, and do so with love and respect.

Reminding members about how the phrase "love and respect" occurs in the Chinmaya Mission pledge, Swamiji went on to point out that love and respect usually do not co-exist. In his typically humorous style, Swamiji cited an example which members could easily relate to and said that a person usually loves their spouse but does not respect them. A person would usually respect their boss but would not love them. Explaining further, Swamiji noted that the glory of the mind is to love and the glory of the intellect is to respect. When love and respect are found in a single altar, it transforms into reverence. The confluence of love and respect becomes reverence. Whatever we revere, we become that. We should recognize that the same divine life exists in every living being. Recognizing the same divine life and revering it, one can then become the universal life.

Swamiji shared a story to inspire us to be grateful to everyone who has contributed and contributing in making our lives successful. Vishal (literally means vast) was a fighter pilot whose plane was shot down at during a combat mission. He managed to eject out and land safely using a parachute. On his return, he was honored with multiple awards and became famous. About five years later, he was once sitting down for dinner at a restaurant. A man approached him and asked him if he was Vishal, the famous fighter pilot. The man

understood that Vishal may not remember him, so he went on to remind him that he was part of the aircraft maintenance unit and responsible for packing the parachutes. Vishal suddenly felt a surge of gratitude towards the man. Later that night, he could not sleep because he was feeling guilty – he had been a fighter pilot but could barely recognize this humble maintenance crew member he used to see on a daily basis. If the man had not done his job sincerely and well, Vishal would not have been alive today.

Swamiji urged the members of the audience to look around. Just like that maintenance man, we all have friends and family members who have helped us by packing our physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual "parachute". We should take some time to recognize these people and be grateful to them for their contribution to our life. Being grateful does not mean just saying "Thank you" (lip service) but should be demonstrated through our actions full of love and respect. The greatest way to greet and express gratitude is through a combination of love and respect.

Swamiji concluded his message by asking the audience members to make a commitment that beginning now, in all our transactions, may the magic of love and respect flow through our perceptions, thoughts, ideas and actions. To enable this, we should feel this sentiment first. Giving the analogy of great singers and dancers who understand the meaning of the song in order to feel the "Bhava", Swamiji asked everyone to feel this sentiment within oneself first and then bring it into our transactions. The first step is to pray to the Lord to fill us up with love and respect at the meditation seat, and then enter into worldly transactions.

Expressing great happiness at being able to see so many members of the Chinmaya family on this new years' day, Swamiji ended with a message of "Keep smiling and keep sharing. May we love and respect each other whenever we meet and greet."

Calendar and Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

- February 3rd – 4th – auditions for a play to be staged on May 5th (Gurudev Jayanti) at Chinmayam.
- February 16th - 18th – a CHYK workshop at Chinmayam on Guru Parampara System: a spiritual retreat for university students and young professionals (ages 18-35) conducted by Swami Dheerananda and Acharya Shubhani.
- February 13th – Mahashivaratri program at Chinmayam and Chinmaya Somnath
- March 17th and 18th – 2018 Geeta Chanting Competition at all chapters.
- March 10th – Bhajan Sandhya at Chinmayam at 5 p.m.
- March 10th – Thyagaraja/Purandaradasa Aradhana at Urbana Middle School, Urbana MD.
- March 11th – Lion King drama performance at Northern Virginia Community College.
- February 3rd – Life Management Workshop by Acharya Priya at Chinmaya Somnath based on “Storm to Perform” by Mukhya Swami Swaroopananda.
- February 10th – Cineragas – a benefit concert for Chinmaya Mission – Krishnapriya Tirumala, a CHYK from the Frederick chapter presents devotional songs from various movies (Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Sanskrit).
- March 3rd – Succeed in College Townhall at Chinmayam.
- March 18th – 25th – weeklong celebration of Rama Navami at Chinmayam including chanting of the entire Sri Ramacharitamanas (Sri Tulasidasji).

Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Ravi Ravichandran ji by email at ravi5211@yahoo.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 – January 2018, are due by December 31, 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

Editorial Staff: (smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org)

Editor: K.A. Lakshmanan

Advisers: Sri Raju Chidambaram, Acharya Vilasiniji, Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji, Sitaram Kowtha

BV students –Ananya Krishnan, Dakshesh Nimishe, Varsha Krishnan, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Vishnu Lakshmanan and Bhuvan Devarsu

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

Table of Contents

	Foreword, Calendar and Events, Editorial Team, Contact Us	
NEWS	News & Tidbits	
	Announcement & Flyers	
	<i>New Year Prayer</i> Pooja Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda	
	<i>Chinmayam New Year Pictures</i> Shyam Menon	
	<i>Chinmaya Somnath New Year Pictures</i> Rajaram	
	<i>Reflections on Gita verses</i> Various Balavihar students	
	<i>Learnings from Vibhishana Gita</i> Shrikar M. Vasisht	
	<i>Reflections: Existence and Ego</i> Sitaram Kowtha	
	<i>Messages from an autobiography of a Mahatma -4 (Iswara Darshana)</i> Sitaram Kowtha	
	<i>Vedanta Series: Ishwara Darshan: Part 7</i> Acharya Sadananda	

News & Tidbits

New Years' Pooja Chinmayam

The Chinmayam chapter ushered in 2018 with a prayer and joyful celebration. The day began with the chanting of the Vishnu Sahasranamam followed by Paduka Pooja for Gurudev. Dr. Nayar gave a new years' message to the Chinmayam family. This was followed by new year resolutions by both children as well as adults. Volunteers had also arranged for various fun and exciting games followed by Mahaprasad. Please see a few pictures of the event on pages 9 and 10 in this edition. To view all the pictures, please visit the link below: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/AQHMwD1kfNSiDtAc2>

New Years' Pooja Chinmaya Somnath

The Chinmaya Somnath chapter also ushered in 2018 with prayers and chanting of the Vishnu Sahasranamavali. Around 250 attendees visited Chinmaya Somnath for the new year celebrations. Swami Dheeranandaji gave an inspiring new years' message (see foreword). The Pooja concluded with Mahaprasad. A few pictures of the event are on pages 11 and 12 of this edition. To view all the pictures, please visit <https://photos.app.goo.gl/N190oecckyjimtYx1>.

A link to the recording of the entire Pooja is also available at <https://youtu.be/LNnpc61nRmw>

Gita Jnana Yagna

Swami Dheerananda conducted the annual Gita Jnana Yagna at Chinmaya Somnath from Dec 27th to Dec 30th on Gita Chapter 3 (verses 22-43). Swamiji lucidly explained the importance of Karma Yoga as it applies to us in the Grahastashrama. In spite of the freezing weather, the Yagna was well attended. Pictures from the Yagna are available at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/VClw10ealvYa8XT52>. Swamiji's talks are now posted to the website <http://cmwrc.chinmayadc.org/our-acharyas/swami-dheerananda/> under GitaYajna2017.

Bhajan Sandhya

A divine evening of soulful melodious music was put together by Krushanu and Deeti Majmundar on the evening of January 13th. This event was part of the fund raising efforts to support capital projects at CMWRC. The Majmundars are part of the Chinmaya family and are also accomplished artistes having won various awards over the years. This event is the first of a series of

monthly fund-raising events at Chinmayam. The evening concluded with light dinner.

CM-LAP

After many months of coordinated effort among multiple Sevaks working with the county as well as the community, CMWRC recently successfully completed acquiring about 18 acres of land adjoining the existing Chinmayam facilities at Silver Spring. Please await further details about this acquisition and future plans for developing this land.

2018 Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Family Camp

Poojya Gurudev left his body in San Diego 25 years ago on August 3rd. We observe that day as Sadhana Day. The annual Mahasamadhi Family Camp will be in San Diego led by Mukhya Swamiji, Swami Swaroopananda. Every Chinmaya family is encouraged to attend the special camp in San Diego this year. (CMWRC has requested an opportunity to host an upcoming Mahasamadhi family camp. The last one we hosted was in 2008 at Rocky Gap, Maryland). Visit the 2018 Mahasamadhi camp website to learn more and register. Here is the link: <https://msc2018.chinmayajyoti.org/>



CHINMAYA MISSION WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

LIFE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

by ACHARYA PRIYA

- SELF IMPROVEMENT
- MEDITATION FOR SUCCESS
- MIND MANAGEMENT
- UNLEASHING POTENTIAL
- HARNESSING CHALLENGES

BASED ON **STORM TO PERFORM**

by Pujya Swami Swaroopananda

FEBRUARY 3, 2018, 12PM-8PM



CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

Maximum happiness for maximum people for maximum time
presents



Krishnapriya Tirumala
CHYK, Frederick Chapter
Student of Carnatic music
TV Reality Show Singer

CINE RAGAS

A Benefit Concert for Chinmaya Mission

Listen to your favorite Devotional Film songs
from Telugu, Hindi, and Tamil films
and get to know a little about the classical ragas of those songs....

Saturday Feb 10th, 2018

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Chinmayam
46 Norwood Drive
Silver Spring, MD

Tickets
\$10.00
per person
*Limited Spaces
216 seats only*

**Sponsorship requested:
\$108 per person

Tickets are available at CMWRC chapters.
Contact CMWRC Chapter Directors

Pre-School!

- Accepting ages 3 to Pre-K
- Loving and Caring Staff
- Value Education Classes
- Yoga & Mindfulness

Location:

4350 Blue Spring Drive
Chantilly, VA 20151



Now Enrolling!

- Vegetarian premises
- State of the art facility
with playground
- Integrated learning
methods

Call Us @ 703.378.2899



www.chinmayablossomsva.org

Bala Vihar

Enriching our children with the great knowledge of Sanatana Dharma through scriptural stories, games and activities. Join us every week as we learn about values and ideals with laughter and joy!

'Children are not vessels to be filled, but lamps to be lit.'
- Puja Swami Chinmayananda

Registration for 2017-18 Now Open!

2018 Geeta Chanting Competition

Chant Geeta, Enchant Krishna, Celebrate Chinmaya
Chapter 3 Verses 22-43 The Art of Action

Participation Categories

- Memory
- Memory and Comprehension
- Reading
- Reading and Comprehension
- Writing and Reflection

All are invited - Child- Youth and Adults
Registration: Individual \$25, Family \$50

Chinmayam, MD
March 17, 2018, 1-5 PM

Chinmaya Somnath, VA
March 17, 2018, 12 Noon - 4 PM

Chinmaya Frederick, MD
March 18, 2018, 1- 2:30 PM

CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER
CHINMAYA SOMNATH
4350 Blue Spring Drive, Chantilly 20151

Summer Immersion Camp

THEME
Adi Shankaracharya

Conducted By
Swami Dheerananda

June 18th- July 13th, 2018
For rising 1st to 8th graders
as of September 1, 2018

Swami Dheerananda

EARLY REGISTRATION (03/31/2018): \$1200
REGULAR REGISTRATION: \$1400

ONLY 108 SEATS AVAILABLE

Registration opening soon
<http://summercamp.chinmayadc.org>

Questions: summercamp@chinmayasomnath.org



CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

CHINMAYAM

46 Norwood Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20905



Summer Immersion Camp



THEME

Adi Shankaracharya

Conducted By

Swami Dheerananda

For rising 1st to 8th graders
as of September 1, 2018

श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणानामालयं करुणालयम् ।
नमामि भगवत्पादशङ्करं लोकशङ्करम् ॥

July 23 to August 17, 2018

All day activities

- Dance and Drama • Indoor Games • Outdoor Athletics • Art •
- Inspiring Stories • Shlokas & Bhajans • Fun Fridays •



Swami Dheerananda

Register at <http://summercamp.chinmayadc.org>

Questions: summercamp@chinmayadc.org

Subscribe to Inspiring Chinmaya Mission Magazines

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:

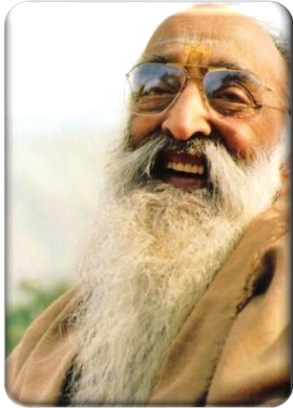
1. Please go to www.tapovanprasad.com website
2. Click on 'Subscribe-advertise-donate' and select 'Print version
3. Subscription - Overseas'
4. Choose the required subscription package and then Click on 'Add to Cart' and then 'Go to checkout'
5. Please provide username, password, email...details, etc...and proceed.
6. When you click on Axis Bank / CCAvenue payment gateway, enter details and complete the process. (Do revert in case of any problem)

Please consider Other Chinmaya Magazines for your subscriptions:

- 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_MBPrJhE

New Year Prayer

Poojya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda



Beloved Lord! You had, with infinite patience, in Your endless mercy, led us through a busy year, giving certainly more than what we asked for, and often even more than what we perhaps deserved.

We prostrate to You in humble reverence, really aghast at Your endless grace, under which alone we could live all through the last year a fairly noble and moral life of service and satisfaction.

Lord! With Your help, may we live a nobler life of greater undertakings in your sevā all through the coming year. Let duty become touched with beauty and every fancied crime done to each other, let us forgive among ourselves in the flood of our mutual love for each other and for all.

If we may be permitted to ask of You anything, we ask that all our obligations may, in Your blessing, be turned magically into opportunities. Teach us to fulfil our duties with joy - nay, with pleasure. May we bow down to others' needs.

Let our ears be tuned to hear with love and concern the silent cry of the needy. Give our hands not so much the strength to accomplish great things as the sensitivity to do small things most graciously, with loving sympathy.

Let us learn to accept kindness with humble joy. Let us, during this year, learn to heal ourselves of all our bleeding ulcers of misunderstanding, jealousy and regrets that erupt from time to time in our own hearts.

As this year ends, and the fresh year is being welcomed, let peace and goodwill burst in our hearts. In all our honest and good intentioned efforts in serving others, O Lord! let others feel happy with us and supremely thankful to Your glory.

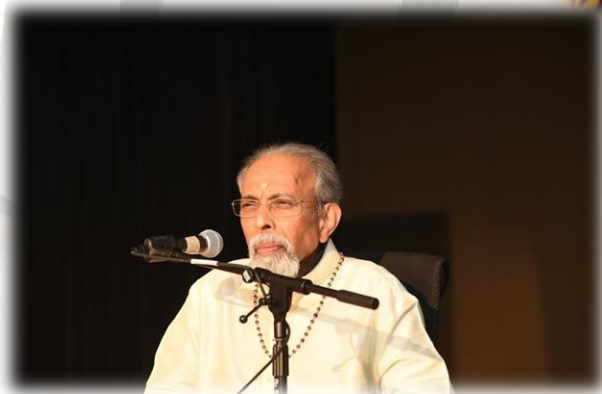
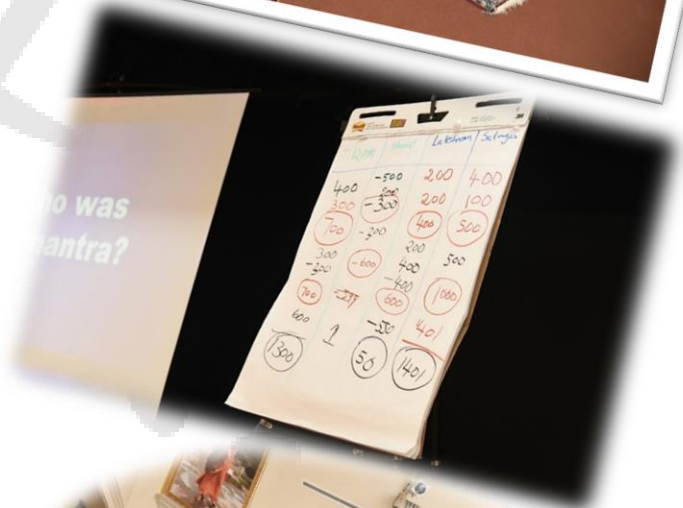
We shall sincerely strive, all through the year, to serve Your creatures, but only in Your grace shall they feel blessed, by Your Splendor Divine.

Hari Om!

When our motives and intentions are noble, all our actions become brilliant and good. When the depth is without mud, the surface should reflect clearly the brilliant beauty of the heavens above!

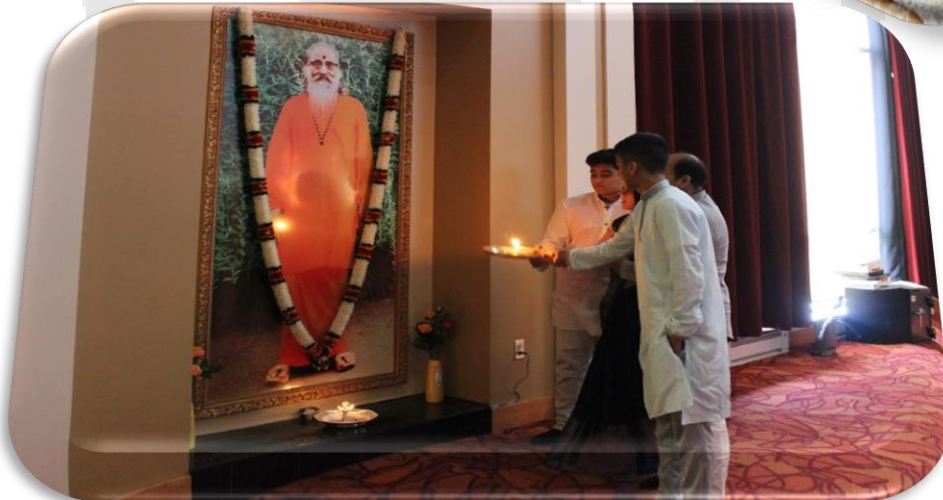
New Year Pictures Chinmayam





New Year Pictures Chinmaya Somnath





Reflections on Gita verses

Various Tapovanam students

[**Editor's Note:** On the occasion of Gita Jayanti, students from Tapovanam and Chinmayam reflected on their favorite Gita verse. Below are reflections submitted for publication in Smrithi.]

uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet

ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ

(Elevate yourself through the power of your mind, and not degrade yourself, for the mind can be the friend and also the enemy of the self.)

This verse is significant because it emphasizes the need to take action and participate in your own life. At my age, we're often exposed to a lot of different information and opinions: from our parents, teachers, friends, social media, etc. and that can be sort of be paralyzing. It's easy to live your life by just listening to others and relying on what they think, but ultimately, we are the ones who have to elevate ourselves and grow as individuals.

The second part of the verse related more to my life, because I tend to care a lot about the opinions of other people, and I tend to get caught up in self-doubt, which prevents me from moving forward. This is an example of how the mind can become the enemy of the self and can prevent us from elevating ourselves, so it's important to not let this happen.

Shivani Sawant, Tapovanam student

dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ

saṅgas teṣūpajāyate

saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmah

kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate

Gita Chapter 2 Verse 62

(When contemplating the worldly objects of senses, one develops attachment, from attachment, there arises the desire, and from the desire raises anger.)

In his commentary on the Gita, Gurudev has said that the source of all evil starts with our own wrong thinking, or false imaginations. He says if your thoughts are misused it will destroy you. When we think of a sense object, it goes into a flow, which then crystalizes to make a burning desire, which leads to anger.

I chose this verse because it is something that 99% of people, including myself can't control, when we have a desire. I felt like it is something that could be learnt and put into place.

For Example: Say I had just gone for a ride in my friend's expensive car, and I was so taken in by the experience that I wanted one of my own. Well, say I keep thinking about that car for several weeks, and I keep checking that company's website scanning for deals, and when I go onto my browser, the first thing I see when I type in the letter "T" is Tesla, and Tesla roadster offers. I mean don't I have anything better to do with my time? Anyway, this attachment will only stay for so long, because when I do eventually try to buy it, the bank will deny my loan and will probably force me to pay more on my mortgage which I am already struggling to pay off. All of this will eventually lead to the anger that I will probably think back to because I would have been evicted from my house.

After reading this verse, I realized that even though you get desires, you should be able to control them, and not let them get the better of you.

Vishnu Lakshmanan, Tapovanam Student

Sri Rama's Speech: An Inspiration for Vibhishana and Me

Shrikar M. Vasisht

[Editor's Note: *Shrikar is a 10th grade student at Wootton High School. This article was originally published in the SSVT 2017 Mahotsavam souvenir and has been re-published here with their kind permission.]*

Puranas, Bhagavad Gita, and Upanishads, and how I can apply it in my life. I have seen how it helps me to learn many of the unrelated subjects at school, such as science and history. I have also been inspired more to do community seva by my teachers there and Swami Dheeranandaji, who stress the importance of giving back. Education, whether about Hinduism or otherwise, has been an impactful part of my life.

One such inspirational camp was the Vibhishana Gita Youth Retreat last summer. Gita is a text included in the sixth book of Sant Tulsidas's Ramcharit manas. Tulsidas decided to include it in his Ramayana because he wanted the teachings of the Upanishads and Bhagawat Gita to be imported to the common people.

The Vibhishana Gita is the dialogue between Lord Rama and Vibhishana before Rama fights Ravana. Vibhishana is scared after seeing how Ravana's weapons and armor appear to be stronger than anything Rama has. Rama consoles Vibhishana by telling him about the "chariot of righteousness". The chariot is a metaphor for the values or Dharma that are required to reach God. The second sloka in the Vibhishana Gita says, "sauraja dhīraja tēhi ratha cākā. satya sīla dṛḍha dhvajā patākā; bala bibeka dama parahita ghore, chama krupa smata raju jore." The meaning of this verse is: "different parts of the chariot represent different virtues: the wheels-valor and fortitude (sauraja and dheeraja), the flags - truth and good character; the horses are the strength, discrimination, self-control and caring for others; its reins are forgiveness, compassion, and equanimity". The chariot will not work without all the parts together. Similarly, unless I use these virtues, whatever I do will get messed up.

Rama also describes the weapons and what they represent. Even when the chariot has all the parts together, you need the charioteer to drive it into a victory. This is said in the sloka, "Isa bhajanu sa rathi sujana, birati karma samtosa krpana...". The charioteer represents devotion to God, and his weapons represent different qualities such as understanding and knowledge of self. If I have devotion to god, I know I can control myself to use beneficial values, instead of getting distracted by something negative. When one is riding this chariot, they can achieve self-realization or find Bhagavan in themselves.

After I finished the camp, I realized I could use many of the concepts in the Vibhishana Gita in my daily life. Acharya Vivekji taught us big and small ways of practicing the different values every day. These methods, such as smiling, and viewing your day as a movie before you go to sleep have helped me focus myself for whatever I have ahead in the day.

I also try to use another virtue we learned, viveka (discrimination), in everything I do. In school, I can make proper choices related to my studies and my social life. I try to plan out everything that I have to do, then see which are the most important for me. Sometimes, before I am going to do something, I think about whether I am using any of the virtues from the Vibhishana Gita. If I am not, I rethink what I am going to do and figure out how I can use some values. Maybe I should start practicing viveka more often.

Even though we learn shlokas at Chinmaya Mission right from the younger classes, I did not really understand some of them. As I got older, and went through a variety of situations in life at school and home, with friends and family, I was able to understand these shlokas better and use them. Sri Rama taught this Gita to Vibhishana in the battlefield, but his words are still applicable for me and others.

Reference: Vibhishana Gita slokas and meanings are from the Vibhishana Gita book by Swami Tejomayananda.

Reflection: Existence and Ego

Sitaram Kowtha

Nature offers us with infinite ways to understand the beauty and grace of pure living. This is the one of the essential messages of the scriptures. We can observe and 'see' it in the interworking of existence, embodiment and expression. Nature also offers us myriad opportunities to observe egoistic living. In this case, the embodiment and expression are tainted by ego.

One of nature's illustrious examples of pure living is the cycle of rain clouds, rains, streams, rivers and ocean. One can observe the transformation of drops of water, from rain, into tiny streams that add up to become more defined and sustained streams which flow into rivers. The rivers over the course of their journey merge to become larger and stronger rivers and ultimately flow into a vast sea. The seas serve as the origin and the destination of the rivers, as the rain clouds are generated from the sea.

A drop of water has ephemeral living. In its embodiment, it captures the beauty and duty of its existence, even as it prepares to lose its identity when joining other drops of water. Sri Adi Sankara, in Bhaja Govindam, uses the life of a drop of water on a lotus leaf, to explain how precarious and short-lived our bodily life is (Nalini Dalagata Jalamati taralam...).

If the drop of water had the knowledge that one day it would become part of mighty and holy Ganga and flow into the ocean, it might boost its ego, and choose to refuse to join other drops of water, to be able to proclaim one day that it is Ganga. By focusing on its potential future and unwillingness to give up its sense of self, it may forget its duty to nourish the streams and eventually lakes and rivers. In choosing to preserve itself, it will have lived for naught. But, on the other hand, the same knowledge might inspire the drop of water to joyfully merge with other drops knowing that it is on its way to a holy union with the ocean. Such an inspired drop of water is joyful, dutybound and serving in whichever form it takes on – a drop of water, a stream, a river or the ocean. Embodiments change, but the expression remains pure.

We, humans, are but drops of water. When we join hands with duty and common purpose in mind, adopt an embodiment that efficiently and purposefully serves the duty and common purpose, knowing that one day we will be in a joyful union with the divine Self, we can strive to achieve purer living.

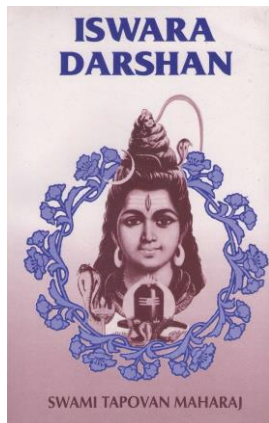
We, of course, can choose to focus on our unique individual expression, mindful of our embodiment in this body-mind-intellect complex, and employ all our guile and energy to retain and express through our individuality.

The choice is ours – purer living or egoistic living. While we may choose to expend precious time in deliberating on such a difficult choice, the nature will continue to show us how everything around us goes about its joyful way, pure embodiment and expression of their existence.

Messages from an autobiography of a Mahatma -4 (Iswara Darshan)

Sitaram Kowtha

Editor's Note: In this series, selected excerpts from the book "Iswara Darshan" by Pujya Swami Tapovan Maharaj of Uttar Kashi, are provided by Sitaram Kowthaji to inspire the students of Vedanta to delve deeply into the glories of a mahatma who inspired our sadguru, Swami Chinmayananda.



4. Swami Tapovanam - Youth

Study of Grammar and Literature

Subramania's studies in grammar and literature proceeded initially under Sri Krishna Sastri and later under Sri Venkatachala Sastri. He studied Siddhanta Koumudi and other books on logic. He soon gained a degree of mastery over the language. A poem he composed in his 18th year, "Vibhakaram", met with wide appreciation. Scholars encouraged him to continue his poetic efforts. Still in his teens, he dedicated laudatory poems to reputed persons like Sri Kerala Varma Koil Tampuran – men of ripe age who had won his admiration with their learning, literary talents, etc. By offering his poems as tributes, he received their blessings and encouraging words. He was deeply respectful to old people and full of humility in their presence. Similar was his attitude towards Brahmins. One two occasions, Subramania prostrated at the feet of a Malayali Brahmin, Azhvanchery Thampurakal, as he was also distinguished by deep erudition and noble virtues. He offered laudatory poems at his feet and secured his blessings.

Father's dilemma

Once, after receiving Sri Sastri's courtesy, Subramania's father respectfully asked him, "Of what use

is the study of Nyaya to my son?" Sri Sastri replied, "the study of Nyaya will help your son in the study of Vedanta. I need not add that study of Vedanta will help deserving persons possessing vairagya (dispassion) – spirit of renunciation, to realize God". Achutan Nair (Subramania's father) was shocked as if he had been struck by lightning. Where is the father who would like his son to grow rich in dispassion, in the spirit of renunciation and in the thirst for God-realization? Every parent wishes his or her son to get rich and lead a life of luxury and ease. Some may treat sannyasins with respect and pay homage to their holiness, but how many of them would like to see their own sons accept life of sannyasins?

What about the Son?

As a result of study of spiritual books and of the samskara (culture) inherited from previous lives, his eagerness to obtain vision of God and his spirit of dispassion were growing with his years. His pure and innocent mind was filled with a desire to accept sannyasa. That seemed to be *Summum Bonum* of existence. ***"It is the cord of desire that binds man to the world. He alone is liberated who has broken those cords and shaken himself free of them."***

"If, having born as a man, one pursues worldly wealth in preference to the other worldly, he is like one discarding the richest and most delicious food served in golden dishes to eat poor, nauseating stuff served in dirty repulsive rusty, iron plates."

"The noble prince Siddhartha gave up his newborn son, his dear beautiful wife and even his throne to become a religious mendicant. Then, what is there to prevent me from leaving my empty home? God alone is eternally true. Without Him, I shall be as good as dead. What is the use of a life-in-death? Such a life I won't have. I don't want to be a bird in a cage. My desire is to be a wandering mendicant, finding my joy in the soul within. Let me wander in the Himalayas as a sannyasi, imbibing supreme the peace from tranquility of the holy region. May God within me aid me to fulfil my desire."

Reflective

Though young, he was intelligent and thoughtful. He did not like to depart abruptly from home or inflict

unnecessary pain upon his father and other relations. He therefore bided his time. Meanwhile he continued his studies in earnest.

Contrary qualities like heat and cold cannot exist together in the same object. Similarly, the thirst for pleasure of the world and the resolute desire to win liberation cannot exist side by side in the same person. ***Love of God is the bright Sun; desire for sensuousness is darkness itself.*** The one destroys the other in no time. God is full, eternal bliss. Worldly pleasures are imperfect and momentary. How can a man who has found perennial bliss, abandon it for anything else? He who pursues sensuous enjoyment can never realize God; he who is intent upon finding God, can never indulge in worldly pleasures. That is why the wise ones proclaim that ***the choice of a spiritual life is the highest, noblest and the best.*** What really matters is not external renunciation, but the internal.

He alone is wise who has discovered the evil inherent in worldliness; conquered desire, anger, etc., checked sorrow, delusion, etc.; and concentrating the mind on God, has found God in everything.

Continued diligence

After some time, Sri Sastrigal left and Subramania did not despair. He continued study of Sanskrit day and night. With the help of some eminent scholars, he studied 'Sahitya Darpana' and many important works on literature, poetry and dramas. Subsequently, he turned to study of preliminary works on Vedanta, and various commentaries on Geeta and Upanishads.

While he grasped the concept that formless Brahman alone is true, he assiduously persisted in the 'japa' of 'Panchakshara Mantra' and the contemplation of God in the form of Siva. He had already learned the whole of Geeta by heart. Every day he recited all the eighteen chapters fully adverting to the sense of each verse.

Now in his adolescence, he entertained divine contemplation and thoughts of sannyasa. Here was a bachelor, eligible in every way – rich, handsome, learned and young. No wonder if parents with girls of marriageable age wished to get him for a son-in-law. Their wise counsels regarding marriage and acquisition of wealth fell flat on him. How can a man, gasping for life, enjoy love-play?

To Be Continued

Iswara Darshanam - VII

Discussion of the 11th Chapter of Gita – Acharya Sadanandaji

All religions say that God is omnipresent and at the same time, some say He is in Heaven or He is in vAikunTa or in Kailasa. The all-pervading Lord is in vAikunTa may sound illogical, but logic is secondary in spiritual or adhyaatmic field. He is everywhere, yet He is especially in vAikunTa. Vedanta says He himself became many; therefore, he cannot but be omnipresent.

In the Ishaavaasya Upanishad, the very first sloka, after the invocation sloka, says – ishAvAsyam idagam sarvam – normally, this is translated as that Lord pervades the entire universe. Shankara explains it as – see that Lord pervades the entire universe, as the word vaasyam implies. Whether I see or not, Lord always pervades the entire universe. However, for me to see that He pervades the entire world of names and forms, I should have a clear vision of this truth. For that I need both jnaanam, knowledge of the Iswara, and the grace of the Lord, as has been pointed in this chapter. For those who are interested, a detailed analysis of the above Isvaasya Understanding the statement is one thing, but to have that vision as one sees the external world of plurality is another. For that one needs to remove all the obstacles that obstruct the vision. This has been temporarily accomplished here by the grace of Krishna for Arjuna. Not only for Arjuna, even for Sanjaya, the commentator, the vision of Iswara is provided. He was blessed by the grace of vyAsa Bhagavan. Hence Iswara kRipa and/or Guru kripa is needed to have that vision.

It is interesting to note that the very first name in the Vishnusahasra nAmAvali is viswam, indicating the whole universe of names and forms are the Lord Narayana himself. The second name is VishnuH, that is, He pervades the entire universe of the names and forms, vyaapakatvaat vishnuH. Thus, the apparent names and forms, as well as the substantive that pervades the names and forms, are Brahman only. Since Brahman means infiniteness, by definition there cannot be anything away from Brahman or other than Brahman. Infinite cannot have parts, since it is infinite. One has to gain that vision by first acquiring the sadhana chatuShTaya sampatti or the four-fold qualifications that involve purification of the mind, supported by the proper teaching. Arjuna has emphasized in the first two slokas that he has gained them, by the grace of the Lord.

Extended and Exalted Visions: Krishna provides a divine vision that involves two aspects; 1. Extended Vision and 2. Exalted Vision.

We all see the world and we transact with the world day in and day out. This is our normal perceptual vision arrived at, via sense observations. Hence the capacity of the senses would come into play for the vision that we have. Without going into details of the perceptuality conditions required for the vision of the universe (these are discussed exhaustively in Vedanta Paribhasha, a critical commentary of which is available at www.advaitaforum.org), we state here that what we see as the world first depends on the capacity of our five senses. Secondly, what we see depends on the degree of the distortion of this perceptual universe by our individual likes and dislikes. If we have neutralized these likes and dislikes either temporarily by God's grace, or by karma and upaasana yoga, then what we see is what is there to the extent that the senses can bring.

Exalted vision is not only seeing the world of plurality as seen by the senses but seeing the Iswara that pervades the Universe. That is the vision of a jnaani also who can see oneness that pervades the whole world of names and forms. Thus, jnaani still sees the world of plurality but also sees the oneness that pervades the plurality. That is the exalted vision that Arjuna sees as he describes his vision.

Extended vision involves more than what the five senses can see. Arjuna, describes these as he sees the worlds beyond, which are not perceptible for normal eyes. Here Arjuna sees the other worlds, the fourteen worlds as per our scriptures, as well as the presiding deities or demons that control those worlds, as part of vishwaruupa Iswara darshanam. This vision involves extra perceptible universe, which cannot be perceived normally by human senses, but perhaps can be gained via special siddhis or karmas. This vision is not necessary for jnaanam or for a jnaani. This vision includes not only space and beyond but also time involving the past and the future. Knowing about future gives more a headache than any benefit. As Swami Chinmayanandaji says that the present is the womb of the future and taking care of the present which is in our hands is more important; and that will take care of the future. What I have is present, and what I do with what I have will be my future. For moksha what we need is only the exalted vision; not the extended vision.