

Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 30, Number 2, March 2020



Shri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram – our humble prostrations to Shri Ram

Foreword: Swamiji's Message



Editor's Note: [Our beloved resident Swamiji, Swami Dheerananda is continuing his weekly classes on Vivekachoodamani. Please find below an excerpt from his class on verse 9].

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं मग्नं संसारवारिधौ ।

योगारूढत्वमासाद्य सम्यग्दर्शननिष्ठया ॥ ९ ॥

*uddharedātmanātmānam magnam sāmsāravāridhau |
yogārūḍhatvamāsādyā samyagdarśananisṭhaya || 9 ||*

Meaning: Having attained the state of yogarudha through continuous and well-established discrimination, one should lift oneself from the ocean of change and finitude wherein one has come to be drowned.

In the previous verse, Adi Shankara has explained how the sincere seeker should try and follow the Guru's teachings. But one should not expect the Guru to be a "Mule Guru". Gurudev often said that he was not a Mule Guru to carry the students on his back. They need to strive and realize the goal for themselves. He would provide them guidance.

This verse exhorts the seeker to raise their Self by the Self. It is similar to the verse in Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 6, Verse 5). In that verse, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the disciplined mind is man's best friend and an undisciplined mind is one's worst enemy.

The question arises in the mind of the seeker as to which Self is to be raised and by which Self? The Self, which seems to be drowning in the ocean of Samsar (realm of change) has to be raised. One should know that the Atma or the pure Self is never drowning in the Samsar just as the waker is never immersed in the dream. One forgets the waker and becomes the dreamer. Similarly, by

forgetting the pure Self (I as I), one becomes identified with the perceiver I, feeler I and thinker I. It is also interesting that the body itself is inert and not drowning in the realm of change. It is the mind that is drowning, and it is the mind that needs to be lifted up.

To drive home the moral of this verse, Swamiji narrated a story. In a blizzard, a doctor's friend invites him home. The doctor steps out of his house and soon finds that in the deep snow, he is unable to make progress. In fact, for every step forward he takes, he is forced to take two steps back. However, the wonder is that after some time, he finds himself in his friend's house. When he narrates his struggles to his friend, his friend is astonished and asks the doctor "How were you ever able to reach my house in this weather?". The doctor replied that he decided to head back home and thus his struggles to get home pushed him backward to his friend's place. The story illustrates the lesson that by taking corrective action, one can slowly master the circumstances and reach one's goal.

The mind is compared to a wild horse which is very difficult to tame; much tougher is to be able to ride the horse. This requires tremendous effort on the part of the seeker. In order to master the mind, one has to do Karma Yoga or selfless dedicated service. When the mind is no longer drifting or entertaining desires for objects of sense-gratification, that is a sign that the mind is in balance. A seeker who has balanced his mind should then focus on Sanyasa. This is further explained in the following verses.

Calendar and Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

- June 15th – July 10th : Summer Camp at Chinmaya Somnath, Virginia.
- July 13th – Aug 6th : Summer Camp at Chinmayam, Silver Spring, Maryland.
- April 11th – 12th : Geeta chanting online competition (dates to be finalized).
- May 2nd: Chinmaya Jayanti celebrations – please look out for announcements regarding online arrangements.

Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Ravi Ravichandran ji by email at ravi5211@yahoo.com , if you are interested in for 30th ming 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 – May 2020, are due by April 30, 2020
- 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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BV students – Please contact the editorial staff if interested to volunteer.

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

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News & Tidbits – Special Message from Swami Swaroopananda

[Editor's Note: As we face an unprecedented situation caused by a global pandemic, here is an inspiring message from Pujya Swami Swaroopananda, Global Head of Chinmaya Mission. Please also see the flyers section for a message on the Bhagvad Gita verses that will help us cope with the situation.]

Swamins, Brahmacharins and Members of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide

Dear All,

Hari Om!

Fear of the spread of Coronavirus, predominates conversations and is making headlines in the print as well as social media. News of countries shutting down their borders, the impact on businesses worldwide is causing concern across all cross-sections of society.

Against this background, I request you all to remain calm. To members of those centres that have had to suspend classes for a while, the advice is to please continue with your sadhana at home. Take advantage of any of the e-learning options that the Mission has to offer. There is no cause for panic, but please exercise caution and follow all the guidelines being put out by the governments of our respective countries.

In addition to all the physical measures being taken to eradicate the virus, I request members in Chinmaya Mission Centres worldwide to daily chant – *Hanuman Chalisa* and *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah...* for the good health of everyone and the restoration of world peace. It may not be understood by all, but prayers do have a mystical power of their own.

May He shower His grace and blessings on us and the world around us!

Love

At His Feet

Swami Swaroopananda



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Facilities remain closed - Online classes will continue

Hari Om!

Dear Chinmaya Family,

The COVID-19 crisis continues, and our area is seeing an increasing number of cases daily. The state of Virginia has declared all schools and related facilities to remain closed for the rest of the academic year. The state of Maryland has declared the same except until April 24, 2020. In addition to schools, restaurants, churches, grocery stores and entertainment venues have also been restricted or closed.

Sri Gurudev's teachings bestow the **Power of Adaptability** along with **Humility and Tenacity**. With His blessings, we continue despite these limitations. We have been successful in a variety of **online classes, satsangs, and community outreach efforts** as detailed on our website. Our special thanks to Swamiji for guiding us through this challenge and our lead sevaks – teachers, especially IT sevaks in making this happen. The background efforts continue to happen even though we are not physically conducting our programs.

In response to continued uncertainty about the virus and guidance from all the reliable sources, **CMWRC and all its facilities will remain closed for the rest of the 2019-2020 academic year**. We will continue with our **online activities** and many of our programs will be reformatted to this form of interaction including the celebration of Geeta Chanting, Sri Gurudev Jayanti, 2020 Bala Vihar Tilak Ceremony, and annual or assembly performances by our Bala Vihar children. Our lead sevaks for each of these programs will communicate the details with you.

Hopefully, we all can use this opportunity to spend more quality time with our families, and more time with our spiritual studies and sadhana. Remembering Bhagavan's teachings and grace will give us strength and composure throughout this challenge. With integrity and nobility let us invoke the divine grace and blessings of Sri Gurudev to fulfill our responsibilities cheerfully!

Let us all be safe and support each other, and together we will ride out the crisis.

We will continue to update you as necessary in the coming weeks and months. Thanks for your continued support.

Anil Kishore
President, CMWRC

Bhagavad Geeta Tips for Corona-War

What should be a spiritual seeker's response to Corona Pandemic?

Bhagavad Geeta was given in the battle-field where there was a war between Dharma & Adharma. Here are 2 tips from each chapter of the Bhagavad Geeta to fight the Corona Pandemic successfully.

[Click here for Notes and Musings](#)

<https://notesmusings.blogspot.com/2020/03/bhagavad-geeta-tips-for-corona-war.html?m=1>

Sessions Resuming Online

We begin by thanking our sevaks and Bala Vihar Teachers who started the Bala Vihar Online classes this past weekend and had an amazing success. If you missed the details about your child's Bala Vihar class, please contact your Bala Vihar Director or Chapter Director for information specific to your child's class.

We are also pleased to inform you that the Shloka Classes are transitioning to an online format.

The study groups have moved online. Please contact your study group coordinator for the online meeting details if you have not received them yet.

Thanks to Swamiji's guidance, we now have **online Vedanta Classes available to all adults**. You may also consider signing up for Vedanta courses offered by Chinmaya International foundation.

Online Saturday Yoga Classes for Chinmayam

Online yoga classes are being conducted for Saturday session from last Saturday 21st March.

Please contact vanaja.jaligam@gmail.com for further details.

Bhagavad Geeta - Session Resumes Online

With Gurudev's grace and Swami Dheerananda's blessing, the Bhagavad Geeta classes will resume and will be delivered online by Vijay Kumar, one of CMWRC's Vedanta Teachers.

When: Every Saturday at 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM starting from March 28

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/879819998>

Meeting ID: 879 819 998

Duration: 1 hour

Please connect to the meeting 5 minutes ahead of time. You can join this meeting from a computer or phone that is connected to the internet.

Shrimat Dasbodh - Online Session - Talks in Marathi

With Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji's Blessings Arvind Bhagwat, one of CMWRC Vedanta Teachers, will be giving discourses on **Shrimat Dasbodh**, a famous Vedanta composition by Swami Samarth Ramdas (1608-1681) in **Marathi**.

The word Dasbodh means "Advice to the Disciples". The text is in a dialog format between the Guru and the Disciples, and it encompasses all worldly and spiritual aspects. Several scholars have pointed out the similarity between our Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda and Samarth Ramdas in terms of the teaching style, humor, quest for knowledge and the services rendered to the society.

When: Inaugural Session on Wednesday, March 25 (Auspicious Chaitra Pratipada, Gudi Padwa day);

All Subsequent sessions will be on Mondays, starting March 30, between 7:00 PM and 8:15 PM

Where: Zoom Code will be available upon sending E-mail to bmipftoet@gmail.com

Duration: 1:15 hour

Please connect to the meeting 5 minutes ahead of time. You can join this meeting from a computer or phone that is connected to the internet.

The talks will also be available in English and information regarding the program will be announced soon.



The character of Rama
paints the picture of a
Man of Perfection.
He was also an ideal brother,
a perfect and chivalrous enemy
and so on. Thus every
aspect of his personality
is idealised to
absolute perfection.

-Swami Chinmayananda





When happiness and peace
reside with Dedication,
Service and Humility
there is
Shri Rama Parivar.
There is Ayodhya
- A place of no
conflict and wars.

- Swami Swaroopananda



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

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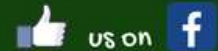
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Arpanam

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Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water,
that I accept, offered by the pure-minded with devotion
Geeta Chapter 9, Verse 26

True loving is not passive 'taking'
but a dynamic 'giving'
- Swami Chinmayananda

Pledge Today Generously

-  *Patram (Leaf) - \$2700 and above*
-  *Pushpam (Flower) - \$5400 and above*
-  *Phalam (Fruit) - \$10,800 and above*
-  *Toyam (Water) - \$21,600 and above*

**Grow Spiritually and Help Our Center
Expand to Serve More**

Thursday Class Commencement

Our Thursday classes will resume on **Thursday, October 3th, 2019** from 7-8:30pm in **Kailas Niwas**, and we will continue our study of **Vivekachudamani**.

In preparation for our study, please...

- Arrive before 7:00pm. If you arrive after 7:00pm, or after Aarti has begun, please wait in the foyer and enter once Swamiji begins the lecture.
- Bring the Vivekachudamani text to every class. Contact Vijay Singh if you need to purchase a book.
- Bring a japa mala to class.
- Help with classroom set up if you arrive early

Zoom Access Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/872939557>

Zoom Webinar ID: 872-939-557

Follow us on Facebook!

Exciting news! We now have a Chinmayam Facebook page for our Silver Spring center where we can showcase our vibrant community, events and activities. **We request all members to "follow us" and "like us"** to receive important updates, information on events and special guests, photos of your children in Bala Vihar, quotes from our Gurudev, and more. Updates will be sent to your phone or email accounts. **Don't be left out - join now !**

Step 1: Login at Facebook.com (or join Facebook by creating your profile - it's free and easy)

Step 2: Search Chinmaya Mission DC

Step 3: Click on "Like" and "Follow"

Step 4: Click on "Invite Friends" and send the page to your friends, members and non-members.

Publicity team needs volunteers who are active on social media! Please contact Amita Jain, amitajain815@gmail.com

Chinmayam Learning Center

Chinmayam is now available for rental services!

We are delighted to announce your single destination for enrichment programs!! Presenting the Chinmayam Learning Center, weekdays and weekends!

For more information, please contact: Raja Kirkire, rkkirkire@gmail.com,
Meena Sankar, meena17.sankar@gmail.com





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Little Engineers

July 13 - July 24
8:30am - 5:30pm



Around the World

July 27 - August 14
8:30am - 5:30pm



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5 - 6 weeks - \$250/week

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Must attend all four weeks (where applicable) | Sibling Discount is available

Register at chinmayadc.org/summercamp | For more information, email us at summercampinfo@cmwrc.org

STUDY VIVEKACUDAMANI with Swami Dheerananda

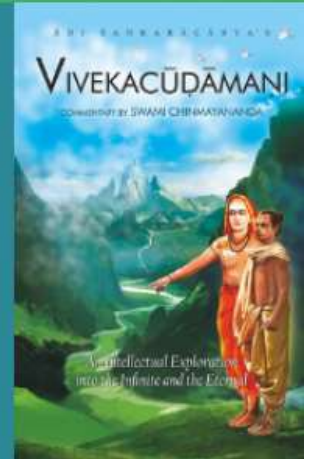
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7:00 pm - 8:30 pm (EST)
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Zoom Webinar ID: 872-939-557

You can also sign in using
this QR code





27TH CHINMAYA MAHASAMADHI ARADHANA CAMP

Chinmaya Mission San Jose | Hyatt Regency Hotel, Burlingame CA | 30th July to 3rd August 2020

**Super Early-Bird Registration Open for
27th Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Aradhana Camp
Read Below for Details**

**Don't miss out on significant cost savings -
Register ASAP, before September 15, 2019 to take
advantage of the Super Early Bird Discounts!!**

Hari Om!

Chinmaya Mission San Jose is very happy to announce that we are blessed with this great opportunity to host the 2020 Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Aradhana Camp.

Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda left His bodily form on 3rd August, 1993. Each year, Chinmaya Mission Worldwide observes this Holy Day as Chinmaya Aradhana Day honoring His Life and Legacy. The spiritual growth we are reaping today is the result of the tireless work of our beloved Pujya Gurudev and the flow of knowledge we have received from Him. We worshipfully contemplate on Pujya Gurudev and His constant Grace and honor His Life and Legacy by observing the Aradhana camp on His Mahasamadhi day.

The Theme of this camp is "**2020 - The Perfect Vision**". Pujya Swami Swaroopananda, the Global Head of Chinmaya Mission will conduct the camp with many of the Swamins, Brahmacharins and Teachers of Chinmaya Mission. There will be discourses on Adi Shankara's composition "**Maneesha Panchakam**" conducted by Swami Swaroopananda ji. Discourses on Bhagavad Gita chapter 2 "**Sthitaprajna Lakshana**" will be conducted by Swami Shantananda ji. There will be interactive workshops, panel discussions, and several fun filled and informative activities planned for the whole family. There will be Shishu Vihar, Bala Vihar, CHYK, Sethukari tracks also to incorporate an enriching experience for all age groups.

We humbly request support, participation and blessings from everyone in our Chinmaya Family. As this Perfect Vision is being brought to us by the various discourses and activities during the Mahasamadhi Camp in 2020, let us hold out our hands and receive these blessings. We invite the entire Chinmaya Family to come together to participate in the function.

You can register to the camp

at <https://forms.chinmayamission.com/v2/forms/5c96811ed0443d00011255d5>

Please register by September 15, 2019 to take advantage of the Super Early Bird Discount of 10%.

To help raise awareness for the Chinmaya family and beyond, we have the following materials to share. We would deeply appreciate if you could share it with your friends, neighbors and family members.

Flyer: Here is the flyer for the event <https://chinmayaanaradhana2020.org/flyer/>

Website: The website <https://chinmayaanaradhana2020.org> has all the registration information and other details. Please note that there is a 10% reduced registration fees if you sign up by September 15th 2019. There is an additional 1 % discount if you pay by check. Also, you can spread out the payment over 3 months, if you wish.

Promo Video: Please check out the promo video prepared for the event. Here is the Promo Video <https://chinmayaanaradhana2020.org/welcome-video/>

Please reach out to any of the following sevaks if you have any questions or comments.

Lakshmy Prakash Lakshmy prakash@cmsj.org 510-378-1264

Ramkumar Subramanian ramkumar.s@cmsj.org 408-893-6637

In His Service,

MSC 2020 Organizing Team

Chinmaya Mission San Jose



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Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth | An Appeal



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Hari Om Chinmaya Family,

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Chinmaya University founded on the principles of Purity, Spirituality, Practicality and Innovation, our core mission is to blend the ancient and time-tested wisdom of India with present day knowledge fields. It is breaking new ground where necessary and adopting the merits of all that has come before, but always leaning towards the winds of innovation. Striking a careful balance between the old and new, the organization offers common streams of courses with unique electives and supplementary subjects, with an intent to mould the teenagers of today into well-rounded, responsible, value-grounded, young adults that contribute to the nation, and the world at large.

Learn more about Chinmaya University by clicking this [link](#).
Like Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth on [Facebook](#).

Attached are additional materials for your review and get insights into Chinmaya University:

1. [Swami Advayananda's presentation](#) about Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth's unique Vision & Inception (video)
2. [Chinmaya University - An appeal for support](#) (video)
3. [Chinmaya Shree: Bi-annual Newsletter of Chinmaya University](#) (PDF)

Chinmaya University looks forward to your **continued support and engagement** in the years to come. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any information or clarification.

In His Seva,
On behalf of Dr. AppaRao Mukkamala
Managing Trustee

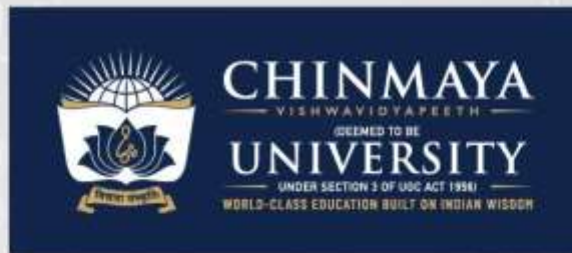
Swami Advayananda's presentation : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO9ts04tSM8&feature=youtu.be>

Chinmaya University: An appeal for support: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NADht0NBRxM>

Chinmaya Shree: Bi-Annual newsletter of Chinmaya University:

https://gallery.mailchimp.com/80619a985e5d6e34c2ba01298/files/a46d5eac-b4e8-44f6-94b1-9b553915eb57/CVV_Newsletter_Dec_2018_Volume_1_issue_1_Final.01.pdf

Learn more about Chinmaya University at: <http://www.cvv.ac.in/>



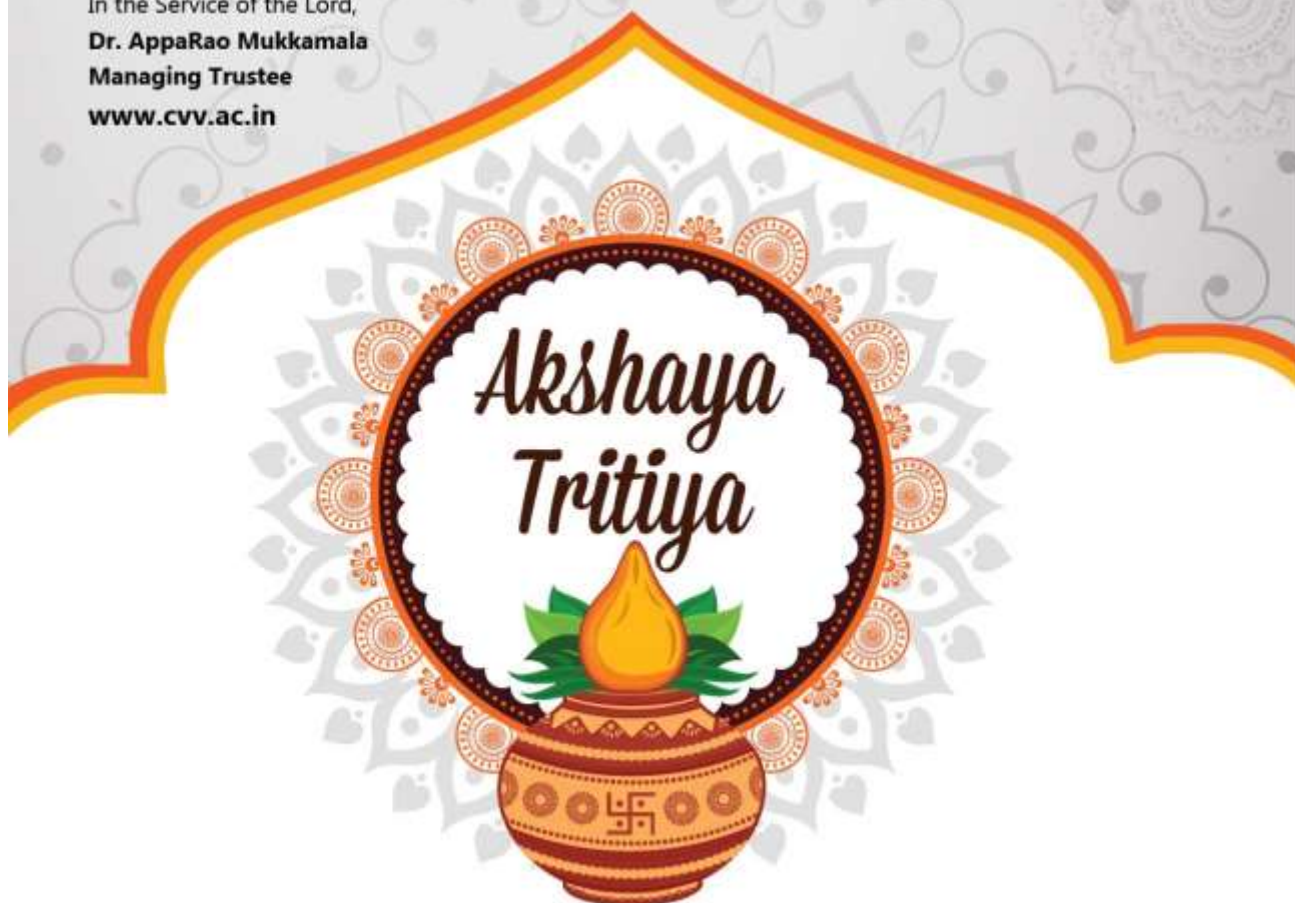
Greetings from Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth on the auspicious day of AkshayaTritiya. This sacred day marked the beginning of Satya Yuga and it is said that all sat-karmas undertaken on this auspicious day become Akshaya (अक्षय) that is 'imperishable, eternal' in the sense of 'prosperity, hope, joy and success'.

The Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth Trust expresses deep gratitude to all the well-wishers, supporters, donors, students and their parents, faculty, staff and the community that is supporting the University. On this auspicious day Chinmaya University is launching the **Vidya Lakshya Nidhi (विद्या लक्ष्य निधि)** schemewhereby a donor of ₹1 lakh (USD 1500) per year for 5 years, will be titled **Vidya Mitra (विद्या मित्र)** – a friend of the Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth, and the donor's name will be permanently engraved on the donors list at the Chinmaya University. In Puja Guruji Swami Tejomayananda's words, Vidya stands for Vishwavidyapeeth and Lakshya means the goal or aim. May this endeavour build an Akshaya Nidhi or Eternal Bounty for the Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth to serve the global community for posterity.

We invoke the grace of Bhagavan and blessings of Puja Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda on all the Family members that have and are supporting the Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth.

Thanking You,

In the Service of the Lord,
Dr. AppaRao Mukkamala
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THEME

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Conducted by
Swami Dheerananda

For Rising 1st to 8th graders
as of Sept 2020

ALL DAY ACTIVITIES

Indoor Games
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Inspiring Stories
Shlokas & Bhajans
Fun Fridays



Early Registration (till March 31, 2020): \$1200

Registration (from April 1, 2020): \$1400

Must attend all four weeks | Sibling Discount is available

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Message from Swami Shivatmananda

ॐ

Blessed Self,

Hari OM and Namaste!

So much has happened in the last few weeks. We have seen the activity of our planet Earth brought to a halt on practically all continents, in a matter of days. A simple virus is at the core of all this. We have been asked to stay at home, keep social distance, reduce our interactions with people etc. As people gear up to follow the instructions of their doctors, community leaders and the government, there is an added burden of anxiety that rises in the midst of all this. Many a folks have questioned WHY this is happening, HOW can it happen this day in age and WHO is responsible for this?

For a while, questions aside, let us deal with the situation at hand. When we clear our minds of unnecessary worries and anxieties, we are left with a very powerful tool with us to deal with our lives, and that is our MIND. Naturally this Mind wants to know the Why's, the How's and the Who's, but in fact an answer to any one of these questions is not going to restore peace in us. The fact is that we have to deal with a "pandemic" problem, and each one of us can contribute to its viable solution as seen by the experts who advise us. So, let us follow their instructions, and at the same time, let us put our hands together in prayers for the ones affected by this virus. Our scriptures provide a beautiful prayer, The Maha-Mrityunjaya mantra. I have included this mantra here below with the healing Mrityunjaya Bijas (sacred Energy sound syllables).

औम् हौं जूं सः ।

औम् त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे

सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।

उर्वारुकमिव बंधनान्

मृत्योर्मुक्षीय माऽमृतात् औम् ॥

सः जूं हौं औम् ।

om̐ haum̐ jūm̐ saḥ |

om̐ tryambakam yajāmahe

sugandhim̐ puṣṭi-vardhanam |

urvā-rukamiva bandhanān

mṛtyor mukṣīya mā'ṛtāt om̐ ||

saḥ jūm̐ haum̐ om̐ |

"We worship You, the three-eyed Lord, fragrantful, nourisher of all beings - protect and liberate us from bondage of death, just like a cucumber is freed from its bondage from the creeper."

Chant this mantra/prayer as often as you can, for yourself, your family, friends, neighbors, fellow countrymen and for the denizens of this beautiful mother Earth. A sincere prayer from the depths of our heart is indeed recognized by this universe. This world of sentient beings and insentient objects is not an inert universe; to the contrary, it is alive, it is throbbing and reverberating with the life principle of Consciousness. Every conscious attempt to reach this Life Principle is acknowledged and rewarded. On the other hand, indeed the universe has to necessarily exhaust its own destiny; But in this process of exhausting its destiny, if at all pain, fear, sorrow and the like are felt, then, a one united voice of prayer of the afflicted souls IS indeed heard.

In our Vedic lore, the Universe is referred to as Prakruti (the projected feminine power aspect of the TRUTH) and its enlivening principle is referred to as the Purusha (the unqualified TRUTH, the substratum). Thus, the Universe is a Divine Power referred to as, the Maya, the Prakruti, the Pradhana etc., and SHE is very much alive and present. In the Devi Mahatmyam, chapter 11 sings the glory of the Goddess as the Power of this universe, and the 33rd verse beautifully captures the power of a prayer released to Her.

विश्वेश्वरि त्वं परिपासि विश्वं

विश्वात्मिका धारयसीह विश्वम् ।

विश्वेशवन्द्या भवती भवन्ति

विश्वाश्रया ये त्वयि भक्तिनमाः ॥ ३३ ॥

vishveshvari tvaM paripAsi vishvaM

vishvAtmikA dhArayasIha vishvam |

vishveshavandyA bhavati bhavanti

vishvAshrayA ye tvayi bhaktinamrAH || 33 ||

O'Mother, You who art the sovereign ruler and the essence of the Universe, You who art the protector and sustainer of it, You are venerated by the Lord of the Universe. Those who pray earnestly to you, themselves become a sanctuary of the Universe...Durga Saptashati 11.33

This universe knows how to self correct itself. For She is far too intelligent than all of us combined. She has seen the times that have incubated the dinosaurs, the cave man, the bubonic plague of the middle ages, the industrial revolution, the rise and fall of powerful empires, and She still continues to take stride forward without anxiety, for She has to meet the times trapped in the annals of future. Have faith in this WORLD; do not be scared, do not be worried, do not be anxious. Instead harbor love, prayer, optimism, generosity, kindness and the like. We are indeed equipped with ways to systematically face, cure and rise above this pandemic virus. We have much too much to look forward to. Thus, let us make the most of what is given to us. We have time to spend with our families. In recent times, we have not had much family time. Acknowledge each other's presence. Moreover, we have been running much too much in trying to build - nations, governance, companies, careers, bank balance, 401ks, objects - all at the expense of the betterment of our souls. Here arrives a perfect opportunity, where we do not have to face traffic, hectic travel schedules, soccer games etc. Take this well deserved opportunity of vital TIME at hand to spend in silence, to reflect, to connect with your deeper being, for even this shall pass away. Such is the story of TIME....

We started this satsang with questions born out of anxiety and fear. But when we cultivate innocent faith in life, we are left with no heavy mental burden. The antidote to all problems in life is a spiritual vision. Since time immemorial sages have all given us the tools to face life's challenges, and they all have ascertained the importance of faith, devotion

and knowledge. Whether in the teachings of the Upanishads as Nachiketa or Satyakama or the Sanatkumaras learn; whether in two great epics where Prince Arjuna or Lord Shri Rama learn; whether in the Puranas as Sage Agastya summons Lord Hayagreeva to give an antidote for pain and suffering: They all exemplify growth in faith, devotion and knowledge based actions. I invoke the grace and blessings of Pujya Gurudev, in these trying times to help us guide ourselves onto the path of Spirituality. May Blessings BE!

With Prem and OM

Swami Shivatmananda



Gita Jayanti Reflections

Tapovanam and Chinmayam students

Hari Om, my name is Maya Patel. I am chanting Verse 63 from Chapter 2.

The literal meaning of this verse is: anger leads to clouding of judgement which results in bewilderment of memory. When the memory is bewildered, the intellect gets destroyed, and when the intellect is destroyed, one is ruined. When desires develop, it creates 2 problems- greed and anger. Greed comes from the fulfillment of desire- if you satisfy desire, it leads to greed. And when the fulfillment of desire is obstructed, it leads to anger. Anger has the ability to impair our judgement. Anger has the ability to destroy love and compassion and can cause us to be violent at times. In anger, people commit mistakes that they later regret because the intellect gets clouded by the haze of emotions. I chose this verse for a few reasons. Firstly, I can see what anger can do to individuals because of their clouded judgement due to feelings of anger, they have done things they would not normally do and have suffered from it. People who act out because of anger fail to see the difference between right and wrong and commit acts that are not true to their character. Anger is powerful in the way that it can change rationality in a matter of seconds as well as change your behavior. I have also chosen this verse because I have seen what anger has done to me. There have been times where my anger had begun to control me, and I did and said things I didn't mean to do or say. This verse is a reminder for me to keep my anger in check because I know what happens when I get angry and I know that it can cause me to not be myself. It is important to not let anger interfere with who you are and not let it impact you. It is hard to not let anger control the way you tend to behave sometimes, but it is important to keep under control because it can cause a great deal of harm to you and others around you.

Hari Om. My name is Saketh Karri and today I will reflect upon Chapter 3 Verse 30.

The meaning of this verse literally is: renouncing all actions in me, with the mind centered on the self, free from hope and egoism, free from fever, do fight. So, to me this verse means to always live in the present, to perform better on the task at hand, not letting the mind

be occupied with the dead past or any unborn future event. In my life, I've always had the tendency to worry and overthink things that have already happened. In school, there have been many times when I had poorly performed on a test, and not done well on things in other classes later that day. Even though I've heard it many times from my parents to live in the present, I've never taken it too seriously, but after learning this verse and its meaning, I've taken it upon myself to try and apply this to my life. This past week, I had 3 tests and a presentation on the same day in school. I had a hard test in physics, but I did not let that affect the presentation I had to give in English right after. I've noticed that by living in the present, I am able to perform to do my best, so I want to continue to apply this in my life in order to perform better and achieve my goals.

Hari Om, my name is Sona Chudamani and today I would like to talk about Chapter 3, Verse 19.

The literal translation is: Therefore, always perform actions which should be done without attachments. For, by performing actions without attachment, one attains the supreme. For context, Krishna is telling Arjun to fight in the battle of Kurukshetra and to remove his personal attachment from it. As similarly stated in Chapter 2, Verse 47, you are to do your duty without concerning yourself with the results. The fruit of your action are not for your enjoyment. This verse is Krishna's answer to Arjuna's question that was posed in the beginning of the chapter, which is why he should commit the act of war. Krishna is basically saying that no one can flee from their active duty and that doing selfless dedicated service or yajna can help you reach the supreme. This idea can be found even in pop culture today. As I am sure you are all familiar, millions of children pick up the book: *Harry Potter* every year. For our generation, it is almost a modern-day Mahabharata. In the 7th book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry is confronted with a dilemma similar to Arjuna – in order to achieve the greater good, he must free himself from attachment and face the challenges before him. For example, he finds himself having to confront the antagonist, Voldemort, where he might end up losing his life for the greater good of stopping evil. Harry realizes that he must make the ultimate sacrifice similar to Arjuna but replacing

Kuruksheetra in place of the Forbidden Forest. He ends up doing what is best for everyone, not for him and saves the day with his selfless act of bravery. On a surface level, you can compare this to studying for an exam, with the purpose of learning and not for the grade. As a high schooler, I try to tell myself this every day, and as often as possible- while I have not completely reached this mentality, I work towards it every day. Thinking deeper, I consider this to be a parallel to the way I live my day to day life- being selfish and making decisions based on how it affects me versus being selfless and considering everyone around me are my two options in any situation. This is something we deal with every day, and we all hope to be a better person in these situations like Krishna reminds us to be. Hari Om.

Hari Om, my name is Pooja Nimmagadda. The verse I chose was Chapter 5, Verse 10.

The meaning of this verse is: He who does actions offering them to Brahman, abandoning the attachment is not tainted by sin, just as a lotus leaf remains unaffected by the water around it. I chose this verse because I don't get upset by sadness or jump up in joy when I am happy as my actions are offered to Lord Krishna.

Hari Om, my name is Karthik and I'm doing Chapter 6, Verse 6.

This is translated as: "To the self is the friend of the self for whom he has conquered himself by the self. But to the unconquered self, the self stands in the position of an enemy like the external foe."

To me, this verse talked about how we spend too much of our time and energy fighting perceived outward enemies, but instead we should look inwards and fight our internal enemies such as greed, anger, envy, and other distractions. Once we can learn to do that, we can begin to be at peace with ourselves, but until then, our untamed mind will act as the worst enemy. For example, external factors will only hurt for a short period of time like when you fall off a bike or other physical injuries, but internal demons can keep causing inner bitterness for much longer. Personally, I feel this applies to me when I'm trying to get my schoolwork done, and I can shut off the outward distractions by turning off the TV or turning off my laptop and stop listening to music, but my inward thoughts like the distraction of the football game on Sunday or how I'm going to do on this next test keep clouding my judgement

and distracting my thoughts. Additionally, by design, when you learn to block out these inner demons, you inherently become closer to the divine. This inverse correlation between the lower and given ego does not address how the lower ego allows it to be conquered by higher influences- which is another way of saying that tackling one's inner demons will enable you to better be equipped to face external problems. I find this relates to Chapter 16, Verse 4 which states conceitful arrogance, anger, harshness, ignorance arises in one born of demonic nature. In other words, the demonic road to hell for those who want to experience religious and religious advancement, or the given ego is shown by following these negative principles. Arrogance and harshness lead to these problems demanding, not commanding respect, which is eventually detrimental to their growth. I see this in high school where kids are bullied for being different. The bullies have a tendency to exert such a manner onto their victims that bystanders feel intimidated to intervene because of the bully's falsified confidence through insecure aggression. They refuse to recognize what should and should not be done and blur the line between sinful and positive actions as they see themselves as the ultimate authority. This can be seen throughout time as those with arrogant behaviors tend to act aggressively towards those they feel superior to. Examples being cultural genocides or other hate crimes which stem from an innate desire to be worshipped and eliminate those who stand in the way of that goal. In the end, what I took from this verse was that your thoughts have greater ramifications than your decisions and your outward actions.

Hari Om, my name is Pooja Dharm and I chose to talk about Chapter 12, Verses 13 and 14.

The meaning of this verse is: "He who hates no creature, is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, forgiving, ever content, steady in meditation, controlled, possesses a firm conviction with mind and intellect dedicated to me, he my devotee is devoted to me".

So, these verses spoke to me because of how they address common issues I deal with regularly – stress, and self-doubt. The things I stress about can range from not being able to park my car straight or whether I have turned in all the documents for a certain college. Throughout my life, I have dealt with stress and unnecessary worry because it is unfortunately in my mindset and how I approach many situations. This was definitely revealed in

high school as I was faced with stressful situations almost every moment of the day. I remember the beginning of junior year where my classes became much harder and my extra-curricular activities seemed to take up any free time that I had. This also didn't change in my senior year, in fact it got even busier with having to turn in applications, write tons of supplemental essays, while balancing my schoolwork and activities at the same time. Having a constantly busy schedule especially in my last year of high school often leaves me mentally exhausted and very agitated. This results with me putting off anything that doesn't do with school and missing out on quality family time when I shove myself in room trying to finish all my work. Eventually, I realized that I am not going to be able to do everything successfully and that I need to develop better methods to cope with stress. I feel like a lot of us feel this way with increasingly busy schedules and having every moment of the day occupied by some obligation. However, the Gita, especially these verses are a good source of guidance when you don't know how to handle all the things you are juggling. I actually watched a video where Swami Chinmayananda spoke on these verses and he pointed out that the reason we feel mentally exhausted is because of false values such as my need to do well on every test, my belief that getting into a good college will define me, and that if I am not busy enough, then I am not doing life right. But these are not the things that should drive me- instead I will need to detach myself from these superficial and self-centered thoughts. While it is not as easy as declaring that I will do this from now on, it is still important for me to recognize when I am going into this negative mindset. These verses teach us that the mindset that we maintain can either lead us to the right direction or the wrong one. As Lord Sri Krishna tells Arjuna in this verse, we must work towards maintaining a calm and pure mindset where we are not so overwhelmed or agitated. We must be aware that we are going to experience both ups and downs in life, but we must deal with them appropriately through means such as meditation, and not in a way that can harm us or others. We must detach ourselves from fear and anxiety and not let it overcome us. If I detach myself from material things such as good grades and college acceptances, then I'll probably be much happier and lose my constant worrying and unnecessary fear. This verse and many others from the Gita are essential pieces of advice that if we pay attention to, can make us much happier and teach us to enjoy life and approach life with a positive mindset.

Reflections on Bhagvad Gita verse

Sudiksha Nimishe

Some of you may know that I am a teacher by profession; when Swamiji asked for us to talk, I understood that it is a teacher's way to keep checking on their students' learning and also sometimes we need a break from talking.

Swamiji, as you know that all students are not same, some are special like me who no matter how hard they try the veiling of maya is so thick that they forget who they really are! Sunday to Sunday does not work in that and maybe that is why someone thought of Gita 365 app!

The verse I have chosen to speak about is Verse 5 from Chapter 15 because it is a hope for those like me and it's still fresh in mind and I want to keep it that way. It is exactly one year since Swamiji taught this verse as per my notes. I will not go deep into the meaning, but rather how I apply the teachings in my life.

So, let's begin. Just like Gurudev said, "tune into the Om channel" (When someone had asked Gurudev that they are not able to meditate and imbibe the teachings while fixing a radio set for Gurudev. Gurudev's immediate reply was just like you are tuning my radio, tune your mind to the Om channel)

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा
अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञै
र्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥ ५॥

*nirmāna-mohā jita-saṅga-doṣhā
adhyātma-nityā viniṣṛitta-kāmāḥ
dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukha-duḥkha-sañjñair
gacchhanty amūḍhāḥ padam avyayaṁ tat*

Given meaning: Free from pride and delusion, victorious over the evil of attachment, dwelling constantly in the Self, their desires having completely retired, freed from the pairs of opposites – such as pleasure and pain – the undeluded reach that Goal Eternal.

Our Swamiji said, "Use these 5 knobs to fine tune into the OM channel"

1. **Free from pride and delusion: *Nirman moha*:** I am reminded of the Gita 365 video where one is sitting on the banks of a stream, dipping their feet in water and while moving their feet producing ripples. Now at any point if the person feels that the moment they stop moving their feet the flow of the water will stop, is not only foolish, its delusional!

So too the work I do in this world is very tiny (just like a ripple) in the whole scheme hence I need to just do what comes my way – cheerfully.

A quote that helps me is, "Don't take yourself (as in ego) seriously, take your work seriously". Being a Special Ed teacher people sometimes say to me that I must have a lot of patience and then some look at me with pity that I am surrounded by sadness. I do have days when I am sad for them and perplexed by their processing deficits or memory issues, but that only propels me to figure out to what I can do to help them navigate through life with what they have. If I give up, then they will too. Working cheerfully is very important for me and for them. Every person has some strengths and my job is to help them find those strengths and make them so strong that the weakness will not have any effect! I need to do this cheerfully and also without attachment. Remembering at the same time that if not for me God will have someone else do this job.

2. **Victorious over the evil of attachment: *sang dosha*:** I remember Swamiji dramatizing the story of a monkey who is not letting go of his fist full of chana while his hand gets stuck in a narrow mouthed pot and even when he is getting beaten!

Me and mine... what a tragedy of attachment! We are given the whole world and we reject more than half because it is either not me or mine. How can I try to overcome this attachment? A small example of how I apply this teaching is when I see beautiful yard or house plants. See, I like to garden and love having house plants, but I am not so successful with them. So instead of

getting sad that they are not my plants or yard, I remind myself to simply enjoy the beauty, why should it bother me that it is not mine? I am grateful that at least I am able to enjoy their beauty and fragrance while I am in their house. And as Swamiji says that gifts come your way when you are not desiring it, I think of that when I am gifted flowers or plants.

Swamiji had said that Satsang is the cure for this illness of attachment. More I learn, more I can apply. At least I can be free of attachment while I am in company of sattvic persons or I can observe and learn from their unattached actions.

3. **Dwelling constantly in the Self, *Adhyatma nitya*** – to do this one needs **Purity of mind and clarity of knowledge** Purity of mind comes through tranquility of mind which comes with lack of agitations, meaning less and less desires.

How to know what we need and what we don't? How to not desire in this world of multiple options! This is something I find most difficult of all. During the waking hours I play so many roles and very easily assume that I am all of them. Where is the time to dwell in the Self! I am so many selves Hahaha 😊

But well maybe for a start I start seeing or reminding myself that the Self *is* everything around! A bhajan line from Saint Kabir ji comes to my rescue. He says, “*Hari (as in Lord Krishna) ko har (everyone) main dekha*”

Meaning: I see Lord in every being. This line helps me see the goodness in a disruptive child, a difficult colleague and so on. Once I had a meeting with a parent who was angry at the school system for something. She was rude and impolite during the meeting and raised questions and objections to every proposal. I kept on chanting this line in my head to see if I am able to see the Lord in her and I did! I saw that she only has the best intentions for her daughter and was not able to trust because of the experiences she has had so far. Once I understood that, the meeting became very easy; I took time to explain and convince her of our intentions and rationale and by the end of the meeting she was smiling and was able to trust us as she told me so at the end of the meeting.

4. **Desires having completely retired:** Having heard the joke that our desires end when we are 6 feet under or in an urn of ashes and thinking that well then it is simply impossible reminds me of Swamiji's disclaimer “I am only responsible for what I say, not for what you understand” So

clearly this is not what Swamiji said or meant. For one who is ONE WITH THE SELF there are no selfish desires! The death of the body is inevitable. But living without selfish desires is very much possible, we are surrounded by such examples our own Swamiji and the whole Guru Shishya parampara is an example of that. It is not easy, but not impossible either.

5. **Getting free from the pairs of opposites:** Such as sukha and dukkha. All these teachings resonate so well intellectually but why so hard to put into practice? Can we do it conscientiously? I think we can. Daily reminders such as Gita 365 is a big help and then we have study groups, online courses to keep us balanced, on track, “not too loose, not too tight, just right”. We learn here that everything, even PROBLEMS are also Purposeful Roadblocks Offering Beneficial Lessons Enhancing Mental Strength/Stamina. There are only situations, we can make them problems or opportunities. We need to be grateful for being able to even have access to this knowledge.

Met a girl recently who happened to come into the Ashram for something and through casual conversation learned that she was a Chinmaya student in India. I thought that how Gurudev takes care of his children like Lord Krishna did. HE will make sure that we are in good hands. So, if I can just remind that to myself every time, when I experience dukkha or when I experience sukha/joy and in fact starting with sukkah/joyful times – it would not be impossible to get over the pairs of opposites with help from HIM.

We do a “Gratitude Jar” at our house. Throughout the year we fill the jar with our ‘thankings’, times we feel grateful. We try to write at least once a month or as often we feel to do so. In December we open the jar as a family and read our gratitude notes. It is very powerful and humbling to know all the blessings and that God was taking care of us throughout the year! I will strongly advise you all to do so. Our teenage son is invested in it as well, my husband needed some coaxing, but we find his notes in there as well.

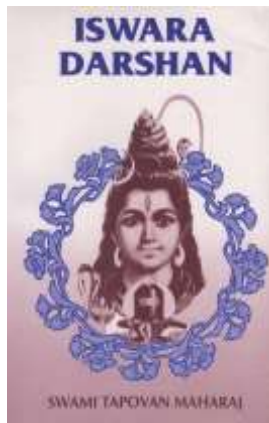
Pranams,

Sudiksha

Messages from an autobiography of a Mahatma -17 (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 sadhguru, Swami Chinmayananda.



Part 2 Chapter 7 – Teertha Yatra

Kurukshetra

Swamiji felt an urge to visit teerthas (holy destinations) in the Himalayas. He started his journey by first going to Kurukshetra. Upon arriving there, he found a place to stay in the verandah of 'Kali Kumbhlivala' temple. He stayed for a few days, visited temple of Krishna and Pandavas; visited the site where the great Bhishmacharya laid on a bed of arrows and joined other devotees to take a dip in a beautiful lake with blooming lotus flowers.

Northern Punjab and Jwaalamukhi Temple

From Kurukshetra, he made his way to Hoshiarpur in Punjab and stayed with Judge Ayodhya Prasad. Judge Prasad would visit Rishikesh and continue to discuss spiritual matters with Swamiji. After spending a few happy days at Hoshiarpur, he made his way to Jwaalamukhi temple. Parvati Devi is worshipped here. A natural phenomenon of flames arising from the ground is seen as embodiment of Parvati. Scientists offer a geologic explanation for the phenomenon, but for the common man it is a sight to marvel at. The ancient Rishis made use of such uncommon natural phenomena to withdraw minds of worldlings from external things to Godward. That is why all over India, places that are peculiar or

arrestingly beautiful are celebrated as teerthas or abodes of the gods.

Onwards to Vaidyanatham

Swamiji spent a few days at Jwaalamukhi temple and made his to the famous Vaidyanatham temple via Kangra. He visited the temple and stayed at a dandiswami mutt. A brahmin named Somadatta made his acquaintance. They discussed the scriptures freely in Sanskrit.

Shower of Ridicule

Swamiji experienced verbal abuse at a train station in Punjab and again on the train when leaving Vaidyanatham. On the train, a woman of 'easy morals' entered the compartment with a group of lustful young men. Shameless and unrestrained, they engaged in obscene language and flirtation. Upon noticing a clean-shaven, ochre-clothed sannyasin, they targeted their verbal assault on Swamiji. At a train station in Punjab, a porter counseled Swamiji to take up a job and settle down instead of going all over in search of filling up the belly. A sadhu must be as patient as earth. Insult from others is a touchstone of his patience; censure elevates, praise degrades. A man of dispassion and discrimination, therefore, never hankers after praise or appreciation; on the contrary he loves deprecation.

In the eyes of some, Sivalinga and Salagrama are Siva and Vishnu. In others' eyes, they are merely stones. Different mind, different thoughts. Similarly, some eye sannyasin living exalted lives as most honorable, whereas others regard them idle, parasites, useless, despicable and verily a burden to the earth. Why quarrel with them?

Neelaradham Teertha

A lake, now known as Lake Reewal, is a teertha revered by both Hindus and Buddhists. The peculiarity of the teertha was that mounds of clay with small trees and creepers moved hither and thither in the wind. Swamiji and an accompanying sadhu Kailasagiri bathed in the lake and performed puja. Swamiji visited a Buddhist Vihara nearby. Along with the head priest of the Vihara, he circumambulated the lake.

Wicked Sannyasins

After leaving Neelaradham, Swamiji was resting at an ashram on the bank of river Vipasa. There at night between 9 and 10 PM, a Punjabi brahmin was holding Tulsidas Ramayan discourses. The event drew large crowds to the ashram. After the third day of the discourse, all rested on the dais. The Punjabi Brahmin held the Tulsidas Ramayan book close to him as it was his most precious possession. In the early hours of the morning, Swamiji woke up to a sudden sound. A sannyasin had grabbed the book and ran away. The next day morning the Punjabi Brahmin was in tears - a rare book, not easily available in these parts. The suspicion fell on another person who had studied in Varanasi but settled here after marrying a pahadi woman. But that person also expressed sorrow at the loss of the book. Swamiji soon left towards the next teertha. He continued to wonder in sorrow at the misconduct of the sannyasin – a black-sheep. Such fellows are the scum of the society. It is these fellows who dethrone sannyasa from its time-honored, exalted place.

Vashishtam Teertha

Swamiji next travelled to Manikarnika on the banks of Parvathi Ganga. After bathing in the ushna-kunda (hot water pool) and performing puja, he headed to Kulu. After staying a few days there, he headed to Vashishtam. Here also there were hot water pools. He bathed and visited temple of Vashista with flowers in hand. He paid his respects to Vashista, the great teacher and householder and he shines among the holy Rishis like the moon among stars, and then he meditated upon his teachings regarding the abidance in the Self. He thus spent four happy days there.

Ratang Mountain Pass

After Vashishtam, Swamiji and a few other saintly men resolved to cross a very high mountain pass, ice covered, beautiful, yet terrible. It was an ocean of solid ice all around and the mountain peak was shining like burnished silver. With great courage, Swamiji climbed step by step. With the help of Tibetan merchants, he managed to cross the pass. The Ratang pass inspired terror and pleasure. His eyes feasted upon the unprecedented and unearthly sight from the top of that pass. How beautiful is the creation! What is man's work by its side? God is truth. Beauty is truth. They who know the truth about Prakrithi and Purusha, experience the divine presence in places of such beauty and grandeur. From here he could see villages, peopled by Buddhists. The villagers have

remarkable faith and respect for sadhus. There was no dearth of milk, curds, butter, vegetables, etc. The party of 6-7 sannyasins cooked meals and served Swamiji first.

Trilokanath Temple and return trek to Uttar Kashi

A nine-day journey through the difficult mountain path brought them to the temple of Trilokanath. Venerated equally by Hindus and non-Hindus, the temple stands on the banks of river Chandrabhaga, a tributary of Sindhu. The priest, a Lama, was away, so his wife helped Swamiji conduct puja. The priests, as in Tibet, wear leather sandals when performing puja. Swamiji offered fruits, flowers, etc. to both Lord Vishnu and Sri Buddha.

After the visit, Swamiji decided to skip a teertha and return to Kulu. From Kulu he made his way towards Uttar Kashi. The sadhu, Kailasgiri, who had accompanied him until now parted to visit other teerthas. As he trekked towards Uttar Kashi through the mountains, Swamiji had no provisions, just his punya and paapa from his own actions. Occasionally finding food, sometimes finding shelter, sometimes finding rebuke, Swamiji made it to Uttar Kashi in about 25 days.

Back in Uttar Kashi

Swamiji settled back into his routine at Kailash Mutt, doing daily tapas and engaging in teaching Vedanta topics. Due to his inclination to worship Lord Shiva from his childhood, he felt an urge to worship Shiva in a new way. Every day from Guru Purnima he composed a few stanzas in praise of Sri Kashi Vishwanath and read them after his bath in the Ganga near the Soumya Kashi temple in Uttar Kashi. By grace of God this went on unobstructed for two months during Chaturmasya, and it afforded him great delight and satisfaction. His mind became pure, clear and concentrated. The hymn contained the gist of sixteen Upanishads. The stanzas were collected under the title, "Sri Soumya Kaseesa Stotram". Sri Ganeshadatta Goswami who heard the chanting by Swamiji, got a manuscript copy of it for publication to benefit the mankind.

Return journey to Rishikesh for winter

On arrival of autumn, Swamiji made his way to Rishikesh, alone, along the banks of Ganga, resting here and there in places beautified by trees and bowers. At such places, Swamiji steeped in meditation, would lose all sense of place, time, hunger and thirst. Not only on this route, but also along many paths in the Himalayas, he had the same experiences. What was he thinking on such occasions?

On Supreme Self and nothing else. He was experiencing divine joy, unsurpassed, eternal and supreme.

Alas, seekers of worldly joy implore God for sensuous pleasures; people in pain pray him to rid of their pains; travelers crossing seas or mountains ask for safe passages ; thieves and cheats pray him to save them from punishment; sinners praise God to escape from the effects of their sin and fighters pray to win their battles. Thus, enchanters, physicians and astrologers, enslaved by their desires, worship God as an instrument to fulfil their desires. How can they even understand the Supreme Truth or enjoy the Supreme Bliss? Only those can enjoy the Supreme Bliss who have no desires, whose conscience is clear, who believe in existence of God as in their own and find their self as one with the Supreme Self. Their mind flows naturally towards God, without any conscious effort, as water flows downward. Even at the moment of mental distraction their peace is not broken. They are naturally drawn to that unsurpassed peace that follows the cessation of distractions. Thus, Swamiji desired to enjoy divine peace was naturally attracted to places of celestial beauty. Thus, he made his way slowly to Rishikesh.

Kumbh Mela at Prayag

After two months had passed at Rishikesh, the excitement was in the air about going to Prayag for Kumbh Mela. Though Swamiji was averse to it, a devotee of his, Sri Ganga Sankar, persuaded him to go. Swamiji, accompanied by his friends, Swami Sivananda (of Divine Life Society) and Sri Advaitananda.

As in Haridwar, hundreds of thousands of people had gathered to take a dip in the confluence of the holy rivers. Unlike in the past, the focus is no longer on tapas or religious significance, it is on revelry and display. Swamiji went to visit sannyasins on both sides of Ganga with his friends. One of the sannyasins they paid a visit to was a mandaleswar (a respected head of a spiritual organization). They visited him in his large beautiful tent on the sandy banks of Ganga. Swamiji prostrated and sat near the mandaleswar. The topic of discussion was on scriptures in general, but soon centered on 'jeevanmukta'.

An incident during a spiritual discussion

The mandaleswar pointed to a man advanced in age as the scholar who can hold the discussion on this topic and clear any doubts. The pundit cited the words of the Lord from Geeta (Chapter 2, verse 55) on 'sthita prajna lakshana' as a clear indication of a person who is a

'jeevanmukta'. In particular, the pundit indicated the word 'prajahatiyadkaaman' (one who has freed himself from desires) as an important sign.

Swamiji: But, Lord Krishna gives freedom from desires, etc., as knowers to Truth only, as a statement of current fact, not as an assertion of an inevitable truth. He repudiates strong desires, it is true, but he doesn't say that knower of Truth won't have even light desires and the various actions springing out of them. Then, there is a question, how to know if an action is the outcome of a strong desire or light desire?

Pundit: That, of course, is easy for the man who has the necessary skill.

Swamiji: How is that? By guess work? Don't we often come across sinful hypocrites, bent upon cheating others, posing as innocent children, or as conqueror of all desires or at most having only light ones? What is the test that will help us to distinguish such fellows from really good people?

The pundit flew into a rage supposing that Swamiji had come to defeat him in argument. Swamiji quietly sought to reduce the tension. He cited an assertion of great rishis:

न परस्य कस्यचिद्देदनं परसंवेदनम्

किन्तु स्ववेद्यमेव क्षौद्रादिनामास्वादनसौख्यवत्

(it is not possible for any man to know another's realization of the Supreme Self. Only the man who drinks honey knows its sweetness – so also the experience of Brahman)

This only served to further enrage the pundit, and he became fiercely argumentative. With words "to sit near you is as unbearable as sitting near a blazing fire", Swamiji and his companions took leave. The pundit felt ashamed, calmed down and sought camaraderie as wrestlers would after a tough tangle in the arena.

At Swamiji's residence, there were gatherings of good and pious people. Some, highly educated in English, came to pay respect to the 'Saint of Rishikesh'. Among them was a lawyer who was thoughtful and spiritually inclined. The lawyer took it upon himself to write messages of Geeta in English and started discussing with Swamiji on his interpretations. Swamiji enjoyed the exchange and they kept communications long after the Kumbha Mela.

Swamiji's Diet

Swamiji avoided salt and any salty foods. He also avoided drinking tea. He kept to this diet scrupulously while staying in Rishikesh. He allowed salt, tea and sweetmeats in Uttar Kashi or Gangotri, and was less scrupulous when travelling and staying at other ashrams.

The bath at Kumbh Mela

Under the sign of Capricorn, on the Kumbha-snana day, he took a bath early in the morning. It was not easy with hundreds and thousands of men and women crowding to do the same. He dipped in the Triveni sangam (confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi rivers) with a mind full of faith like an innocent child.

They then observed a procession of Naga Sadhus go for a dip. The men were stark naked. Women too were with them. Those educated observed it with scorn on how this can be allowed in modern times. Some old men and women took the dust from the feet of sadhus and put it on the crown of their heads. Others observed that divine qualities such as tapasya and devotion to God are mental not physical. Thus Swamiji observed the beautiful and the ugly.

Back in Rishikesh

A young man started attending Swamiji's talks, as Swamiji settled back to into his rhythm at Rishikesh. Vallabharama Sarma from Saurashtra continued discussions with Swamiji on Vedanta topics by coming to Rishikesh again and again from far away Gujarat. He too heard Sowmya Kasheesa Stotram, got a manuscript and decided to take it upon himself to have it printed.

A princess named Suratha Kumari Devi visited Rishikesh to associate with sadhu men and women. She invited Swamiji and other sannaysins to her residence. She treated Swamiji with respect, and after a luxurious meal, he and other sannayasins pleasantly narrated stories of God. After that, she made it a point to visit Swamiji in his cottage, without regard to her status and stature, whenever she was in Rishikesh or Haridwar.

On Charity

The wise and the wealthy man should give away his wealth in charity. But that must be done with good intention. Never aim at any reward.

Those who think that sensuous enjoyment is the purpose of life and that their money is for such sensuous enjoyments are laboring under a fatal delusion; they fall

never reaching the way of beatitude; they lose all their wealth.

Money should be used for the cause of righteousness; otherwise it is a heinous sin.

Birds and beasts, who have no wealth, enjoy sensuous pleasures. Wealth therefore is for the service of the world.

Maharshi Dadhyak said to Sutrama, "pleasures of the senses are common to all creatures". People inordinately fond of wealth and sensuous pleasures cannot even practice virtues. How far then will it be for them to devote themselves to the pursuit of Supreme Truth?

Christ said, "it may be possible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, but it is impossible for a rich man to pass through the gates of heaven". All this is God's. Nothing is mine. With this conviction, like a servant in a rich man's home, one should do his duties in a spirit of worship.

Let every man do his duty as an offering to God without any attachment to the results, solely for the purification of the mind. Choose a mantra on Rama, Krishna, Siva or Sakti and worship him or her with offering of flowers. Repeat the mantra with joy, persistently and with all mind.

God will be pleased with him; sins will be destroyed; love of God will grow more and more.

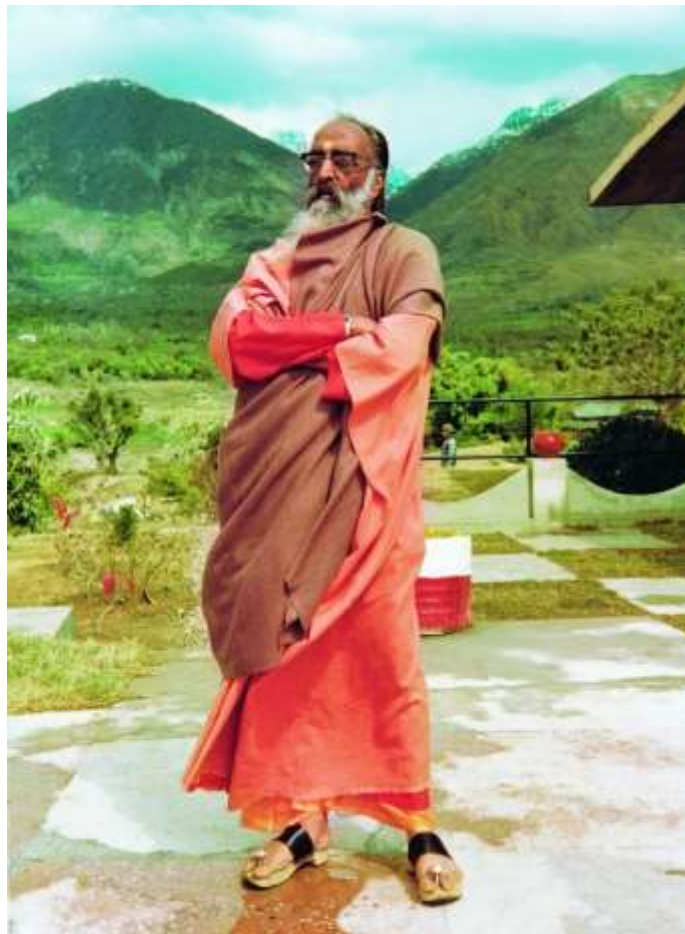
The resources placed at your disposal by God should be used to worship Him. The universe is His. The service of the world is worship to Him. The resources are to sustain life and worship Him, not for sensuous enjoyment.

Worship Him. Worship Him.

To Be Continued

Gurudev Uvacha

Inspiring Quotes from Pujya Gurudev Chinmayananda



[Editor's Note: Continuing the series of inspiring quotes from Gurudev sourced from the weekly Chinmayam announcements].

The character of Rama paints the picture of a Man-of-Perfection. He was also an ideal brother, a perfect and chivalrous enemy and so on- thus every aspect of his personality is idealised to absolute perfection.

Renouncing our present preoccupations, let us march towards the Higher. Ultimately, our ego-sense can end only through our own inner growth. Grow, we must.

A devotee soaring into the highest peaks of Love is an occasion of Universal Joy and Auspiciousness.

Rama means the One Reveler who revels everywhere in all the bosoms. Rama is the Self of all, of the nature of Peace-Auspiciousness-Beauty.

Krishna is the Actionless Center around which all actions are taking place.....the activities are only possible in His Presence.....Krishna is Motionless in the midst of all movement, the Changeless in the midst of all change, the Immutable in the midst of all mutation...