



Hari OM
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Conquest of desire is kaivalya (moksha), the highest goal of man. It is the culmination and ultimate goal of all human activity; it is the highest attainment. It alone yields absolute peace and supreme bliss. Conquest of desire alone leads to a fearless, free, and happy life. One who has conquered desire is not haunted by sorrows or worries. He alone is a master. However, the conquest of desire is not easy. Only devotees of jñāna can overcome desire. One may fast and leave food untouched, but the mind will still revert to the thought of food. One may keep away from worldly enjoyments by force of will, yet the mind will remain attached to such pleasures. In fact, until one fully realizes the Self, the mind cannot be completely freed from desire.

The mind may become steady and even filled with the noblest of thoughts, yet so long as it exists and survives, its thought-agitations will veil the Self under a mist of mind-created confusions. This mind is the cause for the non-apprehension of the real essence in us, which is our own being, the eternal Self. Hence, the mind is to be completely sublimated. In the last stages, we can say that the mind disappears, and when it does, the vision of the ultimate Reality takes place.

One whose mind is pure and endowed with faith should gain the knowledge of the oneness of Brahman and the Self. Through mahāvākya-vichāra (reflection on the most profound statements of the Upanishads), with the Guru's grace and blessings, one should attain happiness in its true sense. This is a happiness not shaken by anything—not by temptations, fears, or worries. This does not mean being in a jubilant mood all the time; this happiness refers to a state where the mind is always equipoised.

SPIRITUAL TRAILS

Self-exploration in the Word-paintings of Maharishi Veda-vyāsa

by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda

Melody carved in stone is sculpture. Sculpture in melody is music. Sculpture in color is painting. Sculptured music, painted in words, is the best of literature. This medium of word-painting has been chosen by the poet-seer Vyāsa to describe the Indescribable in his Puranas (*Purānas*).

There is a definite reason for this choice. The painter, in his medium, can, no doubt, express not only all the details, but also movement. However, he can express only two dimensions in his paintings. On the other hand, a sculpture can express its rhythm of form overflowing from all sides. The spectator can move around the sculpture and appreciate it from all angles, though the sculpture is an arrested moment in life, without movement.

To describe the play of the Infinite in the finite world, Vyāsa felt he needed a medium with the beauty and strength of both—painting and sculpture—but with none of their inherent limitations. To bring our attention to the unseen Power that supports and molds life's happenings, Vyāsa searched for a new art of sculpture-painting. His search yielded the welded art of word-painting that we find in the Puranas.

The theme of the Upanishads is too subtle for the average intellect to comprehend. When one is not able to appreciate an ideal, one will naturally fail to apply one's mind to it. Unless the student is capable of clearly visualizing a concept and continuously meditating on it, he will not be able to experience the highest beatitude that has been promised in all the scriptures of the world as the ultimate and achievable goal.

In order to help growing children understand their country, all education systems use maps. The teacher points out therein the various cities, rivers, mountains, etc. But the map is not the country; it only helps the student understand the relative positions of various places. The student thereafter, through his own maturity, realizes the glory of his country in detail. The map is just a physical guide for the student's intellectual growth. In the same way, in order to help the seeker comprehend the infinite Reality and Vedantic concepts, Vyāsa, the mighty teacher, felt the need to provide some conceivable representations, which he did through his word-pictures on the Puranic stories.

The word-paintings of this master-poet have succeeded in carving for us solid forms of the infinite Truth, as indicated in the Upanishads. All these forms live, act, and move magnificently across the world's dark despondencies, and diligently meet the despairs of man-made situations. These symbols of Truth are called deities, and Puranic literature is studded with such blazing pictures of dynamic "gods" and "goddesses." They are represented in ordinary human form. However, it is not unusual for Vyāsa to take even impossible anatomical features and structures to describe the all-pervading Essence, for the one infinite Reality has itself become the world of endless forms. Thus, every form in the universe is, in a sense, a representation of the primeval Truth.

The Puranas were written for the benefit of beginner students on the path of spiritual Truth, but in his pages, the irresistible philosopher and man of God-realization in Vyāsa could not remain hidden. Now and then, the mask of the teacher falls off, and Upanishadic themes unconsciously flow from his pen. As we read the Puranas, we find drab descriptions of man-like deities enhanced by Vyāsa's effulgent strokes of Upanishadic concepts, which directly reveal

the deities' real essence as the eternal Self of the universe.

This style, known as "mysticism," is the strain in which all the Vedas are written. Vyāsa, a perfect poet, sings through his pen songs of mysticism and creates for us palpitating sculptures of comprehensible God-forms. These forms become altars at which devoted seekers, shattered by their own desires and passions, confused with despairs and disappointments, and crushed beneath duties and responsibilities, can easily find a haven of peace and consolation.

The criticism that "though God created man in His own image, man has, in his turn, ultimately created a God in his own mortal form," is apparently true. But on deeper analysis, there is not much pith in such a statement. The human mind, in its present state of constant preoccupations, is so dense that it cannot directly lift itself to the subtler heights of pure contemplation or sheer meditation. Weighed down by attachments and desires for worldly objects, the mind's meditative powers today lie undiscovered and unexplored.

The spiritual master must first help the seeker quiet the mind so that he may discover his own meditative faculties. For this purpose, the method of *upāsana* (worship) has been prescribed even in the earliest of Vedic literature. People of that age worshipped the sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, rain, and ocean as expressions of the mighty, unseen Cause of the universe.

In the Upanishads, we find many methods of *upāsana* that are all techniques to develop the seeker's power of concentration, which each student intensifies by channeling all his thoughts to the given line of contemplation. As time passed and the population increased, the competition for existence became more severe. In a competitive society, the individual mind gets more shattered. Under such continuous tension, it is difficult for the mind to discover the necessary poise to pursue the methods of concentration prescribed in the Upanishads.

By Vyāsa's era, a psychological situation had arisen wherein it became necessary for teachers to provide students with fresh techniques in order to profit from spiritual exercises. In the Puranas, Vyāsa had so successfully inaugurated new deities and easier methods of meditating upon them that the Vedic methods fell almost completely into disuse, and in their place, Puranic "gods" and "goddesses" became the most popular altars of worship for Hindus.

Nothing has so directly helped Hindus feel a common religious bond as the worship of these deities—the most important and popular of them being Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Vishnu, Narayana, and Devi. In the temples of these forms of God, Hindus of all classes and persuasions visit, mingle, worship, and feel the exhilaration of Spirit. For centuries, these temples, and within them the customary worship of these deities, have held Hindu society together, providing a common bond of love and devotion, creating a great sense of pride and unity.

The regular study of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata* has molded the emotional and intellectual character of India. Millions unable to read the original sacred books have heard various pandits' constant discourses on them. Many of these inspiring talks have been translated into various local languages, both in prose and song. These deities have thus contributed greatly in the formation of Hindu mind and thought.

No doubt, when pandits came merely to explain a story without giving the deeper meanings of the intelligent, philosophical, and scriptural import of these mystical texts, as well as the ideals these personalities stood for, the intelligent and educated classes slowly strayed away from the study sessions of these Puranas. Without complete understanding, their faith in the deities became tainted, and consequently, the temples enshrining them became deserted.

To revive a true interest in temples, we must gain a clearer understanding of what these divine representations signify and in what way each one of them suggests aspects of the infinite Self. For students of the Upanishads, a few indicative pointers are more than sufficient. When

discussions on such topics are deliberately sketchy, not exhaustive, well-informed minds can explore these enchanting realms of suggestiveness and discover for themselves much more. In Self-exploration, there is a thrill of discovery and a continuous inspiration to search for more meaning in each Puranic story.

Satsang with Swami Tejomayananda

(Reprinted and edited from Vedānta Vāṇi, February 2013)

Q: In *Kaṭhopanishad*, Nachiketa is given three boons by Lord Yama. The third boon he asks is to know what the nature of Reality or Truth is. What is it?

A: The nature of Truth is revealed as pure Existence. It is not subject to birth, growth, or death, and remains always as “is-ness.” This Existence is *cit*, *caitanya*, or Consciousness. How?

In our waking state of experiences, we have knowledge of many things. I am aware of object-a, person-b, situation-c, etc. The objects may vary, but awareness does not change. Consciousness is always the same. When I go to the dream state, the whole waking state is obliterated, but I am conscious of the dream. When I wake up, the dream vanishes, but not consciousness. In the state of deep sleep, there is the absence of everything, but we know that there is absence. Consciousness is one and does not go on changing, though we may go through different states of experiences. Pure Existence is this Consciousness infinite. This is the nature of Truth.

Where is the Truth? It is all-pervading, but it is in your own heart, as your own Self. Presently, our attention is only on our body or mind. So this Awareness is lost sight of; if we turn our attention to Consciousness, we find that it is our own Self. It is me, myself! Realize you are this Self and not just the assemblage of body, mind, etc.

When you know the Truth, the result is liberation. You are totally liberated from all bondage. When I think that I am the body, I am naturally limited by the dharma of the body. If I know I am different from the body, I am free from its bondage. *Kaṭhopanishad* teaches us the nature of Reality, where it is, and what is our relationship with It. The knowledge of “I am That” releases us from all bondage.

Q: What is the nature of a *sthitaprajña*? What is a balanced state of mind? What is wisdom?

A: A *sthitaprajña* is one who is well established in the knowledge and experience that he is the infinite Self, one alone without a second, appearing as this entire world. He is blissful and complete, not dependent on external factors for any kind of happiness or fulfillment. In the language of the *Gītā*, a *sthitaprajña* is one who is content in the Self, by the Self, so he is free from all desires of worldly things to “become happy.” When such a person performs actions, the actions arise from fulfillment and joy. There is no attachment to the action itself or to any fruits of the action. Whatever results come—experiences that we call good, bad, pleasant, unpleasant, joyous or sad—he has only equipoise of mind. This is the mark of *asthitaprajña*.

As our mind becomes purer, we gain glimpses of this Knowledge and begin to understand many things. Even those who develop an interest in this Knowledge start losing their attachment to things to a great extent, so you can well imagine the state of a *sthitaprajña*.

Q: Can spiritual exercises do anything to alleviate physical suffering, especially in the case of incurable diseases of the body?

A: It is worth asking what the cause of our physical disease is. More often than not, the cause is created by ourselves. Many toxins are built up in our body and they cause diseases. When we take treatments, more chemicals are injected into the body, so sometimes the situation does not improve.

I once met a lady in Pune, who told me that one fine day she woke up to find that she could not open her eyes at all. She consulted an eye specialist, who considered the situation and suggested injections, but he was doubtful if they would help. She then went to a naturopath she knew. He asked her to eat only raw vegetables for the next two weeks. Believe it or not, at the end of the given period, her eyes opened, without any medicines or injections. I have heard of a lady who was cured of cancer in the same way. She lived in Vinoba Bhave's ashram in Paunar for a few years, eating only raw vegetables and avoiding all cooked food. Finally, there was no trace of cancer. Usually, for cancer, they give toxic medicines, radiation, etc. So, even at a physical level, if we meet someone with this understanding of nature's ways, it can help us.

Spiritually, a lot of help is available. It is said that the mind rules over the body. Spiritual exercises, knowledge, and practices can strengthen our mind. If the mind says, "I am going to get well," even that will have an effect. Even if the body is sick with an incurable disease, the mind can be lifted and tuned to a higher truth. Then the disease will not affect us to that degree. An example will make this clear. If I am walking in the hot sun, holding an umbrella over my head, I am protected from the scorching heat, though the heat of the sun is not reduced or removed. In the same way, spiritual and devotional practices create an umbrella over us. In the language of devotion, it is called the umbrella of the grace of God. The troubles are there, but they don't affect you as much. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had cancer of the throat. Ramana Maharshi also had cancer. But their minds were so immersed in the Truth, they could say, "If there is disease in the body, let it be there." So, we should do spiritual sadhana not just because we are sick, but because spiritual sadhana can give us real health.

REFLECTIONS

When a Mahatma Commands

(Anecdote narrated by Ganga Prasad)

Once, as a child, when I had gone with my mother and sisters to meet Swamiji. After meeting him, Swamiji asked one of the ashram students to bring a basket of oranges that had been gifted to him. He gave fruits to each one of us and then asked my sister, "How many people are there down below?" He started counting on his fingers along with her—one, two, three, There were around five or six people there. She held up the edge of her frock and he put seven oranges in it. She went down, but in a little while, we heard her screaming. A group of monkeys had surrounded her.

All of us rushed out, but Swamiji, being a fast walker, reached her first. He saw that the monkeys had taken the oranges and some had even climbed up the tree. Swamiji simply called out, "Rama! Rama!" and signaled to them to come down. Most of the monkeys came down like obedient students. Swamiji said in Hindi, "Rakko! Rakko!: Keep it! Keep it!" and gestured to them to put the fruits down. He spoke Hindi with a Malayali accent, so rakho in Hindi sounded like rakko, but the monkeys understood regardless. They silently kept the oranges where he had indicated. Then Swamiji said, "Pichhe! Pichhe!: Move back! Move back!" My sister was still crying. Swamiji instructed someone to take care of her and escort her. He then had the entire

basket of oranges brought down and kept for the monkeys. They came in a very orderly manner, picked up one orange each, and went back up the tree.

A New Year Prayer

by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda

O beloved Lord, with Your endless mercy and infinite patience,
You have led us through a busy year, guiding our conscience
We got what we asked for; we have been bountifully served
With Your love often, perhaps even more than what we deserved.

We prostrate to You gratefully, acknowledging with humble reverence
That we couldn't have been upright all through, but for Your perseverance.
Grant us our wish that we may lead a nobler, richer life this new year,
Bending our sinews to greater undertakings in Your service, sans fear!

In every act of ours, let duty with beauty be sweetly mingled,
Bathed in the flood of mutual love, none of the hatred singled.
Let all our obligations turn to respond rightly in opportunities bright,
Teach us to fulfill our duties with overflowing joy and delight.

May we have concern for fellow beings and bow to the needs of others,
Our hearts attuned to respond to the silent cry of poor brothers.
To hear the woes of the unfortunate, with patience may we tune our ears,
Give us the strength of mind with compassion to wipe their tears.

Accomplishment of things great and heroic should not be our aim or prime,
But to do graceful little things with love, sympathy, and feelings sublime.
Let us learn to accept kindness gratefully with humility and joy,
To heal our bleeding ulcers of misunderstanding, let us our time employ.

Let the New Year ring in peace, bring in the fragrance of goodwill,
To help us help others, so that we make their hearts' desires fulfill.
We shall strive to keep all beings happy in the glow of Your sunshine,
We pray for Your grace so that they feel blessed with Your splendor divine.

Light and Sound

by Chetana Neerchal

You are the music of the wind that speaks through the autumn colors.
The light in Your voice ripples in my heart and stills into peace.

Revelations and Remembrances of Tapovan Kuṭi

by Anjali Singh

It was February 1981 and I was traveling with Pujya Gurudev to Tapovan Kuṭi in Uttarkashi. Our car wound along the quaint, wooded road from Rishikesh into the mountains, allowing us a magnificent view in pre-dawn light of the spiritual hamlet embracing and nestling against the majestic Ganga.

As we neared Uttarkashi, the scenery changed dramatically to stretches of carved ravines below and lush wheat terraces above. Herds of shaggy mountain goats grazed en route. Swamiji identified spots where he had halted during his two journeys on foot as a student.

We arrived at the Tapovan Kuṭi ashram, the rainwater collected at the front steps washed Swamiji's feet in greeting. As I opened the latch, the heavy wooden door creaked and its bells tinkled to announce Swamiji's entrance. Swamiji went first to prostrate at the shrine of his Guru and then seated himself at the same spot where he had once been photographed in his student days with his Guru.

Tapovan Kuṭi is maintained just as it was when the master resided there, with added residential facilities around its mainframe. The small veranda outside the mud-plastered room is where Param Pūjya Swami Tapovanam spent the major part of his life. It was a moment of deep devotion and gratitude to be seated in that same sacred space with my Guru.

Tapovan Kuṭi symbolizes years of tapas of an enlightened master. This is not the tapas of sadhana by which a spiritual seeker evolves within, but the tapas of a God-realized master who blesses all of creation. The atmosphere of such a spiritual alcove is charged for all time by the mere presence of the master. Here, a sincere seeker's mind, filled with faith and surrender, can bask in, and draw from, its divine content.

Swamiji spoke about his student days in Uttarkashi, when he would eat only from the bhikshās offered at the Kali Kambliwāllāh Annakshetra. The free meal usually consisted of one roti and watery dāl. He said, "Never did I get even a headache! It was only when I went down and started taking 'better' food that little, little troubles started!"

Pūjya Swami Tapovanam was intensely strict, and if any sweets were offered to him by devotees, he would neither eat them himself nor give them to his disciples. Swamiji recalled, "The box would stay there until it rotted! Most of the students who came there wanted to run away because of the austere conditions. I, too, thought of running away many times," he laughed.

The next morning, Swamiji was up by 2:30 a.m. and worked the next ten hours, without coming out for breakfast. We saw him at noon after our return from the renowned nearby Vishvanāth Mandir. After lunch, Swamiji again went back to his desk to work, granting us permission to go visit local mahatmas.

We first went to see Swami Govindagiri, who lived next door and was Swamiji's contemporary and peer during their student days. He recalled that when Swamiji's first commentary on Māṇḍūkya Kārikā, a book that was dedicated to Swami Tapovanam, was received in the hands of the latter, his Guru had been very pleased and had said in Hindi, "Chinmaya is very intelligent."

After our day-long local visits and satsangs, we welcomed the evening's healing respite of bhajans. Swamiji spoke about his idea for the Sidhbari ashram—to send volunteers into the interiors of Himachal Pradesh to teach the Rāmāyaṇa in the local dialect, treat basic illnesses, and help villagers develop their own cooperative farming and cottage industry. He hoped these services would provide the growing children of the area a healthy atmosphere of values. He felt that the completion of this plan would discharge his debt to the Himalayas, in whose shelter he had received spiritual knowledge, and to whose folk he would be giving it back.

On the drive back from Uttarkashi, countless stars twinkled in the dark early morning sky. The indigo sky steadily transformed into lighter hues, offering a stunning painting of five mountain ranges layered one behind the other in varying shades of gray, blue, and purple. Within moments, the rising sun was unveiled, coloring the world in its warmth and vibrancy.

As we crept higher into the mountains, we were afforded an aerial vista of the Ganga's intricate designs woven around rocky slopes. Swamiji commented, "The place where the Ganga takes a U-turn is considered most holy. Temples are generally built in that area. It is rare that man turns his attention away from the world of objects, emotions, and thoughts and turns it toward his Source—the Self. This effort to turn against its natural downward flow, and back toward the spring of Consciousness, is symbolically marked by such places as Benares and Uttarkashi, where the Ganga turns northward."

Pūjya Guruji has said, "Where there is a tradition of Guru-shishya paramparā, there is growth and unfoldment. If every individual keeps knowledge without sharing it, there can be no flow. For knowledge, a perennial flow is necessary, like the flow of the Ganga, not like the flow of rivers that come forth only in the rainy season and cease to be thereafter. Spiritual knowledge cannot be acquired through sense perception, inference, or mere reasoning. Self-knowledge can be taught only by a Guru—a teacher who is enlightened himself and capable of enlightening others. Even if all who come in contact with the Guru are not enlightened immediately, they are inspired, and that inspiration changes their vision forever."

My World and Yours
by Chetana Neerchal

When light
dips into
darkness,

every now
and then

my mind
dips into
that reflection

suspended

in the dark

of Your world.

That reflection
held together
by
shafts of light
from my world

seen
only
in my window pane.

My connection
to the dark
in Your world.

News

Sannyāsa Dīkshā

Sannyāsa dīkshā, or initiation into renunciation, was given by Pūjya Guruji to two brahmacārīs and five brahmacārīṇīs in the Pranav Ganesh Mandir at the Chinmaya Vibhooti ashram in Kolwan, India. The previous and new names are as follows:

- 1) Brahmachari Akasha Chaitanya - Swami Sarvagananda
- 2) Brahmachari Tejaswi Chaitanya - Swami Swaprakashananda
- 3) Brahmacharini Kanthi Chaitanya - Swamini Shriyananda
- 4) Brahmacharini Medha Chaitanya - Swamini Shraddhananda
- 5) Brahmacharini Prafulla Chaitanya - Swamini Pratishthananda
- 6) Brahmacharini Suneeta Chaitanya - Swamini Ashritananda
- 7) Brahmacharini Susheela Chaitanya - Swamini Shampradananda

In the announcement to all centers, Pūjya Guruji wrote, “May the grace of God and the blessings of our entire Guru Paramparā lead them to the ultimate goal of Self-realization. May all be blessed to benefit from their dedicated sevā offered at the holy feet of Pujya Gurudev.”



Chinmaya International Gītā Chanting Competition by K. Rajan

By the grace of the Lord and the blessings of the Guru-paramparā, the Chintech team successfully organized the second Chinmaya International Gītā Chanting Competition in celebration of Pujya Gurudev’s birth centenary. The electrifying final was held at Chinmaya Vibhooti, in Kolwan, India, on December 22, 2015, bringing together 42 finalists from 11 countries: Australia, Bahrain, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Kuwait, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, UAE, and USA.

The finalists, who had qualified for the final based on their center, state, and national competitions, chanted Chapter 15 of Shṛīmad Bhagavad Gītā and competed based on four age categories. Their chanting was judged by Swami Sharadananda (CIF), Swami Sharanananda (CM Chicago), Swami Advaitananda, (Chinmaya Vibhooti), Swami Siddheshananda (CM Pune), and Pramodini Rao (Director, Chinmaya Naada Bindu).

The number of participants worldwide totaled 152,757, of which 2,463 were from outside India. The largest number of participants outside India came from UAE (1,839), USA (176), Bahrain (103), Hong Kong (92), Singapore (79), and Malaysia (66). Within India, Andhra Pradesh topped the list with 43,837 participants, followed by Maharashtra (37,301), Tamil Nadu (17,401), Kerala (16,149), and Gujarat (7,627). With respect to participants from CM centers, the maximum came from Mumbai (more than 20,000), followed by Piller in Andhra Pradesh (5,135), Vadodara in Gujarat (4,874) and Trichy in Tamil Nadu (4,226).

The competition started at 9 a.m. at the Pranav Ganesh Mandir, where the atmosphere reverberated with divine energy. The chanting continued until 12:30 p.m. and the grand valedictory function commenced at 1:30 p.m. after lunch prasād.

Pujya Guruji’s august presence welcomed one and all with warmth and affection. In his address, he said, “Every participant is a winner and winning is just an incident.” He said about the main purpose of the event was “collaboration, not competition.” Books personally selected by Pujya Guruji were presented to all the participants. Pujya Guruji, all the judges, acharyas, and coordinators at all levels (country, state, and center) appreciated the efforts of all the participants, attendees, and the Chintech organizers.

Group A Winners

First Place: Shruti Sharma, Gems Modern Academy, Dubai, UAE

Second Place: Sagarika Sen, GD Birla Centre for Education, Kolkata, India
Third Place: Akshara Sivaraj, Jack & Jill Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan, Kuwait

Group B Winners

First Place: Mohitaa Ganesan, Indian Community School, Kuwait
Second Place: Shreeya Srinivasan, Bright Riders School, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Third Place: Tulya Reddy, KKR Goutam School, Vijayawada, India

Group C Winners

First Place: Krupaksh Kenkre, Popular Primary School, Goa, India
Second Place: Shruthi Aiyar, Vendo Middle School, Los Angeles, USA
Third Place: Komal Papanwar, Global Indian International School, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Group D Winners

First Place: Deepti Kumar, Indian Community School, Kuwait
Second Place: S. Suraj, SBOA Higher Secondary School, Coimbatore, India
Third Place: Soundarya Vaithyanathan, Our Own English High School, Dubai, UAE

Hearty congratulations to all the winners of this glorious and memorable milestone event!



New Purohit Course 2016-17

Excerpt from a letter to centers and āchāryas from Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

One of the 108 names for Pujya Gurudev is dharma-samsthāpaka, one who re-establishes dharma in the world. In keeping with his grand vision, in recent years, Chinmaya Mission has administered two Purohit Courses, each 18 months long, at the Chinmaya Gardens ashram in Coimbatore, India. A need was felt for a shorter course, so Chinmaya Mission will now be offering a six-month course at Chinmaya Gardens, from August 29, 2016 to February 28, 2017.

This new course is designed for interested persons to get training and be able to lead the society on the path of dharma. This course will:

Train young men to take up paurohityam as their profession

Allow Chinmaya Mission members to learn the principles and practices of various rituals that will help them in their regular sadhana and empower them to offer sevā in their respective centers

Help purohits gain more clarity and refresh their knowledge

[View details.](#)

CIF International Conference and Release of
Brahmasūtra-catuḥ-sūtrī-śāṅkara-bhaṣyam and Anusāraka
by Shibani Khurana and Aishwarya Nair

The sublime philosophy of Advaita Vedanta enshrined in Hindu scriptures is what transformed the agnostic journalist Balakrishnan Menon into the visionary and world-renowned monk, Swami Chinmayananda, who dedicated over four decades of dynamic service to the cultural rejuvenation of India and spiritual upliftment of the world. Through its various activities, Chinmaya Mission has been promoting and spreading Advaita Vedanta for over six decades today, and the effects on humanity at large are visible and tangible.

In honor of CBCC (Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebrations), CIF was privileged to host an international conference on the “Contribution of Advaita Vedanta to Humanity,” November 18-21, 2015 at the Chinmaya Vibhooti ashram in Kolwan, India. The conference also marked the celebration of CIF’s 25-year anniversary as a Sanskrit and Indic research center. The purpose of this conference was to review the core elements of Advaita Vedanta, identify its influence on humanity, recognize various concepts in the context of modern-day, and understand its implications for comprehensive, sustainable unity.

The three-day conference was attended by more than 400 participants, as well as speakers from India and other parts of the world. Each day featured a primary Vedantic theme, namely, jīva (individual), jagat (world), and Ishvara (God). The inaugural ceremonies were held in the esteemed presence of Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, Dr. Parameshwara Shastry (Vice Chancellor, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan), and Dr. Sanjay Deshmukh (Vice Chancellor, Mumbai University). In his address, Dr. Deshmukh said, “One bee collects only one gram of honey after visiting 350 flowers. Its efforts are only for the betterment of the hive, without a drop for itself. What each of us as humans are doing for humanity is to think about.” This was followed by a soulful rendition of devotional songs and hymns, themed on Advaita, by Music Director of Chinmaya Naada Bindu, Pramodini Rao.

The first day of the conference, November 19, was themed on jīva and began with a succinct keynote address from Pūjya Guruji. The day included a talk on “The Ideal Individual According to Advaita Vedanta” by Dr. V. Sastry (Hyderabad); a panel discussion on “The Role of Vedanta in Sustaining Social Harmony and Human Relationships, with panelists Dr. Anita Thapan (Delhi), Dr. Geetha Mohan (Mumbai), and others; “Exponents of Advaita Vedanta and their Contributions, East and West” by Dr. Annette Wilke (Berlin) and Dr. Dharm Bhawuk (Hawaii). The day concluded with a traditional Kerala Sanskrit theater performance by Kapila Venu and troupe. This mesmerizing Kudidiyaṭam art is nearly 2,000 years old. Each day of the conference saw the philosophy of Advaita featured not only in the academic sessions, but also in the evening cultural programs. Audiences from far and wide witnessed and appreciated a wealth of diverse performances.

The second day, themed on jagat, commenced with a keynote address from Swami Advayananda, President of the Chinmaya International Foundation. The engaging topics for the day included “Reorienting Education” by Swamini Vimalananda (Coimbatore), “Nation-building and Nourishing Leaders through Advaita” by Dr. B. Mahadevan (Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru); a panel discussion on “Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam” that included panelists Alexander Jacob (Retired IPS Officer, Kannur) and Swami Nikhilananda (Delhi); and “Advaita Vedanta and the Philosophy of Science” by Dr. K. Ramasubramanian (Mumbai). The day concluded with a screening of On a Quest.

The keynote address on the third day, themed on Īshvara, was delivered in Sanskrit by noted scholar, Dr. Mani Shastri, (Chennai) on jīva-brahmaikya-bodha. The topics of the day included “Saguṇa and Nirguṇa Brahma” by Dr. Srinivasan Krishnamurthy (Chennai), “The Concept of Jīva-brahmaikya” by Dr. Godabarisha Misra (Head of Department of Philosophy, Madras

University). Swami Haribrahmendra (Ādi Shaṅkara Brahmavidyāpeeth, Uttarkashi) presided as the chairperson. Swami Swaroopananda (CIRS Director and Regional Head of CM UK, Australia, and Far East) shared his personal encounters with Pūjya Gurudev and spoke on Pūjya Gurudev's contributions to humanity as an Advaitin. The valedictory address was delivered by Ram Madhav (Director, India Foundation), who urged Indians to wear their culture on their sleeve and spoke of how Pūjya Gurudev turned Indians to look at their own culture in the most appealing way to the modern man.

New publications were released each day: The two-volume Brahma-sūtra-catuḥ-sūtrī-śāṅkara-bhaṣyam; Advaitāṃṛtam, the conference commemorative; and the much-awaited language access software, Anusāraka. Of the Brahma-sūtra-catuḥ-sūtrī-śāṅkara-bhaṣyam, Bhagavān Ādi Shaṅkarāchārya's commentary on the Brahma-sūtra, Pūjya Guruji stated, "This publication on the Brahma-sūtra is a long cherished dream. There couldn't have been a more befitting time for its release—in Pūjya Gurudev's birth centenary year." The comprehensive treatise consists of Maharishi Veda-vyāsa's Brahma-sūtra in Sanskrit, Ādi Shaṅkarāchārya's commentary in Sanskrit, and the English translation of both. Meticulously researched, this critical edition of the Brahma-sūtra is a treasure for Vedantic seekers. Aside from a detailed, analytical, and lucid translation of Ādi Shaṅkarāchārya's commentary, it also includes material from ten significant sub-commentaries and sixteen scriptural texts. Orders may be placed through CIF's publications department.

The success of the event was by the Lord's grace and Pūjya Gurudev's blessings, leaving every volunteer, speaker, and participant touched by the glory of Advaita Vedanta.



Chinmaya Jyoti in Delhi
Report submitted by CCMT

The Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebrations at Siri Fort in Delhi were covered by India's national Doordarshan television channel. DD-1 telecast a documentary on the Chinmaya Jyoti Yātrā on November 14, 3-3:30 p.m. The program showcased the Jyoti Yātrā in Delhi, the teachings and Mission of Pūjya Gurudev, a short film on Pujya Gurudev, a trailer of On a Quest, a speech by Mohan Bhagwat, and video bytes by various dignitaries and compere, Shyam Banerji.

The following are recent postings in 2015 of the Chinmaya Sandesh Vāhinī mobile on its continuing journey of the Chinmaya Jyoti Yātrā.

Day 208: December 1

The Chinmaya Jyoti was received in Ahmednagar by CM devotees and Swami Pratyānanda, who was conducting a jñāna yajña there. The procession headed to the Viṭṭhala-Rakumāi Temple with nāma-saṅkīrtana and bhajans. After an elaborate pādukā pūjā at the temple, Swamiji addressed the devotees, explaining the purpose of the Chinmaya Jyoti Yātrā and the highlights of the journey so far. Devotees viewed the Chinmaya Jyoti exhibit and then had lunch bhikshā. In the afternoon, excited Anand Vidyalaya students of the Mission arrived, eager to have the unique lifetime experience of the Chinmaya Jyoti. Early in the evening, Swamiji led devotees in the chanting of Shrī Vishnu Sahasranāma.

Day 209: December 2

The Chinmaya Jyoti was received in the 400-year old Viṭṭhala temple in Talegaon where the great saint Tūkārāma Maharaja frequently sang bhajans. Over the years, many CM āchāryas have conducted jñāna yajñas in the temple, including Swami Purushottamananda, who had conducted more than 25 yajñas there. That afternoon, the entire temple was decorated with beautiful flower arrangements and colorful lights to mark the joyous, festive occasion. Swami Atmeshananda led the pādukā pūjā and then addressed the gathering, sharing the importance of the celebrations and purpose of the yātrā. Thereafter, a bhajan group offered bhajans and a young artist rendered a solo vocal in Raga Bhairavi. After devotees had darshan of the Chinmaya Sandesh Vahini exhibit, everyone left for the Ayyappa temple situated atop Sastha Hill. After performing pradikshana around the temple, Pūjya Gurudev's pādukā pūjā was performed. This Ayyappa temple, which has a beautiful view of Pune's suburbs, was constructed in accordance with Pūjya Gurudev's vision and he gave the first donation for its construction. Many such temples were established worldwide based on his vision, saṅkalpa, and support. The final destination for the day was the Chinmaya Mauli ashram in Lohegaon, where the Jyoti was received by Swami Siddheshananda and other āchāryas.

Day 210: December 3

The yātrā team made its way toward Toap-Sambhapur near Kolhapur, to the abode of Chinmaya Gaṇādhīsha, the 85-ft. tall idol of Lord Ganesha. The Lord's form is a magnificent sight from the Mumbai-Bengaluru highway. The Jyoti was given a traditional ḍhola and tūtari Kolhapuri welcome by Swami Atmadevananda and CM devotees. Pūjya Gurudev's pādukās were carried in a palanquin to the temple. Thereafter, Swami Atmadevananda carried them on his head as ladies from the nearby villages showered flower petals on them and men sang bhajans. The pādukās were taken to the satsang hall, where all the ladies, bearing ārati thālīs in their hands performed ārati.

In the afternoon, students from various schools came in bus loads to view the exhibit on Pūjya Gurudev's life. In the evening, devotees led by Brahmachari Atari Chaitanya performed pādukā pūjā. Swami Atmadevananda addressed the gathering briefly, after which Prime Minister Modi's speech at the CBCC coin release, and Many Moods of the Master (a video montage of Pūjya Gurudev) was screened. The evening concluded with dinner prasād for all devotees.

Day 211: December 4

In the morning, the team visited Swami Purushottamananda's samādhi mandir in the ashram with Pūjya Gurudev's pādukās. The Toap ashram and idol were constructed under the guidance of Swami Purushottamananda, who was a great devotee of Lord Dattātreya. Before meeting Pūjya Gurudev, he did intense penance to invoke Lord Dattātreya's blessings and in their first meeting, Pūjya Gurudev called him into the room saying, "Come Dattātreya!" In later years, Pūjya Gurudev called Swamiji his "Marathi mouthpiece."

The Chinmaya Jyoti continued to Belgavi (previously Belgaum), where it was received on the highway, near the town entrance, by Mayor Kiran Sayanak and Minister Suresh Angadi in the presence of Swamini Prajnananda, Swami Atmadevananda, and Siddharam Mahaswamigalu of Rudraximath Naganur. A convoy of approximately 200 motorcycles and cars led the Chinmaya Sandesh Vāhinī to the Chinmaya Vandana ashram, where Pūjya Gurudev's pādukās and the Jyoti were carried for display in two specially designed chariots for display. En route, the Jyoti was received by the staff and administration of the KLE Hospital near their premises. The convoy alerted all the citizens of Belgavi of the arrival of the Jyoti. The traditional pūrṇakumbha and pādukā pūjā were performed led by Swamini Prajnananda, after which lunch prasad was served to all. Post-lunch, the CM bhajan group sang various bhajans and abhaṅgas until early evening. Having tied the traditional pheṭa (traditional Maharashtrian headwear) and placed kalashas on their heads, devotees began their procession with the sounding of the conch and the invocation of Lord Ganesha. The pādukās were taken around the block to the songs of a bhajan maṇḍali and music of a ḍhola pāṭhaka (group), followed closely by the Vāhinī exhibit and the convoy. The procession drew much attention from the residents of the area. A unique feature was that the majority of the members of the entire procession and the ḍhola group, which played continuously for more than an hour, were women. With much enthusiasm and inspirational spirit, as the procession approached the Ramnath Mangal Karyalaya, the rhythm of the beats increased in pace and intensity. Devotees were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Jyoti at the hall. Having placed the pādukās, jyoti, and vastram on the stage in the hall, Swami Atmadevananada addressed the gathering. The chief guest for the function was Minister Suresh Angadi, who spoke in his address of Pūjya Gurudev's tireless work for the upliftment of the common man and that world peace is achievable if it is rooted in the spiritual knowledge of the scriptures. A few cultural performances, including Bharatnatyam and fusion instrumental music, followed, marking a wonderful end to a day of festivities. Joy and contentment in the hearts of all showed in their enthusiasm throughout the function.

Day 212: December 5

CM devotees in Goa assembled at the Datta Mandir in Sanquelim, nearly 30 km from its capital city of Panaji. The Jyoti was received by Swamis Sughoshananda and Prakarshananda, along with other devotees. The temple is one of the oldest temples in Goa, dedicated to Lord Dattātreya. An elaborate pādukā pūjā led by Swami Sughoshananda was performed at the temple. Swami Prakarshananda addressed the gathering after the puja.

The Chinmaya Sandesh Vāhinī then made its way toward Divza Square at the entrance of Panaji, where it was received by Chief Minister Laxmikant Parasekar, Minister Siddharth Kunkolieknkar, and Mayor Shubham Chodankar. After ārati, the Jyoti proceeded in a decorated chariot to the Chinmaya Ālok ashram, where it was received by Swami Prakarshananda and devotees. The pādukā pūjā was performed by Brahmacharini Dharana Chaitanya. Lunch prasad was served thereafter.

The next morning, the hall at the Jnyan Vikas School in Porvorim was set up for the students, while four "Transforming Indians to Transform India" sessions were conducted in Porvorim and Panaji at Vidya Prabodhini College, District Institute of Education and Training, Dempo College of Commerce, and Santo Miguel High School.

In the evening, the Jyoti procession went to Dariya Sagar in Kala Academy, Panaji, where a traditional Goan folk song and dance performance was presented in colorful costumes, with steady drumbeats. Around 150 students from the Adarsh School participated in the procession, dancing with lezim. At the Kala Academy, Bala Vihar children sang a few bhajans and chanted Gītā, Chapter 15. This was followed by Swami Prakarshananda's address, in which he recalled Pūjya Gurudev's message at the United Nations to live righteously and peacefully. Chinmaya Nāda Brahma, a CHYK Goa music initiative, mesmerized the audience with their soulful singing of bhajans. The evening concluded with dinner prasad.

For more dates and details, follow the Chinmaya Jyoti Yātrā on Facebook.



CM Los Angeles' "Shruti Laya" Fundraiser with Yesudas
by Hema Ravikumar

Attendees at CM Los Angeles' annual Sevāñjali fundraiser, "Shruti Laya," saw Padmabhūshan K. J. Yesudas enthral a packed auditorium with a dazzling vocal repertoire of multilingual musical pieces. The audience assembled at the Plummer Auditorium on November 1, 2015 and enthusiastically vocalized their appreciation.

In his address, Swami Ishwarananda, (CM Los Angeles) aptly summed up the glory of "Shruti Laya," explaining shruti is pleasant musical sound heard by the ears, and laya is when the listener is transported and transformed by that music. Laya means "dissolution," and here it refers to the mind dissolving into a meditative peace. This, he said, is the ultimate feat and goal of all great musicians, who convey through their art this rare transcendence into Oneness.

Acharya Mahadev Parameswaran (CM Los Angeles) echoed the theme of divinity in sound emphasizing that just as shruti is the constant drone in the background of a musical piece, so, too, "in Vedanta, shruti is the changeless substratum of the universe, the Supreme." He said if we play our part like an actor on the stage of life; in rhythm with the conscious, divine principle of life; we gain absorption, or laya, in the Self.

Interspersing his music with endearing anecdotes about his music and life journey, Yesudas established a positive rapport with the audience from the start. He spoke about his simple beginnings; his training with renowned Carnatic music guru, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar; his connection to the Indian film industry's music doyens, such as Ravindra Jain and Salil Choudhary; and reflected nostalgically on the process of singing in various languages over the years. He went on to draw attention humorously, yet poignantly, to the disparity of regional loyalties and differences. He repeatedly expressed his views about the common thread shared by all religions and made a plea for all communities to work beyond differences. He said, "I was born in a Christian family, but feel close to Hinduism and to Allah. I sing music from the heart without thinking about religions and their differences. When I sing about Krishna or Christ, they both simply start with the same sound; neither is higher, lower, or better than the other."

Yesudas began the program with Carnatic devotional songs and then moved to performing improvisational pieces from different genres and languages: Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam, Bengali, Kannada, and Telugu. The audience appreciated and lauded the singing idol, who has delivered nearly six decades of acclaimed music from ornate temple settings to the silver screen. The accompanists were Krishna Parthasarathy on violin, Santosh Chandru on ghaṭam, T.S. Nandakumar on mridangam, and Mayuri Vasani (BV alumnus) on tanpura.

Yesudas' parting message to youth studying music was to be strong and disciplined in their sadhana, to learn under a guru who observes and corrects their flaws to allow them to truly excel and evolve in their craft. Swami Siddhananda (CM Philadelphia) spoke at the event as a special guest and performed a short original composition inspired by Yesudas's "Jaba Dīpa Jale." Shashi Acharya, CM Los Angeles' Foundation Committee Chair, spoke on the center's fundraising goals and successes, and wholeheartedly praised all the volunteers. The evening was excellently emceed by Nimmi Raghunathan.



Prayer and Gratitude Illumine Chinmaya Prabhā

by Padmashree Rao

Light has great significance in any religion. As a shining representation of the eternal Truth that dispels the darkness of ignorance, it stands for everything that is joyful, inspiring, beautiful, and peaceful. Such is the central spirit of Dīpāvali, the Hindu festival of lights, which literally means “an array of lights.” Celebrated by Indians all over the world, the theme of this festival is uniquely unifying and uplifting in all the various ways it is cherished.

At CM Houston’s Chinmaya Prabhā ashram, Divali was hailed on November 8, 2015 with heartfelt prayers and deep gratitude to the Lord and the Guru. Unfailing in both discipline and devotion, every aspect of the Divali puja invoked tradition, introspection, and the spirit of community with equal fervor. In two sessions, over 800 families, sharing the social and spiritual cheer of the auspicious festival, gathered and prayed.

That morning, everywhere in Chinmaya Prabhā, the aesthetic beauty of the Divali decorations captivated the senses. The colorful rangolis, brilliant lights, and intricate floral arrangements caught every eye; fragrant incense spread a divine scent; the devotional bhajans and chanted hymns purified and elevated devotees; and all around, the sacred brightness of Divali was palpable.

In such an inspiring atmosphere, the message of Acharya Gaurang Nanavaty emphasized how Divali is about treasuring the true wealth of spiritual values. He pointed out that while the material wealth that Mother Lakshmi provides raises our standard of living, the wealth of universally good values ensures a high quality of life. He said to gain such values, the grace of Lord Nārāyaṇa, and the blessings and guidance of the Guru-paramparā, are essential.

The Divali puja, led by the ashram’s temple priest, began with a Ganesha Pūjā. This was followed by all the families offering worship with Lakshmi-ashtottara-shata-nāmāvaliḥ and chanting Vishnu-sahasra-nāma. The hour-long puja concluded with the Vedic and Chinmaya āratīs, and the offering of Guru-dakshinā.

Hindu scriptures declare that the way to God is through the Guru. Especially in this birth centenary year of Pūjya Gurudev, the ancient tradition of symbolically conveying gratitude through the Guru-dakshinā ceremony was significant. Another notable feature of this year’s Divali celebration was the three-week Food Drive organized by Houston CHYKs to support the Houston Food Bank.

Pūjya Gurudev once said, “As you stand in wonderment at the beauty of the rows of lights everywhere, learn to feel elated at the light of divine Consciousness that flutters in the hearts of all living beings.” The members of Chinmaya Houston glimpsed such elevating brightness this Dīpāvali.



Divya Shakti 2015
by Priya Amaresh

Reverence, silence, contemplation, creativity, laughter, and love were just a few of the myriad expressions experienced by nearly 100 ladies at the third annual “Divya Shakti Retreat” held October 9-11, 2015 in Raleigh, North Carolina. This year’s retreat, themed “Finding Your

Balance,” was also conducted, as in prior years, by Acharya Vilasini Balakrishnan (CM Washington DC) and Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara).

For 25 joyful hours, the “devis” of the retreat were engaged in meditation, discourse, discussion, and activity, all centered on enlightening one about the true Self. Vilasiniji led blissful guided meditations in the early morning, and helped plan for and design a sattvic home and environment in the afternoon workshop. In his discourses, Vivekji reflected on verses from Gītā, Chapter 14 (the three-fold qualities of nature) and guided us on living a balanced life. The retreat teachings were aimed at helping transcend the three gunas.

In addition, the weekend was filled with various fun and introspective activities. On Friday evening, the retreat began with several “Ego Eraser” activities, which helped everyone set aside inhibitions, judgments, and expectations before proceeding to a weekend of spiritual growth. Saturday morning featured a series of exciting challenges that included “Club Sattva” to express joy, the “Tower Test” to learn to work collectively, and a time management activity to help realize that in spite of busy schedules and overwhelming responsibilities, one can always make time to remember one’s divine nature and seek the spiritual knowledge.

Overall, the Divya Shakti retreat gave the attending women a chance to participate in exercises with an active body and a quiet mind. The morning meals that were partaken in mauna (silence) were much enjoyed, allowing participants to be mindful of every thought and act focused on the present. To channel their creativity, the ladies were introduced to Warli Art, and given the opportunity to sketch and paint simple yet meaningful ancient designs on clay pots.

One of the highlights of the retreat was an evening cultural program of “Devis Take the Stage.” The activity connected participants to the nature of noble women in Hindu scriptures as they attempted to emulate their values in modern-day situations. The Divya Shakti retreat created a longing for more learning and inspired several participants to form new study groups. Everyone left with the theme of finding their balance etched in their minds.



CHYKs Ask, “Can You Hear Me Now?”
by Priya Wiersba

Chinmaya Yuva Kendra (CHYK) students of Ann Arbor hosted a CHYK retreat entitled, “Can You Hear Me Now?” October 30-November 1, 2015. Discourses and discussions for the 40 participants were led by three CM āchāryas: Sharada Kumar (CM Ann Arbor), Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara), and Gina Singh (CM Toronto). The retreat focused on approaching communication and dialogue from the perspective of Advaita Vedanta.

This retreat was the second in a series of CHYK retreats about gender; the first being, “Developing Our Inner Devika,” held in Washington D.C. in the summer of 2014. The first retreat was developed to allow women in CHYK to discuss gender and identity in a Vedantic setting. This year’s retreat was created to bridge the gap between the genders and hold discussions about becoming better “allies” to develop support within local Hindu communities.

The start of this CHYK retreat offered select split-gender activities to allow for the free discussion of gender issues among like-minded seekers. Also included were discourses, discussions, Q&A sessions, and recreational activities. The topic of identity was explored and

honed through an art activity using one's own facial profile, and a writing activity that encouraged reflection on the topics covered during the retreat. On Halloween, participants had an activity that allowed them to dress in costume. Overall, the retreat was very successful, and all the participating CHYKs were grateful for the opportunity to grow and serve.



CM Houston's Festive Navarātri Garba by Vinod Sharma

CM Houston's Navarātri celebration at the Stafford Civic Center on Friday, October 16, 2015 was a grand event attended by more than 1,200 member families and their friends to celebrate and worship Divine Mother, and to enjoy happy interactions, resonating music, energetic dance, and sumptuous food. It was a treat to see infants, toddlers, pre-teens, teens, young adults, parents, and grandparents in one grand ballroom, sharing the joy of the festival.

As the evening began, families were greeted in a foyer decorated with flowers and then ushered into the grand hall by volunteers. The atmosphere grew increasingly colorful and vibrant, as did the number of smiles, hugs, and handshakes as families continued to arrive. Everyone was soon captivated by a sanedo, a traditional dance drama from the villages of Gujarat. Uma Agarwal and Ruchira Shah offered an original composition of a sanedo in Hindi celebrating the life of Pūjya Gurudev. The poetic musical mix of story and dance had nearly everyone in the room on their feet. Without missing a beat, the dancing and music segued into ārati of Mother Durga.

Following a delicious dinner and some rest, everyone collected their dandiya for raas. The hall was packed to capacity with dancers forming parallel rows, in which they skipped, twirled, sashayed, and tapped dandiya in joyful rhythm. The room was filled with toe-tapping and finger-snapping music, hearty laughter, and goodwill, and soon, the clicking of the dandiya sounded like the ticking of a giant clock. The singers, dancers, and music accompanists competed to showcase their stamina, each group performing to outlast the other. As that evening concluded, the picture of families and friends portrayed a beautiful celebration of unity.



CM Pittsburgh "Dharmic Living" Family Camp by Shuba Sriram

CM Pittsburgh's weekend family retreat in September 2015 on "Dharmic Living with the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" welcomed 80 participants of all ages, hailing from Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Washington D.C. The retreat, led by Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara), featured inspiring discourses, silent reflection sessions, and group discussions for adults, CHYKs, and Junior CHYKs; Bala Vihar sessions for children; and Shri Ganesha Chaturthi celebrations. On the inaugural evening, each family was given clay to create their own Lord

Ganesha idol, to which they offered puja and then submerged in a visarjana procession on the last day of the retreat. The early autumn weather allowed all the planned outdoor activities to take place with ease and joy, including nature walks, outdoor games, garba, and a recreational “Escape Room.”

In his discourses, Vivekji highlighted the role that self-development plays in handling relationships in a dharmic way. He beautifully elaborated relevant messages from three scriptural texts. While he showed a philosophical perspective from Īshāvāsya Upanishad, he gave a practical perspective from Bhagavad Gītā and Chāṇakyya’s Nīti Shāstra. He then spoke on how clarity in scriptural knowledge leads to conviction and confidence in translating Vedantic truths into daily life. After a rejuvenating and a reflective weekend for the BMI, the families left positively charged, and the children said they could not wait to return next year.

JCHYK Camp
by Aashika Suseendran

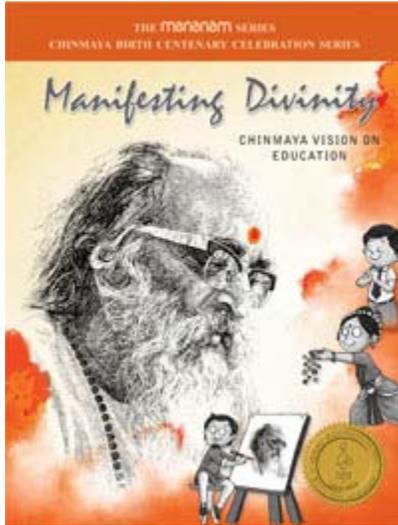
Teens in grades 9-12 gathered in August 2015 from various states for the JCHYK (Junior CHYK) camp at CM Washington DC’s Chinmaya Somnāth ashram in Chantilly, VA. The camp, entitled “Decoding Dharma,” was conducted by Acharya Vivek Gupta (CM Niagara). JCHYKs had the opportunity not only to seek answers to enigmatic spiritual questions, but also to introspect and share their thoughts with others.

The camp consisted of satsangs by Vivekji and a discourse by Swami Dheerananda (CM Washington DC). The JCHYKs were taught the meaning of sanātana dharma, self-development, and discipline—realizing one’s nature as eternal Bliss through the process of self-development, which requires learning discipline.

The campers also enjoyed celebrating Holi, participating in bhajans, offering sevā, learning prayers and meditation, engaging in outdoor athletics, and going on an excursion called “Pride in DC.” The final evening of the camp, where families were invited, culminated in group performances—from game show skits to dramas, to rap. The camp concluded with ārati and the offering of Guru-dakshinā.



Features



Education: The Power to Manifest Divinity

Edited excerpts from Manifesting Divinity, Cbcc Mananam Series

CMW News is pleased to offer in this sacred milestone year of the birth centenary celebrations of Pujya Gurudev, His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda-ji Maharaj, a series of feature articles showcasing excerpts from the Cbcc Mananam series of books. Our humble and unending prostrations of worship and adoration at the holy feet of our revered Guru, who is, and will ever remain, the Love of our hearts, the Light of our understanding, the very Fulfillment of our lives. Hari Om Tat Sat.

Knowledge empowers, elevates, and liberates man. The purpose of knowledge is to give us a vision, to make us independent, to transform our life. More important than secular knowledge, each of us needs spiritual knowledge to live a value-based and dharmic life. Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda has said, “Education refines, beautifies, and transforms the soul of man. It has the power to manifest his inherent divinity.”

While parents, teachers, family, and society help beautify and refine the behavior and mind of the child, scriptures teach the child the means to manage personal and professional life. Such comprehensive education, which includes holistic and cultural teachings, is called *samskṛti*.

Ancient India had a highly advanced and well-developed education system. There were thousands of *gurukulas* spread throughout the country, offering basic and advanced education in various secular and spiritual subjects. Students received advanced teachings in subjects according to their inclination, but spiritual and cultural education was common to all. The Guru set a high standard of values and conduct that the students were expected to follow even when they returned home after their many years of stay in the *gurukula*. The students lived a simple and disciplined life, dedicated to knowledge and service of the Guru. They graduated with mastery in their vocation and with strength of character, which helped them to face life’s

challenges and build a successful life of their own. The Guru was neither concerned with making money nor the country's politics, even though their students included eminent rulers, leaders, and thinkers. The Guru led an inspired, and inspiring, life dedicated to knowledge.

Customs, traditions, festivals, samskaras, spiritual practices, worship, fine arts, and performing arts are all a means to inculcate culture and values. Students in the *gurukul* were taught the various fields of knowledge with the goal of mastering them to the highest degree. Teaching and learning was always dedicated to God and performed as a means to worship God.

Scottish architect and mason, William Adam, observed in 1835, "Before the British arrived there were thousands of *gurukulas* flourishing in India. Now, hardly a few remain. Indians became alienated from their cultural roots—their values, customs, languages, religion, and all that they held in great reverence."

The Indian education system, management skills, and culture can be practiced even today, for they are, at once, ancient and time-tested, as well as relevant and practically applicable. Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda envisioned a holistic education program in schools, by which the best of ancient and modern education methods could be integrated. This, he ascertained, was the right means to manifest the inherent divinity in man. His vision gave form to the Chinmaya Vision Program, which is currently implemented in all of educational institutions under the Chinmaya Mission banner.

The sages of Vedic India were great educationists who were concerned with life as a whole, with the holistic development of the individual and society. Spirituality formed the basis of all aspects of life, including education. Prenatal education was considered extremely important. Mothers were responsible to entertain good thoughts, read sacred texts, listen to holy chants and wise words, keep the company of noble souls, and make auspicious resolutions for the child. In addition, the child received traditional samskaras to reinforce his learning, culminating with the *jāta* ceremony at the time of his birth.

The child's informal preschool education at home, in the loving and caring presence of a joint family, was given particularly by the parents and elders, nourishing the child and providing strong support for his lifelong growth and progress. Childhood was marked by rituals of worship and samskaras such as the naming ceremony, first bite of solid food, first time being taken out of the house, first haircut, first ear-piercing, and the like.

Between the ages of six and eight years, the child was taken to the *gurukula*, a residential school where he or she stayed for ten to eighteen years, immersed in continuous and rigorous studies without any vacation. The students lived with the Guru and his wife, often in the same house. Their relationship was one of mutual love and respect. Reverence toward the Guru is the hallmark of Indian spirituality and culture. The teaching-learning process involved chanting, discourses, reflection, independent thinking, group discussions, research, demonstrations, and hands-on experimentation. All classes always started and ended with prayers and peace invocations. The students were not divided age-wise into classes, but based on their individual progress. Aside from studies and routine chores, daily life in the *gurukula* involved spiritual practices like fasting, worship, fire rituals, dawn and dusk prayers, yoga, and meditation. All these opened the door to a unique way of learning—intuition.

A love for knowledge and a zeal for constant self-improvement were embedded in the ancient Indian approach to learning. It was passed from generation to generation through the teacher-taught lineage, or *guru-paramparā*. In Indian culture, one's lineage was also given due reverence and importance. Thus, the student would always salute the entire lineage: “*Vande guru-paramparām.*”

Education in *gurukulas* was patronized by kings and wealthy nobles; fees were not charged. Presently, in government schools, which give free education, more often than not, neither the students nor the teachers are inspired to learn or teach, respectively. In *gurukulas*, the Guru taught because of his love for knowledge and the student learned selecting subjects according to his aptitude; education was not a burden. Students were taught how to live as ideal citizens. On graduating, the student offered his Guru *guru-dakshinā*, an offering of gratitude, according to his capacity.

The first university of ancient India was flourishing in Takshashīlā nearly 3,000 years ago; its ruins are located in present-day Pakistan. Records indicate that more than 10,000 students from around the world studied there, gaining specialization in more than 64 different fields of study, such as the Vedas, grammar, philosophy, Ayurveda, agriculture, surgery, politics, archery, warfare, astronomy, commerce, futurology, music, dance, and even the art of discovering hidden treasure (archaeology).

Nalanda, a university for higher learning in ancient India, attracted pupils and scholars from Korea, Japan, China, Tibet, Indonesia, Persia, and Turkey. It featured the study of philosophy, fine arts, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, politics, and the art of war, among other subjects. Interfaith debates were also encouraged. At its peak, Nalanda University could accommodate over 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers.

Today, the “Chinmaya” name is globally renowned in the world of Indian spirituality. Pūjya Gurudev was a leader and a pioneer, a Hindu missionary who propagated Vedanta in a modern language and context to the intellectual masses of India and the world. He worked tirelessly for more than four decades and spread Vedantic teachings under the banner of Chinmaya Mission through Upanishad and *Gītā jñāna yajñas*, Chinmaya Bala Vihars, Chinmaya Yuva Kendra, Chinmaya Study Groups, and Chinmaya Colleges, and Chinmaya Vidyālayas—schools with a difference.

Pūjya Gurudev's vision of education eventually matured into the Chinmaya Education Movement. In a time of great need to rethink what true education is, Pūjya Gurudev sought to infuse modern academics with ancient Indian learning principles to form a holistic yet relevant system of study, best suited to the needs of today. During his lifetime, he established and personally guided schools under the Chinmaya Mission umbrella. He formally concretized his vision and objectives for all such educational institutes in 1996. Thus was born the “Chinmaya Vision Program,” or CVP.

Swamini Vimalananda, current director of CVP, says, “Radhika Krishnakumar, Mytrae Maganti, Viji Vijaykumar, and myself penned Gurudev's vision into a program and worked to develop the four aspects of CVP, compile a manual of guidelines, and introduce it to all the schools and colleges—all in a year's time. CVP was Gurudev's will at work. It started with a bang,

progressed at unbelievable speed, and received accolades from thousands. Teachers, parents, and management responded with words such as, ‘need of the hour,’ ‘inspires the teacher in me,’ ‘real education,’ and ‘what Gurudev envisaged.’”

Swamini Vimalananda and Radhika Krishnakumar traveled across India conducting nearly 200 CVP seminars for management and faculty at hundreds of schools across India. To date, the program is being implemented in 2,000 schools and colleges across fifteen states in India. In addition, the Sri Lankan government is supporting the integration of CVP into their education system.

CVP’s four aspects are physical fitness, mental development, intellectual development, and spiritual development. Integrated development aims at the overall unfoldment and gentle blossoming of the student at all levels of the personality, so that he becomes physically fit and well-groomed, emotionally balanced, intellectually alert and creative, and spiritually awakened.

1. Physical Fitness

A healthy body is more likely to house a healthy mind. Children and youth get accustomed to the joy of being physically fit and making healthy living a lifelong passion. Nutrition, hygiene, physical grooming, health education, and health assessment are also emphasized in CVP.

2. Mental Development

Shri Krishna has said in *Gītā*, “One who is disintegrated has neither right thinking nor right emotions. How can there be peace and happiness for one who has not developed emotionally?” CVP’s mental development aims at making the student emotionally balanced and able to live in harmony with the world. Conscious elimination of negative emotions and cultivation of positive emotions lead to the overall emotional well-being of the student. Children are taught to experience the joy of selfless actions, sharing, and caring, and to learn to rejoice in the joy of others. This makes them trusting, sensitive, accommodative, and kind.

The main components here are handling emotions to strike a balance between the head and heart, gender-specific education to understand how to form healthy relationships with the opposite sex, and handling relationships to relate effectively to situations and all age groups.

3. Intellectual Development

It is said in *Pañchadashi* that problems are caused by “lack of thinking (*avicāra*), incomplete thinking (*alpa vicāra*), and wrong thinking (*viparīta vicāra*),” and complete and right thinking resolves problems. The purpose of intellectual development is to realize one’s infinite potential, explore its reach and depth, guide its direction, tame its waywardness, and develop qualities of subtlety and alertness. Taught knowledge is mostly forgotten, but learned knowledge never is. We live by what we have learned and not by what we are taught. The teacher, therefore, kindles questioning and lateral, independent, out-of-box thinking. We become excited by what we discover, fulfilled by what we solve, and committed to what we are convinced about. CVP provides intellectual assessment and guidance to enter professions students find motivating and satisfying. Students are taught to bring beauty into all that they do, within and without.

4. Spiritual Development

While outer progress is measured by what a man has, inner evolution is measured by what a man is. Man evolves from stone-man, to plant-man (with little awareness), to animal-man (selfish and brutish), to man-man (humane and refined), and finally, to God-man (selfless and divine). Man alone has the precious gift of choice, so he evolves or regresses accordingly. Spiritual development aims at enabling students to evolve in a wholesome and holistic way, growing in nobility and divinity. Here, CVP provides value education with the aim to establish a strong foundation of goodness to develop and support an edifice of greatness. The student's introduction to spiritual practices, such as scriptural study, introspection, self-assessment, *japa*, prayer, meditation, yoga, pranayama, chanting, and the like enrich his relationship with God, help increase his willpower and discipline, offer solace in times of trouble, and connect him with his spiritual core, which is the same in all beings.

Over the years, the government has discourage the teaching of spiritual, value-based, and culture-oriented knowledge in schools, which is a main reason Indians have shifted from upholding spiritual culture to promoting materialistic culture. At Chinmaya Mission schools, known as Chinmaya Vidyālayas (CVs), students are given wide exposure to various aspects of Indian culture, including literature, science, and art, as well as explanations on customs and traditions. Knowledge of their cultural roots enhances their self-esteem. Through stories, love, nonviolence, truthfulness, and dharmic living are embedded in children's minds.

Pujya Gurudev was acutely aware and concerned that India's masses lived in ignorance of their own philosophical, religious, and cultural heritage. He thus allowed the formation of Chinmaya Mission as an organization under the umbrella of which unique learning institutes such as *Sāndeepany Sādhanālayas* and Chinmaya Vidyālayas flourish.

CVP first exposes students to Indian festivals, customs, rituals, chanting, and symbolism. Pūjya Gurudev did not miss an opportunity to make Indians aware of their culture. He once asked the teachers of CV Delhi, "Do you know why you put the red dot on your forehead? It is the seat of wisdom. If you understand its significance, and place it there with the right attitude and intention, your third eye really opens up!"

CVP focuses on developing in students the sense of patriotism for their motherland. Patriotism is a deep-seated emotion that enables one to put one's motherland before oneself and one's family. Students develop pride in their country and study its weaknesses, so that they can learn to tackle the injustices and evils of society. Each student is rooted in the conviction that he or she is an Indian first and foremost, irrespective of the differences of community, religion, state, or race. CVP aims to create dedicated and committed citizens who are proud to serve the nation. Accordingly, CVP also focuses on citizenship, civic consciousness, patriotic pride, and handling vital national concerns. India has traditionally been a society duty-based, rather than a rights-based. Students are empowered to strive to create jobs, rather than only seek jobs.

A universal outlook is the appreciation, sensitivity, and commitment to universal issues. It helps students see themselves as responsible world citizens who must be ready and able to address world issues, to live in harmony with creation, to elevate their relationship with God, and to look at every day as Earth Day, Sun Day, Tree Day, Cow Day, etc., so that there is no

question of exploiting nature.

From an early age, students are guided to look upon God as a universal presence, to look with wonder at the universe, to recognize the one Divine in creation. Faith in God is invoked through simple scriptural stories. In later years, through deeper study and discussions, practical applications in daily living become the focus, including observing how prayer and meditation reduce stress before exams. It is enthralling and inspiring to think of the difference that the 1.5 million alumni of CM schools and colleges can make all over the world through their learnings.

Pūjya Guruji has explained, “Man identifies with the physical body most naturally, for it is closest to him. The next level is his willingness to make sacrifices for his children. When he identifies with the nation, his selfishness drops even further. However, if the mind realizes its oneness with totality, with the entire universe, his vision becomes all-inclusive and not a trace of selfishness remains in him. It is this holistic concept that has been translated into educational terms as the Chinmaya Vision Program.”

Chinmaya Mission is Pūjya Gurudev’s love made visible, and the Mission’s education institutions are edifices enlivened with his holistic and grand vision. The Mission’s educational institutions and courses include its schools, boarding school, colleges, Vedanta courses (residential and home-study), the Purohit Course (to train priests), the Dharma Sevak Course (for volunteers who wish to serve the Mission more), the Youth Empowerment Program, *jñāna yajñas* (series of discourses), spiritual camps, weekly Vedanta classes for all ages, and the Sanskrit and Indology research center known as CIF (the Chinmaya International Foundation). In 2012, there were 7 Chinmaya Colleges, 81 Chinmaya Vidyalayas, 5,000 teachers on CV campuses, 85,000 students, and 850,000 alumni.

The Chinmaya International Residential School (CIRS) in Coimbatore, India was envisioned by Pūjya Gurudev for Indian NRI families around the world who wanted their children to be rooted in Hindu culture despite living abroad. To serve their needs, Pūjya Gurudev envisaged a school that would “integrate the best of the East and West, a cultural home away from home to unearth the beauty and hidden potential of tomorrow’s leaders.” In 1996, CIRS opened at full capacity, with 100 students across grades 5-8, 11 faculty members, administrators, and *brahmacārins* to guide the students’ spiritual studies. Over the years, CIRS expanded and opened the 2012 academic year at full capacity with 550 students from 23 states of India and 19 other countries. The boarding school features state-of-the-art facilities, and has grown in prestige and renown. It has earned lauded academic results and continues to fulfill Pūjya Gurudev’s vision of education. In 2011, CIRS won the British Council International School Award, as well as the Chinmaya Vision Award for excellence in the implementation of CVP. In 2012, CIRS was ranked as one of India’s top ten boarding schools by Education World magazine.

As many as 139,000 Indians, mostly from the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, left India’s shores between 1895 and 1917 to become indentured immigrants in the distant island country of Trinidad of Tobago. Today, Indians in Trinidad make up just under half the population. Rudranath Capildeo, the child of an indentured laborer, remains the first and only Nobel laureate (in mathematics) of Trinidad. The country’s first president and two prime ministers were of Indian descent. Religion, culture, and traditions were maintained in the home, in accordance with the colonial masters’ restrictions. Noting the forceful threats posed by

religious converters, Badhase Sagan Maharaj, a local Hindu leader, began building schools to meet the educational needs of Hindus.

Pūjya Gurudev first visited Trinidad in May 1965. Years later, a Chinmaya Mission center was established in 1997 by native-born Swami Prakashananda, who saw that local education completely lacked spiritual and cultural values. The first Chinmaya Vidyalaya outside of India was inaugurated in Trinidad in 2003. Today, there are seven CVs in Trinidad and Tobago, serving over 700 students.

In these CVs, students perform *Sarasvatī Pūjā* at the beginning of each academic year, celebrate Hindu festivals throughout the year, and learn Sanskrit, Vedic chanting, yoga, music, and dance as part of their curriculum. A *jñāna yajña* is conducted each year by Swami Prakashananda for the Vidyalaya teachers and parents. Sanskrit is mandatory from pre-primary grades. An annual *Shānti Yātrā* and lecture are held in memory of, on the birth date of, Mahatma Gandhi.

The motto of Chinmaya Mission's Education Cell is, "*Vidyā phalam syāt asato nivrittih*: True knowledge removes all that is false in our lives." This cell guides policies and procedures of all CM Vidyalayas and colleges; produces resource materials on CVP; provides assessment and guidance on the academic, vision, and administration aspects for all CM educational institutions; provides consistent, timely training on all aspects of holistic education, including the efficient functioning of top management, principals, teachers, and administrative staff; offers scholarships and materials to needy students and schools; recognizes and awards excellence to management, principals, staff, and students; offers camps to forge bonding; and unites all the institutions as one whole to foster a stronger and more cohesive Chinmaya Family spirit.

Pūjya Gurudev inaugurated the Chinmaya Institute of Higher Learning in Bengaluru in 1975. It was renamed in 1996 as the Chinmaya Institute of Management (CIM). CIM was envisaged as a national and international institute of studies and research in leadership and management, with an aim to inspire a generation of leaders with values anchored in Indian heritage. At the heart of CIM programs are Pūjya Gurudev's life-affirming teachings of Vedanta.

Pūjya Gurudev's vision of art aligned with ancient India's concepts of art. As a connoisseur and supporter of the fine arts and performing arts, he encouraged many devotees in art, music, and dance fields to excel in their craft. Years later, in 2009, under the guidance of Pūjya Guruji, Chinmaya Mission established Chinmaya Naada Bindu, a residential *gurukula* for classical Indian music and dance at the *Chinmaya Vibhooti* ashram.

Devotee Anjali Singh recalled, "My brother invited Gurudev for a classical Indian music performance at his home. By the time Gurudev reached the place, drinks were flowing freely. Gurudev told the audience, "To attend a classical Indian music recital with a glass in hand is a contradiction. Music makes the mind quiet and alert; alcohol makes it dull. You would be defeating the very purpose for which the music is meant." People put down their glasses and experienced the beauty of the music."

Swami Swraopananda shared a story, saying, "A devotee with a sweet voice kept singing bhajans and chanting *shlokas* all the time before Gurudev. To the surprise of all, he told her

one day, ‘Spare everyone your singing.’ We had seen him tolerate the poor singing of many devotees. I realized that he was annihilating her ego because she felt she alone was the best singer and would not allow others to sing. He later told her, ‘Allow Him to sing through you.’”

Chinmaya Mission’s bhajan classes, inspired by Gurudev as a grassroots level activity, are weekly meetings for devotional singing. Music stalwarts such as Padma Shankar, Bombay Jayashri, and Shankar Mahadevan emerged from the bhajan group run by Susheela Acharya in Chembur, Mumbai. Her bhajan group, called Chinmaya Naada Bindu, continued for more than 30 years and she composed bhajans on Gurudev that are sung in Chinmaya Mission even today. The bhajan groups of Chinmaya Mission gave rise to Chinmaya Swarānjali groups, in which members can also learn the basics of Indian classical music, which forms the basis of all bhajans. The first Chinmaya Swarānjali group was inaugurated in 2003 on Pūjya Guruji’s birth date of June 30. Currently, there are various Chinmaya Swarānjali groups in India and overseas.

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I studied CV Virugambakkam until the third grade. When I was in twelfth grade, I went to Sidhbari to seek Gurudev’s permission to join the Vedanta Course (two-year residential course) even though I had not yet graduated, which was a requirement for eligibility. Gurudev told me I could join the course only if I passed with distinction in my twelfth grade exams. So, I studied very hard and got it. He then asked me to meet him in Secunderabad and I did. He looked me up and down, and said, “You look so innocent. You need to learn something about the world before you join. Teach at the Chinmaya Vidyalaya here.” So, I taught English, Science, and Social Studies to fourth and fifth graders for ten months. That was when I experienced the joy of teaching. I loved the children and they loved me. They still keep in touch with me. The experience polished me. I was introduced to the art of teaching, which was greatly helpful when I was assigned to teach *brahmacārins* at the Vedanta Course in Mumbai many years later.

- Swami Advayananda (CIF)

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Each year, the Rotary Club’s annual Dibakar Patnaik Memorial Shield award went to a CV for the best school in Rourkela. Finally, the Rotary Club decided that instead of giving the award year after year to CV, it should be given to the second best school—so that others also got a chance.

- K. C. Patnaik

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The first batch of students of CV Chend Colony appeared for the ICSE exam in 2001 at a center that was not their own school. As usual, anxiety was rampant among all the parents and students present. To everyone’s astonishment, there began a resounding recitation of *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter 12 in its entirety by the CV students. Having shooed away their fears, the confidence and calm seen on the students’ faces that day were the talk of the town.

- Anonymous

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Soon after CVP was launched, I took over as principal. There were major discipline issues at the time and I saw CVP as the answer. It was. The school became completely transformed, and we conducted sessions for parents as well, so that they felt connected to CVP and to CM, so that they, too, felt part of their children’s molding process. We won the Vision Award that year (1996). It was a big boost to the school, and made a big difference.

- Shanti Krishnamurthy

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When you teach children, their innocence affects you. Once, during *Janmāshṭami*, I told the fifth graders, “Krishna is with you all the time. When you drink your milk, see that He, too, drinks; otherwise, He will go hungry.” The children fully accepted this. Later, when I went to sit on an empty chair in the dining hall next to little Meera, she said in total belief, “Don’t sit here, *bhaiyā*. Krishna is already sitting here.”

- Swami Advayananda (at CIRS)

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One day, someone who had seen Swami Prakashananda’s discourse on television telephoned and offered land to open a new school. On another occasion, we were in Tobago and at the gas station, someone who had never met Swamiji, approached him and asked if we could open a Vidyalaya on his land. This is how our schools have been growing! Children from different backgrounds, including African and Chinese, study at our Chinmaya Vidyalaya. We also have students from the U.S., Guyana, and one from India. Most of them are children of parents who have been inspired by Swami Prakashananda, who is also the principal of the Vidyalayas. He received the 2012 Chaconia Gold Medal, the second highest award of the country, in recognition of his meritorious service to the people.

- Rama Heeralal (Vice Principal, CV Trinidad)

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Students of CV Bokaro developed a unique low-cost water filtration system made of only a filter and a tap, which consumes just two watts of electricity. The invention was adopted by a multinational company that distributed them to thousands of villagers at a nominal cost.

CV Chennai conducts medical and health check-ups biannually, and gives guidance regarding diet and exercise. The parent of a child who was detected with a hole in the heart fell at the feet of the principal in gratitude for the timely detection and saving of her child’s life.

A student of CV Tarapur went around his housing colony as part of his hygiene project, politely returning to the owner all the litter he found outside each home. The secretary of the housing colony in a letter of appreciation wrote to the principal, “Your student achieved what several notices could not.”

At CV Nagapattinam, students are made aware of the use of animal products in food, cosmetics, and leather products, so that they can choose to practice ‘beauty without cruelty’ and adopt a natural option instead. The students receive a list of products marked green, brown, or red to facilitate their choices.

Students of CV Kannamally abstained from buying firecrackers for Divali and donated the amount saved to purchase medicines for the nearby indigenous villagers.

Student Council members of CVs in Coimbatore were trained by professionals in leadership qualities, understanding roles and responsibilities, and problem-solving techniques. This gave them greater confidence in performing their duties as school leaders. In select CVs, children resolve their own issues and disputes by creating a student jury. It provides an opportunity for senior students to manage their difficulties through careful deliberation.

CV Tripunithura has a “Good News” bulletin, where even small achievements, in all areas, are displayed. This has boosted the confidence of students, for they are recognized and congratulated by everyone.

Some CV schools arrange pilgrimages on foot to holy places over weekends and during camps. Students are encouraged to observe silence, and watch their minds and everything around them. They absorb the spiritual vibrations of the place, pen their thoughts in prose or poetry, and return singing bhajans. This has helped bring about a change in attitude toward God, nature, and themselves.

The seventh grade students of CV Bengaluru were asked to keep a record of their own good and wrong deeds. The teachers were pleasantly surprised to find a visible improvement in their behavior within a month of their daily recordkeeping. Maintaining a spiritual diary has helped many Vidyalaya students assess themselves and change over the years.

“*Rāmāyaṇa* Month” is celebrated by all Vidyalayas in Kerala in various ways, including the rendering of select verses in assembly every morning.

All-India CHYK conducted a quiz across India called “Awakening Indians to India,” in which hundreds of CV students participated. The quiz achieved a world record for maximum simultaneous participation across India. Along a similar vein, the students of CV Delhi organized an exhibition on “Discover India.” All-India CHYK’s second national quiz on “Transforming Indians to Transform India” was held in honor of Gurudev’s birth centenary. Weekly and monthly quizzes on “Incredible India” and “Vision 2020” are conducted by CV Delhi, CIRS, and other CVs in order to promote patriotism.

To remind everyone that plants are alive, have feelings, and require love and care, the fifth grade students of CV Thiruvananthapuram identified healthy and unhealthy plants and trees in and around the school premises. They then put up signs such as, “I am happy at Chinmaya Vidyalaya,” “Take care of me; I am sick,” and “I need your love; water me,” were placed in front of the trees.

For a fourth consecutive year, the Ministry of Environment and Development sanctioned a climate change project initiated by CV Naruvamood. CV management sponsored smokeless *schūlās* (cooking stoves) in the neighborhood at half-price and installed a bio-gas plant in the Vidyalaya for effective waste disposal. The school measures its carbon footprint so that students can understand the amount of energy they consume.

Mass chanting creates a powerful sense of universality and has a great impact on the mind. Every year, CM Chennai and CVs in Chennai commemorate Pujya Gurudev’s *mahāsamādhi* with the mass chanting of *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. On one occasion, there were 20,000 students chanting the *Gītā* on Chennai’s Marina Beach!





Chinmaya Mission: Carrying Forward Swami Chinmayananda's Legacy

by Nithin Sridhar

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Hinduism is a dharma-centric religion and tradition that stands on the firm foundation of the philosophy of Vedanta. Vedantic teachings are universal in nature and eternally applicable to every person, irrespective of class, race, or gender. These teachings of Vedanta, which were once confined to *pāṭhashālās* (traditional schools) and particular *Guru-paramparās* (lineages), are now widely available in simple language to common people everywhere, thanks to the continued efforts of various teachers and organizations.

One such organization that is foremost in spreading Vedanta all around the world is Chinmaya

Mission, founded in 1953 under the guidance of the late Swami Chinmayananda. Swami Chinmayananda was a spiritual master and teacher of Advaita Vedanta who was inducted into the monastic order by Swami Sivananda of Divine Life Society. He was a dynamic teacher who authored more than 95 books, including insightful commentaries on the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

In 1951, when Swami Chinmayananda left Himalayas on an India-wide tour, he realized that there was a need to spread the teachings of the Upanishads to common masses. As a result, he conducted his first *jñāna yajña* (lecture series) in December 1951. In 1953, Chennai devotees requested the formation of an organization to organize and conduct activities such as *jñāna yajñas* and study groups.

Today, Chinmaya Mission has over 325 centers in 25 countries, including India, USA, Australia, UK, Canada, South Africa, Nigeria, Bahrain, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Indonesia, and France. It conducts a large number of activities that range from conducting Vedanta courses and Indic research, to administering schools/colleges and a wide array of social services.

Manisha Khemlani, the Chief Operating Officer of Central Chinmaya Mission Trust stated, “Every activity undertaken by Chinmaya Mission is guided by the vision and mission of our founder and inspiration, Swami Chinmayananda. Our mission statement reads, ‘To provide to individuals from any background, the wisdom of Vedanta and the practical means for spiritual growth and happiness, enabling them to become positive contributors to society.’ Every activity the Mission undertakes seeks to fulfill its motto to give maximum happiness to maximum people for maximum time.”

The Mission has established various Vedanta institutes that exclusively focus on imparting teachings of the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta. The first such institute of *Sāndeepany Sāadhanālaya* was established in Powai, Mumbai in 1963. Today, *Sāndeepany* institutes are present in Kolhapur (Maharashtra), Sidhbari (Himachal Pradesh), Prayag (Uttar Pradesh), Kasaragod (Kerala), Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu), Chokkahalli (Karnataka), and Piercy (Northern California). Named after Rishi Sāndīpanī, the Guru of Shri Krishna, these institutes symbolize “the kindling of Perfection in the hearts of men,” said Swami Chinmayananda.

Chinmaya Mission offers various courses related to Hinduism in general and Vedanta in particular. The two-year residential course is offered at the Vedanta institutes for graduates, married or unmarried. The course curriculum—taught in English in *Sāndeepany* Mumbai, in Hindi in *Sāndeepany* Sidhbari, and in Tamil, Telugu, and Odiya in other Mission ashrams—includes Sanskrit, Vedic chanting, *Bhagavad Gītā*, Upanishads, *Brahma-sūtra*, and various introductory Vedantic texts.

Chinmaya Mission’s basic and advanced postal and e-courses in Vedanta, the *Gītā*, and other subjects are offered through the Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF). A simple course on various aspects of dharma and Vedanta are taught in the Dharma Sevak Course. The Mission also conducts a *Purohita* Course to train priests in Hindu rituals and a Youth Empowerment Program for youth.

Another sector where Chinmaya Mission has made enormous contributions is the field of education. Its first school was established in Kerala in 1965. Now, there are 81 Chinmaya

Vidyālayas across India, including in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. The Mission also inaugurated its first Vidyālaya outside of India in 2003 in Trinidad. Chinmaya Mission also runs seven colleges across India.

The Chinmaya Organization of Rural Development (CORD) offers integrated and sustainable development of rural and underprivileged communities. Its activities include health awareness, vocational training, spiritual classes for small children, literacy drives, women's groups, and self-help groups.

To carry out research in Sanskrit, Hindu scriptures, and Indology, Chinmaya Mission established Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) in 1990. CIF has conducted numerous seminars and workshops, and has published various research papers and books. The foundation conducted an "International Conference on the Contribution of Advaita Vedanta to Humanity" in November 2015 as part of the birth centenary celebrations of Swami Chinmayananda.

Chinmaya Mission has made significant contributions in the field of health through the Chinmaya Mission Hospital and Chinmaya Institute of Nursing in Karnataka. Its ongoing contributions in the performing arts gave birth to Chinmaya Naada Bindu in 2009, a gurkula in Indian classical music and dance, situated in the vast *Chinmaya Vibhooti* ashram in Kolwan, near Pune. It currently teaches Hindustani vocal, Hindustani flute, Bharatanatyam, and tabla.

Chinmaya Mission grassroot activities of Vedanta forums for all age groups—toddlers (*Shishu Vihār*), children (*Bāla Vihār*), young adults (*Yuva Kendra*), middle-aged adults (*Setukāri*), adults (Study Groups), and senior citizens (*Vānaprastha*). Other primary activities conducted to spread Vedantic teachings include lecture series (*jñāna yajñas*), camps, retreats, workshops, and seminars.

In 2015-2016, Mission members around the world are celebrating the birth centenary of Swami Chinmayananda, expressing their gratitude as encapsulated in the CBCC motto, "Unto Him, Our Best." The centenary celebrations were launched in Ernakulam, Kerala, by former President of India, Late Abdul Kalam, on May 6, 2015. Here began the *Chinmaya Jyoti Yātrā*, an eternal flame being taken to Mission centers across the country, to be ultimately placed and kept lit in *Chinmaya Vibhooti* as a source of inspiration for all seekers. CBCC also brought forth the production of a 90-minute movie on the life of Swami Chinmayananda, titled, *On a Quest*. The movie traces the transformative journey, struggle, and self-discovery of Balakrishna Menon into Swami Chinmayananda. Members of *NewsGram* attended the movie screening in Chicago in May 2015. The screening saw overwhelming responses from the audience. Dr. Munish Raizada, a Chicago resident, said, "Swami Chinmayananda is an example of how a one-man army can transform the lives of millions of people. Today, Chinmaya Mission is playing a pivotal role in bringing Indian culture closer to the hearts of children, particularly outside India. Chinmaya Mission centers are living examples of Indian culture, traditions, and religion. This is a great biopic, and more and more people should see it to understand his inspiring life."

CBCC also will feature an international *Gītā* Chanting Competition and the distribution of two booklets—one on the life and vision of Swami Chinmayananda, and the other on the activities of the Chinmaya Mission. The Government of India also released two commemorative coins of Rs. 10 and Rs. 100 on May 8, 2015, as a tribute to the contributions of Swami Chinmayananda to the nation.

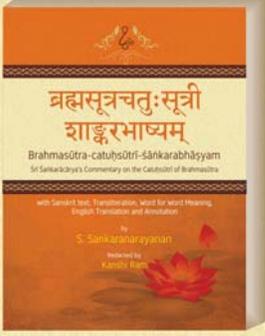
Swami Chinmayananda has inspired millions of people to turn away from materialism and become spiritually dedicated. He was one of the foremost guides, leaders, and teachers of Hinduism in the twentieth century. Chinmaya Mission has successfully managed to carry forward his legacy by transforming the lives of millions of people in India, as well as abroad, through its initiatives in the fields of Vedanta, art, culture, education, health, and self-sustenance. The Mission has further succeeded in placing Vedanta and other Hindu spiritual practices on the global map.

Announcements

New Publication: *Brahmasūtra-catuḥ-sūtrī-śāṅkara-bhaṣyam*



Chinmaya International Foundation
Academia of Sanskrit Research and Indology



**ब्रह्मसूत्रचतुःसूत्री
शाङ्करभाष्यम्**
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Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's Commentary on the Catuḥsūtrī of Brahmasūtra
with Sanskrit text, Transliteration, Word for Word Meaning,
English Translation and Annotation
by
S. Sankararayanan
Foreword by
Kashyap Das

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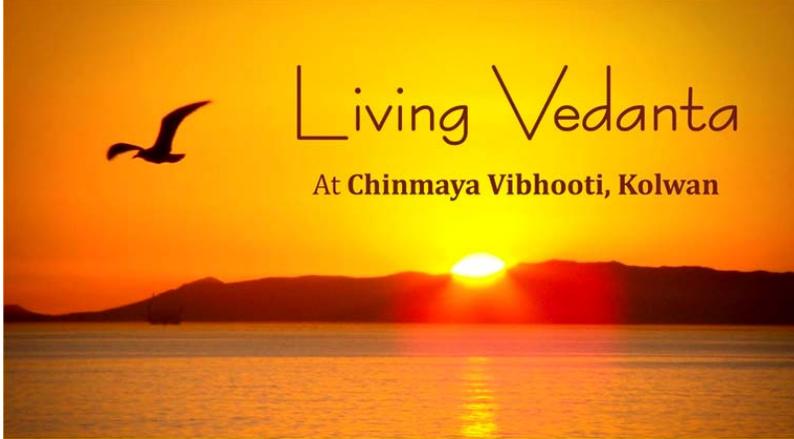
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