



Chinmaya Smrithi



A Bi-Monthly Online Newsletter of the Washington DC Area Chinmaya Mission Center and its Chapters
Volume 17, Number 1 -- March 27, 2007

On Chinmaya Smrithi

~ Acharya Swami Dheerananda

Our Newsletter Smrithi is reincarnating today March 27, 2007, on the auspicious Sri Rama Navami Day, bearing a new name and a new electronic format to keep us moving with the advancing information technology. It will continue to remind us of the various programs of Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center.

The new name we have chosen is Chinmaya Smrithi.

Chinmaya means Consciousness—the Self—the Guru within.

Smrithi means memory or thinking of...

Chinmaya Smrithi thus means memory of Chinmaya or thinking of Chinmaya—the Illuminating Consciousness—the Guru within.

Continued

Jai Sri Ram! Hari Om!

This is an expanded online newsletter, covering Chinmaya Mission DC area, being launched on Sri Rama Navami. The newsletter will be published bi-monthly, and posted under the Smrithi link at www.chinmayadc.org website. This newsletter is still under construction, and will go through further changes with your ideas, suggestions and contributions. Your Articles are highly encouraged and welcome. Please submit your articles to smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Please review the 'Final Page' for further details.

(Editor: Sitaram Kowtha; Editorial Board: Acharyas, Raju Chidambaram, Balanji, Chapter Coordinators)

Inside this Issue

- § A brief history of Smrithi, including a message from Gurudev
- § A poem on Painting, Life and an article on "When Faith calls..." by our Bala Vihar students
- § A teacher shares experience in engaging and motivating students.
- § Members share their views on Vedanta, offer a way to measure ego, and share a spiritual experience
- § A friend of the mission offers guidance on holistic health

*"Plan out your work, Then work out your plan.
The former without the latter is a sheer waste
The latter without the former is mere unproductive confusion."
-Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda*

On Chinmaya Smrithi

Continued

Chinmaya families revel in the memory of Chinmaya and
rejoice thinking of Chinmaya.

It is a revelation to recognize that we revel and rejoice in
Chinmaya
illuminated by Chinmaya—The Illuminating Consciousness.

Whether we are conscious of many external objects or one
external object;
whether we are conscious of many internal thought images
or one thought image;
the many or one both are illuminated by the same
Illuminating Consciousness—Chinmaya.

Thus the same illuminating Consciousness—
Chinmaya has been illuminating all our experiences external
and internal.

It is a Wonderful Spiritual Practice to recognize the same
Consciousness—
Chinmaya illuminating our experiences within and without.

It is a Wonderful Spiritual Practice to remember steadily
the very same Consciousness
Illuminating our experiences within and without.

May every Chinmaya family member remember the glory
of Chinmaya!

May every Chinmaya member revel and rejoice in
Chinmaya Smrithi!

The Naming of Smrithi

~ Raju Chidambaram

It was in the fall of 1989 that some of the members of the then newly established Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center decided that the Center ought to have a formal newsletter. We were a small congregation of perhaps fifty or sixty families then, one-tenth of the present size. What we lacked in size was more than made up by the zeal of the members, no doubt energized by the personal contact most of us had with Gurudev. Kailas Niwas was a busy, crowded place, in those days with classes and programs supervised ably by a young Brahmachari by name Sudheer Chaitanyaji, recently transferred from the Chennai center. We had by 1989 coordinated two successful week long spiritual camps by Gurudev and had three or four study groups in Maryland, Virginia and DC.

In those days before e-mail became a public utility, a printed newsletter was deemed a vital necessity to communicate to all members about the Mission programs as well as to document the growth of a young dynamic institution. Having decided on the concept, the next obvious question was about an appropriate name. So, when we learnt that one of the members Ms. Aslesha Tamboli, would be soon meeting Gurudev in India, we requested her to get Gurudev's blessings for the project as well as a name. Shortly afterwards, we were thrilled to get the following message from our Gurudev, which we duly published on the front page of the very first issue of Smrithi released in February 1990:

A MESSAGE FROM OUR GURUDEV

"No great undertaking or project can be successful unless it is planned properly. A well-planned activity is assured of success when it is supported by consistent and sincere efforts. Planning is essentially visualizing; a clear perception of what we want to achieve is the backbone of any plan. Though the journal is called as "Newsletter", it should serve as a guideline to the members of our institution to know where we are heading for and how quick we can reach our destination. Once the route is laid and goal pointed out, by conscientious efforts of our members, we shall reach our targets.

"I am glad that our Kailas Niwas center at Silver Spring has decided to bring forth a newsletter, and I would suggest we call it as "Smrithi". "Smrithi" essentially means memory. To remember steadily the goal in front of us is to channelize all our efforts toward that one single chosen goal. Let the "Newsletter" issues clearly point out the immediate targets that the Mission keeps for the members to strive and gain. Let 1990 be a year of great success and creative projects for the service of our community.

*With Prem and Om,
Thy Own Self,*

Signed

*Chinmayananda
Camp: Coimbatore
Date: February 1, 1990*

Smrithi has indeed strived to fulfill Gurudev's mandate by presenting to the members from time to time the pressing issues confronting CMWRC, such as, for example, the need for building the Chinmayam Children's Center to accommodate our burgeoning needs. I personally found the time devoted to Smrithi a very rewarding experience. The series of special "editorial" articles that I wrote for Smrithi may not have benefited any reader as much as they benefited me! I will also not forget the frantic emotion-filled days following Gurudev's Samadhi in 1993 when we, having been blessed to attend His very last sermons, tried to put together a very special Mahasamadhi issue of Smrithi.

Sethuraman Balan, Vilasini ji, and Sri Gopalakrishna are among the several who helped to bring out the two or three printed issues every year. Balan ji edited the newsletter for a couple of years while also handling a number of other Mission responsibilities. With the advent of mass e-mail and electronic communications, we all knew Smrithi must change and adapt. So it was with some relief that I greeted the idea of Sri. Sitaram Kowtha to start this on-line version. I am sure Smrithi will continue to fulfill the vision Gurudev has set for it under Sitaramji's leadership and with the help from his editorial group.
Hari Om!

Publications / Book Store

~ Vijay Kumar

CDs and DVDs of recently held Jnana Yagna (Dec 24-30, 2006) in the Washington region by Brni. Sumati Chaitanya, Acharya, CM-UK, are available in bookstore.

Aitareya Upanishad: It belongs to the Aitareya Aranyaka of the Rigveda. This Upanishad deals with the Process of Creation. It also contains the first of the four Maha-Vaakyas (the four great statements from the Vedas), "Pragnanam Brahma," which means Consciousness is Brahman.

Audio: 1 CD, 7 MP3 Tracks, 10.5 hr, \$10.00

Video: A set of 7 DVDs - \$25.00

Srimad Bhagavatam - Mukti Skandha (Canto 11): Srimad Bhagavatam composed by the great sage Veda Vyasa expounds the Supreme Dharma - the essential truth, knowing which all sins are destroyed. The work is made up 12 Skandhas or Cantos. In the Eleventh Canto, in Mukti-Skandha, the path to liberation is expounded via King Nimi's questions to the Nine Yogis.

Audio: 1 CD, 7 MP3 Tracks, 10.5 hr, \$10.00

Video: A set of 7 DVDs, \$25.00

Manah Sodhanam: In Sanskrit, 'Manah' means Mind and 'Shodhanam' means Cleaning or purification. In the Panchakoshas (Sheaths) of the human personality, mind is the central sheath. It is our best friend and worst enemy as well. It is the cause of our bondage and is also the means of our liberation. 'Keeping the mind in check' is the main aim of all our spiritual practices. This is a short and beautiful text by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda.

Audio: 1 CD, 4 MP3 Tracks, 5.5 hr, \$10.00

Video: A set of 4 DVDs - \$15.00

To get above items by mail, please write a check in favor of CMWRC and mail it to CMWRC (Attn Vijay K. Singh), 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905). On receipt of the check, the CDs/DVDs will be mailed immediately.

Of Note

(DC Area News & Events)

- Gita Chanting – May 6th at Chinmayam (Details at the website)
- Plan Ahead: 2008 Yagna in Washington DC
- Youth Camp 2007 for Grades 8-12, July 2-6 2007. (Details at the website)

April Yagna

APRIL 8

One Day Spiritual Camp on 'Maneesha Panchakam' by Swami Ishwarananda. Maneesha Panchakam text by Adi Sankara lucidly covers the import of the four mahavakyas where Acharya declares the greatness of the Brahma-vidya. The camp will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., in the Chinmaya Dulles Center, 24328 Goshen Road, Aldie, VA. Registration is required. Please send an e-mail to camp@chinmayadulles.org.

APRIL 9 - 15

Week-long 'Jnana Yagna' featuring free talks on the **Bhagavad Gita Chapter 9** and **Amrita Bindu Upanishad** by Swami Ishwarananda. The program schedule is as follows:
April 10-14, 7:00 to 8:30 a.m. - talk by Amrita Bindu on the Upanishad; April 9-15, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. - discourse on the Bhagavad Gita chapter 9. Venue is the Chinmayam: 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD.

Amrita Bindu Upanishad emphasizes that 'mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation'. It also gives simple guidelines to all seekers about the ways and means to purify the mind, method of contemplation and meditation.

Gita Chapter 9 or Raja Yoga teaches that to understand ourselves and the world around is to know the secret of happy living.

Swami Ishwarananda is the Acharya of the Chinmaya Mission, Southern California. He is a dynamic speaker and has given talks on Vedanta, stress management, management techniques and related fields. He presents complex subjects on Vedanta philosophy with ease accompanied by humor and wit.

Our Chapters

(Chapter News & Events)

Dulles Chapter

Frederick Chapter

- April 15th, Sunday 10:15 AM - 12:00 PM - Swami Ishwarananda's discourse at Frederick, MD. (Lunch will be served after the talk)
- April 28th, Saturday 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM - Chimayam visit & Swamiji's monthly Frederick Chapter Biksha
- May 12th, Saturday 10:15 AM - 11:30 AM - Entertainment Program for residents of Glade Valley Nursing Home by Frederick Balavihar children.
- June 10th, Sunday 5:30 PM - 9:00 PM - Frederick Chapter Annual Day (Tentative)

Salisbury Chapter

Silver Spring Chapter

Chapter Events

- 1 April 2 – Hanuman Jayanthi
- 1 April 9-15th – Jnana Yagna by Swami Ishwarananda.
- 1 April 21-22 Bala Vihar Annual Performance By Session
- 1 April 21 – Bala Vihar will participate in National Youth Volunteer Day. An

annual event sponsored by DC Govt and Fannie Mae brings hundreds of organization in beautifying schools, libraries in DC. It reiterates the value of volunteer participation for our youth. A well publicized event places all the children in one location working as a team.

For more details see *EVENTS* at www.chinmayadc.org

Springfield Chapter

Bala Vihar Voices

Painting

~ Vibha Sastri,
Session III, Silver Spring Chapter

Painting is fun.

I would like to get a picture done.

You can make a picture book.

So all the people can come and look.

My picture book tells it all.

It's about the season fall.

In fall leaves come tumbling down.

From most trees in the town.

Life

~ Vijay Iyer,
Session III, Silver Spring Chapter

It is the state when one is alive,
and in this state you have been given a
task to complete this journey.

And when we ask questions we get answers,

But none shall know how it will all end.

But death will come,
and this journey will not be over.

For in death you are dead,
but still there,
and alive.

Watching what goes down there.

And in the end,
all will be revealed

When Faith Calls, God will come

~ Sruti Uppuluri,
Session II, Silver Spring Chapter

Of all the times people pray to God, is it because they really have the faith in Him, or because they have to? I found the answer to that last week. When I went to a good friend's house after school, she burst into tears because of an unsatisfying grade on her math test. It was the first time she had experienced this after two years of hard work and focus. I remembered her as a devoted person that always prayed in the morning, hoping to have a good day. I randomly asked her, "Did you pray to God?" She looked up at me with her eyes red, and shook her head. Her mother was serving us a snack, and told me that she had lost her faith in God after bringing home unproductive grades two years ago. She had

stopped praying for God to be at her side.

I remembered the time when my grandmother had read me a book about Sai Baba called “Your Questions, Sai Baba’s Answers.” The writer had explained faith in a detailed way, and I was able to understand why having faith and trusting God is one of the most important aspects of life, “On the basis of faith and trust [,] man comes across the biggest darkness and the biggest troubles in life.”

I explained to my friend that faith in God is helpful in life, and He will truly come when you imagine him in your mind, as Swamiji says before our Shiva meditation.

Aside from the book my grandmother had read to me, I also recalled one Bala Vihar class in which my teacher, Savithri Auntie, had told us about a poor saint who was deeply devoted to Lord Shiva. He had constructed a temple for Lord Shiva in his mind, because he did not have the money to build a real one. It took him two years, and when he finally finished, he was able to perform the pooja. However, the king was also a devotee of Shiva, and had many riches and tangible temples. Shiva had seen the clash between the two devotees, and decided to tell the king through a dream that he would go to the poor saint’s temple. The king realized that Shiva would not be able to attend the royal pooja, but he helped the saint to perform the pooja along with many other villagers. This story showed how much faith the poor saint had in Lord Shiva. He trusted Him so much, that Lord Shiva could not refuse the offer to come to his temple.

I summarized this story to my friend’s mother, and soon, my friend started to pray to God again. She was the person I knew a long time ago. She prayed to God day after day, and never lost trust again. I felt proud to help my friend. I changed a person, in a good way, through Shirdi Sai Baba’s readings, and Bala Vihar.

Teachers Corner

A Shivanandam Experience

~ Nagaraj Neerchal
Silver Spring Chapter

One of the most frequently asked questions by Bala Vihar teachers is, “How do I keep children engaged in the class?” Experienced teachers say that early on, stories and crafts are undisputed winners in the classes up to Sundaram. However, as children get into teenage years, such activities seem to lose some of their attraction. Children tend to be quite competitive at this age. Perhaps we can take advantage of the children’s energy and engage them in games relevant to the curriculum.

In one of the Shivanandam years, children study Vibheeshana Geetha written by Goswami Tulasidas. Vibheeshana Geetha (VG) is Lord Rama’s teachings to Vibheeshana in the Tulasi Ramayana and is contextually similar to Bhagavad Geetha in Mahabharatha. Vibheeshana asks Lord Rama “How can you defeat the world conqueror Ravana with the help of a monkey army, without even a chariot to ride?” Lord Rama assures Vibheeshana that one’s chariot is made up of courage, steadfastness (wheels), truthfulness, good character (flags), strength, discrimination, self-control, parahita (horses), forgiveness, compassion, and equanimity (reins). Vibheeshana’s questions raised out of concern for his Lord’s safety in pure devotion contrasts with Arjuna’s grief and intellectual questions to Lord Krishna in the first chapter of Bhagavad Geetha. Lord Rama goes on to tell Vibheeshana that the charioteer of one’s chariot is none other than one’s devotion to God.

Though children are exposed to Ramayana in several of their earlier classes, it is very useful to start the class with a review. Once again, at this age it is natural to find differences in the level

of exposure to Ramayana among the students. So, one option is to review Ramayana in the form of a game show.

The class can be made into several teams. A hat with numbered paper slips can be passed around, and then the teacher may use “remainder rule” [Divide the number picked by four; all the 0 remainders make one team and so on] to make four (or five) teams. Interesting questions are available from many sources (e.g. from Kaun Banega Ramayan Expert website). A set of questions put together by Mr. Balakrishnan (Sureshji’s father), Savithri Devaraj (my Shivanandam co-teacher from last year) and myself can be downloaded from the Bala Vihar Resources page from chinmayadc.org. This is an activity the students were eager to repeat through out the year in our class.

Most of Shivanandam class is spent on studying the importance of the virtues cited in VG in the context of scriptural and contemporary examples. Thus, activities play an important role in reinforcing the lessons. Towards the end of the class, after going over all the values discussed in VG, we had an activity which really got all the children very involved. Fashioned after the game Word Boggle, a clue, say, “Dheeraja” is given out. Every team is required to write down all Ramayana characters who exhibited that virtue. The lists are then compared, and points are given for every correct answer. Extra points are given for the names not written down by any other teams. Teams will have to justify their answers by recalling a specific instance from Ramayana. Of course, there would be plenty of passionate discussion on why each of their unique answers deserved extra points, which is the real fun part of this game.

Members Musings

A Meter to Diagnose the Level of EGO!

~ Dr. Ram Chandran

EGO is the barrier for spiritual practice and should be crushed. Actions that are obstacles to peaceful worldly life can be classified into eight types. Avoidance of these actions has the potential to enhance spiritual life without sacrificing success in one's worldly life. You can test on the basis of how you behave by honestly answering the eight types of EGO classified below. You can measure each one of them on a scale of 0 to 10. If you have complete control over your emotion, you can record your score as 0, but if you outburst quite often then you will score 10. The cumulative maximum score is 80 and the minimum score 0.

A score of 60 and above will indicate you fall into the HIGH EGO category.

A score between forty and 59 will signify that you belong to MEDIUM EGO category

A score between twenty and 39 will classify you into the LOW EGO category.

A score above 0 and below 19 means that your EGO is under control

With a score of 0 you are indeed a Jnani!

EGO 1: Emotion - Grief - Overreaction
(Sensory perceptions that cause grief and reckless actions)

EGO 2: Exploitation - Greed - Oppression
(Greedy actions that oppress and exploit others)

- EGO 3: Exaggeration - Gimmick - Opportunism (Gain personal profits through exaggeration of facts)
- EGO 4: Expectation - Glory - Ornamental (Conduct useless and glamorous actions for personal glory)
- EGO 5: Externalization - Grumble - Opinionated (Stubbornly accuse others of one's own mistakes)
- EGO 6: Embarrassment - Guilt - Oscillation (Disturbed mind filled with guilt and disputed notions)
- EGO 7: Extremism - Grudge - Opposition (Express extreme views with animosity and hostility)
- EGO 8: Empty-headed - Guesswork - Obnoxious (Exhibiting ignorance by constantly irritating others)

Those who read Reader's Digest would have noticed similar tests to measure other human traits. I wrote this article in 1995 for a discussion group called <Social.religion.hindu> (which discontinued during 1997) under USENET. I have modified the article and converted it as a test.

My wife Shanthi and I have been attending Chinmaya Mission since 1991. We have found that our regular participation has had a positive effect on how we treat our co-workers, relatives, friends and our neighbors. If we regularly attend the Chinmaya Mission classes and follow the teachings, we are guaranteed to reduce our EGO! As a minimum, by self-administering this test, we will become more aware of our weaknesses. This awareness will become the instrument to correct our flaws.

DEAR READER, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE "EGO-METER"?

Ram and Shanthi are currently visiting India and it is indeed nice of Ram to take the time to write the above short article for Smrithi. The basic premise of the article, namely that ego is an obstacle to peace within, is virtually uncontested. However, many may question the feasibility of measuring the ego using an objective test. It is a well known though that social scientists and psychologists routinely use similar techniques to measure everything from the level of leadership skills in corporate executives to the degree of dementia in Alzheimer's patients. I have seen NIH and other agencies funding research which involve measuring spiritual or religious attitudes in order to establish a link between these and the mental and physical health of an individual. It will be no doubt more satisfying to the scientifically minded if the advaitic teachings can be validated using similar formal measurement techniques, but for most of us, our own experience is the pramana.

If you have any views on this subject, please share it through Smrithi with everyone in CMWRC.

- Raju Chidambaram

Reflections on Vedanta

~ Benjamin Root

For over five years, I have been a member of the DC Chinmaya Mission, attending one satsang every week and another every two weeks. I thought I would briefly reflect on what Vedanta means to me.

I am trained in the modern 'scientific' outlook, with its emphasis on reason and facts, and I fully understand why this outlook often leads to atheism or agnosticism. However, science cannot answer the ultimate questions: Why does anything exist? Why are the laws of nature as they are? Only at this ultimate level do we see the need for a 'divine source'. Even so, I

retain the scientist's skepticism regarding a 'hidden God in the sky', who can only be revealed through prophets or blind faith.

Fortunately, Vedanta proceeds from a different perspective. This divine source is also within us as our inmost essence. Nothing can exist without it, and that includes us. Indeed, it is the omnipresent Existence, sustaining everything. Furthermore, it has the nature of Pure Consciousness, which explains why we are conscious, and why consciousness is our ultimate identity. Only ignorance separates us from this reality. If the ignorance is dispelled, then we can directly taste the reality, and that is about as 'scientific' as you can get. Until then, I am willing to trust seers such as Ramana Maharshi, which is not blind faith, since the goal is verification through experience. Call it a working hypothesis. And even we ordinary people may sometimes experience encouraging flashes of intuition, upon reading scripture, especially with the guidance of a good Swamiji such as our own Dheerananda.

I first came to the Chinmaya satsangs to hear a real Advaitin swami speak. I expected him to be distant and formal, since Advaita seems such an austere and forbidding philosophy to the newcomer, not meant for ordinary people. Like Lord Shiva meditating on Mt. Kailash! I was surprised to discover how friendly, warm-hearted and down-to-earth an Advaitin swami can be. The same was true when I met Swami Tejomayananda last year. The philosophy is indeed austere, in some sense, but the goal is wisdom, enlightenment and love, not intellectual snobbery, as some may suppose. Just look at a picture of Sri Ramana.

Holistic Health and Healing

~ Mrs. Anandi Ramachandran

“Holistic Health” is a science and art, practice and application of Holistic Therapies. It promotes self-care, prevention and healing. It emphasizes in treating the person as a comprehensive “Whole”, a complete entity, taking into consideration physical emotional mental spiritual well being, as well as environmental, social and life style behavioral patterns. The individuals are encouraged to heal themselves at all levels of mind body and spirit. The therapies, modalities either single or in combination with conventional medicine facilitate the physician within them to do the healing work.

Holistic Therapies in the 21st Century are identified as “Vibrational Medicine” or “Energy Medicine“. They include Yoga –Meditation, Acupuncture, Quantum healing, Acupressure, Reflexology, Unani, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Bach Flower Remedies, Ayurveda, Herbal Medicine, Crystal Healing, Chakra Therapies, and Prayer- the list goes on and on.

Why “Energy Medicine”? We are energy – chi or prana- the life force behind all existence. Depletion of energy is the breeding ground for toxicity of mind, body and spirit resulting in impairing the entire immune system. Self-care is prevention and healing to identify and detoxify the individual holistically, restoring the imbalances at all levels to a “fine balance”. Vibrational Medicine initiates healing at a cellular level. On being healed the individual functions with optimum health, productive at all levels, operating with a sense of awareness and bliss, in a state of “being” not “doing”.

In Holistic Healing there is no “curing of a disease”. A holistic practitioner or physician facilitates the healing process of the individual. The treatments are geared towards identifying the “source” of the health issue (or healing

crises as it is referred), which often is emotion related and deep rooted. This manifests as psychosomatic illnesses. Over a period of time this transforms into physical illnesses, impairing the functions of the organs, creating degenerative diseases and finally affecting the immune system as a whole. The practitioner directs guides and helps the individual to understand their present state of health, with informed and caring approach. Through a process of education the individuals takes responsibility for their wellness and find the physician within them to heal.

Holistic Persons are those healed in mind body and spirit. They establish a fine balance in all areas of life both within and outside of themselves. They are competent to empower others to achieve the same level of wellness. They are a living example, a role model. "Their life is their book". With their calm and centered personality they radiate at all times a light, beckoning others to join them in their quest for health.

In conclusion:

1. We are responsible for our Health and Wellness. All healing takes place within us, not outside of us.

2. The key to this is a paradigm shift in the mind, the gateway to healing. This can be accomplished by joining a program of yoga-pranayam – meditation.

3. When the individual makes the appointment with health and healing, the first baby steps are taken; an ounce of prevention can avoid all the heartaches down the road. - The quest to wellness, which is a "sadhana"-individually tailored.

4. To be aware at all times that emotional instability, coupled with how we think, respond and behave in any given situation affects our physical well-being.

5. Nutritional awareness, re-education and training ourselves to eat food as "medicine" – going through a gradual but committed discipline to eliminate all canned processed food, soda pop, milk, dairy and sugar products. Introduce organic foods that are alive and compatible-fresh vegetables, fruits in season, sprouts wheat grass juice; rejuvelac (when sprouted organic wheat is added to drinking water thereby introducing live enzymes) and raw green vegetable juices are a good way to begin the quest for health and healing.

{Ms Mini Ramchandran submitted this article. Mrs. Ramchandran about her association with the mission: From my childhood in Sri-Lanka Chinmayaji was personally known to my parents during his many visits to Colombo Sri-Lanka I was privileged not only to know him personally but also listen to his Satsangs Apart form that the present head of the mission Swami Tejomayananda in Mumbai is also closely connected to my family In particular to Dr Vijaya Venkat (my cousin) with whom Swami Tejomayananda has been associated in matters of nutrition. We have also been associated with Mr D Easwaran of Colombo Sri-Lanka who is presently associated with activities of the mission. She can be reached by email – anandi1948@yahoo.com}

To Sweeten my spirit

~ Aziza Meer

After a small snow fall and freezing temperatures over night, the Shri Shiva Vishnu temple steps are loaded with ice the next morning—or, so they seem when I look from my car. The parking lot looks no better. Logic (mind) says, turn around and leave. The thought of falling is not appealing. Wisdom (intellect) says, leave. But my body gets off the

car and carefully walks to the steps. The steps still look icy. The mind and intellect warn. My feet go up the stairs, one stair at a time. All stairs have ice. On the first stair, I can get into the foot step of someone who went before me. When my first step doesn't slip, I look at the next step. It has a clear sheet of ice. I try to break the ice with my sole. It cracks and gives way. I clear the ice and go forward. One step at a time, I am up at the front door. Each stair is different. As I move on, making the right choice step by step, one after another, I reach the door. All along, I hang on to the railing (faith) that runs along all these stairs. Going up the steps is actually possible, and in fact, isn't that hard when I work with what is presented to me. All the time, the thought is--if the door was open, someone obviously went in before me. If they could, I can. There are a handful up there, busy in prayer, warm and past the glassy stairs.

The thought of Tolstoy's Anna Karenina comes to my mind from no where. Anna leaves her husband and marries a younger man for glamour. But her new life comes with its own set of challenges. When she marries the young man, she only thinks of running away from what she has in her present marriage. But in her new marriage, she faces an entirely different set of challenges. True the 2nd situation does not have the challenges of the first situation. And come to think of it, the 1st situation didn't have the challenges of the 2nd situation. This makes one wonder—is there any perfect situation? Vedanta says, none other than with Him. I guess my body knew when it braved those stairs. What about my mind and intellect? Oop..

What is the connection between social oppression and spiritual upliftment? In one way, we need peace and nurture for sadhana. But those evolved the most seem to be those who stumble all their lives and fight daily battles and learnt to fight these battles in peace, with tolerance and forgiveness. Like in the Narratives of Frederick Douglas. In the Japanese art of Reiki, the concept of light passing through the giver to the taker, offers a parallel, and an explanation to how oppression leads to spiritual upliftment. Reiki is a healing art where the giver of Reiki places hands on the receiver's body, on different nerve centers. The concept is that energy passes to the receiver or is generated in the body of the receiver from the giver's touch. While doing Reiki, the giver is visualizing healing energy and is meditative. As the receiver heals from the light, the giver also heals from the light. Before giving anything—whether it is peace, or it is anger, it first passes through you, helps or hurts you, and then passes to those who receive it from you. When one learns to deal with the battles of life in peace and forgiveness, that peace and forgiveness first passes through one's body and then reaches those around them. That may be why oppression or harsh daily lives are opportunities we can be grateful for. Opportunities that sweeten our spirit. These sweeten the spirit and give us a chance to exercise that muscle of love over and over and over again, in spite of everything. The closer we stick to TRUTH, the better the benefits.

In the name of forgiveness and love if we are tricking ourselves, follow a façade of truth and not quite reach it--that does not help. And yet another detour in the thought is—when oppressed, the free spirit finds a different avenue of expression. Men may oppress intentionally or unintentionally. But the door to the Lord is always open. When pushed out of the human fold with oppression, the spirit finds its path to the open door.

All to sweeten the spirit.

As I go around the idol of Ganesha for my daily exercise—instead of the treadmill, I find it more appealing sometimes to go around Ganesh and look at him from all angles—in some angles he smiles, in some he mocks at you as you lose your count of the rounds and start over—and so as I go around the idol of Ganesh, I realize how dirty the floor is. My white socks are turning very black. I haven't seen the floor being mopped any time. The thought comes to me that if I win a lottery, I can donate a floor cleaning device for a perfect temple, clean in every way. A perfect temple—don't they say one's heart is a temple? Before trying to perfect the temple floors, how about perfecting the floors of my heart. And sweeten my spirit.

All to sweeten the spirit.



Resources & Links

- 1 www.chinmayadc.org
- 1 www.chinmayadulles.org

Submitting Your Articles

(Newsletter Policies, submitting content, etc.)

- 1 **Who can submit?**
Acharyas, Visiting Acharyas, Speakers
Secretary
Coordinators (Balavihar, Chapter, Session)
Bala Vihar students
Bala Vihar graduates
Teachers
Volunteers
Parents and Adult Members,
Friends of Chinmaya mission, etc.
- 1 **What can be submitted? What is allowed? What is not allowed?**
You may submit articles that would be of general interest to the DC area Chinmaya Families. They must be related to the mission activities or may be on Vedanta. The essays and stories should be kept short to less than 500 words, so that we can keep the size of the newsletter reasonably small. However, at times compelling submissions may be allowed even if they exceed 500 words.
Along with the submission, please provide the details
 - Name of the Author
 - Submitter's affiliation with the mission
 - If applicable, to which Chapter does the author belong
 - Bala Vihar session and class if applicable
 - Title of the submission
- 1 **What are some of the possible topics?**
World-Wide Mission news of interest to CMWRC
DC Center Events – brief write up on chapter activities (yagnas, etc.) or Balavihar activities (field trips, for example)
Yagnas and Events at other centers
Poems
Stories
Essays
Thoughts or Experience
Plays
Tips for Busy Balavihar Parents, Volunteers
 - Easy Recipes
 - Bhiksha Recipes
 - costume ideas for Bala Vihar plays

- 1 **What format you may use?**
We prefer submission formatted in Microsoft Word, Open Office, or plain email text. For images, use JPEG, resized to no larger than 3 inches by 3 inches. (Open office is freely available at www.openoffice.org)
- 1 **Where to submit content for the newsletter?**
Smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Use "submission" in the subject line.
- 1 **What is the deadline for submission?**
Send in your submissions early and often. The editorial committee will publish revised newsletter versions periodically. Your submission may be included in a revised edition for the current issue, or scheduled for the following issue.
- 1 **Who to contact for questions?**
Send your questions to smrithi@chinmayadc.org. Use "Question" in the subject line.
- 1 **Once you submit, what happens?**
The Articles are reviewed and considered for inclusion in the newsletter. Goal is to include all submissions, but the editorial board has to ensure that the articles can be enjoyed by one and all, that they are appropriate, and consistent with the spirit and values of the Chinmaya Mission. Some articles may be held for the next newsletter publication so as to keep the newsletter size down to a handful of pages.
- 1 **How can BalaVihar Students Help?**
Middle and High School level Balavihar students may help the editors with spelling and grammar check, organizing and formatting the newsletter, and improving the look and feel to make this an informative, spiritual, fun and attractive newsletter. Currently Harsha Neerchal and Srikanth Kowtha are supporting the editors. Those who volunteer and consistently support publication of the newsletter will be rewarded with a certificate during Bala Vihar graduation.
- 1 **What is the editorial process?**
An editorial board consisting of Raju Chidambaram, Sitaram Kowtha, Acharyas and chapter coordinators will review the submissions, and approve final drafts of the newsletter before they are published on the website. In cases where the articles do not receive initial approval, the editors will work the authors to revise or improve submissions
- **Your Suggestions**
Please send your suggestions to smrithi@chinmayadc.org, with subject line 'suggestions'. We welcome your ideas, tips, corrections, to help us improve the quality, look and feel, and content.