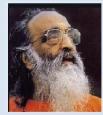


# **CHINMAYA MISSION CHICAGO**

**BADRI - A School of Vedantic Studies** 

Monthly Newsletter - June 2023





# Chinmaya

#### Wisdom Quote

"Old age comes with a passage of time; maturity comes with deep reflection." - Swami Chinmayananda

#### Gurudev's Message



#### When we strive to identify with our real nature, that is Vaikuntham

A very common question asked by the seekers is:

"In the Upanishads, the description of the highest state is Sat-Chit-Ananda which is the essential nature of our own Self. But in the Puranas, it is mentioned that Vaikuntha is the highest state to be reached. How can we reconcile the two contradicting statements?"

To answer this question, we have to understand the helpless state of Veda Vyasa who had written these Puranas.

Vyasacharya had a very difficult task at hand. His aim was to attract everyone to spirituality in some way or the other. Hence he had to write a scripture that would be appealing to all cross-sections of people in the society – the evolved and the unevolved... the beginners and the advanced in spirituality... the tamasic, rajasic and the sattvic... the cultured and the uncultured... children, youth and the old... men and women... the uneducated and the scholarly... the emotional and the intellectual... the aarta, arthaarthee bhaktas and the jijnaasu and jnani bhaktas... the high caste and the low caste... the orthodox and the modern...

It is just impossible to satisfy all classes of people of all generations at the same time.

But Veda Vyasa achieved the impossible. How? Through the Puranas.

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#### **Upcoming Events -**

- Balavihar Graduation Ceremony:
  - On 6/4, Sunday
  - 9:45 am @ Badri Shrine
- Monthly Bhajan: 6/10 @ 6 7:30 pm
  - Host: Smt Jyothi & Naishad Shah
  - RSVP: (630) 842-4653
  - Home: 1 Graystone Ct Naperville
- Vishnu Sahasranamam: 6/11 @ 9:15 am
  - At Badri Shrine
- Group Vedic Chanting 6/25 @ 9:00 am
  - At Badri Shrine



29th July to 3rd August 2023 @ Waterford Banquet & Conference Center

Enroll NOW for the 30<sup>th</sup> Chinmaya Aradhana

Mahasamadhi Camp because what you have is a

Gift from HIM, and what you do is a Gift to him.

#### Highlights from Previous Month

The month of May comes with lots of expectations around the Mothers' Day event and anticipation about the upcoming Balavihar Graduation in June. The Mothers' Day being the biggest outdoor event held at Badri, had its planning started several weeks earlier under a new organizing team. We had the great opportunity to celebrate the auspicious occasion of Chinmaya Jayanthi during this month. To go with these activities, we also had the opportunity to conduct our regular monthly programs like Bhajan Sandhya, Vishnu Sahasranamam Chanting and Vedic Chanting.

#### 1. Bhajan Sandhya

The May month's Bhajan Sandhya was hosted by Smt Geeta & Shri Sudarshan Iyengar at their home. The evening was well attended as several participants sang the Bhajans after all the shlokas were chanted. The event as always practiced, ended with the chanting of Nirvana Shatakam and Aarthi, followed by the distribution of prasadam dinner.

#### 2. Vishnu Sahasranamam Chanting

On the first Sunday of the month, the practice of chanting Vishnu Sahasranamam continued this month too. There was a good participation and the chanting reverberated through the shrine as everyone chanted in unison at the same pace. The session concluded with the chanting of Narayana Suktam. We are seeing a great level of interest among devotees in participating in this monthly chanting.



#### 3. Monthly Vedic Chanting

This month also our Monthly Group chanting of Vedic mantras and suktams was conducted on the third Sunday of the month as the last Sunday was coinciding with the Memorial Day weekend and Badri was closed.



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#### 4. Gurudev Jayanthi

The auspicious day of Gurudev Jayanthi on 8<sup>th</sup> May. During the previous year this day coincided with the Mothers' Day too. This year it was on a Monday. Several devotees gathered at Badri for a wonderful remembrance of Guru Paduka Puja, Bhajans, a message from Swamiji and followed by an elaborate dinner mahaprasadam.







#### 5. Mothers' Day Celebration

The much awaited and anticipated event of the year at Badri, Mothers' Day was celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Along with the excitement of the upcoming event, there was also the mushrooming concern about a possible rain or showers playing spoilsport on that day. Staying up with technology, the various Whatsapp groups were all busy piling up messages in the days leading up to the 14th May. Several of the volunteers gathered at Badri on Satutday, the preceding day to setup the tents and other preparations for the big event the following day. The teamwork was extraordinary, and all the setup was done as planned.

The following day, the early arrivers were the food stall team members and the traffic management volunteers. By 10 am the Shrine was full with mothers and their children ready for the Maatru Puja which was followed by messages from both Swami Sharanananda ji and Swami Aparijithananda ji. By 12 noon, the food stalls started serving their respective food and the excitement continued until 2 pm. We had anywhere between 1500 – 2000 people who attended this year's Mothers' Day event. The showers holding up until 2 pm was a blessing.



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Maatru Puja & Aarthi







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## **Outdoor Celebrations at their peak**





**Traffic Organizers Thinking for Innovative Ideas** 





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## Badri Weekly Class Schedule



### Swami Sharananandaji's Weekly Program Schedule

Program Name	Details
Saddarshanam (on Zoom)	Sunday/ 8:00 - 8:45 am
Bhagavad Gita Discourse (In-person at Shrine)	Sunday / 10 - 10:30 am
Viveka Choodamani (on Zoom)	Tuesday/ 7 – 8 pm
Mandukya Upanishad (on Zoom)	Wed/ 7 – 8 pm
Drik Drishya Viveka (on Zoom)	Saturday/ 8 – 9 am



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#### **Balavihar Student's Essay**

#### Lessons in life from 22 teachers

I have found that school is not the only place where you can learn a powerful lesson. We can learn many important values from nature all around us.

#### Sun

The sun shines on everyone regardless of race, religion, gender, or color. Follow the lead of the sun and do not discriminate.

#### Farth

Mother earth loves us despite us walking all over her, littering everywhere, and destroying resources. She still sustains, so from that we learn tolerance.

#### River

The flowing river stays clean while the river that slowed down gathers leaves and litter. Go with the flow, and don't stop learning. Swami Chinmayananda said, "If I rest, I rust".

#### Squirrel

The squirrels bury nuts not just for themselves but for anyone that might find them. The squirrels show that you don't need to be selfish even though it is very tempting.

#### **Python**

The python doesn't eat when full. That means no snacking or overeating or unnecessary early meals. Take only what you need: no more, no less.

#### Child

Children do not understand the concept of waiting. This means that they never procrastinate. For them, "now" is the only time. That task you've been avoiding? Do it now.

#### Swan

Swans have 24 or more vertebrae depending on the kind, while humans and giraffes have only 7. This makes for some extremely flexible necks. If you stay limber, you can adapt to any situation.

#### Rabbit

These fluffy cuties will pretend you don't exist if they don't want to play with you. If you don't want to do something or interact with someone, just ignore them. Keep this up and you will be able to give up any bad habit.

#### **Bumblebee**

A bumblebee only stings when it is absolutely necessary for defending her hive or herself. Her sting is more painful than a wasp's, who will sting for no reason. If you speak only when it is needed, your words will be more powerful.

#### Woodpecker

When woodpeckers dig beneath the bark of a tree they reveal the insects within. Don't assume based on what seems to be, look beyond the obvious.

#### Eagle

An eagle can see its prey from so far away using its telescopic vision. When we have a clear vision in life, the biggest obstacles seem to shrink in size until they disappear.

#### Ant

Ants are masters of teamwork. You must have seen how they group together and lift many times their combined bodyweight. They follow one ant's trail in a single file line, while us humans would be pushing and shoving.



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#### Gnat

A gnat, greedy for food, gets stuck in a flytrap. Greed will eventually trap you, so beware. Ocean An ocean receives water from many different rivers, seas, and lakes. Even when the sun is at its hottest or water flows in at an astounding rate, the ocean doesn't flood or run dry. You will experience extreme excitement and deep disappointment, but don't go off the rails celebrating or mourning.

#### **Candle**

If a candle is used to light another one, the first candle's life is not shortened. It doesn't hurt to extend a helping hand to someone in need, and in fact, the light is doubled because of both candles.

#### Air

The air only carries smells, it doesn't hold onto one or leave it, be it from a rose or a landfill. When we work, we must do so without being attached to the results, whether they are scented or stinky.

#### Nature

Nature never makes mistakes. No matter how much you beg, an apple tree will only give you apples, never pears. Einstein said, "I think 99 times and I find nothing. I stop thinking, swim in silence, and the truth comes to me". When in doubt, let the perfect intelligence that guides nature, guide you.

#### **Shadow**

You cannot, no matter how hard you try, directly change a shadow. The only way to do it is to change the object or the light. The only change in a person comes from within, even though it shows on the outside. Attempting to change someone from the outside will make it seem like something happened for a limited time.

#### Seed

It's just a tiny, boring old seed, right? Wrong. This seed contains an entire tree, and trees that will come from that tree, and so on and so forth. Even the biggest bores in life have infinite potential—we just don't know how to find it yet.

#### Ice cubes

When the ice cubes in your drink melt, the same matter is transforming from one state to another. And when water disappears, it becomes vapor, because matter cannot be created or destroyed. And like that matter, we take on different roles throughout our lives. We only suffer when we identify ourselves with a particular role.

#### **Beavers**

Using only their teeth, beavers can cut down large trees for their dams. Due to their unmatched determination, these rodents can fall 100 ft tall 30-inch-thick giants in a matter of weeks. Many times their dams are washed away, and many times they have to be rebuilt. Be an eager beaver and don't quit, even if everything is going horribly.

#### **Trees**

From trees I learnt to give, give and give. All throughout its life, a tree provides shade, fruit or vegetables, and flowers. Birds, squirrels, and other animals and insects call it home. Most importantly, it turns the harmful carbon dioxide into fresh oxygen that we breathe. Even after being cut down, the tree donates its wood and the stump becomes a place to sit. And these are just some of the lessons that Nature teaches us.



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#### Updates from around the world -

- <u>Swadhyaya Series of Self Learning</u> Online learning with access to materials for a lifetime
- CIF Courses available this month
  - Online mode only
  - Registration required
- Puja Vidhanam Course
  - 1 month in-person/ English
  - Swami Sharadananda Sarasvathi
  - Basic and Advanced level courses available
  - 12 Aug 10 Sept 2023 @ Adi Shankara Nilayam

## 30th Chinmaya Aradhana Mahasamadhi Camp 2023



## 30th Chinmaya Aradhana Mahasamadhi Camp 2023

29th July to 3rd August 2023 @ Waterford Banquet & Conference Center

Our wait is over; this year the 30th Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Aradhana Camp is returning IN-PERSON to....CHICAGO! Our love and gratitude for Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda binds us all together as One Chinmaya Family. The annual event which brings our Chinmaya family together to exclusively celebrate His life and legacy is our annual Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Aradhana Camp.

Our respected Swami Swaroopananda will be present in-person leading this 30th MSC along with Swami Shantananda, Swami Sharanananda, Swami Ishwarananda and Swami Aparajitananda who will be covering inspirational topics and planning activities for the entire family. There will be activities for children from pre-k through grade 8, high schoolers, young adults, and adults. There will be meditation, workshops, yoga, swaranjali, cultural programs and of course mouthwatering food. There will be opportunities to share in devotion and offer seva by participating in Bhiksha, Arati, and Puja.

We just can't wait to meet again in-person to celebrate our Pujya Gurudev.

Please click here for more information and registration.



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(Late) Shri Ram Ramakrishnan

Our Ram Ramakrishnan, a long time Mission devotee and ardent sevak, left his body on Friday May 19, 2023, after a cardiac arrest.

Ram dedicated countless hours over several years teaching Math in our SAT class. He has touched a lot of families by mentoring children for SAT and college. With an encyclopedic knowledge of various topics ranging from Hindu culture, temples, all the way to world history and science, he was always willing to share and inspire all who came in touch with him.

Ram was also part of our Rudram team and enthusiastically participated in all Mission events. He was a sincere seeker of Vedanta and has been attending study groups for many years. Ram leaves behind his wife Nithya and daughters Nandini and Madhavi, both of whom were Bala Vihar students.

Visitation and the last rites were held on Tuesday, May 23, 2023, at McCauley-Sullivan Funeral Home, 530 W Boughton Rd Bolingbrook, IL 60440.

Hari Om



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#### Swamiji's Message Contd...

Vyasacharya, the master psychologist knew that the one way to grab the attention of everyone – the young or the old, the educated or the illiterate, the ignorant or the wise, the materialist or the spiritualist – is to tell soul-captivating stories. Hence, Vyasacharya used this technique in the Puranas to explain the highest philosophies of life.

The unevolved and the immature ones rejoiced in the mind-blowing divine stories of the Lord, while the advanced seekers who were in search of answers to serious questions of life, who were the seekers of Reality, found the Vedantic message hidden in it. Everyone found their needs fulfilled in Puranas, thus making these Puranas popular among all sections of people at all times.

Here is a sample of the storytelling of Vyasacharya. This story comes in the second canto of Srimad Bhagavatham.

Brahma, the first of all beings, found himself all alone, seated in a lotus, in the infinite Cosmic Waters. Utterly confused, not knowing who he is, where he is, and what his purpose in life is, he tried to solve the riddle of his life. He tried to find the source of the lotus but in vain. At last, totally dejected and depressed, he sat not knowing what to do. He then heard a thundering divine voice, "Tapa, tapa" – which meant "Perform austerity."

Brahma sat for meditation for 1000 divine years and attained great purity and concentration of mind following this advice. In such a prepared mind, he gained the vision of the Lord. The Lord came in the shankha-chakra-gadaa-padma form and took him to Vaikuntha.

Vaikuntha is described in the Puranas as the abode of Lord Mahavishnu. In this abode, the three gunas – rajas, tamas, and sattva – do not operate. This abode is untouched by Maya. All the denizens of that realm are blue in colour, radiant, endowed with eyes like lotus petals, dressed in yellow robes, extremely attractive and handsome, having four arms, bedecked with brilliant gem-studded necklaces, ear-rings, diadems and wreaths.

There, Mahalakshmi, possessed of unimaginable beauty, adores the feet of the Lord with rare and invaluable ingredients. The abode is described as a place abundant in all luxuries, riches, and comforts. There the Lord is seated and served by His attendants. He is ever ready to bless the devotees.

The Lord took Brahma to Vaikuntha and made clear to him his purpose in life. The Lord said, "My dear son, you are going to be the Brahma of the next creation. So, therefore, now that you have to engage yourself in this activity, you will need the most important knowledge, the Self-knowledge. Without this knowledge, if you enter into this activity of creation, you will bind yourself with ahankara and mamakara."

"When you create, you will get attached to the creation and you will say 'it is my creation.' This is mamakara. After creation, you will have the arrogance and pride that 'I did the creation.' This is called ahankara. The sense of doership and the sense of possessiveness – these are the two major dangers of this world. These two will lead you to repeated births and deaths, not allowing you to get liberated. Hence Self-knowledge is a must."



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The Lord's teaching to Brahma is for all of us also, because our condition is also not different from Brahma. Just like Brahma, we also don't know who we are, where we have come from, and what our purpose in life is. Like Brahma, we are also given certain responsibilities in life. Action being a double-edged weapon, it can bind us or liberate us. Hence like Brahma, we are also faced with the threat of ahankara, mamakara, and transmigration. Hence the knowledge of the Self is equally useful to all of us.

The Lord gave this knowledge of the Self in just 4 verses. These verses are famously known as Chatushloki Bhagavatham.

The blessed Lord said:

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यत् यत् सदसत् परम् । पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम् ।।2.9.32।।

"I am that which is beyond cause and effect. In the beginning, before creation, I alone was. During the existence of creation also I alone am. After the dissolution of creation also I alone will be.

In short, there is nothing other than Me."

Brahma: "Lord, if You alone exists, then why am I seeing this creation?"

The Lord answers:

ऋतेऽर्थं यत् प्रतीयेत न प्रतीयेत चात्मनि । तद्विद्यात् आत्मनो मायां यथाऽऽभासो यथा तमः।।2.9.33।।

"You see this world due to My Maya. This Maya has two powers:

- 1. Maya projects that which is not there (vikshepa). For example, like the reflection in the mirror. We see things and beings in the mirror, but they don't really exist.
- 2. Maya covers that which exists (aavarana). For example, like darkness. In the darkness, though the things exist, they are not seen.

Maya firstly projects the illusory world and the ego as real. Secondly, it hides Me, the Self of all beings, and makes Me appear non-existent."

Brahma: "O Lord, how to come out of this Maya, the source of all miseries, the cause of transmigration?"

The Lord answers:

यथा महान्ति भूतानि भूतेषूच्चावचेष्वनु । प्रविष्टान्यप्रविष्टानि तथा तेषु न तेष्वहम् ।।2.9.34।।

"When we ignore the reality and get attached to the illusion, we get caught up in Maya. An example will make it clear.

Consider the physical body. What is this body? It is nothing but the 5 elements. These 5 elements alone are the reality. Why? It is so because these 5 elements exist before the formation of the body, after the formation of the body, and after the death and destruction of the body. Hence the reality of the body is



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that they are 5 elements only. But instead of paying attention to reality, we get attached to the form of the body. This identification with the illusory body causes all problems in life."

"The body exists in the 5 elements. But the 5 elements are not affected by the body's presence or absence. So too, the whole creation exists in Me, the Supreme Self, but I am not affected by the creation.

Hence all suffering is because of Maya. Under the influence of Maya, one attaches to the illusory world and ignores Me, his real Self."

"Hence the solution to all problems is this: pay attention to the reality. Never ignore the Self. The root cause of all suffering is Self-ignorance – ignoring the Self."

The Lord concluded His teachings and said:

## एतावद् एव जिज्ञास्यं तत्त्वजिज्ञास्नाऽऽत्मनः । अन्वयव्यतिरेकाभ्यां यत्स्यात् सर्वत्र सर्वदा ।।2.9.35।।

"The Supreme Self is the support and substratum of everything in this world. In its presence, everything is present. In its absence, everything is absent. The illusions come and go, but the reality always exists everywhere, at all times. Hence for a sincere seeker of truth, the only thing to be done is to enquire into the nature of the Self."

## एतन्मतं समातिष्ठ परमेण समाधिना । भवान् कल्पविकल्पेषु न विमुहयति कर्हिचित् ।।2.9.36।।

"This is the one thing to be practised with supreme care and concentration – abidance in the Self. Remember Me, your own Self, the ultimate Reality, the only existing thing in this world. If you do this then you will never get deluded."

From the above discussion, it is clear what Vaikuntha is. It is not some outer place to travel and reach. Vaikuntha is our own true Self. We reach there by knowing the Self, by abiding in the Self.

Q= If this is true, then why did Vyasacharya describe Vaikuntha as a beautiful world?

A= It is only for the uninvolved and the immature ones who don't have the mental purity and intellectual subtlety to understand the Self.

Q= Why can't we consider Vaikuntha as a divine world?

A=If we consider Vaikuntha as a world to reach in outer space, we will have many logical fallacies. Some of them are mentioned here.

- 1. If karma takes us to Vaikuntha, then return from Vaikuntha is guaranteed because every action can give only a limited result, says Bhagavan Shankaracharya. Hence liberation can never become permanent. We will have to come back from Vaikuntha once the Punya is exhausted. If liberation is impermanent, then that is no liberation at all.
- 2. If we assume that Vishnu is different from us, then we can never love Vishnu infinitely and unconditionally because infinite conditional love is possible only towards the Self.



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The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad says:

आत्मनस्त् कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति | Everything is dear to us only because of the love for the Self.

Since we love the Self infinitely and unconditionally, the love for the Lord can become infinite and unconditional only if the Lord is our own Self.

- 3. If we exist as individual entities in Vaikuntha, then we remain eternally limited and conditioned by our subtle and causal bodies.
- 4. Spatial existence of Vaikuntha cannot be accepted because time and space are illusions projected by Maya, experienced in the illusory mind.

Hence due to all these reasons, Vaikuntha cannot be an external world. It has to be the Self alone, as rightly pointed out in the quote, as unambiguously experienced by the seekers of all times.

OMTATSAT



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## Badri Expansion – Models & Plans











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**Om Tat Sat**