



Issue 18: Focus on Meditation

"Our physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual personalities must be blended into one harmonious whole. Meditation is the technique for achieving this harmony. It is the highest spiritual discipline. Through meditation we come to experience peace within ourselves."

Swami Chinmayananda

Editorial

Meditation classes are not unusual or rare to come by in the UK, but in the present-day culture of instant coffee, food-on-the-go and high-speed travel, city-dwellers often seek to escape the mayhem using such techniques with the expectation of instant results.

Meditation on the whole is perceived as a means of relieving stress. Rarely is it understood to be not a process but an effortless awareness of one's true nature - the Self. However, when the mind is unprepared, even with this knowledge, what results is more agitation than meditation.

So what is needed to prepare the mind?

One of the first steps on the journey to successful meditation is learning how to remain single-pointed. I will use a personal experience from my university days to illustrate this point.

I was one of a group of fifty students in an economics lecture. We had just had lunch, it was a hot day, the lecturer's voice was sleep inducing, and quite frankly, economic theory had left the building. The lecturer, aptly named Dr Shanti could tell that we were not paying attention so he said to us, 'What if I just give you 2 key facts that will guarantee success in your finals next week? It will take 5 minutes, and then we can all call it a day'. He had our undivided attention for 5 minutes.

But then he started talking in a voice that was so low that we could barely hear him, but we did hear odd words like 'you must make sure'... 'In your answer'... 'The examiner' ... The voice got lower - almost a whisper now. Frankly I could hear nothing and I was straining every muscle to catch his words with increasing desperation. This 5-minute 'quick fix' was vital to our success. We all had our eyes fixed on his face, trying to lip read. No one moved.

And then, without warning, he stopped talking. The room was filled with total silence. Nobody quite knew what to do - we were all looking at him and he at us. Nobody dared break the silence. Then finally, in a low but quite clear voice, Dr Shanti said, 'That is guaranteed success'.

Dr Shanti hadn't actually said anything of any value - but he forced us to remain completely still and focussed for a short period of time.

Next I will share with you a form of 'active meditation'; which is experienced when we begin to incorporate the benefits of regular practice into our daily lives.

I first heard Swami Chidatmananda talk about dynamic stillness and active meditation but it was then, to me, just a theory. I needed to see it - and as these things do - the opportunity presented itself. It was at a family camp, when one of the acts of the evening entertainment was a 'sword dance' - a blend of Tai Chi and dance.

The performer glided gracefully through the ritual of the dance. A powerful and inspiring blend of dance and meditative awareness - his body was in perfect harmony with the sword and the music. His combination of fluidity and athleticism had the audience totally mesmerised.

Just as I wanted the 'quick fix' to my economics exam that made me focus on the lecturer's words. Dr Shanti taught me that concentration and dedication come when we are really determined. And just as the dancer glided through his well-practiced steps, I witnessed that when you are in harmony and at one with a noble activity then you can reach a meditative state where you are filled with peace and radiate it to others around you.

Concentration and developing single-pointedness are just steps along the way that help prepare the mind for meditation. But choosing an activity we enjoy and throwing ourselves into it wholeheartedly is a good place to begin.

The higher and nobler that activity, the more our minds are purified. We have a range of activities run by Chinmaya Mission for all ages, including Study classes, Vanaprastha sessions, Children's value based activities, Swaranjali and Sanskrit classes, camps and Yagnas: to help us develop useful skills, but more importantly to prepare our minds for contemplation on the highest knowledge.

I invite you all to peruse through the pages of this issue. It is packed full of articles containing practical techniques on how to meditate, meditation as prescribed in the Bhagavad Gita, liberally illustrated with examples and shared experiences. These range from excerpts of articles by our Acharyas to the experiences of our young professionals, teenagers and children.

Madhavi Vadera

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Meet SWAMI SWAROOPANANDA

Swami Swaroopananda has been addressing and inspiring large audiences in the UK for more than ten years. He is the Acharya in charge of Chinmaya Mission UK, Far East and Australia. He is also Director of the Chinmaya International Residential School, India. Swamiji is back in London from 1st-6th September 2008 doing a series of talks at Kensington Town Hall on Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gita; the Yoga of Meditation.



Swami Swaroopananda has nurtured the development of Chinmaya Mission UK from its early days. He built a management team, drawing out different skills and strengths of UK members to form a cohesive unit; a chariot with all its component parts, active in working towards bringing about Swami Chinmayananda's vision. I particularly remember the groundbreaking Hanuman Chalisa talks in 2001.

During his beautiful explanation of each and every verse, Swamiji managed to light a fire of devotion in everyone's hearts. As the talks went on, sevaks (volunteers) had to hold the doors closed due to the overwhelming crowds, as word spread fast and the numbers swelled over the days. Swamiji's compelling exposition of the devotion, courage and wisdom of Sri Hanumanji not only demonstrated his own love and faith but prompted a chain reaction a thousand times over: not least in the way in which all Chinmaya Mission members in London and worldwide, have adopted the ideals of Sri Rama's messenger, taking up His worship with full heart at the Ashram.

Born into a large, successful family business in Hong Kong, Swami Swaroopananda decided at a young age that he wanted "to be a doctor of the heart, treating people for free." As a teenager, Swamiji went to Swami Chinmayananda, seeking "real answers to real questions." Now as Swamiji addresses the youth himself, he brings his extraordinary energy with a unique brand of streetwise understanding to his younger audience.

The highest knowledge is laced with wit and humour in Swamiji's discourses, and flavoured with deep-seated devotion. All these factors combine to create a lovely blend, capturing unsuspecting audience members that hear him for the first time and delights his regular listeners.

Taking references from the scriptures, Swamiji champions women, drawing their attention to their innate strength and reminding them of their true, elevated position; he relates to men with all the wisdom and experience drawn from being a listening ear to the world over; he is an unparalleled story teller with a great sense of fun and mischief, he lovingly guides children, unfailingly drawing their attention to the correct path for maximum happiness; and as a management Guru, Swamiji is known round the world for his techniques for success in the corporate world.

Swami Swaroopananda blazes Vedanta on stage like the rainbow fire seen in pure cut crystal. And with the practical compassion of a true friend, just like the gentle charioteer Sri Krishna, he has empathy that comes from identifying with the Truth.

Ever youthful with the youth, he leads outdoor activities in a jaunty baseball cap; countless devotees confide in him sensing his deep compassion; and he has indeed come to touch people's hearts. Thus there is a universal sense of personal connection, as his logic resonates with each and every person.

I was never going to be able to describe all the different facets of our beloved Swamiji to you – but I would like to say, make sure you do not miss the opportunity of hearing him speak this September when he makes a rare visit to London.

Hari Om!
Devayani Khakhria

Online WITH THE MASTER

Be still, and let the infinite flow down to flood your within...

In the thick of life, in the work-a-day world, we are ever called upon to face problems, and every moment raises a new challenge to be solved by us. A smart young man has to pour out his best at all times in order to build up his life, and later on he has to maintain the very life that has been raised by him. This can be exhausting and weakening unless he regularly replenishes the brain-drain and replaces the mental wastage.

Therefore, for a few, but sweet moments, cheerfully and joyously learn to halt the mind from all its wanderings in the usual realms of objects, emotions and thoughts. Under such a balmy quiet, the lacerated mind recovers and refills itself with a strange light and a new power. At such moments of inner tranquillity, the mind can reach out to thoughts profound, which are ordinarily too high for us to readily clasp in the sweep of our personal understanding. When we are still and our mind is quiet, then alone the infinite resources of the Total-Mind will flow down to flood our within.

To some temperaments, morning hours are the best for meditation, while for others, due to the very programme of their life's duties, late evenings are perhaps most suitable. Some consider caves to be the best place for them to quieten their minds. To others, out in the field, under the open sky, seems to be the most conducive place to meditate. In fact, these external factors of time and place have really nothing to do with the practice of meditation – but students in their initial attempts receive a false psychological help from these factors. The Scriptures too, encourage them. Soon the seeker will come to realise that any prejudices and taboos of his earlier days were but his own idle phobia.

After discovering through trial-and-error method, the exact hour and precise place where each of us can most easily and effectively compose ourselves, let us systematically pursue this significant practice of "listening to the silence of the mind", or "hearing the dynamic hush of the silent bosom." Let us rest therein peacefully for ten to fifteen minutes, let us learn to relax and retire from all our worries and fears, anxieties and lusts, passions and pains. Let us persuade ourselves to be relaxed, happy, confident and gay as an innocent child playing at the feet of its mother.

Any one in the world who invests in his personality, which is thus grown rich in concentration, intellectual poise, mental peace and integrity of character, must surely succeed and reach the realms beyond the ordinary purview of the average man.



Ultimately through meditation alone, prophets and saints became immortal men of wisdom, power and glory. If one saint or sage of the past could thus raise himself above the average in his own generation, every one of us, as human beings, has the right to claim this privilege as our sacred heritage. Meditate and grow! There is no end to possibilities!

Let not any seeker throw up his efforts in despair and run away from his meditation-seat, even after his millionth failure to quieten the mind. These attempts, though apparently unrewarding, are slowly eating up into the delusions and widening the gateway to Realisation. Never give up - never despair. Strive on... on... and... on. Every effort you put forth is a step taken towards the Truth. When tired... smile. When exhausted... rest, and then strive again. When dispirited... sing His glories. When totally disgusted... surrender to Him. Help comes! Help surely comes!!

The path of spiritual unfoldment is reserved for the wise heroes and not for the simple-minded, foolish cowards. You must, now and then, assume a get-tough stance with the mind. Don't yield easily. Continuously fight down the mind's rebellions. Even when you are losing, retreat still fighting for every inch.

Call up reinforcements from the Lord, through your devotion and surrender.

The Sadhana must be continued till the achievement of the realisation of the "Flameless Light" (Nirvana) of Consciousness. Says the Guru, "To gain the Supreme experience, through a total quietude of the entire mind-intellect-equipment Oh Sin-less-one, strive on till you reach the Abode of Peace. Brahman."

Having thus set the student on the path and having equipped the pilgrim with all knowledge, the teacher in the Upanishad says to the seeker: "God speed! Good luck enroute!! May you go pleasantly beyond the Kingdom of Darkness" into the Light-of-Lights, by whose Light alone all other lights are lit up.

Never hurry. Have faith in the Lord and your teachers. And hasten slowly. "Hari Om – Hari Om – Hari Om".

Swami Chinmayananda

Online WITH THE MASTER

“Meditation is the effortless abidance in the awareness of one’s true nature.” Swami Tejomayananda

Meditation for the Seeker - Preparing the mind for the journey.

We are often misguided by the belief that meditation amounts to the image of a Yogi sat under a tree, clutching a Japa mala and reciting mantras. This is certainly one technique used to still the mind and enable us to experience our true nature, this eternal and absolute bliss. **However, it is effortless abidance - this constant knowing that one is nothing other than pure consciousness, that is meditation.**

Initially, a strong desire has to arise within the seeker to want to experience such a state. It is only after developing this level of faith that further progress can be made on the spiritual path. Thereafter, the process to become firmly established and abide within pure consciousness or the Self (Nididhyasanam) can begin in earnest.



Techniques

As the mind prepares itself to enter this state of being, the image of the yogi is somewhat re-affirmed! It is necessary that a state of relaxation is initially achieved, one in which there is solitude and minimum of distractions. A comfortable seat of meditation should then be prepared (asana) which can be placed in a quiet corner of the house. Japa meditation is certainly one of the most established techniques of quietening the mind and stilling the thoughts. Rosary beads are rotated between the thumb and middle finger as a mantra is chanted. Essentially it is a process through which the mind becomes single-pointed and it is this constant chanting of the Lord’s name which behaves as a trigger in enabling us to detach from the lower and attach to the higher. The absorption of the withdrawn mind in the Self is accomplished through sattvic buddhi i.e. the intellect with the capacity to discriminate between the Self (pure consciousness) and the not-Self (body, mind and intellect).

Obstacles

The journey itself can often seem very slow and painful – it may seem that you are not making progress and it is easy to give up. One of the obstacles on the path is that the mind will wander. The more we force ourselves to concentrate, the more this is likely to occur. Our perceptions can lead to distractions and our memories of experiences can also deter the mind from reaching its objective. A second obstacle is the tendency to enjoy the quietude. One develops such an appreciation of this particular state that there is an unwillingness to go beyond it and experience ultimate bliss.

Essentially, we all aspire towards this state of pure bliss. Once we taste it, we will always hunger for more. The space between our thoughts whence we experience pure consciousness is magical. It is certainly a journey worth making.

Do not think, do not do, do not become. Just be!

By Deesha Chadha, inspired by the writings of Swami Tejomayananda

Vision of THE GITA

Satsang with Brahmacharini Sumati Chaitanya: *The One Key*

Just like the Upanishads, Gita study requires the help of a sympathetic teacher. Just as water flows in a natural and effortless way from an upper to a lower level, pure knowledge flows from the Guru to the dedicated disciple. Chinmaya Mission Swamis uplift crowds with weeklong discourses on a chapter of the Bhagavad Gita during their annual UK visits. But at Chinmaya Kirti, our centre in London, Brahmacharini Sumati Chaitanya provides seekers with a weekly dosage of Gita knowledge.



The ultimate spiritual goal is to recognise one's true Self, not simply to go through life's fleeting experiences. We know **'we are,' but do we know who we really are?**

Our shifting understanding of ourselves is always in association with things and beings around us that are constantly changing. With body-association, we define ourselves as young or old, fat or thin, fair or dark.

With thought-association, we see ourselves as angry, sad or happy, intelligent or dull, peaceful or agitated. Our identity is based on our identification with our nation, culture, religion, people, and circumstances, all of which are also constantly changing.

But in this ever-changing world, even though our relative identity keeps changing, there is one absolute identity that never changes-and that is 'I.' I am the unchanging factor in all my experiences.

So, what is the true nature of this I?

Vedantic scriptures indicate the true nature of the 'I'. Note that the main purpose of scriptural study is not merely to know that 'I am'- because no one has ever had the experience of being non-existent. The main purpose is also not to merely appreciate that 'I am other than the body'-because simply and logically; the knower is always different from the known. Scriptural study must necessarily end in the recognition of one's Self - the I - as the non-dual, existence-consciousness-bliss principle. Unless we rediscover our true identity as the non-dual Self, to be free from fears and sorrows will remain a mere dream.

The Self is nitya and nitya-mukta, ever-present and ever-liberated. Hence the experience of the Self cannot be the result of any action. If that which always 'is' is not 'cognised', it is only because one is not aware of It. Therefore, 'recognition of the Self - the I - and Its nature is possible when it is pointed out by one who has knowledge or experience of the Self, as the Self. Such a one is known as the shrotriya brahma-nishtha guru.

The Guru and scriptures indicate various types of Sadhana, or spiritual practices, for the disciple. But if spiritual practices cannot create the Self, modify the Self, refine the Self, or even cause one to attain the Self, then what is their purpose? **All Sadhana is to first prepare the inner equipments (mind and intellect) to grasp the import of the scriptural wisdom.** Through this, once one is convinced of the true nature of one's I, the next stage is to practice giving up the notion of being an individual, separate from the world. When this practice matures, in the subtle heights of meditation, as the notion of individuality disappears, the nature of the I, one's true Self, reveals itself, to its own Self, as non-dual Consciousness.

The Guru's task is to introduce the disciple's own Self to the disciple. The Guru cannot do anything if the disciple refuses to follow the instructions. Insistence, proving one's own point, and arguing with the spiritual teacher is a complete waste of time and energy. If the spiritual path is not based on blind belief, it is also not a path of disbelief: Samshaya-atma vinashyati. Shraddhavan labhate jnanam.

A student who submits to the Guru's discipline is a true disciple. When the intelligent student-'intelligent' because he discovers that his limited intellect cannot grasp the infinite Truth-with an attitude of surrender, follows his Guru's instructions and maintains perfect faith in the Guru's wisdom, he comes to realise fully his own Self. And this Self-realisation frees him, at once, from all imaginary limitations of individuality.

The Gita is one of the great revealers of the true nature of the Self.

When Arjuna realises that he is unable to rise above his present situation and is helpless before his overwhelming emotions, he surrenders to the wisdom of his teacher, Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna advises Arjuna to renounce his physical-mental-intellectual estimates of the world and re-evaluate his life-situation through spiritual understanding. Shri Krishna reveals to Arjuna that the world of names and forms is not other than his own Self.

The non-apprehension of the true nature of the non-dual Self leads to the misapprehension of being an individual. From such misapprehension come fears, anxieties, sorrows, and the sense of being a doer and enjoyer. The individual thus goes through birth after birth to exhaust the impressions created from all these experiences.

The Gita teaches, clearly and firmly, that the only way to end the cycle of birth and death, to rise above pain and suffering, is to recognise one's non-dual nature. Whether under open skies, behind closed doors, in remote mountain caves, within bustling city crowds, atop financial success, at rock bottom depressions . . . **Self-knowledge is the One Key.**

Brahmacharini Sumati Chaitanya

Vision of THE GITA

Personal Transformation: A Beginner's Journey



I had the good fortune of listening to Swami Chinmayananda speak on the Gita as a teenager – I was taken there under duress by my grandfather who had asked me to take him to a yagna in Chennai. At the time, I didn't understand the full import of the words spoken; nevertheless the phrase "Discover Thyself" made a deep impression. I started attending lectures on the Gita intermittently from that point onwards but the opportunity for regular study under the guidance of a teacher did not present itself until a few years ago when I moved with my family to the UK.

My journey began with many questions but with guidance and contemplation I have started to gain a better understanding of basic concepts. Fundamentally, I **have learnt that the attitude behind each action is more important than the action itself**. Actions should be performed without egocentric desires and this in turn cleanses the mind of its latent impressions resulting in a purification that allows for a deeper understanding of the subtler aspects of the Truth.

My involvement in a range of Chinmaya Mission UK activities provides me with ample opportunity to put the newly acquired spiritual knowledge into practice. Any insistence on trying to arrange the world around me to suit my own likes and dislikes is challenged at every step.

The futility of the notion of being in control of situations and circumstances has become increasingly apparent and I have slowly learnt to surrender and function as an instrument of Divine will.

Having discovered the joy of surrender and acceptance I now consciously attempt to maintain this understanding in all that I do. The most profound personal transformation has been a distinct change in vision – I now find myself increasingly looking inwards for solutions as opposed to the previously conditioned reflex to search for solutions in the outside world. **I have developed an alertness that encourages me to pause, understand and try to analyse situations as they arise.** This new understanding has also led to significant changes in other aspects of my life – most notably, in my approach to prayer: from wish-fulfilment to asking for strength to face daily obstacles.

The challenges that I've faced along the way have been phenomenal - the difficulty of maintaining this efficiency throughout and in all circumstances being the most recurring obstacle. But I realise that after having been conditioned for so many years, indeed several births, this transformation will not occur without its inherent challenges. Regular study of the Gita has allowed me to begin to recognise the full significance of its teachings – that **it is not merely a manual for self improvement, but a true and complete guide to one's self-unfoldment. And, as I struggle to reinforce this new understanding of the true meaning of life and how to act, I am comforted by the conviction that this is indeed the true path at the end of which is a light – the light of true wisdom and liberation from bondage.**

V. Madhusudhan





City THINK

Spiritual principles for a corporate world

A company is nothing but a collection of **processes** and **people**. Companies go to great lengths and spend countless hours and funds to improve their **processes**, making systems more efficient, cutting costs and maximising margins.

But ask any successful businessman and he will tell you that ultimately, a company succeeds and fails because of its **people**. Efficient **processes** certainly help, but **a worker who feels fulfilled in his job and works with inspiration is a company's most valuable asset.**

Vedanta ultimately provides us with knowledge of who we are. But it also tells us who we are not. We are not limited BMIs (Body, Mind, Intellect) and in explaining so, Vedanta provides us with a perfect understanding of these equipments, how they work and what their limitations are.

Vedanta declares that happiness does not lie in the fulfillment of desires. Rather, we feel happy when we experience our Higher Selves. Satisfying desires creates a temporary tranquility of mind that allows us to experience our Higher Selves for brief moments. But if we change the way we work, we discover that we can find fulfillment in the task itself and not defer our contentment to only those times when our desires are met.

By changing the way we work, we can discover contentment even in the cut and thrust of the corporate world. When we are contented and fulfilled in our work, we excel. And when we excel, profit and promotion come as a side-effect. There are many advantages that Vedanta provides us with in the workplace but here I will discuss two of them: **awareness** and **mind-body-alignment**.

Awareness

Vedanta states that the BMI are my equipment. The body is my physical tool, the mind my emotional faculty and the intellect the seat of my discriminative capacity.

None of them are Me. So when I feel a flood of negative emotions in the workplace, be it due to other's (or my own) incompetence, being overwhelmed and stressed with my workload or my colleagues not working in accordance with my expectations, I am safe in the knowledge that these emotions are not Me.

This immediately creates space between my Self and my emotions. Negative emotions cause agitation and if I allow them to perpetuate, they ultimately cloud my judgement and fill me with anxiety. But I **have** these emotions: I have not **become** them. They have come to me for a period of time but by not indulging or entertaining them, they will pass away.

In fact every negative emotion that comes to us lasts only as long as one thought. It is our insistence to hold on to them and feed them that causes them to propagate. When we create space between our Selves and our emotions, we provide ourselves with room to think clearly.

Do I want this emotion?

If I act on this emotion, what will be the consequence of my action? Do I want to be responsible for this consequence? By creating this space, we create clarity. And with this clarity we stop making decisions based on short-term emotional reactions but see the situation as a whole.

Spiritual principles for a corporate world

When coupled with a high vision (one that unifies the team, company and society) the effect of such decision-making is greater clarity. The ultimate goal remains clear and the path to reach that goal remains as direct as ever. Obstacles will always come but by becoming aware of our emotions, the obstacles become incapable of clouding our judgement. We see situations as they are and root our decisions in the rationality of the intellect.

A welcome side-effect of such a working practice is an almost instantaneous decrease in stress levels. When we become aware of our emotions and consciously choose to entertain them based upon how useful they will be to the current situation, they instantly lose their power to agitate us. As a result, we gain not only greater clarity of thinking but also greater efficiency in the moment. Work becomes effortless and we leave the office vitalised instead of drained.

MBA: Mind-Body Alignment

The second technique has been described by Swami Chinmayananda as MBA: Mind-Body Alignment. The modern manager faces a hectic work schedule. On any given day, many of us will have ten to twenty tasks to accomplish and many companies offer time-management courses to help people manage their workload.

But in my experience, **time management** is not the root problem. The problem is **energy management**. When presented with a multitude of issues, we don't focus on each task at a time but hold them all in our minds, constantly moving from one to the other in our thoughts.

Hence when we are supposed to focus on task A, our minds are worried about the consequences of not focussing on tasks B, C and D. The result is agitation of the mind and dissipation of energy. The work becomes laborious and we become resentful, leaving the office exhausted, even though we have barely used a muscle.

MBA is a simple technique: place your mind where your hands are. Time management is important. We need to prioritise and schedule our work but once this is done, by focussing solely on the task at hand, we gain efficiency and poise. Our body and mind become aligned and we tap into our Higher Selves, the source of all energy and creativity, and work becomes effortless. Many top athletes use this technique and describe it as being 'in the moment', a state of heightened awareness that comes with single-pointed concentration.

The result is a reduction in stress and an increase in efficiency. But more than this, when we apply MBA, we often find that we can transcend our limitations and produce insights and a quality of work that astonishes us and those around us. Why? Because when the mind and body are aligned, we become a channel for the Higher Self to express and this Higher Self knows no limits.

These are a few of the techniques that Vedanta has provided me with that have helped me become more efficient, productive and fulfilled in my work. There are many more and the wonder of Vedanta is that by practicing its secrets, every day becomes an opportunity to unfold our personality and feel happier and more fulfilled here and now, in the moment.

By Milan Samani

Milan Samani, a qualified chartered accountant, is the CHYK UK (Chinmaya Yuva Kendra) coordinator and has conducted talks on the application of Vedanta to modern corporate life at places including: PricewaterhouseCoopers Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, London School of Economics.

City Thinkers' Perspective: Comments from those who regularly attend a Chinmaya Mission Study Class

"CityThink has given me a fresh perspective on life. I have connected with people on a similar wavelength. At work I am finding methods to instill a noble philosophy and vision in everything I do: with my staff, clients, partners and even competitors." Sridhar Sharma (MD in an advertising and marketing company)

"My work life has taken a 180-degree turn. Before attending the Chinmaya Mission classes I was disheartened and demotivated I was an ineffective labourer living day-to-day. Since joining the classes, I have come to see what it means to see work as service." Rita Hemraj (Management Consultant)

"It sounds almost improbable: a group of City professionals learning Vedanta in the middle of the world's most sophisticated and ruthless financial centre - the City of London! The weekly study classes have had an incredible impact on me and on all aspects of my life." Priya Shah (Investment Banker)

In preparation FOR MEDITATION

Meditation Q & A



What is meditation and why should I meditate?

Few of us would deny the need for integrating the various conflicting aspects of our personality. The conflict arises between our physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual being. It arises when our desires clash with our duties. Meditation is the technique for achieving total harmony. It is the process by which we are able to discover who we truly are by clearing the dust off the mirror of our mind. **In actual fact meditation is not an action, it is nothing but effortless abidance in the Self.** What we 'do' is preparation for meditation.

Through this preparation we control our flow of thoughts so they are fewer and slower, and we become more efficient, dynamic and happier.

I have tried meditation and nothing happened- what should I do?

Don't give up. It is important to cultivate the habit and discipline within the mind. You may continue in this way for a week or perhaps months; eventually the wall you are trying to push will give way unexpectedly and you will be surprised at how swiftly you move forward!

What about when I am having a bad day?

As your mind relaxes, it may slip to allow thoughts and feelings to surface to the forefront of the mind making you feel more agitated, in which case we should muster our strength and fight the battle against our lower tendencies. We have been told by great Masters that sometimes the hardest time for a sincere spiritual seeker is before their ultimate divine experience. So **with faith and conviction hasten slowly, do not give in to despair**, and you will begin to have fewer bad days!

What connection is there between meditation and my everyday life?

Once you have discovered the wonders of meditation you may wonder how to carry the good effects beyond the prayer seat. If we carry the fruits of meditation as if carrying water in a clay pot- at first we may spill all of it as soon as we get up, but slowly as we practice we carry it for longer and longer periods through the day before it spills over the pot edge and we will see the benefit of meditation manifesting in our everyday lives.

The entire day's activities are a form of preparation for meditation. If our acts are selfless and we act with awareness we create a conducive environment for meditation to take place.

What is concentration and contemplation?

These words are used frequently in connection with meditation. Concentration is the unwavering focus on a chosen object or idea for a sustained period. We can use dynamic concentration by keeping our minds focused on the here and now, achieving integration between the mind, body and intellect, which ultimately leads to disassociating ourselves from the BMI.

Contemplation is feeling or thinking about an object or idea for a sustained period. Dynamic contemplation takes this a step further as it invokes a higher emotion or thought. For example, by replaying the story of Hanumanji in our minds, we feel compassion and love.

What stops us from reaching the goal - effortless abidance in the Self?

Stopping us are impurities that arise from our desires, agitations that arise from conditionings from the past and anxieties of the future, and identification with the ego or sense of doership. Instead we need a mind that is calm concentrated and contemplative; so how do we achieve this?

Through devotion and a strong sense of duty and by applying discipline to the mind we can free ourselves from desires, agitations and the ego identity.

How can I purify my mind?

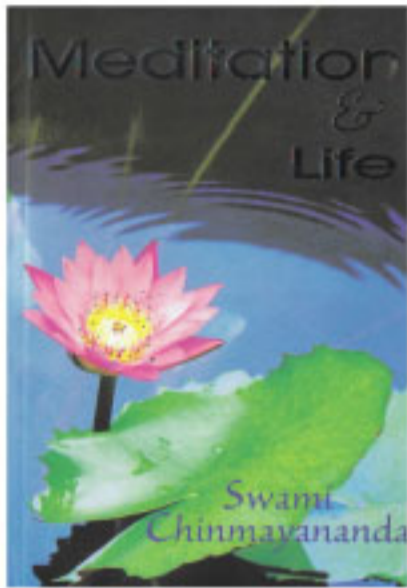
We can achieve this through 3 steps:

- purification of our feelings by renunciation of likes and dislikes, detaching ourselves from people and objects and reattaching to the higher;
- purifying our thoughts by creating more sattvic desires to replace lower, more tamasic desires and detaching from the thought process.
- purifying the feeling of 'I' ness (attachment to the ego) through steady contemplation, devotion and selfless service.

Compiled by Rita Hemraj

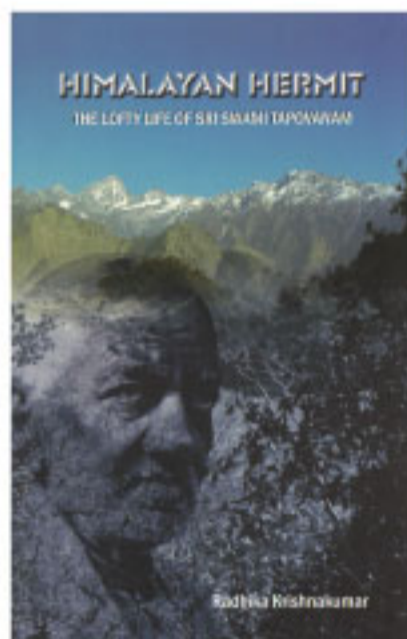
On OUR BOOKSHELF

Chinmaya Mission UK has an extensive selection of books, CDs, DVDs and audiotapes available online at www.chinmayabooks.com and at the bookshop in Chinmaya Kirti (London Mission Centre). They range from popular children's publications to commentaries on the Upanishads and the Holy Gita. Here is a selection of items available on the subject of meditation.



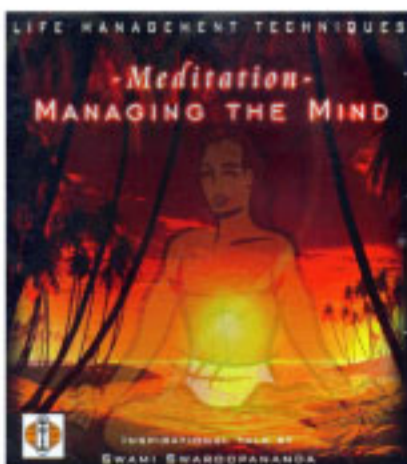
Meditation & Life (Book)

Swami Chinmayananda, one of the greatest exponents of Vedanta in modern times, takes us through the thought process necessary to gain control of our inner world. He first shows us the logic behind meditation and then teaches us the specific techniques for applying meditative practice to our daily lives. When meditation becomes a natural part of our day, we find our lives transformed and our minds at peace. The book describes step-by-step powerful techniques including introspection and logical thinking to tame our mind and create a mind-state fit for meditation. It is an excellent resource for someone new to meditation and has been masterfully divided into four parts going through the purpose, process and discipline of meditation but ultimately tells us how to absorb meditation into every moment of our existence.



Himalayan Hermit (Book)

This inspiring book written by Radhika Krishnakumar is based on the life of Sri Swami Tapovanam. It bears the title 'Himalayan Hermit' because he spent a large portion of his life living in the Himalayas in search of wisdom and the highest level of consciousness. His disciple, the internationally acclaimed spiritual leader Swami Chinmayanada, spread his Guru's name and image to the far corners of the globe. This book takes us on a journey through the life of Swami Tapovanam from his early childhood days where he was influenced by spirituality and religious practices to the later years where he lived at the foothills of the Himalayas. His path of spiritual growth gives us a unique perspective of the journey faced by those who dedicate their entire life in search of the Truth. His life inspires and elevates, teaches and transforms, and possesses the rare power to make us look within ourselves and question the very fundamental basis upon which we lead our lives.



Meditation - Managing the Mind (Audio CD)

A popular phrase, 'Master the mind and master the universe', but can the mind be tamed? And can it be mastered? Swami Swaroopananda explores these questions and shows us that through self-knowledge and the use of powerful techniques including meditation, mastery of the mind is possible. 'This mind is your best friend; this mind is your deadliest enemy'. That mind which is under your mastery is your best friend; that mind that dictates you, that mind that masters you, is your deadliest enemy. Swamiji refers to the Bhagavad Gita in these talks and explains how we need to master the mind through strategy rather than force. As the mind is the manager of our emotions and actions, we need to learn how to 'manage the manager' and the only way to do that is through the understanding of the inner workings of our own minds.

by Nikhil Dhingra

Language OF THE GODS

Sanskrit: Learning the language of the Gods

Sanskrit is known as the language of the Gods. The word itself means 'perfectly formed' Sam + Krita. Many (if not all) modern languages have their roots in this most beautiful language. In fact, it is so precise and accurate that it has been used by scientists in artificial intelligence modelling. The ancient grammarian Panini codified Sanskrit in such a way that it can never be corrupted - it remains to this day an exact science. Its evolution dates back thousands of years, from Vedic Sanskrit into the Classical Sanskrit that we study at Chinmaya Mission. Sanskrit is a phonetic language and is written in the beautiful Devanagari script.

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः।
भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः।
स्थिरैर्गङ्गैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तनूभिर्
व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

Q&A with the Student

Meera Shah has been learning Sanskrit under Balkrishna Patel at Chinmaya Mission. She sat the Sanskrit GCSE exam in May 2008.



Why learn a "dead" language?

Does anyone speak Sanskrit? These are questions that I constantly get asked when I mention that I learn Sanskrit. Technically, I suppose the answer is that not many people do speak Sanskrit – the 1991 Indian census recorded just under 50,000 fluent Sanskrit speakers (this figure may well have fallen with the "modernisation" of India over the last two decades). Sanskrit, however, is by no means a "dead" language. She is alive in the scriptures that we study and chant, and in Indian tradition and culture. Moreover, being the mother of Indo-European languages, she has influenced the languages spoken by us everyday – be it Indian languages or even English.

Why did you decide to learn Sanskrit at Chinmaya Mission?

As with all things sacred, you need the "right" teacher and environment for studying Sanskrit. Having tried to pursue the study of Sanskrit at a few different organisations, I never felt that the fit was quite right. I had almost given up when Bal-Krishna started the classes at Chinmaya Mission – by the grace of Gurudev, it was just perfect!

Do you find Sanskrit difficult?

Sanskrit is by no means an "easy" language. You need enthusiasm and commitment. It was helpful to have "formally" studied other languages with a heavy grammatical content. In addition to the scriptures study, I was fortunate to have studied Hindi and Gujarati (both modern Indian languages derived from Sanskrit), all of which helped with the vocabulary. But most of all, I was blessed with a wonderful teacher, whose constant encouragement, unflinching patience and modern approach has eased and inspired my journey into this enchanting language.

By Meera Shah

The Sanskrit class timetable and syllabus are under review. Currently there is a beginners class every Saturday from 10.00am to 11.30am at Chinmaya Kirti. An intermediate class is due to resume from September at the same times.

Please contact Shreyas Iyer for more details: ishreyas@gmail.com or 07910 034 084

Q&A with the Teacher

Balkrishna Patel was the young pioneer of Sanskrit classes at Chinmaya Mission UK. He studied Sanskrit up to A level at St. James School (London), and read Classics (including Sanskrit) at Oxford University. He has been teaching Sanskrit at Chinmaya Mission since 2001.

What made you decide to teach Sanskrit?

When something gives you so much benefit and such profound joy, why keep it to yourself? I think it is more of a question – why not?! At the Chinmaya Mission we learn that we must go back to the ancient scriptures to discover the eternal knowledge, to find out who we truly are. It therefore stands to reason that we should learn the original language that was used by the rishis, so that our vision of this knowledge is not distorted by either an agenda of the translator or by the inadequacy of the English language to communicate such profound statements. Would you prefer to see the Taj Mahal on television or see it for yourself in all its glory? No amount of representation, description or commentary will suffice.

What are the pre-requisites for learning Sanskrit?

Young people think Sanskrit is something they can learn when they retire as it won't help them e.g. to get a job or make money. They are satisfied with reading second hand translations and chanting with poor pronunciation. Older people think that their memory and cognitive equipment are not up to the task of learning something new and regret not having done so earlier. They too satisfy themselves with the same processed and puréed baby food! A true seeker will want to make that extra effort to learn and will not be satisfied until he finds for himself the true meaning of the scripture at hand. So whatever stage you may be at, it is the willingness and self-effort to learn that will prepare you for the study of Sanskrit.

JCHYK Page: "The Zone"

Our thoughts are all over the place most of the time, particularly when we are young and have lots of energy. But how do we channel that energy in a constructive way? Junior CHYKs have been learning how to 'be in the zone'. What is the zone? It's when you are at one with what you are doing, totally immersed in the action. Have you experienced it? Find out

Playing Music

Where you create a piece of music pulling it out of thin air. Or play an instrument as if you were a master at it.

Playing Sports

Being in the zone here, means hitting every ball with perfect precision, nailing every shot with speed and accuracy.



Studying

You ace an exam or an essay, enjoying and immersing yourself in the writing of it.

Socialising with friends

Zinging, laughing and enjoying every minute with friends or meeting new people. Being able to easily carry a conversation and it seems like everyone enjoys your company

WHAT IS THE ZONE?

The zone is a moment in time, could be a minute, could be an hour, where whatever you're doing, you excel at. It is at that time where if you weren't in the zone, you would never have accomplished what you were doing. It's powerful, supremely satisfying, seemingly hard to replicate.

HOW DO YOU GET INTO IT?

Getting in the zone is simple. You just have to put your Mind where your hands are.

PUT YOUR MIND WHERE YOUR HANDS ARE?

When you focus on what you're doing, sports, work, etc, immersing yourself in it, and blocking out everything else, you start to enter the zone. Your mind has a tendency to wander, simply stop it, by linking yourself to your subject.

AND THEN STAY IN THE ZONE?

When you enjoy something, you want to continue doing it. And when you continue doing it, you block out everything else, hence the zone!

HOW TO ENJOY SOMETHING YOU DON'T ENJOY DOING?

To enjoy something, you either become good at it, achieving things easily, or it makes you happy. To be good at it, enter the zone and excel at it, thus entering a positive circle of the zone. And with regards to happiness, well you know that happiness is within!!!

By Vijay Sodhi

Chinmaya Kids

An interesting exercise....taming the monkey mind

Why don't you try an interesting exercise?

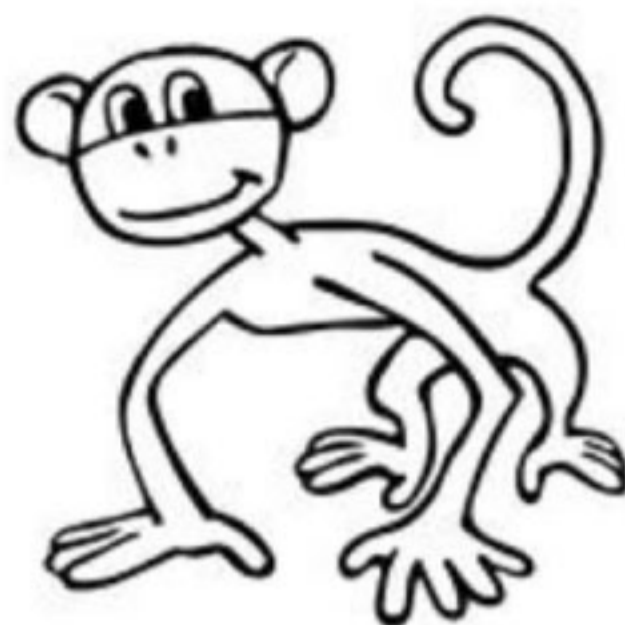
Sit down with your back straight, relax, keep your hands in your lap and close your eyes. Now, simply watch your thoughts floating in your mind as you would the moving pictures on a TV screen.

Do this for just two minutes...

Did you notice how many thoughts flitted in and out?! Did you also note how your mind jumped from one thought to another? This shows that it is not only the body that works. The mind also does a lot of work (thinking, picturing, judging, planning etc.)

Think for a moment...

Even if we want the mind to stay on a single thought, it keeps leaping from one thought to another. Can you name something that jumps around restlessly all the time? Yes! A monkey. This is why sages often compare the mind to a monkey.



Disciplining the monkey mind

Firstly, why should we discipline the mind? Let us take the example of watching TV. We enjoy watching TV because it has lots of channels, and we can watch one of them undisturbed for some time. Suppose the TV kept switching automatically from one channel to the other while you were trying to watch your favourite programme! Would we be able to watch and enjoy anything?

The mind is also like a TV. It has many channels of thought. But in what condition is it now? It jumps continuously from one thought to another, as you saw for yourself when you kept track of your thoughts. So we should try and learn to be aware of the mind and fix it in one place to make full use of it.

What can I do to slow down my monkey mind?

Always try to keep your mind on what you are doing. If you are eating, think only of the food before you. While doing homework, fix your mind on the books, and so on. This only comes with practice. Start today!

Match Up

Draw lines to match up the correct deity to their picture and the animal which relates to them.



Lord Krishna



Lord Shiva



Lord Ganesha



Hanuman Dada



Colouring In

Colour in the pictures of Lord Ganesha – and all his ladoos!



Wordsearch

Can you find the following prayer related words in the box? They may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, forwards or backwards!

U	I	V	A	B	S	N	E	F	C	W	Q	M	A	S	D	F	I	F	R
M	M	N	S	D	E	O	S	A	A	S	D	F	H	O	L	R	Y	C	J
G	O	M	C	D	A	I	P	A	J	A	A	E	P	L	S	E	E	R	S
D	I	V	P	E	D	T	E	N	U	S	D	F	W	U	A	D	F	I	S
I	E	P	N	V	N	V	C	S	P	X	L	S	C	D	T	P	R	D	W
N	C	S	M	O	D	S	T	D	F	B	M	O	V	P	S	U	N	N	R
C	P	F	D	T	G	S	E	F	T	V	F	S	R	C	A	C	C	A	F
N	S	D	L	I	F	R	O	G	G	Y	V	A	J	A	N	A	E	M	S
S	G	I	S	O	Z	X	F	M	Z	E	K	Y	U	M	G	D	X	E	K
E	D	V	P	N	C	S	S	D	E	D	S	U	N	H	V	W	D	A	W
A	G	A	Z	A	V	G	C	V	H	Y	F	G	H	F	J	V	O	L	Q
V	N	S	D	M	E	D	I	T	R	P	L	C	S	D	W	S	A	R	Z
D	A	F	B	K	Y	H	C	R	M	E	D	I	T	A	T	I	O	N	X
M	S	E	V	G	F	S	E	M	E	F	E	P	D	S	G	H	J	K	F
L	A	W	S	I	T	A	R	V	D	S	E	I	B	A	A	R	T	I	D
L	R	Q	O	M	M	B	S	T	A	S	S	R	N	R	V	F	S	D	S
B	A	S	K	L	F	E	A	S	M	X	A	C	D	P	S	B	N	M	A
N	D	T	L	L	R	S	P	R	A	S	P	S	L	K	J	F	S	R	T
A	S	R	L	L	L	C	K	F	C	T	V	A	C	V	X	V	S	O	F
J	S	E	S	D	E	J	D	N	H	Q	C	Z	D	A	R	S	H	A	N
H	B	H	A	J	A	N	A	F	D	A	X	W	D	F	S	X	J	L	I

INCENSE
DEVOTION
DIVA
PUJA
FOCUS
SATSANG
MEDITATION
PRASAD
AARTI
DARSHAN
OM
BELL
BHAJAN
MANDIR

By Bhavisha Morjaria and Asha Karia

What's HAPPENING

Study Classes & Activities

ADULT STUDY GROUPS (AGE 30 +)

Adult study classes are held on every day of the week by Brni Sumati Chaitanya and experienced sevaks. Classes are held for all levels of advancement in various locations in London including Hendon, Harrow, St John's Wood, Ilford and South Croydon. Study classes are also held in other parts of the UK including Gillingham, Kent and Southsea, Portsmouth. Texts and subjects currently studied include Self Unfoldment, Narada Bhakti Sutra, Jnana Sarah, Bhagavad Gita, Bhaja Govindam, Vivekachudamani, & Updesa Saar. These classes are free and all are welcome to attend. **Please contact Rameshbhai Pattni on 07765 837 134.**

VANPRASTHA SANSTHAN (SENIOR CITIZENS GROUP) (AGE 55 +)

The motto of the Vanprastha Sansthan is 'Graceful Ageing through Spiritual Living'. Classes and a wide range of workshops and other programmes are held. **Please contact Mannu Bhalla on 07946 581 929.**

CHYK (YOUTH) STUDY CLASSES (17-30 yrs)

CHYK classes for the youth are conducted in Baker Street, Hendon and Moorgate for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Talks by our Acharya, Brni Sumatiji, and our experienced young speakers are held at universities and other events around the country. These classes and talks are open to all. **For more information please contact Milan Samani on 07957 568 879 or on chyk@chinmayauk.org**

BALVIHAR (CHILDREN'S) CLASSES (4-12 yrs)

Value-based education classes for children are held at our Balvihar centres in Hendon, St John's Wood, Harrow and Wanstead. **For more information please contact Madhavi Vadera on 07980 597 810.**

JUNIOR CHYK (TEENAGERS') CLASSES (12-17 yrs)

Junior Chyk classes provide teenagers with an introduction to Vedanta, allowing them to develop a rational and logical approach to religion. Through the company of like-minded peers, they develop a healthy resistance against temptations and learn the tools to excel in all avenues of life. Classes take place in Hendon, St John's Wood and Harrow. In addition, Junior Chyks are offered the chance to sit for **GCSE Hinduism**, taught by our trained sevaks. **For more information please contact Mita Patel on 07866 774 244.**

DISCOURSES

Weekly discourses are given by our resident Acharya, Brni Sumatiji, at Chinmaya Kirti in Hendon on the following texts: Keno Upanishad, Bhagavad Geeta, Tulsi Ramayana and Ashtavakra Geeta. Please contact Surabhi Vaghadia 07985 425 792 (for Upanishad) Uma Khambhampati 07704 284 907 (for Geeta) Aruna Bhalla on 01494 711 917 (for Tulsi Ramayana) and Jayasri Pillai on 020 8578 0800 (for Ashtavakra Geeta).

SANSKRIT CLASSES

Weekly Sanskrit classes are currently held for beginners and intermediate students. The classes are taught by experienced sevaks. These complement our study of the ancient Vedic texts. **Please contact Shreyas Iyer for more details on 07910 034 084 or ishreyas@gmail.com**

GUIDED MEDITATION, CHANTING AND PUJA, MUSIC AND BHAJANS

The following meditation, pujas, chanting and bhajan sessions take place at Chinmaya Kirti:

- Guided meditation. Contact Steve Fitch on 020 8880 7622
- Guru Paduka Puja (devotion and prayers at the feet of the Guru). Contact Sapna Khanchandani on 07801 064 296
- Sponsored Hanuman Puja and Hanuman Chalisa. Contact Aruna Bhalla on 01494 711 917
- CHYK Soul (Youth music group). Contact Darpan Patel on 07956 855 017
- Swaranjali (Bhajan sessions). Contact Himanshu Vaya on 07921 979 578

Upcoming Yagnas & Camps

SEPTEMBER

Swami Swaroopananda visits London

Morning Course on guided meditation based on the Upanishads, 2-6th September 7-8am

Evening Talks on the Yoga of Meditation, 1-6th September, 7.30-9pm

discourses@chinmayauk.org

Lift Yourself: One-day Youth Conference (18-35 yrs)

Sunday 31st August, 9am-6.30pm

www.enquiringminds.info / chyk@chinmayauk.org

Magic Touch: Children's Session (5-12 yrs)

Sunday 7th September, 11am-12.30pm

bv@chinmayauk.org / Madhavi Vadera on 07980 597 810

Heroes: the Power of Principles within you (12-18 yrs)

Sunday 7th September, 1.30pm-6.30pm

Heroes_r@chinmayauk.org / Vijay Sodhi on 07949 559 773

DECEMBER/JANUARY

International Family Camp with Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

At Chinmaya Vibhooti, Kolwan (near Pune), Maharashtra 26 December 2008 – 1 January 2009

Geeta Chapter 10

Vibhooti Yoga

Purohit Residential Course (2008-2010) with Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda

9th October 2008 – 9th April 2010

Study of the Puja Vidhis, Shodasha Samskaaras, Vaidik Chanting, Sanskrit and Hindu Culture

Chinmaya Gardens Coimbatore

Answers to Wordsearch (p15)

U	I	V	A	B	S	N	E	F	C	W	Q	M	A	S	D	F	I	F	R
M	M	N	S	D	E	O	S	A	A	S	D	F	H	O	L	R	Y	C	J
G	O	M	C	D	A	I	P	A	J	A	A	E	P	L	S	E	E	R	S
D	I	V	P	E	D	T	E	N	U	S	D	F	W	U	A	D	F	I	S
I	E	P	N	V	N	V	C	S	P	X	L	S	C	D	T	P	R	D	W
N	C	S	M	O	D	S	T	D	F	B	M	O	V	P	S	U	N	N	R
C	P	F	D	T	G	S	E	F	T	V	F	S	R	C	A	C	C	A	F
N	S	D	L	I	F	R	O	G	G	Y	V	A	J	A	N	A	E	M	S
S	G	I	S	O	Z	X	F	M	Z	E	K	Y	U	M	G	D	X	E	K
E	D	V	P	N	C	S	S	D	E	D	S	U	N	H	V	W	D	A	W
A	G	A	Z	A	V	G	C	V	H	Y	F	G	H	F	J	V	O	L	Q
V	N	S	D	M	E	D	I	T	R	P	L	C	S	D	W	S	A	R	Z
D	A	F	B	K	Y	H	C	R	M	E	D	I	T	A	T	I	O	N	X
M	S	E	V	G	F	S	E	M	E	F	E	P	D	S	G	H	J	K	F
L	A	W	S	I	T	A	R	V	D	S	E	I	B	A	A	R	T	I	D
L	R	Q	O	M	M	B	S	T	A	S	S	R	N	R	V	F	S	D	S
B	A	S	K	L	F	E	A	S	M	X	A	C	D	P	S	B	N	M	A
N	D	T	L	L	R	S	P	R	A	S	P	S	L	K	J	F	S	R	T
A	S	R	L	L	L	C	K	F	C	T	V	A	C	V	X	V	S	O	F
J	S	E	S	D	E	J	D	N	H	Q	C	Z	D	A	R	S	H	A	N
H	B	H	A	J	A	N	A	F	D	A	X	W	D	F	S	X	J	L	I

For detailed information on all our study classes, including timing and venues, please visit www.chinmayauk.org or call 0208 203 6288.

Please visit our e-bookshop on

www.chinmayabooks.com

to purchase all our books and publications.