

Vedānta Vāṇī

ॐ NAMAH VEDĀNTA CENTER
for SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT

SPRING 2018



SIDHABARI, INDIA
DECEMBER 16, 2017

Blessed Self: Hari Om!

After a gap of ten years we are reviving the publication of this newsletter.

Over this time I have interacted with communities in USA and around the globe, and it has been heartening to see that the Vedānta Family is blossoming. My focus has been and continues to be on facilitating the inner growth of spiritual seekers through a personalized approach in communicating this timeless teaching.

I am delighted that, by the grace of my Guru, Pūjya Swāmī Chinmāyanandajī, we embarked on innovative programs, spreading the eternal message of Vedānta through live discourses as well as online long distance teachings.



We completed a two year non-residential Vedānta Yoga Integrative Program at our upstate New York Center in 2015. The full 18 chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* were taught online in 2016 in 18 sessions.

More recently, I completed an online 21-Day Vedāntic Meditation series. Amidst all these teachings, I managed to write and self-publish a book on relationships as well!

The Center now has a beautiful statue of its main deity, Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti, who along with my Guru, inspires me to continue the teaching of the eternal knowledge of Vedānta.

In whichever continent I travel, I notice a growing interest in our spiritual philosophy. Recently, I was amazed at the impeccable Sanskrit chanting by Germans in a yoga school in Berlin, Germany! All the above work wouldn't have taken place without the Vedānta Family, and I would like to thank the team of sevaks and sevikas who have consistently been supporting Namah Vedānta Center and created a spirit of real karma yoga through their various offerings.

I'd like to acknowledge my guru-behan, Rajpriya Bhuckory, who has been so dedicated in her Chinmāya style organizational support for my global work. I thank all the people who have given me the opportunity to share the knowledge of Vedānta with them.

Everything I have and everything I share is the blessing of my beloved Guru who soaked my being in Brahma-vidyā. May the wisdom of the masters take root in your heart and uplift not only your life, but the very fabric of your communities.

I wish all the readers a rewarding New Year, filled with a dynamic spirit of service, devotion to God, inner peace and spiritual growth!

*Prostrations at His Lotus Feet,
Shubhrajī*



Vedānta Yoga Integrative Program students with Shubhrajī, NY



Shubhrajī with graduates of the Yoga Vedānta University, Rome, Italy



Shubhrajī with students in Poland



www.namahom.org



www.facebook.com/ShubhrajīNamahom



www.twitter.com/ShubhrajīNamah



In the Lotus of the Heart book launch, Woodstock, NY



Vedānta Journey, trip to South India



Vedānta Teaching, Berlin, Germany



Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Namah Vedanta Center



Vedānta Journey, trip to North India

My heartfelt thanks to the sincere and dedicated people who have helped to nourish Vedānta at the Center in NY as well as globally:

Aditi Mahendroo Venkatraman, Ariana Marchello, Bharti Uttamchandani, Bradford Reed, Deepa Aidasani, Dina Gidwani, Gerino Casal & Maribel Unanue, Janine Nagel, Manoj & Rashmi Bakshi, Linda Miller, Paula Eastwood, Pratap & Jaya Sapra, Patrick Rubin, Reena Khubchandani, Rohini Chotirmal, Sheela Hewitt, Shyamala & R. Shankar, Nurith Spector & Bob Shamis, Poonam Patni and Todd (Raman) Kelly.

Pramāṇas— the valid means for Self-Knowledge

Shubhrajī
Woodstock, NY

Through the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta one tries to move beyond the sense of limitation that one feels while living in this world. This is achieved by recognizing and 'knowing' our true nature as Brahman or the Absolute Self, which is free, pure, eternal and ever the nature of joy and bliss. Brahman is known as *saccidānanda* existence (*sat*), awareness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*).

Brahman is Pure Consciousness and is the basis of this phenomenal world. From that perspective He is called *Īśvara* (Brahman with qualities) or God. This Brahman in itself though, is non-empirical and without qualities. Any changes in the empirical world do not affect this Absolute Reality.



According to Ādi Śaṅkara the 7th century Advaita philosopher, knowledge of Brahman springs from enquiry into the words of the *Upaniṣads*. It is the teacher who through the source books of this tradition, called the *vedās*, or *śrutis*, skillfully handles the scriptural words and helps the student discover the truth. These scriptures were revealed to the great *ṛṣis* or masters who were sitting in the Himalayan Mountains, in search of the Truth. The scriptures are considered *apauruṣeya*, or divine revelations (not of man).

In essence the *jīva* or ego is the *Ātman* or the Self, but because of *avidyā* or ignorance it regards itself as conditioned, limited, finite and with a relative existence.

The ego falsely identifies with its limiting adjuncts or *upādhis*: the assemblage of body, mind and intellect. Each *jīva* or ego feels as if he or she has his or her own unique and distinct self, called *jīvātman*. The concept of the ego is valid only at a relative level and not at the absolute level. These false identifications impel the ego to suffer and fall into the cycle of *saṃsāra*, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Viewed from the absolute level, there is only the One *Ātman*, the Self or Brahman.

Not only do we take ourselves to be a *jīva* but we take the world to be real as well, until such time as we realize Brahman. It is only then that one understands that all *nāma-rūpa* or name and form is merely superimposed on Brahman, who is the sole *adhiṣṭhāna* or substratum of all that appears to be.

The identity or oneness of the *jīva* and Brahman is revealed through a systematic study of the *māhāvākyas* or great statements like '*Tat Tvam Asi*', found in the *vedās*.

The masters implore us to direct all our self-effort in this life towards releasing ourselves from this suffering of *saṃsāra*. This is called *mokṣa*. The way to *mokṣa* is through the path of *jñāna-yoga* or knowledge. *Karma*, rituals, moral values are all necessary and helpful pre-requisites to the path of wisdom (*jñāna-yoga*) but are not by themselves a way to salvation.

Mokṣa is not something outside of us to be attained—but an already existing state of one's being that needs to be realized through correct knowledge. Knowledge only removes the obstruction to realization; it does not create something new.

For any knowledge to take place we need a valid means of knowledge. Philosophical schools of Vedānta differ on what they recognize as the valid means of knowledge. Advaita Vedānta accepts six valid means of knowledge. This topic has been exhaustively dealt with in the vedic tradition. Though it is complex, I share some of its salient features in this article.

Pramā, is a Sankrit word which refers to correct knowledge of an object, arrived at by proper reasoning.

Pramāṇa (valid means of knowledge) forms one part of a trio:

1. *Pramāṭṛ*, is the *subject*; the *knower* of the knowledge
2. *Pramāṇa*, is the *cause* or the *means* of the knowledge
3. *Prameya*, is the *object* of knowledge

Pramāṇa refers to epistemology in Indian philosophy. It is the special means by which some kind of right knowledge (*pramā*) takes place. Any knowledge of an object takes place in our minds through some instrument of knowledge. It is extremely important that we resort to the right means; otherwise even the existence of that object will not be evident to us. These 'means of knowledge' are called *pramāṇas*.

This is particularly relevant when we want to 'know' the *Ātman* or the Self, which is the *ultimate*, transcendental, infinite, non-dual truth referred to as the Brahman in the *Upaniṣads*. Proper understanding of *pramāṇas* not only facilitates channelizing our energy properly but it culminates in the attainment and fulfillment of the objective.

In Advaita Vedānta, the following *pramāṇas* are accepted and they are briefly explained:

1. *Pratyakṣa*— the knowledge gained by means of the senses or perception
2. *Anumāna*— the knowledge gained by means of inference
3. *Upamāna*— the knowledge gained by means of analogy or comparison
4. *Arthāpatti*— the knowledge gained by postulation
5. *Anupalabdhi*— the knowledge gained through non-cognition
6. *Śabda*— the knowledge gained by testimony through vedic texts like the *Upaniṣads* (also known as *Āptavākya*)

1. *Pratyakṣa* — or perception implies direct, immediate cognition. There are two kinds of direct perception, external and internal. The 'external' perception implies cognition of sense objects, namely - sound, touch, form, taste and smell by our five sense organs (ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose). When the sense organs contact their respective objects then the *pratyakṣa* knowledge takes place.

The 'internal' perception refers to the direct and im-

mediate cognition of pain, pleasure, love, hate, anger, knowledge or ignorance of various objects etc. in and by our minds.

Vedānta accepts sense perception as an authentic source of knowledge in the empirical realm.

2. *Anumāna* — It is an inferential, mediate knowledge.

It is the method by which knowledge is derived from

It is the teacher who through the source books of this tradition, called the *vedās*, or *śrutis*, skillfully handles the scriptural words and helps the student discover the truth.

another knowledge. It is an indirect mediate knowledge. Knowledge, which has a relation between what is perceived and what is deduced. Like, I see smoke and I deduce there must be fire.

3. *Upamāna* — is the process by which the knowledge of A's similarity to B is gained from the perception of B's similarity to A, which has been seen elsewhere. For example, a person who has seen his cow at home goes to a forest and sees a *gavaya* (a wild cow but without dewlap). The person sees the similarity 'This *gavaya* is like my cow', and on this basis also concludes the opposite to be equally true, on returning home he recalls the wild cow— 'My cow is like this *gavaya*'. Thus by *Upamāna* he gains the knowledge of his cow's similarity to the *gavaya*—and from the perception of the *gavaya*'s similarity to his cow as well. The Advaita Vedāntins use this method of knowledge by comparison and similarity to logically communicate the nature of Brahman. Brahman is said to be resplendent like the sun. By perceiving the luminosity of the sun, the seeker can appreciate the self-luminosity of Brahman.

4. *Arthāpatti* — This means postulation, supposition or presumption of a fact. It is a distinct valid method of mediate knowledge.

It is a method of assumption of an unknown fact in order to account for a known fact that is otherwise inexplicable. For example person A, says that he never eats in the day, then we can easily postulate that

he eats in the night, for the simple reason that without this assumption his fatness and also his getting fatter cannot be explained. It is used to understand Brahman as well.

5. *Anupalabdhi* — Non-existence of a thing is apprehended by its non-perception. By not seeing a jar in a place one knows that it is not there.

The Advaita School holds that the absence of multiplicity is known directly by non-apprehension in a transcendental experience or in apprehending Brahman.

6. *Śabda* — The vedās are included in verbal testimony as an infallible authority in transcendental matters. *Śabda* has two facets 1) relating to the sensible or worldly – *laukika*, and 2) relating to the transcendental or spiritual – *vaidika*. A verbal statement conveying valid knowledge must have an authentic source, which must be free from defects. Only a competent person possessed of knowledge can impart accurate knowledge.

Among the Western philosophers only a few recog-

So too, on hearing sentences like ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ (That Thou Art), the qualified student can get rid of his ignorance and realize the nature of non-dual Brahman.

nize verbal testimony as a valid and an independent means of knowledge, but the majority of Indian philosophers accept it.

Such an understanding becomes important when it comes to derive the meaning of vedic sentences like ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ (That Thou Art).

Certain facts of everyday life are known only by means of verbal testimony, like someone’s dream-experience. How can one know another’s dream without being told about it? Ādi Śaṅkara the 7th century Advaita philosopher also believes that in internal states – only the words of the experiencer can actually communicate the nature of his experience. Like all inferential knowledge, verbal knowledge is also mediate – except in the case of self-realization. In Advaita Vedānta verbal testimony can also lead to

aparokṣa or immediate knowledge when it pertains to empirical knowledge, knowledge of the Self or a transcendental experience. Like a king who has amnesia forgets that he is a king and imagines himself to be a common man. ‘Thou art king’ – when told to him repeatedly – helps him recognize himself and the words show him his true status.

So too, on hearing sentences like ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ (That Thou Art), the qualified student can get rid of his ignorance and realize the nature of non-dual Brahman.

So *Śabda* is a unique means of valid knowledge as it has a two-fold capacity: it can communicate facts about the empirical universe as well as throw light on facts of a transcendental nature.

Śaṅkara says in his *Brahmasūtra* commentary *Śrūtṣetu śabdamulatvāt* (BS II 1.27) “But (this has to be accepted) on the authority of the *Upaniṣads*, for Brahman is known from *Upaniṣads* alone.”

No other *pramāṇa* or means of knowledge can contradict the *śruti* (scriptures) when dealing with the nature of Brahman or the Self. No other form of knowledge can be applied to understand Brahman, because they all pertain to objective knowledge and what we are trying to ascertain is in the realm of subjective knowledge. However Śaṅkara says, if the scriptures say something about another domain, like fire is cold, then scriptural statements have to be symbolically interpreted or rejected.

What is the *pramāṇa* for self-enquiry?

The use of a proper *pramāṇa* depends upon the field of enquiry; it is not a matter of our choice. For example, to study space, we would use certain scientific instruments like spectrographs, and in the biology lab we would have to use a microscope. To see I need eyes. I cannot see with my ears.

I recall a great Mahatma explain this point. “What is the *pramāṇa* or means for self-enquiry? It cannot be just asking the question, “Who am I?” That question will not get us anywhere, because we would not have used an appropriate instrument”.

We can easily dismiss five of the six *pramāṇas* in the attainment of Self-Knowledge. *Pratyakṣa* or direct perception by sense organs is capable of only enquir-

ing into the objective world and not into the subjective world. We can also rule out *anumāna*, *arthāpatti*, *upamāna*, and *anupalabdhi* because they are based on data from our perception. Objective science is of no use in the field of self-enquiry because it is based on experiments, which are based on *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*. Therefore by default we have to go with *śabda pramāṇa*.

Śabda is classified into two categories:

Laukika śabda– Laukika means ordinary. Words that are found in books written by human beings.

Śāstrīya śabda– Words that come from a beginning-less tradition, (*anādi paramparā*), not written by human beings, but are divine revelations or scriptures.

Laukika śabda must be ruled out because it is based on human instruments of knowledge and deals only with the objective world.

In *Śāstrīya śabda*, there are two categories– *karma kāṇḍa śabda* or the ritual portion in the *vedās* and *jñāna kāṇḍa śabda* or the knowledge portion of the *vedās*. *Karma kāṇḍa śabda* cannot be used for self-

enquiry because it deals with the external world of *karma* and *karmaphalam* or action and their fruit. So only *jñāna kāṇḍa* or the knowledge section, can serve as a *pramāṇa*. This is also known as the *Upaniṣad pramāṇa* and is taken as a valid means to know Brahman as our true nature.

In conclusion, the study and understanding of *pramāṇa* is vital for a student of Advaita Vedānta. This must be done under the guidance of a competent teacher. The idea is not a mere erudition or intellectual study of *pramāṇas*, but its application in understanding the truth. Through logical steps the student is taken along a specific line of thinking to ascertain the infinite nature of Brahman and to ultimately rediscover his or her true identity.

(References: *Methods of Knowledge according to Advaita Vedānta*–Swāmī Satprakāśānanda, *The Roots of Vedānta: Selections from Śāṅkara's writings*, *A New Source Book of Advaita Vedānta*, Edited by Eliot Deutsch & Rohit Dalvi and personal notes)



Annual Viṣṇu Pūjā in Hong Kong

Johannes Pong, JohannesPong.com
Hong Kong

This *archanā* is performed on Makar Saṅkrānti, the auspicious day when the sun moves into Capricorn, where a thousand names of Providence are chanted together with an offering of flowers at each call. Some offer their love and devotion to the deity *Viṣṇu*, others opt to get rid of the rubbish first. Each petal is visualised as a *vāsanā*—your hang-ups/issues—renounced to the universe to be recycled. It's an annual psychic spring cleaning and detox on a deep level.

As my guru Shubhrajī says, you go where your *vāsanās* lead you. I have engaged in this *archanā* annually for more than a decade now, with just one year off. People from all over the planet register for this *pūjā* even if they cannot physically be in Hong Kong during Makar Saṅkrānti, and those who do receive all the benefits, as well as *prasād* (usually in the form of a card with Lord *Viṣṇu* or His sacred symbols on it).

A fierce, three-hour long expression of faith may seem daunting at first, but the aesthetics of the ritual really appeals to the performance artist in me. The main *yajmān* (the ritual patron) and co-sponsors start off the initial *pūjā*, and once the sonorous chanting begins, everything just falls into place.

Shubhrajī alternates the chanting of names with her elder sister Rashmiji — who graciously makes the journey from India annually for the *archanā*. Participants all have *dīyā* lamps and individual baking trays of foil in front of their seats as altars for the placing of petals. By the end of the *archanā*, it's a floral lasagna, a mountain of *vāsanās* to be put into the cosmic oven to be burnt.

Archanā means “dedication/adoration” and is a personalised *pūjā* in which name, birth star and spiritual lineage are announced to invoke individual guidance. It opens up a specific channel— a super-speed highway— to Divine Grace as the ritual gives us a chance to practice uninterrupted detachment from materiality via the physical letting go of petals coupled with the mental elimination of *vāsanās*. Together with the steady remembrance of the Lord via the chanting of epithets, it becomes a powerful form of *yōga*, directly yoking oneself to Higher Consciousness, thereby continually receiving the Grace of God.



Our Himalayan Retreat for Body, Mind and Soul

Shyamala Shankar
Blauvelt, NY

Our small group had been requesting to accompany Shubhraj to Swami Chinmayananda's *ashram* at Sidhabari in the lap of the Himalayas for so long, but she kept saying that the right time had to come! We were extremely fortunate that the auspicious time did arrive in March 2017. Not only did she take our group to the *ashram* but she also conducted a wonderful retreat with us at an exclusive location whose natural beauty and privacy could not have been more perfect, if all of India had been searched!

At the outset, Shubhraj wanted to teach students who

As the story goes, Swami Chinmayananda was just on a casual visit to the area and when he was passing by he pointed to a tract of land on a higher elevation and declared that his *ashram* would be built there. Of course, his intention took shape and was soon a reality. Simple rooms to house the seekers were made, a lecture hall, a small *kutia* (cottage) for Swamiji, a dining hall and kitchen and a beautiful Sri Rama Sita temple. The temple, made to attract and serve the local, humble mountain people, was unique in a way. Instead of decking the lord with resplendent silks, He,

along with Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman were depicted in simple robes as *vanwasis*, on their sojourn in the jungle. Large paintings depicting the story of Sri Rama were all around the temple. The *ashram* grounds also had a Hanuman installed after it was found to be a very windy location and Swamiji decided to place a huge statue of *Pavan Putra* Hanuman, son of the wind god, who he said, would help to mitigate this. The winning point of the *ashram* is the fabulous view of the snowclad mountains and the green valley dotted with colorful homes. Swamiji's presence is everywhere in the spacious ashram property and his *kutia* is now a sacred space for visitors to absorb the energy. His *samadhi* in the rose garden is beautiful and the most inspiring place in the

ashram, at once simple and full of joy and contentment. A *pūjā* is done twice a day there.

had strong basic knowledge of Vedānta and most of us had taken the Vedānta Yoga Integrated Program (VYIP) over two years at the Namah Center in Saugerties, upstate New York. Others came from Hong Kong and various parts of the USA and of course, Rajpriyaji, Shubhraj's guru-behan (spiritual sister), from Mauritius was also with us. She had helped organize this trip. We were just fifteen of us, the right number to bond and explore the intricacies of the Vedānta philosophy.

We met in New Delhi and took a flight to Dharamsala, the current residence of H.H. The Dalai Lama. It was a small airport but as soon as we alighted on the runway to walk to the terminal, we were overwhelmed by the snow clad Dhauladhar mountain range and had to pause to take pictures. This was just the start of many beautiful views of the mountains with perfect timing and weather, snow in the distant mountains, but sunshine and warmth on the plains.



After spending five glorious days, quieting our mind, attending the *pūjās*, walking in the surrounding fields and enjoying the simple and delicious food of the *ashram*, we had to say a reluctant good bye and also leave the mountain view behind us, because we were going to be on a mountain ourselves for the retreat at Mcleodganj! About an hour's drive away and closer to the small town of Dharamsala, we then settled down into the well-maintained and luxurious cottages of our retreat at Glenmoor Cottages, owned and run by Ajay Singh a close devotee of Swami Chinmayananda. We had the entire resort to ourselves and were served very tasty home cooked meals.

With our physical needs taken care of, we turned our attention inwards. We were one with nature, with a few monkeys and exotic birds around us. Shubhrajī had selected the topic of "meditation" and the surroundings could not be more conducive. We had a full day's schedule of activities, but with time for rest, relaxation and introspection. In hushed silence each day we heard our Guru tell us that we need to go deeper into our spiritual journey, go inwards and find ourselves. Even meditation and indeed anything external that this world offers, is not the path to *moksha* or God- Realization. Our spiritual ignorance or *avidya* keeps us fascinated and bound by the world of objects. After we fully understand our scriptures as a valid means of knowledge, we are to seek that Consciousness which can never be an object, as it is the very subject that illumines the mind. We can employ any spiritual method that appeals to us, but this will only quiet the mind. The final "seeking" is to be done through silence and contemplation based on our understanding of the scriptural passages. In short, *sravanam* (listening to a qualified teacher), *mananam* (reflection) and *niddhidhyasanam* (dwelling on the teaching through meditation and various means).

We listened, we meditated, we discussed our experience, we learnt *japa*, we sought our oneness with nature in silence and we had *satsang*. *Pratyahara*, the withdrawal of the mind seemed so easy, away from the hustle and bustle of daily life. The real trick was going to be able to sustain it in the real world. Some of the tips we took away with us were - to be a witness and allow life to unfold, develop *sattvic vasanas* of cheer, joy and clarity, help others and surrender our expectations to a higher power. Then grace would flow in our endeavors, we would sustain that inner bliss which is our birthright.

We did a brief tour of the area, visited some temples and monasteries and the quaint town of Dharamshala. All too soon it was time to say goodbye and we left with a very thankful heart toward Shubhrajī, Swami Chinmayananda and the grace that has made all this possible! Hari Om!



Truchas Retreat– *Walking the Inner Path*

Mike Bechko & Waymon Whittemore

Santa Fe, NM

I AM DIVINE! Those were the parting words that defined Shubhrajī's recent retreat in the beautiful mountains of Northern New Mexico. This was the culmination of untying the three knots of the heart and aiding in walking the inner path. Three days of skillful guidance, imbibing the knowledge of Vedānta and accompanied by the good company of fellow devotees lifted the heart and spirit and renewed the daily remembrance of practices leading to a centered life. Each day empowered the attendees to strengthen their resolve in removing the ignorance of their true selves. This ignorance leaves one with a feeling of incompleteness which in turn leads to desires and actions in an attempt to make one feel whole and complete. This is an endless cycle unless one intelligently manages their desires and detaches from the results.

Reflection, meditation and other practices were offered during the retreat as ways to purify the mind and liberate the three knots of the heart.

We began the retreat on Thursday evening with an opening teaching from Shubhrajī. Starting out we learned that we can move from *avidya*, or spiritual ignorance, to *vidya*, or knowledge of the truth, through the teachings of Vedānta. From this powerful beginning we quickly immersed ourselves into the ocean of consciousness.

This is not to say that this weekend was heavy, deep and somber. Far from it. The retreat was filled with love, laughter and joy. Showing that dwelling in our true nature of the Self is a place of bliss and contentment.

There were excellent vegetarian meals shared in the dining hall with Shubhrajī. We could further discuss the topics of the talks or share in the company of a group of devoted seekers. There were a couple of field trips during the retreat that provided a break from the intense instruction yet continued the teaching in a different yet meaningful way.

We all went to the Santuario de Chimayo on a pilgrimage to that holy site. Being in that sacred atmosphere with Shubhrajī and her wonderful group of students was a healing in itself.

Traveling together into the Carson National forest and spending time in nature was another wonderful experience. With guidance from Shubhrajī we were able to

experience our strong connection with nature and our place in it. Standing in the presence and connecting with the beautiful trees living there as we did is something we should bring into our daily lives.

Mastery is key and so a strong resolve to inculcate this knowledge into our daily lives was imparted by Shubhrajī as



a means to liberation. This will enable one to draw strength from the inner path and learn to be happy. "Persist! Get up and walk!" These words were heard as if imparted by the original rishis. Integrating your outer experiences with the divine knowledge is a path to realizing the Absolute— your true Self. I AM DIVINE— feel it.

When you master your ignorance, desires and actions, nothing will bother you. Approaching our experiences through observation, detachment and reflection will untie the knots of the heart and will lead to a happier, anxiety free life. No effort is ever wasted.

The final morning of the retreat, a moving native American prayer and dedication was led by one of the attendees which was beautiful and heartfelt. During the final moments of the ritual a butterfly appeared, symbolizing the transformation that we had experienced and the strength that was imparted to continue walking the inner path led by the incomparable Shubhrajī.

Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti Re-Consecration Pūjā

Shyamala Shankar Blauvelt, NY

Invitees from Woodstock, Saugerties, New Jersey, Rockland and the rest of the tri-state area were present at a re-consecration ceremony at the Namah Vedānta Center on Saturday, October 7, 2017.

Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti is an aspect of Lord Śiva in the form of the Gurū and it is the main deity of the Center.

After an initial Ganeśa pūjā, the *spatika lingam* (a clear crystal Shiva symbol) was bathed with milk, yogurt, coconut water, rose water and *pañca-amruta* (mixture of fruit, milk and honey), all to the chanting of vedic Sanskrit *mantrās*, including the *Rūdrām*.

The *pūjā* was interspersed with explanations from Shubhrajī. The audience sat in reverent silence enjoying the aura that was created by the chanting and prayers.



Priest V. Bhairavmoorthy purified and changed the vestures of the *pañca dhātu* (five metals) statue of Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti that had been installed three years ago. He did the *alankāra* (decoration) with flowers, sandal paste and vermilion powder.

An elaborate *pūjā sāmagri* (items for the ritual) was set up with a *kalaśa* (pot of holy water, topped with a coconut and special leaves) and items for the *lingam abhiśekam*.

According to the instructions by the priest, the *pūjā* was performed by R Shankar and his wife Shyamala, a couple who have been affiliated with Namah Vedānta Center since its inception.

For the concluding ritual a *havan* (fire ceremony and oblations) was performed. During the *havan*, the Śrī Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti *mantra* was chanted by the entire audience, even the westerners! Everyone had the opportunity to offer flowers to the deity and seek blessings from the Lord.

They were later treated to sweet *prasādams* (food that has been offered to the Lord and is therefore blessed) and a delicious vegetarian *prasād*

lunch. It was a blissful and memorable event!





NAMAH Publications



amazon.com®

At the Center...



Karunamayi Amma visits Namah Vedanta Center

His Master's Voice

"A Guru does not 'condition' the minds of his disciples by the walls of his own ideas but points out to them new and untried realms of contemplation"

—Swāmī Chinmāyananda

From Shubhrajī's Desk

"...The mirror of relationships thus allows us to discover the joy that results when we commit to love from the depth of our hearts."

—Shubhrajī,
excerpt from *In the Lotus of the Heart:
The Essence of Relationships*



Workshop participants



Maha Shivaratri Celebration



Guru Paduka Pūjā, May 8th

Namah Saraswati Project

Providing Deserving Children And Adults With A Valuable Education.

During her teaching around the world, Shubhrajai has met and continues to meet people from different socio-economic backgrounds with varying levels of need, especially in the field of education. The genuine needs of some of these people led to the setting up of the Namah Saraswati Project by Shubhrajai in January 2013.

Today, we are supporting the annual education expense of about 40 children in Nepal and India.

If you would like more information on the above and/or wish to support this project please email Reena Khubhchandani who is based in Hong Kong and coordinates this project.

Email: reenarav@netvigator.com



Vedānta Vāṇī
NAMAH VEDĀNTA CENTER
for SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT
P O BOX 1064
WOODSTOCK, NY 12498
www.namah.org

**Thank you to the Friends of *Vedānta Vāṇī* for donating
towards the publishing of this newsletter:**

Anonymous well wisher from NJ
Maribel Unanue & Gerino Casal
Paula Eastwood
Patti Gareri
Sheela Hewitt
Kimberly & Gregory Kuppenheimer
Carla Olla
Prema & G. Padmanabhan
Gita & S. Raju
Lalitha & R. Ravichandran
Shyamala & R. Shankar
Bharti & Sunil Uttamchandani

Your donations for the continued publishing of this newsletter are appreciated.

Please make checks payable to Namah Inc.

Mail to: Shyamala Shankar, 19 Renie Lane, Blauvelt, NY 10913