

JNANA YAJNA, PURNAKUMBHA and BHIKSHA – General Information

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What is a Chinmaya Jnana Yajna?

In a traditional Vedic yajna, the ritual calls for the invocation of Fire and other deities in a sacrificial trough. As devotees single-pointedly and devotedly offer oblations into the trough, they simultaneously chant Sanskrit mantras for blessings and protection, and hymns of praise. It is from this picture of a ritual that Swami Chinmayananda coined the term, "jnana yajna."

Scriptural study and regular contemplation on the deeper import of the teachings heard, kindles the fire of knowledge in an intelligent spiritual seeker, who thereafter offers his false values and negative tendencies as his oblations into this fire. Jnana yajna is also a term used by Lord Krishna in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, where he uses it to refer to the student who, through scriptural studies, performs the ritual of worship (yajna) at the altar of wisdom (jnana).

To invigorate and inspire the masses for Vedantic scriptural studies and consequent contemplation on them, trained teachers (initiated acharyas), and Chinmaya Mission's monastic order of swamis/swaminis and brahmacharis/brahmacharinis, conduct periodic jnana yajnas (series of talks) on various spiritual texts and subjects.

For the organizing hosts, jnana yajnas are cooperative endeavors that unite like-minded people who together organize a field for their own character development and spiritual growth. For the attending community members, the event has manifold benefits on their personal, familial, and societal levels.

Swami Chinmayananda spearheaded this method in 1951, and now, virtually every Chinmaya centre owes its inception to such jnana yajnas. This lecture series typically lasts 5-7 days, consisting of 60 or 90 minute evening and/or early morning talks daily. Jnana yajnas are free of charge and open to the public. Guru dakshina is a voluntary offering devotees make to the acharya on the yajna's concluding day.

Chinmaya Mission's acharyas are regularly invited throughout the year, by Mission and non-Mission devotees, to conduct lecture series, satsangs, seminars, workshops and other special events.

Purnakumbha tradition



Kumbha means 'pot'. A purna- kumbha is a full pot. The kumbha occupies a special place in Hindu rituals – when entering a new home, at a wedding, when welcoming a brahmachari / sannyasi at jnana yajnas or to our homes.

The pot is filled with water/rice, a symbol of abundant prosperity in a traditional agriculture-based economy. The pot is decorated with the symbol of the sun using kumkum and turmeric, a coconut and mango leaves.

By chanting appropriate mantras, the gods, the Vedas, the oceans, rivers, the Gayatri and Savitri are all invited to reside in the pot. It may be placed on a plate filled with rice. The human body is likened to the pot and a human body filled with the Divine Spark of Life then becomes the purna-kumbha. The purna-kumbha thus signifies the fullness or completeness of life.

The Purnakumbha and a flower garland or bouquet are presented to the sanyasi to the chanting of the Vedic Arati. This practice honors and reveres through the mahatma the state of fullness that is reached through the Scriptural tradition.

Bhiksha tradition

Bhiksha means alms. Brahmacharis and sannyasis sought bhiksha from devotees and householders, or lived on whatever came unasked. This is an exercise in humility and ego-conquering, a test of detachment and mental quietude. For a householder, serving food to a brahmachari/sannyasi is a very rare and blessed opportunity.

The meal served to an Acharya (brahmachari/sannyasi) when that person visits a devout Hindu household is also called bhiksha.

Samashti Bhiksha is a community bhiksha where several members of the community prepare food and partake of the meal with the Acharya.

Chinmaya Mission Sacramento offers an opportunity to all to invite visiting acharyas for bhiksha.

Offering bhiksha to Acharyas affords you and your family a special time with them, perform seva and an opportunity for you to introduce your close friends (who may not be members) to the spiritual environment of Chinmaya Mission. Your donation is an expression of gratitude for having had the opportunity to serve and to enable the work of studying and teaching of the Scriptures to continue.

Signing up for bhiksha

- You may sign up for either lunch or dinner bhikshas by contacting the Jnana Yajna coordinator through the link at this site: contact@chinmaya-sacramento.org or by contacting the Yajna coordinator in person or over the phone.
- The bhiksha host organizes the meal for the Acharya and the guests. Additionally, prasadam of fruits/dry fruits to be given to all the guests is made available.

Who may attend the Bhiksha?

- The bhiksha host family may invite family, friends and any acquaintances to participate.

Welcoming the Acharya

- The bhiksha host family and their guests are encouraged to assemble before the arrival of the Acharya.
- They also have with a “thali” containing kumkum/chandan and a diya.
- The Acharya is received at the door step, where the bhiksha host family and guests welcome him ceremonially with a purnakumbha and chant *na karmana na prajaya*. Click here for the [Vedic Arati](#).

-Arati is done while chanting *na tatra suryo bhati*. Click here for the [Vedic Diparadhana Mantra](#).

The bhiksha family members then prostrate to the Acharya and take his blessings.

- A seat is offered to the Acharya and the bhiksha host family and their guests can introduce themselves or carry on a conversation.

The meal

- Hosts will prepare the meal with consideration to any specific guidelines that the brahmacharin/sannyasi may have and which will be communicated with them when they sign up for Bhiksha.
- When all the meal preparations are ready, he is invited to the table. A glass of water needs to be ready at the table, so that prayers can be offered before the meal.
- Food is served in the Acharya’s plate. All family members are encouraged to take turns to serve him. Click here for [Brahmarpanam](#).
- Hosts are encouraged to allow bhiksha guests to help with the food preparation and serving.

- Bhiksha guests may eat with the Acharya.

Satsang and offering Guru Dakshina

-After finishing the meal, the Acharya returns to the living room accompanied by the host family and guests. He then has a satsang with the host family and their guests. This is a good time to ask any questions that you may have, or have the kids/other members sing a bhajan etc. Our CM Acharyas are quite comfortable with people of all ages.

-After the satsang ,the whole family offers a dakshina to the Acharya. This is generally done with a tray filled with whole fruits and an envelope, which contains a donation. Please make the check payable to CM Sacramento.

-All bhiksha guests may then prostrate to the Acharya and receive prasad.

Contact

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