

# Chinmaya Smrithi



A Bi-Monthly News Magazine of the Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC)

Volume 28, Number 3, June 2018

February 25, 1949



"I was born on that  
Sivaratri Day -  
the past of the  
body and mind  
has nothing to  
do with me."

- Swami Chinmayananda



Om Ajaaya Namah (Pujya Gurudev's Sanyaasa Deeksha, Feb 1949)

## Foreword: Swamiji's Message



Editor's Note: [Our beloved resident Swamiji, Swami Dheerananda is continuing his weekly classes on Vivekachoodamani. Please find below an excerpt from his class on verse 2].

जन्तूनां नरजन्म दुर्लभमतः पुंस्त्वं ततो विप्रता  
तस्माद्द्वैदिकधर्ममार्गपरता विद्वत्त्वमस्मात्परम् ।  
आत्मानात्मविवेचनं स्वनुभवो ब्रह्मात्मना संस्थितिः  
मुक्तिर्नो शतजन्मकोटिसुकृतैः पुण्यैर्विना लभ्यते ॥ 2 ॥

*jantūnāṃ nara janma dur labhamataḥ puṃstvam tato vipratā  
tasmādvaidikadharmamārgaparatā vidvattvamasmātparam |  
ātmanātma vivecanam svanubhavo brahmātmanā sansthitih  
muktirno śatajanmakotisukṛtaiḥ puṇyairvinā labhyate || 2 ||*

In his weekly Vivekachoodamani class, Swamiji explained the ultimate goal of a seeker and the qualities that would describe a seeker. It is indeed rare for anybody to obtain a human birth and even rarer is the person who has an adventurous spirit. Rarer still is the person who has Brahaminical qualities which in the modern age would be a person with a quiet, alert and vigilant mind (traditionally referred to a person who had done Vedic studies). It is indeed rare to find a person who is faithfully following the Vedic Dharmas which would mean a person who is performing Pooja and Japa on a regular daily basis. Among people who are thus following the Vedic Dharma sincerely, one comes across a rare individual who is able to become a learned scholar and discern the difference between Dharma and Adharma. Even superior to mere scholarship is the ability to discern between the "Self" and the "Non-Self". Having discerned this difference, the wise person should try and be established in the blissful Self which is the supreme goal. However, Shankaracharya points out that this achievement is extremely difficult and

only a rare soul can reach this goal. This ability to not only discern but also be established in the Self (24/7) is only possible due to the meritorious deeds done over a hundred crore (billion) births. Being established in the Self is indeed Moksha!

## Calendar and Upcoming Events

### Upcoming Events

- June 9<sup>th</sup> – Bhajan Sandhya Nadopasana at Chinmayam at 5.30 p.m.
- June 18<sup>th</sup> – July 13<sup>th</sup> – Summer Camp at Chinmaya Somnath.
- July 16<sup>th</sup> – August 10<sup>th</sup> – Summer Camp at Chinmayam Silver Spring.
- July 22<sup>nd</sup> – How does Science emerge from Advaita – a talk by Dr. Anoop Kumar, MD at Chinmayam.
- July 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> The Life of Purpose – An exploration of the Yoga Sutras – led by Vivekji
- July 30<sup>th</sup> – Aug 4<sup>th</sup>: 25<sup>th</sup> Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Camp led by Pujya Swami Swaroopananda, Chinmaya Mission Global Head at San Diego, CA.
- July 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> Spiritual Parenting Retreat – The vision of balance led by Vivekji.

### Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Ravi Ravichandran ji by email at [ravi5211@yahoo.com](mailto:ravi5211@yahoo.com) , if you are interested in forming or learning more about study groups.

### Bookstore/Library

- Browse Books, CDs, DVDs, etc. online at [www.chinmayapublications.com](http://www.chinmayapublications.com) Contact Sevak to order (Vijay Singh at Chinmayam, Subbarao Kari at Chinmaya Somnath and Bijay Dash at Frederick)

### Next Edition of Chinmaya Smrithi

- Articles for the next regular bi-monthly edition – July 2018, are due by June 30, 2018
- Email submissions to [smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org).
- Browse Past editions at [www.chinmayadc.org/Smrithi/Smrithi.htm](http://www.chinmayadc.org/Smrithi/Smrithi.htm)

### Useful Links:

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust [www.chinmayamission.com](http://www.chinmayamission.com)

Chinmaya Mission West [www.chinmayamission.org](http://www.chinmayamission.org)

Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Courses [www.chinfo.org](http://www.chinfo.org)

Chinmayam Chapter – Silver Spring MD website <http://chinmayam.chinmayadc.org/chinmayam-chapter/>

Chinmaya Somnath Chapter – Chantilly VA website [www.chinmayasomnath.org](http://www.chinmayasomnath.org)

Chinmaya Frederick Chapter – Urbana MD website <http://www.frederick.cmwrc.org/>

Chinmaya Richmond Chapter – Richmond VA website [www.chinmayarichmond.org](http://www.chinmayarichmond.org)

CMWRC – Washington Regional Center [www.chinmayadc.org](http://www.chinmayadc.org)

### **Please Note**

***The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of Chinmaya Mission or CMWRC***

**Editorial Staff: ([smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org](mailto:smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org))**

*Editor: K.A. Lakshmanan*

*Advisers: Sri Raju Chidambaram, Acharya Vilasiniji, Pujya Swami Dheeranandaji. Sitaram Kowtha*

*BV students – Vishnu Lakshmanan*

*Please contact us if you are interested in joining the editorial staff!*

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## News & Tidbits

### Swami Chidatmananda Gnana Yagna

Swami Chidatmananda, the head of the Chinmaya Mission Hyderabad center was on a visit to CMWRC in April. He conducted a 2 day camp in Chinmayam followed by a 4 day Jnana Yagna at Chinmaya Somnath. Please see some photos from the program in this edition of Smrithi.

He has recently collaborated with Dr. Deepak Chopra on presenting non-duality to worldwide audiences. Visit Anoop at [anoopkumar.com](http://anoopkumar.com). For a short video with more details about the upcoming talk, please visit

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KJlIQfrhLgwhX4tVbM3GUKqt0gbDGrS/view?usp=drivesdk>

### Gurudev Jayanti

Pujya Gurudev's Jayanti was celebrated across all the chapters of CMWRC over the weekend of May 5 and May 6. At Chinmayam, a play based on the life of Gurudev was put up by various mission members followed by an ice cream treat for children (and adults!). See a picture inside.

### Tilak Ceremony

The Balavihar students graduating after completing their Chinmayam class were given a benediction through the chanting of Vedic mantras and blessings from Swami Dheerananda. Dr. Anoop Kumar was the keynote speaker at the event held on May 19<sup>th</sup>. A special edition of Smrithi featuring this year's graduating class will be published separately and available online.

### 2018 Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Family Camp

Poojya Gurudev left his body in San Diego 25 years ago on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. We observe that day as Sadhana Day. The annual Mahasamadhi Family Camp will be in San Diego led by Mukhya Swamiji, Swami Swaroopananda. Every Chinmaya family is encouraged to attend the special camp in San Diego this year. (CMWRC has requested an opportunity to host an upcoming Mahasamadhi family camp. The last one we hosted was in 2008 at Rocky Gap, Maryland). Visit the 2018 Mahasamadhi camp website to learn more and register. Here is the link: <https://msc2018.chinmayajyoti.org/>

### Talk by Dr. Anoop Kumar

Dr. Anoop Kumar, MD will be giving a talk on "How does Science emerge from Advaita" on July 22 at Chinmayam, Silver Spring. He is a Balavihar graduate and author of Michaelangelo's Medicine. He enjoys exploring the intersection of consciousness, science and philosophy.



CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

CHINMAYA SOMNATH

4350 Blue Spring Drive, Chantilly 20151



# Summer Youth Retreat

For rising 9th graders to college freshmen

July 16-20, 2018

## The Life Of Purpose

An Exploration of the Yoga Sutras

Led by **Vivekji**

For details and registration visit <http://tinyurl.com/youthcamp2018>



CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

# SPIRITUAL PARENTING RETREAT

*The Vision of Balance*

Conducted By

**July 13-15, 2018**

July 13, 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

July 14, 8:00 AM - 9:00 PM

July 15, 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**Chinmaya Somnath**

4350 Blue Spring Drive  
Chantilly, VA 20151



**Vivekji**  
CM Niagara Falls



**Vilasiniji**  
CM Washington DC



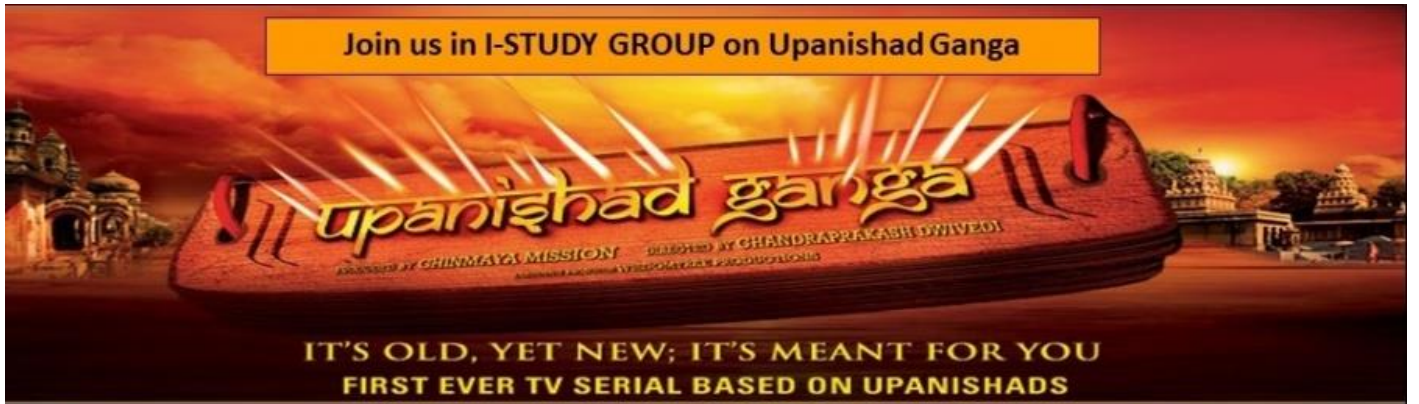
All parents, would-be-parents and grandparents are welcome.

Concurrent program for children ages 5-12

For more information contact [parentingretreat2018@chinmayasomnath.org](mailto:parentingretreat2018@chinmayasomnath.org)



Join us in I-STUDY GROUP on Upanishad Ganga



Day: Every Wednesday

Venue: World Wide Web from the comfort of one's Home

Time: 7:30 to 9:00 PM EST

Join us online via the Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/944126997> Zoom Meeting ID: 944-126-997

Lead Sevaks: Kodumudi Venkateswaran and Ravi Ravichandran

Please contact for details: [drveswaran@gmail.com](mailto:drveswaran@gmail.com)

## Sri Adi Shankara's Vivekachoodamani Class by Pujya Swami Dheerananda

Day: Every Thursday evening

Time: 7:00 - 8:30PM EST

Venue: Kailas Niwas and Online

To Join Online via the Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/658324409>

Zoom Webinar ID: 658-324-409

To join via phone: [+1-669-900-6833](tel:+16699006833), 658324409# OR [+1-646-558-8656](tel:+16465588656), 658324409#

Please send feedback on audio/video quality to [director@chinmayam.org](mailto:director@chinmayam.org)



# CHINMAYA MISSION WEST

presents

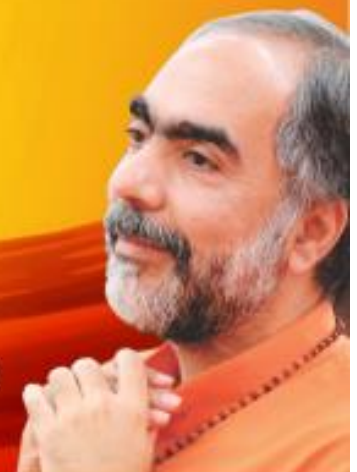
25<sup>TH</sup> CHINMAYA  
MAHASAMADHI CAMP

In His light  
all else shines



Presided by

**Pujya Mukhya Swami Swaroopananda**  
Global Head, Chinmaya Mission



TOWN AND COUNTRY RESORT & CONVENTION CENTER  
500 Hotel Circle North, San Diego, CA 92108

**JULY 30-AUGUST 4, 2018**

hosted by Chinmaya Mission San Diego  
[www.chinmayamahasamadhi.org](http://www.chinmayamahasamadhi.org)



# Bala Vihar

Enriching our children with the great knowledge of Sanatana Dharma through scriptural stories, games and activities. Join us every week as we learn about values and ideals with laughter and joy!

'Children are not vessels to be filled, but lamps to be lit.'  
- Pujya Swami Chinmayananda

Registration for 2017-18 Now Open!



## Pre-School!

- Accepting ages 3 to Pre-K
- Loving and Caring Staff
- Value Education Classes
- Yoga & Mindfulness

Location:  
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Chantilly, VA 20151



## Now Enrolling!

- Vegetarian premises
- State of the art facility with playground
- Integrated learning methods

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[www.chinmayablossomsva.org](http://www.chinmayablossomsva.org)



CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER  
CHINMAYA SOMNATH  
4350 Blue Spring Drive, Chantilly 20151



## Summer Immersion Camp

**THEME**  
Adi Shankaracharya  
**Conducted By**  
Swami Dheerananda

June 18th- July 13th, 2018

For rising 1st to 8th graders  
as of September 1, 2018



Swami Dheerananda

EARLY REGISTRATION (03/31/2018): \$1200  
REGULAR REGISTRATION: \$1400

ONLY 108  
SEATS  
AVAILABLE

**Registration opening soon**

<http://summercamp.chinmayadc.org>

Questions: [summercamp@chinmayasomnath.org](mailto:summercamp@chinmayasomnath.org)



शुद्धिस्तुतिपुराणानामात्रं कुरुणात्तवम् ।  
नमामि भववन्पादकाङ्क्षं लोककाङ्क्षम् ॥



CHINMAYA MISSION® WASHINGTON REGIONAL CENTER

CHINMAYAM

46 Norwood Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20905



## Summer Immersion Camp



### THEME

Adi Shankaracharya

Conducted By

Swami Dheerananda

For rising 1st to 8th graders  
as of September 1, 2018

श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणानामालयं करुणालयम् ।  
नमामि भगवत्पादशङ्करं लोकशङ्करम् ॥

## July 23 to August 17, 2018

### All day activities

- Dance and Drama • Indoor Games • Outdoor Athletics • Art •
- Inspiring Stories • Shlokas & Bhajans • Fun Fridays •



Swami Dheerananda

Register at <http://summercamp.chinmayadc.org>

Questions: [summercamp@chinmayadc.org](mailto:summercamp@chinmayadc.org)



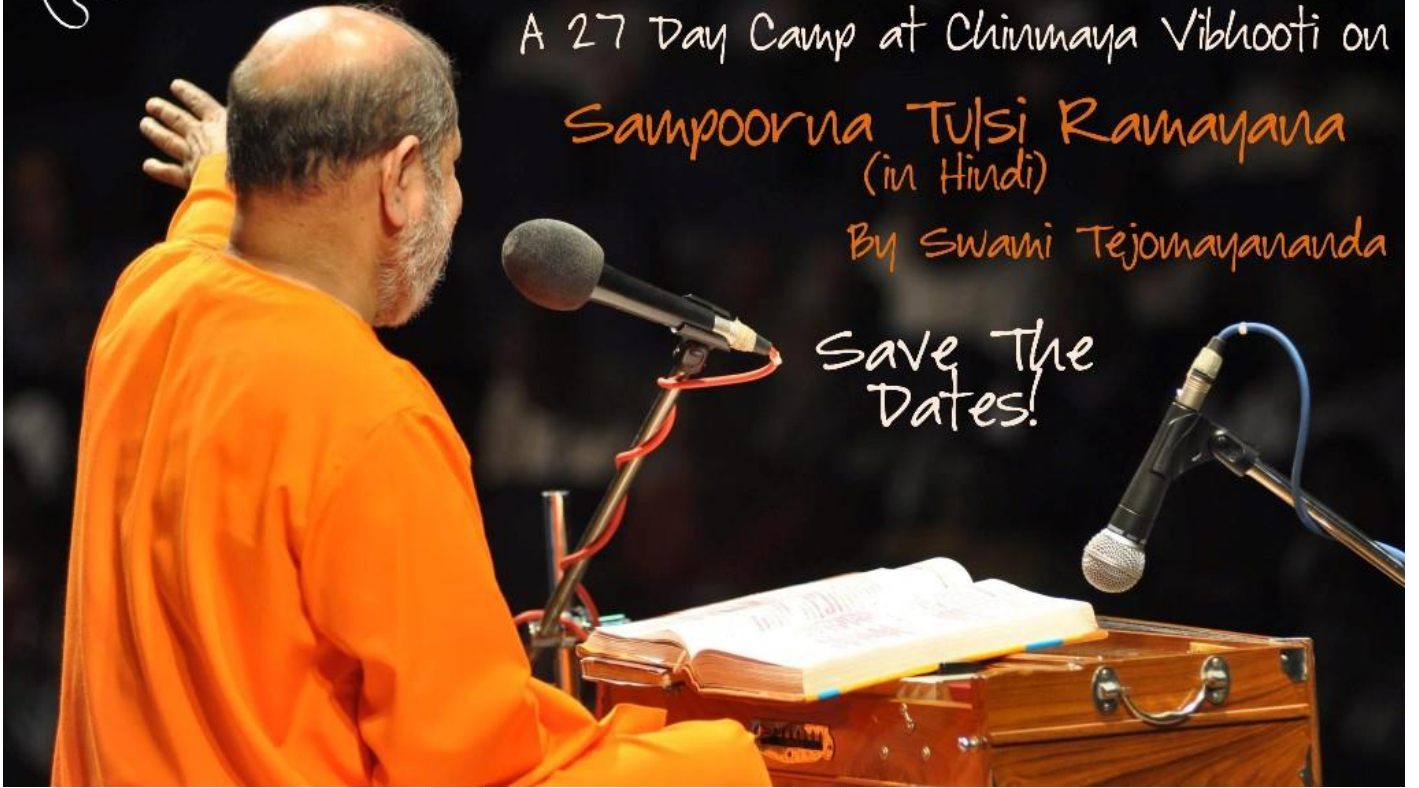
9 January to 5 February 2019

A 27 Day Camp at Chinmaya Vibhooti on

**Sampoorna Tulsi Ramayana**  
(in Hindi)

By Swami Tejomayananda

Save The  
Dates!





Chinmaya Mission® Washington Regional Center presents

# HOW DOES SCIENCE EMERGE FROM ADVAITA?

with Anoop Kumar, MD



Anoop Kumar, MD is a Bala Vihar graduate and author of Michelangelo's Medicine. He enjoys exploring the intersection of consciousness, science, and philosophy. He has recently collaborated with Deepak Chopra on presenting non-duality to worldwide audiences. Visit Anoop at [anoopkumar.com](http://anoopkumar.com).

Join us as we explore:

- What does the current model of perception suggest about the nature of reality?
- How can the subjective and objective worlds be reconciled?
- How can we derive science from advaita?
- How can this help with self-realization?

Talk+Q&A for students & adults, followed by light lunch

Sunday July 22, 2018 • 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Chinmayam, 46 Norwood Rd, Silver Spring, MD

Suggested donation: \$10 per person

Contact Vandana Bapna at [108vandana@gmail.com](mailto:108vandana@gmail.com) for details

## Subscribe to Inspiring Chinmaya Mission Magazines

Mananam Series of Books These are inviting and engaging series of books that go into depth into one selected spiritual theme per edition (Truth, Compassion, Education, Fear- face it, Science of Sciences, and so on) and bring perspectives on it from different thinkers, writers and traditions of the world. The recent editions of Mananam have focused on the life, teachings, inspiration and legacy of Sri Gurudev, in honor of his birth centenary.

Subscription: please write to editor@mananam.org. Current and past editions can be purchased at our bookstores.)

Tapovan Prasad Subscription (print version or E-version). Tapovan Prasad brings out each month - excerpts from teachings of Swami Tapovan Maharaj, Sri Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda and CM acharyas. In addition, it captures the pulse of Chinmaya Mission world-wide with reports on happenings and upcoming events.

Tapovan Prasad Subscription Instructions:

1. Please go to [www.tapovanprasad.com](http://www.tapovanprasad.com) website
2. Click on 'Subscribe-advertise-donate' and select 'Print version'
3. Subscription - Overseas'
4. Choose the required subscription package and then Click on 'Add to Cart' and then 'Go to checkout'
5. Please provide username, password, email...details, etc...and proceed.
6. When you click on Axis Bank / CCAvenue payment gateway, enter details and complete the process. (Do revert in case of any problem)

Please consider Other Chinmaya Magazines for your subscriptions:

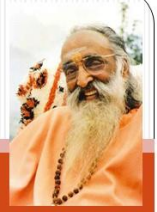
- Bala Vihar magazine for children, parents and Bala Vihar teachers. subscription link: [http://www.chinmayamission.com/balvihar-subscription-overseas/#.WE\\_LYvkrJhE](http://www.chinmayamission.com/balvihar-subscription-overseas/#.WE_LYvkrJhE)
- Chinmaya Udghosh - magazine for youth - appropriate for 13-30 year olds subscription link: [http://www.chinmayamission.com/our-magazines/chinmaya-udghosh/#.WE\\_MBPrJhE](http://www.chinmayamission.com/our-magazines/chinmaya-udghosh/#.WE_MBPrJhE)



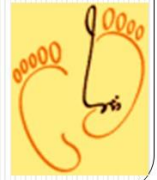
# BALA VIHAR TILAK CEREMONY 2018

3pm, May 19 2018

Chinmayam, 46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD



अभिनन्दनम् अभिनन्दनम् ।  
दीक्षान्त काले अभिनन्दनम् ॥



Swamiji will place tilak on each graduate's forehead as a symbol of Bala Vihar experience

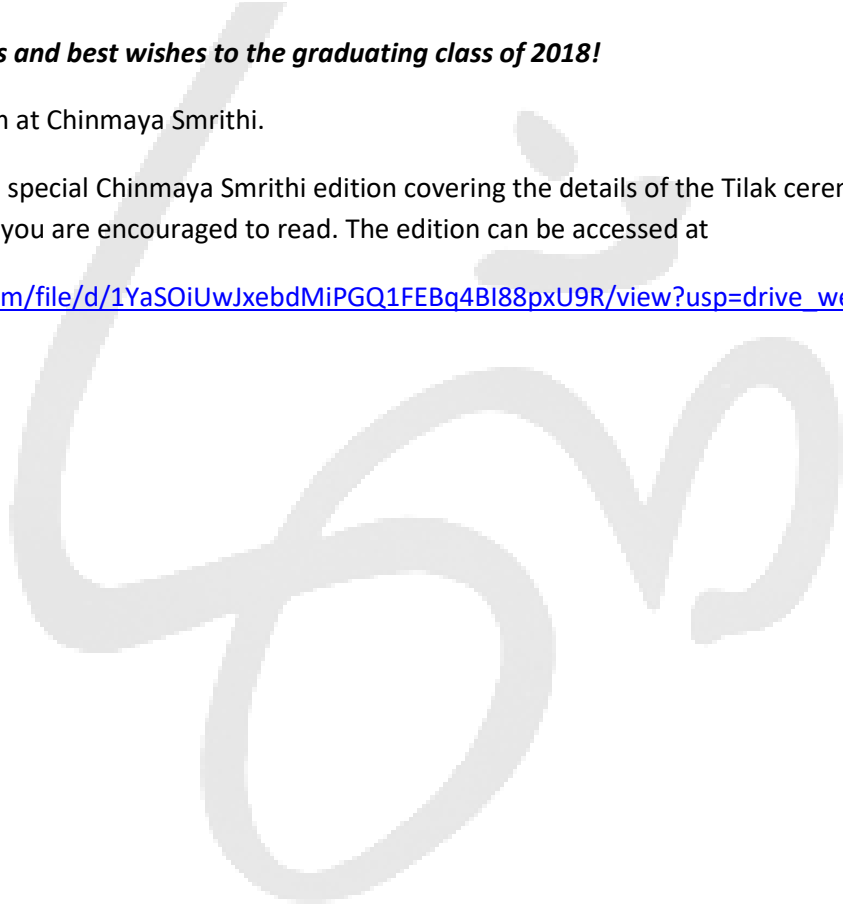


**Hearty congratulations and best wishes to the graduating class of 2018!**

From the editorial team at Chinmaya Smrithi.

P.S. There is a separate special Chinmaya Smrithi edition covering the details of the Tilak ceremony and the graduating class which you are encouraged to read. The edition can be accessed at

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YaSOiUwJxebdMiPGQ1FEBq4BI88pxU9R/view?usp=drive\\_web](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YaSOiUwJxebdMiPGQ1FEBq4BI88pxU9R/view?usp=drive_web)



## Gurudev

*A poem by Maanini Lakshmanan*

Freedom fighter turned teacher

Atheist turned guru

Student turned Swami

An example of a true Hindu

He showed us the way

How to truly live

Taught us compassion

And how to give

He radiated love

And possessed humility

Never got angry

Always showing tranquility

He is my Gurudev

The one and only

I just want to say

Thank you

For everything you've taught me

You'll always be remembered

In our heart and mind

We'll never forget all

Your sacrifices for mankind

And when the sun rises

Bringing the dawn

Leaving behind the darkness

We remember

Your spirit lives on

## CMWRC Interfaith Outreach Activities: 2017 Roundup

*By Richa Agarwala, CMWRC Interfaith Outreach Director*

**[Editor’s Note:** This article has been edited by Anu Prabhala, Sitaram Kowtha and Sudha Bhat]

The vision of the Chinmaya Mission® to foster the inner transformation of individuals through knowledge of Vedanta, spiritual practices, and service to society, resulting in a happy world around them is the guiding principle behind all activities undertaken by Chinmaya Mission. The Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center (CMWRC) Interfaith Outreach Program supports this vision by engaging in opportunities that enhance inter-religious understanding and spread harmony and respect in the community. The Outreach Program achieves this in three ways: (i) Sharing knowledge of Hinduism, (ii) Engaging in dialogues with the larger community, and (iii) Creating avenues for interaction on matters of faith and other relevant issues within communities.

We summarize Outreach activities undertaken in 2017 below. We expect to continue all activities listed in 2018 and beyond, and will take up a few additional ones as opportunities present themselves. For example, in 2018, we will attend the Parliament of Religions event being held in Toronto, Canada that will bring people from around the world with similar interests on the interfaith front. Additional forums involving youth and Sethukaris are being explored.

The 2017 activities fall into three main categories: **Education, Participation, and Exploration.** Visit <http://cmwrc.chinmayadc.org/cmwrcc-outreach-and-interfaith-activities/> for further details.

### 1) Education

- i) **Speaking engagements:** The CWMRC Outreach team provided speakers to schools and colleges to give an authentic introduction of Hinduism, dispel common misconceptions, and engage audiences in Q&A sessions. These presentations are on an invitation-only basis and are conducted by speakers who are qualified as “Dharma Ambassadors” based on the training provided by Hindu American Foundation (HAF). In 2017, nine such classes

were conducted at six area schools and colleges.

- ii) **Training:** CMWRC hosted training for teachers in the class titled “*Religious literacy for Educators*” led by Mr. Chris Murray, who is a world religions teacher with Montgomery County Public Schools. In 2017, there was one class conducted at CMWRC’s Silver Spring chapter with 28 Montgomery County Public School teachers in attendance.
- iii) **Leadership:** Members of the Chinmaya mission also served on the education committees of Montgomery and Howard counties in Maryland.

### 2) Participation

Chinmaya mission members participated in the following forums in 2017: (a) Interfaith Book Club, (b) Montgomery County Unity Walk, (c) Reston multicultural festival, (d) Panel discussions, and (e) Dialogues. These forums resulted in forging tighter ties with the greater DC interfaith community.

**An interfaith book club called “All faiths in Friendship”** for women from all religions is a good forum to read, discuss, visit different places of worship, and develop relationships with members of different faiths. The members of this group visited the CMWRC Silver Spring chapter and met with Swamiji twice in 2017.

**Montgomery county Unity Walk** was the first-of-a-kind event where Chinmaya mission was an organizer along with the Muslim Community Center and Montgomery County’s Office of Community Partnerships (OCP). The Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC) served in an advisory role. It was a successful event by all accords that resulted in many benefits both to the leadership and members of the Chinmaya Mission. Leadership made important contacts with Montgomery County executives both during the planning and on the day of the walk. Members felt happy at the exposure to different faiths and at the smoothness with which the event was executed.

A short video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14PEg6FH5rc>



**Reston multicultural festival** had booths from various community organizations, non-profits, and vendors. As a community organization, CMWRC set up a book stall with information about our programs, and offered Kolam as the art experience from India.

CMWRC engaged in **two panel discussions**. The first discussion was on the book “The Witness of Religion in an Age of Fear” by Michael Kinnamon organized by The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland where the panel had representation from Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, and Hindu faiths. The second one was a panel discussion at 11th Annual Counselor and Career Services conference on “Psychotherapy and Religion” organized by Howard County Community College.

CMWRC participated in a **series of dialogues**. These included a dialogue on (a) “Healing our society and political divides in the society” organized by St. Anselm’s Abbey, (b) IFC dinner dialogue on “Welcoming the stranger: Opening Our Hearts to the Unknown and Other”, (c) Hindu-Catholic dialogue organized by Sri Shiva Vishnu Temple, (d) dialogue on “Healing the soul of the nation” organized by School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, and (e) A three part multicultural dialogue series on bias organized by Faith Community Working Group of Montgomery County and hosted by St. Camillus Catholic Church.

### 3) Exploration

In 2017, CMWRC participation in exploratory activities resulted in building several new relationships with area organizations. Meetings attended include: (a) MLK Shabbat service hosted by Washington Hebrew congregation, (b) Forum on “Faith over Fear” hosted by the National Cathedral, (c) Name reading at a community holocaust commemoration organized by Jewish Community Relations Council, (d) Introductory meetings with Communities United Against Hate (CUAH) and a new division of IFC called Washington Interfaith Outreach and Response Coalition (WIROC), (e) Documentary presentation on Labyrinths by Brookside gardens, (f) a National Press Club organized premiere screening of documentary “Your Health: A Sacred Matter”, (g) A meeting hosted by Montgomery County to give information on a one time security grant made available by county executive for upgrading security systems for faith-based organizations, (h) A panel on role of fasting in different religions hosted by Temple B’nai Shalom in Fairfax Station, (i) Meeting with Senator Ben Cardin for a conversation on “Uniting our community after Charlottesville”, (j) A meeting on Rainscapes that can help

design landscapes to save water run-offs and create habitat for wildlife, (k) Opening session of the two day National Interfaith Anti-Bullying Summit organized by American Muslim Health Professionals, and (l) Attending an online webinar on bullying conducted by HAF.

We are excited to continue our activities in 2018 and beyond. For any questions on this report, please contact [outreach@chinmayadc.org](mailto:outreach@chinmayadc.org)

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## Swami Chidatmananda's Jnana Yagna @Chinmaya Somnath

*Pictures courtesy of Rajaram R*





## 2018 CMWRC Gita Chanting Competition Writing Submissions

### *Various CMWRC members*

**Editor's Note:** [The following are submissions from the "Writing" category of the 2017 Geeta Chanting Competition (Chapter 3 – Karma Yoga – The Art of Action: Verses 22-43). We have reflections from across all age groups ranging from Balavihar students and youth to adults. The contributors selected one or more verses for reflection and drew upon the literal meaning as well as commentary by Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda as well as other sources. In the following pages, you will see write-ups by:

Shalini Gupta  
Shreeya Pullangiri  
Sitaram Kowtha  
Srikanth Kowtha  
Srinivasan Adhinarayanan  
Sudiksha Nimishe  
Suren Nathan  
Tanrika Choudhury  
Teja Nallagorla  
Trisha Dineshkumar

Aashrith  
Aishwarya Balamurugan  
Alisha Mahajan  
Amit Mukherjee  
Anjali Tangirala  
Anirudh G  
Deeksha Sesa  
Dinesh Dhanasekharan  
Gautam Tangirala  
Hridaya Babu  
Jahnvi Kirkire  
K Sangamesh  
Kalpana Panigrahi  
Keshav Kowtha  
Krishay Iyer  
Krishnan Balakrishnan  
Lalitha Yallayi  
MRK  
Muskaan Narula  
Neal Garud  
Neeti Gandhi  
Neha Venkat  
P Sesa  
Padmaja Emani  
Pallavi Nithyanandan  
Pooja Sivarajan  
Prajeet Kalakonda  
Pranaya Babu  
Rajiv Mahajan  
Reshma Ramesh  
Rohan Nigam  
Sahana Kukke  
Sai Ari  
Samhita Ghorakavi  
Shabaritha

धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निः                      dhū-me-nā-vri-ya-te vah-nih  
यथादर्शो मलेन च ।                      ya-thā-dar-śo ma-le-na ca ।  
यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भः                      ya-thol-be-nā-vr-to gar-bhaḥ  
तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ॥ ३-३८ ॥                      ta-thā te-ne-da-mā-vr-tam ॥3-38॥

*As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the womb, so this (wisdom) is enveloped by that (desire or anger).*

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहः                      in-dri-yā-ṇi pa-rāṇ-yā-huḥ  
इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।                      in-dri-ye-bhyaḥ pa-raṁ ma-naḥ ।  
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिः                      ma-na-sas-tu pa-rā bud-dhiḥ  
यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥ ३-४२ ॥                      yo bud-dheḥ pa-ra-tas-tu saḥ ॥3-42॥

*They say that the senses are superior (to the body); superior to the senses is the mind. Superior to the mind is the intellect; one who is even superior to the intellect is He. (the Atman).*

From the definition in verse 42, it shows the hierarchy of our nature or our Atman that can affect the flow to make decisions. However, if you take a look at verse 38, that is not always true. In this verse there are three analogies of how deep desire can affect the way we think, feel and focus. If you want another way to interpret it, you can think of it as greed and want has control over you. If you've ever seen normal action movies, what drive the evil person to do evil are usually their wants and desires. One example from our epics would be Ravana from the Ramayana. He had everything he wanted and needed, but he still wanted more. What was he to gain after he got what he wanted? He wanted things that were not his; so badly that at one point he abducted Sita, Rama's wife. This is a fine example of greed and desire taking over your mind and body. As number 42 says, the flow over control goes from superiority to inferiority. However, when the senses take over the mind, the mind is brainwashed. Even when we know this, our intellect does not take the time to cooperate and hence, doesn't help the mind fight the senses. If you place verse 38 and 42 together, the real meaning behind it shows that the senses can take over the mind and intellect if not kept in your strict line of sight. Of course, we can come over this if we listen to our elders. You notice that all they want you to have is self-control and be able to exert your full amount of focus and effort. We can also remind ourselves every day that what we want and desire is not always the best. With this, we can try and keep our senses under strict watch.

Aashrith

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेत्                      na bud-dhi-bhe-daṁ ja-na-yet  
अज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।                      a-jñā-nāṁ kar-ma-saṅ-gi-nām ।  
जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि                      jo-ṣa-yet-sar-va-kar-mā-ṇi  
विद्वान्युक्तस्समाचरन् ॥ ३-२६ ॥                      vid-vān-yuk-tas-sa-mā-ca-ran ॥3-26॥

*Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people, who are attached to action; he should engage them all in actions, himself fulfilling them with devotion.*

Here, Lord Krishna is telling Arjuna that a wise man should not deviate the mind of an ignorant person. If the ignorant person believes something is right and is doing it while a wise person changes the point of view, it may lead to confusion. So instead encourage them to do the right thing while we don't deviate ourselves. For example, let us use someone who believes in Santa. Even though Santa is not a real person, they are doing right things in order to earn a present from Santa at the end of the year. So you should not tell them the reality of Santa. Instead you should continue to do your duties while encouraging them to stay on path.

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*As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the womb, so this (wisdom) is enveloped by that (desire or anger).*

Lord Krishna says like the smoke covers the fire, the dust covers the mirror, the embryo covers the womb, same way our anger/ego covers up the truth. For example, if I am angry at something or someone, which could be due to my ego. It's like the dust covering the mirror, the dust is the ego/anger that covers the mirror, which is the truth. But if you wipe off the dust from the mirror, you will see your true reflection. Same way, calm down, take a moment to relax, get the ego out of the way and figure out what actually had happened. Once the ego is out of your way, the anger will be gone and you will find it easy to solve the problem.

Aishwarya Balamurugan

Always be true to yourself.

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।  
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥ 3-35॥

My favorite verse of Chapter 3 of the Geeta is verse 35 because it teaches us some valuable life lessons about being true to our own personality.

Personally, I find it pretty hard to relate to some of the verses written in the Geeta, because it was written so long

ago and I am only just a child; however, I can connect to this verse because in high school you meet many people who are not true to themselves and they pretend to be someone which they are not.

The literal translation of this verse is that it is far better to perform one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous. In life, we sometimes pretend to be someone who we are not. The work or the duties of other people around us may seem attractive; however, if it is against our basic nature, then we should avoid doing it even if we are good at it. It may cause conflicting thoughts in our mind, senses, and intellect. That is why Lord Krishna said that one should avoid performing duties that are meant for others. One should primarily focus on their work regardless of if it has some faults in it. Because if you do your work (or duty) according to your basic nature, you will remain happy and calm for your lifetime. This does not mean that no problems would occur in this case but these problems will not bother you as such. In addition, the path to self-realization, which is the ultimate goal of human life, is to live your life in an authentic manner. It is more enjoyable to be ourselves than to pretend to be someone else. The duties born of our nature can be easily performed with the stability of mind. The duties of others may seem attractive from a distance and we may think of switching, but that is a risky thing to do. If they conflict with our nature, it will create disharmony in our senses, mind, and intellect. This will be detrimental to our consciousness and will hinder our progress on the spiritual path. Krishna emphasizes this point dramatically by saying that it is better to die in the faithful performance of one's duty than to be in the unnatural position of doing another's duty.

This teaches us a very important lesson about life that we should always stay true to ourselves even though it might not be what works out the best. Because when you stay true to your character, you are the bravest person out of them all even though it may not seem like that.

Alisha Mahajan

Verse 3-28:

I have to admit that today I am upset. Not just upset as in a cup of tea messed up my shirt. But the kind of upset where the senior leadership of my company decided that today would be the day, the product I had so painstakingly

worked on for the past 7 years of my life would be sent to the grave, i.e. End-of-Lived. How cold, how selfish, cruel. Do these people have any conscience? How do they sleep at night going about dashing people's dreams, destroying people's livelihoods with a few keystrokes of their laptop. And it was at that moment today during a moment of deep anguish, I heard the glorious voice of Swami Dheeranandaji saying "Guna Guneshu Vartante, Iti Matwa Na Sajjate" .

This unique and amazing voice of Swami Ji really served as silver lining to my head full of dark, cloudy and negative thought spiral I was going into. This particular shloka from verse 28 from chapter 3 really lead me to deeply question myself on how I was engaging with my employer, the work that I did for my employer and the entanglement I was getting myself into.

I had the realization that the organization I worked for consisted of individuals and each of these individuals a specific combination of tamasik, rajasik and sattvic gunas. The actions undertaken by these individuals was merely a play of the sense objects dictated by their gunas. What I was unable to perceive was that these actions that were getting manifested with their gunas were by their very nature mutable. In other words, the entity and their actions and resulting outcomes were one and the same for me. And it was this maelstrom of thought process which was leading to unhappiness in my mind. However, our dear Swami Ji's words had the impact of turbo-charging my thought process and power-washing my negativity. As a result, I was able to continue my activities in a cheerful way. It was quite astonishing to see Lord Krishna's divine words flowing through Gurudev and our Swami Dheeranda ji having such a positive impact almost instantaneously.

Amit Mukherjee

Verse 3-37:

Chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita is called "Karma Yoga." This means "connecting to the Supreme through action." The sloka from chapter 3 that is the most inspirational and meaningful to me is sloka 37.

The first line of this sloka is "*sri bhagavan uvaca*", which shows that Lord Krishna is speaking as a Supreme Lord, as opposed to a friend of Arjuna. He is clearly conveying a timeless message to all ages. In response to Arjuna's question about what is the compelling force that pushes humans towards sin, Bhagavan states desire as the cause

of all anger and ultimate downfall. The first line is “*kama esa krodha esah rajo guna samud bhavah.*” This means anger and greed are traits that arise out of the Rajo guna, or the active nature of living creatures. The next line is “*maha shano maha papma viddhyenam iha vairinam.*” The word *maha shano* refers to severe gluttonous tendency. The choice of word *maha papma* not just *papma* emphasizes it is indeed the greatest evil. This means desire grows as it is satisfied over and over, until it turns into anger when it cannot be satisfied. Given our *gunas* are our natural tendencies, it is not an easy task to go against them. Therefore, our own desire transforms into our biggest enemy in the world - anger. This is the literal translation of this sloka. So is desire entirely wrong?

In my opinion, we should have desire to learn our scriptures and do our duty. The real meaning is that although desire can begin as normal and innocent, it can also lead to chaos, when left uncontrolled. Now we think, who can control the desires? At what level does it become a negative quality? How do we know when it is turning sinful? Upon reflecting, I understand Lord Krishna is telling all of us to watch our needs versus our wants. Any desire born from *Rajo Guna*, one’s forceful nature must be conquered.

This sloka taught me a lesson that can be applied to my daily life. Prevention is better than cure, it is said. Instead of trying to satisfy the greed, it is better to avoid it, before it begins to take root. This sloka clearly showed me the eventual dire consequences of unfavourable desire, be it small or large. It made me more conscious by giving me a tool to know ahead and avoid these consequences. Hari Om

Anjali Tangirala

Verse 3-35:

This is a very important verse as it provides clarity, guidance and significance of performing one's own duties (Swadharma) and never to deviate from it. This verse directs us to do self-introspection in understanding our own natural tendencies, deciding our 'natural' duty (towards ourselves and the society) on its basis.

Depending upon our natural tendencies, we could belong to a role of a thinker (Brahmin), warrior (kshatriya), business (Vaishya) or service (Shudra). Krishna clearly mentions that this is not to be decided by birth - as was misunderstood for centuries in India and ended-up being practiced as rigid 'caste' system - or should not be decided

by the family's profession but by one's own natural tendencies.

Arjuna was a warrior by nature and training. Just like Krishna admonished Arjuna when Arjuna wanted to give up his 'duty' and run away from the war (to become a Brahmin), we should also ensure that we don't get confused and run away from performing our duty on the basis of various excuses.

If we have natural tendencies of a Vaishya - one who takes/earns money for his skills and then accumulates it, which is probably where most of us belong to - we should first perform our duties as a Vaishya, which is to donate money generously to noble causes. We should do this **first** before running after doing meditation or other any other spiritual practices that are not natural to our role or our tendencies.

Hari Om.

Anirudh G

Verse 3-39:

Each verse in Chapter 3 provides an insightful analysis on karma yoga, and the consequences of our actions. I chose to reflect on Chapter 3 verse 39: *āvṛitam jñānam etena jñānino nitya-vairiṇā kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya duṣhpūreṇānalena ca.* This verse literally translates to “Enveloped, O son of Kunti, is ‘wisdom’ by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of ‘desire’, which is difficult to appease.” Here, Krishna stresses the detrimental nature of lust and desire, and how they can distract even the most distinguished people. Those who prioritize their desires over their wisdom spend their lives in hopeless pursuit of satisfying these desires. In context of the Mahabharata, Krishna tells Arjuna that result-oriented mindset leads to the development of lust and desire, similar to the Kauravas’ situation. Throughout the epic, their vision for war is clouded by greed and hunger for power.

While it is perfectly fine to set goals for oneself, it is extremely important not to get caught up in the result. Swami Chinmayananda establishes this fine line in his analysis of Chapter 3 verse 39, stating that “the capacity to distinguish the Real from unreal, the permanent from the impermanent, the true from the false, which gives man his higher status in the scale of evolution – is the divine faculty that gets screened off from us due to our own greedy and insatiable desires.” In order for someone

to be considered wise, that person must be able to remain distant from material desires. If a person has the ability to see past material wealth and satisfaction, he/she is untouched by desire. The Kauravas, however, were hung up on gaining impermanent power that produces material fulfillment, meaning that the pride associated with it would also be temporary.

Krishna urged Arjuna to ensure that he didn't lose his wisdom to his desires, and to fight for the right reason. This message is definitely useful to all of us today. For example, if a new iPhone is released, people will work very hard to save up money to purchase the new phone. When they eventually buy it, they feel extremely happy and proud of all their work. However, in a few months when the next phone is released, those same people lose all satisfaction associated with their current phone, and instead channel all their energy to getting this newer, cooler phone. This process continues in a cycle. Our material desires are almost impossible to satisfy, as there will always be something better than what we currently have. But when we become so keen on fulfilling these superficial desires, we become invested in them. Eventually, we start acting with these desires in mind and all our thoughts are somehow linked to them.

When we place more emphasis on the fruits of our actions rather than the action itself, we become attached to our desires, sometimes at the expense of our morals. Therefore, it is always important to apply Krishna's message in Chapter 3 verse 39 to our own lives.

Deeksha Sessa

Curious Mind based on Verse 3-32:

We all entertain incorrect perceptions due to our ignorance. In order to understand our scriptures, we have to inquire. We should not be questioning the scriptures, but our knowledge. Our goal is to incrementally learn our scriptures. This is the inspiration for my reflection.

**“vākyārthaśca vicāryatām śrutiśiraḥ pakṣaḥ samāśrīyatām”**

The above verse is from Adi Sankaracharya's *Sadhana Panchakam*. This verses definition is reflecting the meaning of the scripture and taking refuge in its perspective. Keep away from the irrelevant arguments and follow the reasoning. We mull over such verses and our intellect refuses to agree and accept the message. We

look for logical explanations and are unable to comprehend such concepts.

**ye tvetad abhyasūyanto nānutiṣṭhanti me matam sarva-jñāna-vimūḍhāns tān viddhi naṣṭān achetasaḥ**

The above verses from *Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3* teaches how to approach the dilemma.

Shri Krishna had explained to Arjuna, to offer all actions to him. One of the defects of our mind and intellect is pride. Due to pride, whatever the intellect cannot comprehend at the present time, is often rejected as incorrect. The same is described in *Sadhana Panchakam*. Whenever our mind is unable to comprehend, rather than finding fault with the teachings, we must submit to our intellect. You should accept the concept or the scripture for now and engage in spiritual *sādhana*. We will be able to comprehend it in future when we progress in spirituality through *sādhana*." This attitude is called *śhraddhā*, or faith. Shri Krishna points out the virtues of accepting the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita with faith and following them in one's life. Our prerogative as humans is to know the truth and then modify our lives accordingly.

I was recently being asked to write down the following sentence at the end of a workshop - "I will do my duties without having likes and dislikes". I was prodding on this statement over several days to understand how our day to day life is dictated by the likes and dislikes. How can I overcome the most common emotions we encounter such as anger and fear? If I choose to learn from Shri Krishna's message to Arjuna, I would have to understand how I should perform my duties. Shri Krishna explains to Arjuna that the Lord Himself is engaged in a constant activity. Even though the Lord had nothing more to gain, he is performing activities with enthusiasm and joy. The key message is to ensure one must act with a positive attitude and not for personal gain. The greater good and wellbeing is the purpose of acting constantly. In summary, we need to pacify our mental fever and eliminate the anger, envy, and illusion. We should perform the duties without likes and dislikes.

Dinesh Dhanasekharan

Verse 3-22 and 3-23:

Chapter 3 in the Bhagavad Gita is called "Karma Yoga," or "The path of doing your deeds without wanting a prize." This means that you should do your duty or job without thinking "what will I get out of this?" If you keep thinking



that you will go nowhere in life. Even Krishna does his karma and he has everything in the world. He tells this to Arjuna in sloka 22 of chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita.

In sloka 22 of this chapter, Krishna is telling Arjuna what will happen if he stops doing his work. He says “I am the almighty, I do not need to work.” However, next, he says “But I still do my work.” He says that he has everything in the world but he still does his work. Krishna is telling Arjuna that even when Krishan has everything and can make his work be done without starting it, he still does his work. This actually shows Karma Yoga because Krishna has everything in the world but he still does his work. During the war of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, at night when everyone is asleep he would go to the river and clean all of the Pandavas war horses. He could do this because he does not have to sleep. This shows that of using his time when everyone is sleeping he is doing his work. Also during the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas Krishna gets the horses ready, wakes up the Pandavas, and drives Arjuna's chariot. Again does Krishna have to this work? No, because he has everything and he can go do whatever he wants. However, he still does his karma or deeds.

In sloka 23 Krishna is still telling Arjuna about this. However, he is known also telling Arjuna what will happen if Krishna doesn't do karma. He says that if he stops doing his karma the whole world will stop doing their karma, jobs, duty, and deeds. This makes sense because everyone knows Krishna is the supreme god and they think they will get a good life following Krishna. When Krishna stops doing his duty everyone will say “Oh! Look at Krishna he is not doing any work if we follow him and do no work then we will all have great lives.” This will make the world break down because everyone will just be eating and sleeping. That is why Krishna keeps doing his duty and his karma even when he has everything.

Gautam Tangirala

Verse 3-37:

After Arjuna learns about how following one's own dharma (svadharma) is better than following someone else's dharma, he has a doubt. His question was that how come people in spite of knowing that it is better to stick to one's own nature - are compelled to act in ways that lead to sins. We need to remember that as human beings our svadharma (nature) is Ananda (bliss). So his question is that why people do bad deeds that lead to sin and sorrow even after knowing that our true nature is bliss?

He wants to know what is the force that compels mankind to do sinful actions.

Lord Krishna in this sloka is answering Arjuna by saying that it is the inherent “Rajo Guna” (Passionate nature) of the mankind that compels them to do deeds that lead them away from happiness and towards sin and sorrow. How?

As we previously know, there are three gunas in all of us. Satva Guna (Goodness) Rajo Guna (Passion) and Tamo Guna (Darkness). We need all three gunas to a certain extent to thrive in this world. However, If Rajo guna or Tamo guna grow more than Satva guna then, the person becomes overly greedy or even evil.

Krishna in this sloka explains how that happens. He says that “desire” is a strong feeling of wanting something. When a desire is not fulfilled, it often leads to obsession and then generates anger. On the other hand, if a desire is fulfilled, people will start to crave the temporary satisfaction that such fulfilment brings. Such intense and passionate cravings lead to greed. Once greed is fulfilled, the thing that is being wanted soon becomes an addiction. It is easy to become addicted to something, but it is most definitely not easy to give up that addiction. Such is the result of excessive Rajo guna.

Krishna warns Arjuna that it is that guna inside oneself that can very quickly become an enemy - difficult to defeat. Krishna cautions Arjuna that one should identify such irrational anger and lust to be the inner foes and should strive to conquer them.

The only way to win over such excessive “Rajo Guna” is to increase the “Sattva Guna” in oneself. Increased sattva guna or goodness automatically puts a check on irrational and undesirable tendencies of excessive anger and greed.

Hridaya Babu

Verse 3-27:

The verse I selected was 3:27.

“prakṛiteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśhaḥ ahankāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate.”

Literally, it means “All actions are performed, in all cases, merely by the Qualities-in-Nature (GUNAS). He whose mind is deluded by egoism, thinks ‘I am the doer.’” When I read this, I realized that Bhagwan is talking about us. We

never see a difference between ourselves, and “I.” We have always thought that we are the ones doing everything, and that all the work we do is our hard work. I don’t want to have that misunderstanding, so I decided to better interpret this verse, and learn what I must do.

In order to better understand this verse, I listened to Swami Dheerananda’s talks on it. When I did, I learned that when the Lord says “ahankāra-vimūḍhātāmā,” he is telling us that we have a “doctorate in stupidity.” Upon reading this verse, I realized that I did not want this degree in stupidity. I want to know what I can do to grow out of this mindset.

As I pondered on it, I decided that I have to learn the difference between Jahnvi and “I.” There is a solid difference between the two, as Jahnvi is just a label for the body that is the equipment of “I.” “I,” also known as the gunas of prakriti are the life within us, and are the doer. Our gunas are the essence of the self, and are what make us, us. I have to learn how to discern the difference between who “I” is and who Jahnvi is. As Jahnvi is just the equipment for the gunas to work through, I have to remember that Jahnvi is not the doer, and that all the work I consider mine, isn’t really mine. I’m not the doer, but “I” is. Jahnvi is just a label for the body I call my own, and I have to begin to understand this, and what a place to start.

The prompt for this writing was to say what about this verse inspired me. So, in answering this, I say that this verse inspired me to take action. This verse inspired me to begin my journey to realization. I have to start this journey by figuring out who Jahnvi is versus who “I” is. So, in all, this verse inspired me to begin. To start. To take action.

Jahnvi

Verse 3-35:

|| Hari Om ||

Verse meaning:

***Better is one’s own ‘dharma’ (‘duty’), though devoid of merit, than the ‘dharma’ (‘duty’) of another well discharged. Better is death in one’s own ‘dharma’***

***(‘duty’); the ‘dharma’ (‘duty’) of another is fraught with fear (is productive of positive danger).***

Gurudev mentions that the word ‘Dharma’ is most elusive word and there is no proper word in English nor is there can be any proper translation possible, because it too vast to comprehend.

Dharma can mean duty, role, responsibility, intrinsic nature, righteousness, intrinsic quality, good conduct, etc. In a more precise way it can be summed up as “the Law of Being” of anything in the world.

For example: Dharma of sugar is sweetness. Dharma of fire is hot-ness.

Bhagwan says:

1) ***Better is one’s own ‘Dharma’:*** Here one should first know what is one’s own dharma. This needs introspection and sincere self analysis. We will have to consider various aspects about us to be able to understand “What my dharma is?”. It be based on my gunas, vasanas, gender, age, roles, responsibilities, race, gender, abilities, skills, education, etc.

2) ***Though devoid of merit:*** Our ‘Dharma’ (duties) may not be popular or may not have more money or may be dangerous in nature.

3) ***Than the ‘dharma’ of another well discharged:*** Instead of discharging my ‘dharma’ (duties), if I discharge another persons ‘duty’ well. My role or ‘dharma’ remains unfulfilled. The entire universe is sum of many entities and when each entities performs it’s ‘dharma’, then the ‘dharma’ is upheld otherwise any entity that breaks the ‘dharma’ (or does perform) becomes liable (comes back as Karma-phala). Example: When my ‘dharma’ is to cut the lawn of my backyard and if instead if I cut the lawn of my neighbor (to get some favors or to gain some impression).

4) ***Better is death in one’s own ‘dharma’ (duty):*** Example: A soldier dying in duty is awarded, while one who runs away is punished. Nature also similarly rewards all those who stick to their ‘dharma’ and punishes those who avoid or deviate from it.

5) ***‘Dharma’ of another is fraught with danger:*** One aspect is that, we failed to discharge what we were supposed to discharge. Second aspect is that, we take some other ‘dharma’ (a foreign one) by overriding the natures plan and execute our ego based artificial plan. Suppose, Sun decides to take the role of moon (because

people talk and sing about moon and they love to see moon), i.e it wants to be cool like moon. Now imagine the consequences! Other example: A doctor becomes a full time gambler.

In short, there is a strong message to stick to our nature (race, religion, gender, etc.) instead of changing them. Just like a mango seed grows to be mango and does not try to change into apple, we should stick to built-in 'dharma', let it sprout and grow just as mother nature wanted us to be.

|| Om Tat Sat ||

K Sangamesh

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Verse 3-36 to 3-41:

What is it that propels us into actions that are sinful, at times involuntarily, to our astonishment? I could relate so well to Arjuna's question to Lord Krishna in verse 36. I have experienced this process an umpteen number of times, as if some invisible person or some irresistible force propagated me to indulge in this practice. It is not that the realization of my folly had never surfaced but unfortunately, it was always too late to rein the wrong action in, like an arrow set out of a bow. At these moments one can only think of oneself as a leaf carried by winds on an uncharted path but hoping to find a restful spot at the end. And of course, the outcome is inevitably otherwise.

In retrospect, I always concluded that my unacceptable actions were a result of my lack of poise and at the very onset, my inability to carefully examine the "why" behind getting entangled and setting out on the forbidden path. Certainly, these are valid explanations; however, they are not the precise reasons. I grew aware of my imperfect understanding after carefully going through the answers given to Arjuna by Lord Krishna in verses 37-40. Lord Krishna's revelations in these verses exposed me to a newer thought process and I gained a perspective that helped me to direct my focus on the "real/root" cause as well as the solution to my problem. There was no doubt in my mind that desires indeed drive man into action but I was oblivious of their potency to misguide us. Now, with the awareness of the newfound **Evil** called **Desire**, my perception is transformed.

Desire is that ignorance which conceals the divine in us. How does it do it? It permeates the senses, the mind and the intellect and functions through them. It is akin to a

cloud of ignorance which engulfs the **Wisdom** in it, thereby destroying its inherent discriminative and rationale capacity. Under the influence of Desire, *Jiva* is deluded and is similar to a spider weaving a web with all its might but regrettably, getting trapped in it. The insatiable Desire appears like a mirage, a goal that can never be attained. When the body, mind, and intellect are possessed by desires, then this desire renders an individual crippled and devoid of their competence to employ wisdom efficiently and effectively. Thereby, Desire coaxes him/her towards sinful actions. Also, the nature and intensity of the Desire has a direct impact on the extent of its negative influence on **Wisdom** and is reflected in the attributes of performed actions.

Desire, the potent foe, launches the attack first on the **Senses** as they are the most vulnerable target. The unrestrained senses/ sense-organs are extrovert in nature and, being absorbed in the world through sense-objects, are easily captivated. Thus, in order to conquer this inner enemy named Desire, Lord Krishna recommends to work towards controlling the senses first. That is a sure way to break the shackles of **Desire**!

Kalpana Panigrahi

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Verse 3-38:

As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the womb, so this wisdom is enveloped by anger and desire.

In this verse, Lord Krishna is describing how "desires and the consequent anger delude our rational capacity and choke our discrimination" abilities. Kama, the desires, and Krodha, the anger borne of attachment, together prevent the mind from thinking. Everyone has experienced the lack of judgement that comes when one gives into rage or fear. All thoughts of what is right and wrong leave your mind. All you can hear is the pounding of blood, and all you can focus on is the object of your anger or desire. You are prone to make impulsive decisions, unless you can cool down. Lord Krishna gives three examples which perfectly represent how our wisdom is covered up by these powerful emotions.

However, there is more to the three examples than this. Each example corresponds to a respective guna, and details how each guna's desires delude. In the first example, Lord Krishna compares Sattvic desires with the smoke of a fire. As Swami Chinmayananda says, "A smoky fire place, shrouded by dark curling smoke, can

sometimes ... veil the brilliance of the light emitted by the flames.” In this example, the light is still produced, and minimal effort can wave away the smoke, revealing the fire again. So too, the least amount of effort is required to remove the more noble sattvic desires, but these desires still “veil the infinite glory of the Spirit.”

The Rajasic desires are described as dust caked onto a mirror. Rajasic desires are thick, and represent desires for glory or material possessions. Whereas the smoke of the noble sattvic desires can be blown away with even a single quick breeze, the passionate desires are caked onto the mirror of the Self. It takes significant self-effort to scrub off these desires. And when the rajasic desires cover the mirror, there is no reflection seen at all. Even in the heights of the smoke of sattvic desires, the fire of the Self may still be seen, but the Self cannot be seen under the dirt of the Rajasic desires.

Tamasic Desires are described by Lord Krishna as a fetus in the womb. These Tamasic desires, the desires of inaction and laziness, is the most obscuring of all the desires thus far described. The fetus is completely veiled by the womb. There is no means of observing the baby while it is in the womb. So too, the Self is totally obscured by our Tamasic Desires.

These three examples are very potently described by Lord Krishna. For the purposes of my life, I created three examples that are more relevant for my life. These examples all have to do with driving, as we each have to drive down the road of life, with an eye on the road and two hands on the wheel.

For Sattvic Desires, I imagine fog. As all drivers know, when it gets cold outside while it is warm in the car, all the windows fog up, making it harder and harder to see the road. So too, the smoke obscures the fire more and more. Only when the fog on the windshield is removed by heating it off, does the path forward become clear once more. So too, the sattvic desires obscure the path slightly, but can be easily cleared with the metaphorical push of a button.

For Rajasic Desire, I imagine snow. Before one can drive in the snowy weather, one must clear out all the snow on the driveway. If the car is outside, snow and ice need to be removed from the vehicle too. One cannot drive while the snow is still there, and it takes significant ability to clear the snow to be able to drive. Like how the mirror is completely obscured by the dirt, the car is completely blocked by the snow.

And finally for Tamasic Desires, I imagine the initial fears of driving. These fears stop the driver from first driving on any roads, then from driving on main roads, then on highways, and so forth. An inexperienced driver only focuses on the part of the road immediately before him and does not keep track of the world around him. He reacts heavily to all unexpected stimuli no matter how imminent or grave the stimuli. Eventually the driver seeks to abandon the drive as much as possible. This fear is overwhelming and prevents any progress, without steady work for years to practice away the fears. So too, the womb completely blocks the fetus from view until a long period of growth.

In the end, all three conditions need to be dealt with in the course of one’s driving career. And so too, all the different desires which cloud the mind need to be removed on our spiritual quests. Only then will our inner Self shine.

Keshav Kowtha

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Verse 3-22, 3-25, 3-31, 3-32:

(Shloka #22) There is nothing in the three worlds (Underworld, Overworld, and Heaven), O Partha that has to be done by me, nor is there anything unattained that should be attained by me; yet I engage myself in action.

I think that what Krishna is saying is that since he has nothing unaccomplished that has to be accomplished, he engages himself in the action happening. In other words, Krishna has nothing to do so he engages himself in the war and helps out.

This would connect with me because I like to help people with their needs and favors.

(Shloka #25) As the ‘ignorant’ men act from attachment and action, O Bharata, so should the ‘wise’ men act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world.

What Krishna means is that people who are ignorant only take action to benefit themselves. In other words, being selfish. However, those who are wise and have a wish to make the world a better place to live, benefit themselves and also, the community.

(Shloka #31) Those men who constantly practice this teaching of mine, full of faith and without caviling, they too are freed from actions

I think that what Krishna is saying is that those who learn from Krishna with full faith and not making any silly objections, they are freed from worry, anxiety, sadness and other negativities.

This connects with me because if you practice what you learned, without any objection and with full devotion to what you are doing, you will achieve greatness.

(Shloka #32) But those who carp at my teaching and do not practice it, deluded in all knowledge and devoid of discrimination, know them to be doomed to destruction.

I think that what Krishna is saying is that those who do not practice what Krishna taught them, thinking that they know everything and do not need any help are those who will fail in life and will fall behind others who did use the advices from friends and family to make their lives good.

Krishay Iyer

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Verse 3-39:

I love the word, Aa-vrtam. It means, "covering"

This word symbolizes the essence of Chapter 3 to me. To me, Aa-vrtam implies that there are many layers in terms of understanding the meaning of this chapter.

Coming from the 77 verses of Chapter 2 (The Knowledge of Self), this chapter is setup with a question, "Do I act or do I explore knowledge of myself?"

In order to get a practical aspect of this question in terms of how we transact in this world, we could ask a simple question, "What makes a person commit a sinful act?"

The answer, "Act with knowledge"

This chapter first brings out the fact that performing action is the atomic unit of every being in this world. This concept of performing action is what every being in this world has to do. Not only beings in this world, even the Devatas and Lord Brahma himself perform actions.

All actions arise from a bed of choice. The subject has to choose and select to perform ONE specific act from amongst many possible paths to follow.

What causes a person, the "subject," to choose one specific course of action over another? The answer is "Desire", which is the grease that makes all action possible.

Thus, every action can be broken down to the following three aspects...

"Who is the "Subject" of an act?"

"What is the action?" and

"Who or what is the object of the action?"

This tri-ecta or Subject, action, Object can be used to think about every activity in the world around us. The answers to each of these questions is layered (aa-vrtam!).

It is the Atman, in the inner core of every being, that is the true subject (or source of action). However, this Atman is masked (covered) by the ego of the being. We invariably forget and do not recognize that the Atman is the subject and instead think of the ego being the author or owner of an act.

Anchoring desire prompted activity in the ego leads to sinful acts. Verse 3-39 points out how this ego-driven desire is such a fine skin (or covering) around our Atman that it is (almost) impossible to set it aside.

Our senses, our mind, our intellect, the tools we have at our disposal are all forced to interact via our ego. This anchor, on the shifting sand of ego, is what drives the selection of the choice of action. Instead, actions should be anchored in the Atman itself. Doing so will result in selfless actions- the essence of Karma Yoga!

Anchoring activity in the ego will also result in a sense of ownership around the fruits of the act. This is how one can recognize a sinful act.

Instead, by directing the ownership of the act to the Atman and giving up the craving for the fruits (or result) of the action is how one can avoid performing sinful acts.

Thus, we could say, this ignorance of the Atman being the true Subject, leads to a person committing a sinful act.

Aa-vrtam... a beautiful word to indeed ponder upon!

Krishnan Balakrishnan

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Verse 3-37 & 3-38:

Hari Om, Sri Gurubhyo Namah.

Today I would like to reflect on two of the verses that made me think and reflect verses 37 and 38 of chapter 3.

śhrī bhagavān uvācha:kāma eṣha krodha eṣha rajo-guṇa-  
samudbhavaḥ

mahāśhano mahā-pāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇaman-37

dhūmenāvriyate vahnir yathādarśho malena cha

yatholbenāvṛito garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛitam-38

The Supreme Lord said: It is desire alone, which is born of contact with the mode of passion, and later transformed into anger. Know this as the sinful, all-devouring enemy in the world.

Just as a fire is covered by smoke, a mirror is masked by dust, and an embryo is concealed by the womb, similarly one's knowledge gets shrouded by desire.

Happiness/Ananda is our true Nature! Everyone wants to be happy because that is what we actually are. However, we think that happiness is dependent on material objects. Thus, believing that material objects will make us happy we run around satisfying our desires. When a desire is satisfied, it gives birth to greed, pride, etc. and if the desire is not satisfied it creates anger, jealousy. The tricky thing about desire is it does not come alone; it is like a chain of desires. During this process of satisfying our desires we tend to commit sins out of anger, frustration greed etc. This is because we identify that we are the body and get so attached that we crave to satisfy all our desires thinking the happiness is coming from the material objects. This becomes a vicious circle and they will become so strong and they will become our tendencies or vasanas . Kama and krodha will create "I" ness and "Mine" ness and leads to Kathruthva (ownership) and bhokthruthvam (enjoyership) . All these tend to create negative tendencies and the mind cannot unite with God.

Knowledge of what is right and what is wrong is called discrimination. The discrimination resides in the intellect. This discrimination is required to know the knowledge of the self. However, the desires are so strong they cover the mind like moss. One needs to clear the moss and use one's intellect. Like a child who gets distracted when he/she sees a toy. We tend to get distracted with the worldly desires and forgetting the actual purpose of our human life. All these desires arise in the mind in the forms of thoughts. The thoughts are root cause of all sorrows. Suppression of desires would not help much as they would just build up and break out eventually. Dilution of thoughts to the source from where they arise can help to slowly overcome them. All our desires, actions and words should be directed to God alone. Abandoning all Dharmas

and simply surrendering to the lord, the blessed Lord said that he would liberate us from all sins.

With Prem and Om.

Lalitha Yallayi

Verse 3-30:

Verse 30 says Renounce all our actions at Bhagavan's feet, keep our vision firmly set on Bhagavan and then proceed with our actions with a good attitude.

It also says that we should not be bogged down by our past experiences, or the anxieties of the future (unknown) and too much enthusiasm in the present such that it causes us to lose focus.

Gurudev suggests that we can think of Bhagavan's feet as an altar. Altar can be interpreted as a good long term goal.

To achieve our goal, we should put out best foot forward with a selfless attitude, not attached to the results or have any expectations attached to the action.

My husband and I moved to Muscat, Oman since he already had a job there. Our first daughter was born there, I also got a job in the same company and we were pretty content with our lot at the time.

Our little girl turned 2 years old and she had not even started school yet. We found out from friends that after basic schooling (10<sup>th</sup> grade), there were not any opportunities for higher education in Oman and that people either sent their kids back to India or to the UK or the US.

Hubby's usual attitude was that we would cross that bridge when we get to it. However, this one instance, we both started to talk about our future seriously. We decided to try to move to the US as soon as possible. We were able to secure visas and we landed in the US with 2000 \$, a bit starry eyed and somewhat nervous. We did not have US college degrees and were slightly older than the average migrating couple. We had to find jobs to survive and thrive, in the absence of any family to fall back on or a godparent who could wave a magic wand to make things happen. I think what helped us was that neither had thought about the possibility of failure in this endeavor. We both found jobs not with the greatest salaries but good enough. We had to figure out several things on our own – how to bring up our child in a foreign land where things very different than in India, move from

a rented apartment to our own home, how to pay for college that was super expensive, get permanent residency etc.

Fast forward to 20 years later, our older child is in med school, we have a second daughter who is a freshman at high school, we have a home to call our own. We are also members of Chinmaya Mission which is the best thing we could have done for us and our girls.

When I think back to the past, I realize that we did take a huge leap of faith and some risk by coming to the US with no great plans in mind but our goal, hard work and determination has taken us a long way.

MRK

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### The Two Paths

We humans have a tendency to be self-centered and needy. Everyone has desires and when they're not met, two different reactions can occur. One in which their frustrations and insecurities guide them into digging themselves a hole. And the other where they learn to let go of their failures and look to the future. At the age of seventeen, I have experience with both.

We've all had that one friend whose life is glamour and hype. The sixteen year old me was entranced by this lifestyle and its carefree nature. I wanted to feel THAT happy. So when I finally made a friend who was ALL THAT, I couldn't be more excited.

The curiosity soon wore off as I started noticing a pattern in her behaviour. She would try to one-up my every action. For example, if I got a new set of earrings, she would buy a more expensive set to steal the spotlight. She just had to be the "better" of the two of us. To her, everything was a competition.

It came to a point where our every conversation would make me feel like the lesser human. This insecurity grew overtime as it collected emotional dust and fueled my anger. I was angry at myself for not being interesting. I pushed myself to be someone I'm not. I would change something about myself and tell her about it, looking for her approval. Subconsciously, my goal to disassociate with everything that wasn't glamorous. In the process, I lost the part of myself that made me real.

Over time, I came to realize that her approval had nothing to do with my actions. I LET her drag me down. She thrived on having that power over another. Here I was

getting her to like me, when I didn't even like me. In the end of it all, I felt more broken and empty than ever before.

The next time, I chose a different path- to let it all go. Gradually I stopped caring about her remarks and attitude. I can't control what she does or says. I can only control my reaction to it all. Letting her get to me was like letting her win. I started owning up to the way I really felt about everything. I started answering to myself only.

I was wrong to change myself to seek her approval. My desire to be everything I wasn't got the best of me. I had waged war with an ego that knew no defeat. The Gita has taught me to dedicate my 100% true self to my work and actions without expecting a reward. My self-centered intent to be "cool" was the cause of my demise.

I have truly let go of all the insecurities I had. As I continue to immerse myself in what truly matters to me. That which I cannot control, I should not control. It will all fall into place when the time is right.

Muskaan Narula

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Verse 3-25:

The verse that I found to have an impactful meaning on me was Chapter 3 verse 25 which translated to "As the ignorant men act from attachment to action, O Bharata, so should the wise men act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world". This verse has a very profound impact on me because while I'm not always able to do so, I have seen the value in acting without attachment to an action. Attachment to and an action or result only leads a person towards underachievement or failure. Over the years I saw this in tennis as I matured up after years of being attached to results however once I got older and became less attached to the result I started to do much better in tournaments. Attachment also played a large role in my SAT result as when I took the test the first time I was very attached to the result and I paid a price for that as I didn't do as well as I wanted to. When I took it the second time, I came in with a much better attitude and was focused on my task rather than being nervous and attached to how well I was going to do and I feel much better about the second SAT than my first one. Chapter 3 verse 25 of the Geeta has had a profound impact on my life and I truly see the importance in what Krishna is telling Arjuna in this verse.

Neal Garud

Verse 3-28:

Hari Om!

Dedicating all of our actions to the Lord, without any expectations of the result, and accepting the result as prasāda (blessing), is Karma-yoga. Even though we read and listen to the scriptures, we are not able to implement their teachings. We identify with the body, mind and intellect, and act according to our nature. We have created our own nature by the way we act, feel and think. We can only change our nature by assimilating the knowledge (cimtanama) into our lives. When we do our sādhana and understand and implement the teachings of guru and shāshtras, our worldly desires get sublimated by with the higher desire to attain the Truth.

The whole world is nothing but the three gunas (Satva, Rajas, and Tamas) interacting with each other. We all get entangled

by  
गुणागुणेषु वर्तन्ते इति मत्वा न सज्जते | A realized master knows this and he rises above the gunas. The wheel of action does not bind him, as there are no desires and no results of actions, and neither doership nor enjoyership.

We all have likes and dislikes, Bhagavan says not to come under their sway. To reduce our desires, we need to understand their source. Desires at the initial stages are wishes in the form of thoughts. I think or say, "I wish I had an iPhone X". I keep on talking about the features of phone with the friends and justify why it is worth spending \$1400 for it. As I dwell on these thoughts, they become an insatiable fire that resides in the senses; desire manifests when the senses perceive the object, and either my mind recollects the pleasure enjoyed in the past, or my intellect projects potential pleasure based on past experiences.

An alert mind uses discriminative power (Viveka) to impede desires from springing forth. If my friend invites me to accompany her to the mall, I tag along, do window shopping without any intent to buy anything. However, looking at the objects can create desire, a feeling intensified if they are on sale. If I choose not to purchase them, I will later regret it, feeling it was a mistake not to make the purchase. For that I reason, the temptation of the desire converts into the action of giving in and purchasing the desired item. There was never a need for the object, but the desire was created. In the initial stages of spiritual journey, desires can be curbed by controlling the sense organs, rather than feeding them with sense objects.

Understanding the situations, circumstances, and beings around us, is conducive to our spiritual growth. When we do our duties selflessly and avoid selfish and prohibited actions, we exhaust the maximum vasanas, and restrict the creation of new vāsanās. We progress towards naishkarmya siddhi (desirelessness), where the mind is totally absorbed in the Self. Even acting in the world, the mind is totally absorbed into the Self, which is goal of our life - Self-realization (mukti).

Neeti Gandhi

Verse 3-26 , 3-30 and 3-40:

| *na buddhi-bhedam janayed ajñānām karma-saṅginām  
joṣhayet sarva-karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācharan |*

In the Bhagavad Gita this refers to "Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people, who are attached to action; he should engage them in action, himself fulfilling them with devotion". This means that the people who know what is right to do or how to do something correctly should not confuse the others that are ignorant or don't understand. For example, the knowledgeable people who have been doing geetha chanting know that they are doing it for self-improvement. But the little kids who do geetha chanting do it for the trophy or the blessing from Swamiji or some other outcome. The knowledgeable people should not confuse the little kids instead letting them do it and encourage them, while they stay focused on learning and chanting Gita for self-improvement.

| *mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasyādhyātma-chetasā  
nirāśhīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ |*

In the third chapter of the gita this means "Renouncing all actions in me, with the mind centered on the self, free from hope and egoism, free from mental fever, you do fight". To me this means that Lord Shri Krishna is telling Arjuna to leave all your thoughts alone, refresh your mind not thinking about anything else and just going out and doing what you have to do. Take an olympic swimmer for instance. They should be thinking about how to swim properly and do what they have to do when the whistle blows before the race begins. They should not think about the outcomes that will happen during the race. So, Krishna is saying to clear your mind and just do what you have to do even if you don't want to do it.



| *indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam uchyate*

*etair vimohayatyēsha jñānam āvṛitya dehinam |*

In the Geetha this refers to “The senses, the mind , and the intellect are said to be its seat; through these it deludes the embodied by veiling his wisdom.” This means that the ego, desire, anger, or all of them come sit in your mind covering all of your thoughts and confusing you and making you think that only you are right and everyone else is wrong. For example, a girl wants a piece of candy and her mother said no. So she threw a fit thinking that she is that she is the only person correct and not at all thinking about the five pieces of candy she already had. So Krishna is saying don’t get deluded by the desire, anger, and ego that veil your mind and wisdom.



Neha Venkat

Verse 3-26:

The verse I chose for writing my reflection on is:

na buddhi-bhedam janayed ajñānām karma-saṅginām

joṣhayet sarva-karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācharan

The literal translation is “Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people, who are attached to action; he should engage them all in actions, himself fulfilling them with devotion”. Said another way, “The wise should not create discord in the intellects of ignorant people, who

are attached to fruitive actions, by inducing them to stop work. Rather, by performing their duties in an enlightened manner, they should inspire the ignorant also to do their prescribed duties.”

Swami Chinmayananda says, “when a man of equipoise and self-discovery enters the field of activity, he will be tempted to advise his generation on pure ethics and abstract ideologies. The generation, misunderstanding the words and the emphasis of such a Master, might come to a wrong conclusion that, to renounce activity was the direct path to Truth. The teachers are warned against such a hasty guidance, which might damp the enthusiasm of the generation to act.

My interpretation of this verse was that a great teacher would not just preach, but make the disciple realize the value of righteousness through their own means. Allen Alda says, “Listening is to be able to be changed by the other person”. So, when the guru is telling the righteous way, the disciple ought to follow it. However, what Krishna seems to be saying here is that the disciple may not have the realization to understand this and hence may choose to not follow. Instead, Krishna says the guru must get to the level of the disciple, and show him the righteous way so that the ignorant mind may be willing to change if he/she sees the guru stepping into his/her shoes. According to Bruce Barton, ‘a good teacher is one who will come to the level of the student, and then slowly lift him or her up’. If the teacher does not do that, the student will resist the change.

I believe this is very much required in today’s political discourse. Recent tragic events in Parkland have inspired high school students to take up the difficult conversation of gun control. Our hope would be that they follow Krishna’s advise and not just preach but find a way to get to the same level as those who are blindly following the 2nd amendment argument and make the realize the righteous way.

Credits: The Holy Geeta Commentary by Swami Chinmayananda

Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gita by Swami Ranganathananda

[www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org](http://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org)

P Sessa

Verses 3-22 to 3-43:

Everything in the world is already manifested by Lord Krsna and there is nothing that must be attained in this world. Though Lord himself engages in action relentlessly.

What is the purpose of Lord Krsna working all the time with enthusiasm and joy? As the masses observe their leaders and follow them and the nature itself sustains on activity, Lord is immersed in action every moment.

If the Lord does not perform action, then the whole world would perish and it will not be conducive to the harmonious progress of the universe.

The harmonious law of the nature exists because of the power of Nature or God.

Ignorant men act with the expectation of certain result of his actions and if the results are not of his choice he becomes weak and timid and in many ways, becomes sinful.

Action is always preferable rather than choosing to be idle even if sometimes it feels that the path being led is the wrong path. All actions must be done with devotion.

Humans with egoistic nature believe that they are the doers. Our mental tendencies in the form of Vasanas manifest as actions and in turn manifest as objects. Involving in all the necessary things without entanglement results in perfect peace.

Success and failure belongs to mind and not to the Atma. A true warrior is not the one who fights the people and saves himself but the one who can tirelessly fights low tendencies of the mind and seeks the liberation.

Ego and hope are like the fangs of a dangerous snake which when removed even most venomous snake becomes harmless. So actions performed without an expectation to the result of the action purifies the doer and frees him from further bondage.

All the humans who practice the teachings of Lord Krsna with full faith shall be freed from all actions. Performing ones actions without lower tendencies of mind like ego, jealousy, fear detaches oneself from further actions and leads to liberation.

An action is considered as divine when one performs it without egocentric desires. The main hurdle for a human not to follow the teachings of Lord Krsna are the vasanas which everyone carries from numerous lives. Attachment

and aversion to the objects are every ones foes and must be eradicated.

To end ones vasanas one must discover ones own swadharma and follow it relentlessly let may come the greatest of the greatest hurdles and never seek the paradharma.

Arjuna is asking Lord Krsna, “what is the exact nature of this evil in our bosom, which thus systematically takes away the good in us?”

Lord Krsna , says it is the anger resulting from the unfulfilled desires that creates ignorance and sways oneself from the wisdom. Controlling the senses of body, mind and intellect in order to attain the Supreme self the Atman can attained through the art of meditation.

Thus ends the dialogue between Sri Krsna and Arjuna , the third chapter of Srimad BhagavadGita.

By abandoning all Dharmas of body, mind and intellect one who seeks the refuge in Lord Krsna alone, will be liberated from all sins and will not grieve.

Padmaja Emani

Verses 3-42 and 3-43:

Om Harih Om Shri Gurubhyoh Namah Harih Om

Verses 42 and 43 are the concluding verses of Chapter 3 that resonated with me because contemplating on their meaning and integrating the teachings in my daily life will prove to be beneficial in overcoming challenges. They provide guidance on lifting myself above mundane existence, not be carried away helplessly through the winds/storms of life, and exercising free will for my evolution.

Earlier in this chapter the step-wise “ladder of fall” was explained in detail, and verses 42 and 43 seem to provide direction on the “ladder to rise” above our tendencies and progress spiritually. We cannot see our vasanas, but they give rise to desires and rule over us and dictate our actions in the world, and lead us to a sorrowful existence. We can embark on the path to spiritual progress, if we make sincere and determined efforts to reduce/end our desires and prevent acquiring new ones.

Verse 42 states that the following is the order of superiority:

Physical body → Senses → Mind →  
Intellect → ATMAN

Physical body is the grossest and is made of the grossified five great elements of matter. The senses, mind and intellect are matter but are made up of five great elements in their nascent form. The senses i.e. the pranas, organs of perception, and organs of action are subtler than the physical body and can control the actions of the physical body. The mind is subtler than the senses, and can control the senses and the physical body because this is often where desires, likes and dislikes originate. The intellect is the most superior part of our subtle body because it has the faculty of discrimination between permanent vs. impermanent, right vs. wrong, *atma* vs. *anatma* etc. If we can defer decisions to our intellect for the use of 'Viveka', we can prevent the mind, senses from taking actions through the body that we would regret later. To deal with this difficult enemy, we must use our superior faculties. Controlling desires at the sense level is not going to be effective if the thoughts still hold the desire. Lord Krishna goes on to reveal that the Atman which is beyond the *sthula and sukshma sharira*; is the subtlest and superior to the gross and subtle bodies. In Verse 43, the Lord urges Arjuna (and us) to understand and know that the Atman is the most subtle, pervasive and superior to everything else, and advises Arjuna to conquer the insatiable enemy that appears in the form of desire. One can ultimately end desires only constant efforts to negate erroneous identification with the body, mind and intellect; and identifying with the Atman/Brahman as one's true nature. Thus, knowing the Big "I", surrendering the little "I"/Jivatman unto the big "I", one can begin renouncing doer ship and be free from all desires and sorrows.

What are my desires? The cause of stress in my life is mainly due to my confusion between dharma and desires (expectations from children, spouse, work projects etc.) I cannot get permanent happiness through people, events in family life and/or political situations. These circumstances should logically not cause me any stress when thought of logically, but they often do! One of the reasons for confounding the two is the busy lives we lead with so much to do. We take on way too much due to peer pressure and impose upon ourselves unrealistic expectations at work and home. I must do my best at work, home, and provide opportunities to children to enhance their skills, set them up for success to be useful citizens when they grow up. These are good goals if I can make intelligent plans and conscious choices to have a balanced life and constantly differentiate between duties

vs. desires. Trust in God; renounce the sense of doer-ship and expectation of particular outcomes.

These verses urge me to not be controlled or carried away by desires and life situations, play various roles in life cheerfully, and inspire me to climb up the ladder of spiritual growth.

Pallavi Nithyanandan

Verse 3-24:

*utsīdeyur ime lokā na kuryāṁ karma ched aham  
sankarasya cha kartā syām upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ*

This verse reflects on the importance of tasks and responsibilities we have in life. We all live to fulfill our duties, but if we do not do so it won't just affect us but the people around us as well. This compares to Shree Krishna when he went to Earth as a human and had to behave like someone suitable to that place in society. He tells Arjuna that if he had failed to do so, humans would have copied him and failed to perform their duties which would spread chaos in society. This shows how every little thing we do or say has an impact on us or someone else. This verse in the geeta teaches a valuable lesson to be responsible for our actions and take any impacts that follow with it, both negative and positive.

We all have responsibilities in society. Whether it's simply doing our homework or having a major role in a job, we all have a part to play in our society. We must all have respect for ourselves and others in order to have a well working community. Our community is like a circle, everyone is connected, and if one part breaks, the circle stretches and becomes a line. At the end of that line, is chaos. This inspires me to make sure to think before any action and think of the impacts that follow from doing so. This verse of the Gita also helps me realize how little things and responsibilities I have could possibly make a great impact on someone else.

Pooja Sivarajan

Verse 3-38:

*dhūmenāvriyate vahnir yathādarśho malena cha  
yatholbenāvṛito garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛitam*

I chose the 38th chapter from the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. The meaning is, as fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the womb, so this(wisdom) is enveloped by that(desire or anger). This quote really stands out to me because I can relate it to my own life. Sometimes I let my anger take the best of me, which automatically takes over my wisdom. I say nonsense when I get angry, people around me don't understand what I'm saying. This quote is basically saying that people won't be able to comprehend what you say when you're angry. Also, sometimes desire can lead to anger, when my parents say no to my desires it results in anger, and even though that is not my true wisdom, it is masked underneath, so I cannot show this wisdom in the same way as dust on the mirror unless you look close enough. Krishna is telling Arjuna that only if you look close enough, you can see your cousin's wisdom, right now it is enveloped in anger/desire. Krishna is basically preparing Arjuna to fight with his cousins because their wisdom is below a wall of anger, to show Arjuna that he has to fight with his cousins even though he doesn't want to.

Prajeet Kalakonda

Verse 3-25: Ignorant vs. Wise

O Bharata, the ignorant men act from attachment to action and the wise men act without attachment - for the welfare of the world.

Here Lord Krishna is telling Arjuna that doing something being attached to the action (work) or the result is ignorance.

What does attachment of work mean? This can happen in two ways. First is to think that "I" am doing it, when we work. Then we are just doing something because we feel "proud" "good" or "important." This is nothing but, "bragging."

Second type is when we attach with the result. That means, we feel that we should always get the result we want - just because we did the work. For example, if I worked really hard on a math problem - I can not think that I will get an 'A' just because I did the work. Sometimes, even if we work hard - we may not get the result we want. If I run super fast in a race, I may not come in first place; I may not win. That is ok. We should always do our best and not worry about what happens after. If we always think about the result, we will either be too proud (win), or end up whining (lose).

So, Krishna says not to be ignorant - not to be bragging or not to whine either

The wise people on the other hand do their work - the best they can and not worry too much about winning or losing. They do not "attach" themselves to the action (work). They do not brag or whine; They do not get upset no matter what happens.

Krishna also tells Arjuna that people who do their work/job wisely (not bragging or whining) are the ones that usually help everyone.

For example, firefighters or teachers. They do their best - they do not brag or complain. They help a lot of people around them.

So we should all be wise and do our best without worrying too much - Then we will feel happy and also end up helping everyone.

Pranaya Babu

Verse 3-42: The Secret to Discovering the Meaning of Life

*इन्द्रियाणिपराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परंमनः ।*

*मनसस्तुपराबुद्धिर्योबुद्धेः परतस्तुसः ॥ 3-42 ॥*

The primary goal of our life is to discover who we really are and what we are meant to do to make the world a better place. We have to realize that we are not just physical beings, but we also have a soul (**atma**), which is a key instrument that requires nourishment.

We learn in this verse, that there is hierarchy of our nature or **prakriti** within our body, senses, mind, and intellect. They are not equally powerful. The subtler a component is, the more power it has. The **body** refers to the gross matter which can be compared to a house where a person lives. Second on the hierarchy are **senses** which include taste, sight, smell, touch, and sound. Third, above the senses is the **mind**, which generates reactions in the form of emotions and thoughts, but lacks decision making power. Fourth, is the **intellect** which refers to the ability to assess situations and suggests the best course of action. Lastly, the divine **soul** which is immortal, imperishable & indestructible.

*अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।  
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति ॥ 2-17 ॥*

When we control one aspect of our prakriti, we can automatically bring all the lower levels in our command. The secret to having a successful life is therefore to nourish the soul, the superior and above all.

To nourish our soul, we should aim at growing a spirit of selflessness and service to the universe. We have to differentiate **niyatam karma** (our obligations as dictated from the universe) from **kamya karma** (selfish interests driven by our ego) to **nishiddha karma** (those driven by ego and are prohibited by conscience).

When we hold beliefs or act against our conscience, we tend to create a mental conflict that results into psychological stress. In other words, when we commit **nishiddha karma** we suffer not only spiritually, but psychologically and physically. Without psychological health, studies have shown that we are prone to conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and many others. We can apply this in our life and understand the same in the form of following example.

Let us say someone wants to quit smoking. If he convinces his intellect that smoking is harmful, and remains alert at the time a desire to smoke arise, he has a good chance of quitting. But, if the intellect starts rationalizing this behavior by saying, “one cigarette is not going to make a difference”, then there is no chance. Therefore, if we are operating on the level of our **vaasanaas**, then desires can take hold of our senses, the mind and even the intellect, making us act selfishly and therefore locking all the doors to recovery. But this shloka urges us to realize that there is something even superior to the intellect, which has the potential to root our desires that have penetrated the intellect.

To discover who we truly are and know what we are meant to do in life, we have to listen to the soul. If we let ourselves be driven by our physical bodies, we will never be happy, the body has its end but the soul will last forever. As the teachings of **karam yog** guide us, our actions must be driven by purity and dedication, which will nourish our souls to help us reach our highest self.

Rajiv Mahajan

Verse 3-23:

*For, should I not ever engage Myself in action, without relaxation, men would in every way follow My Path, O son of Pritha.*

ya-di hya-ham na var-te-yam

jā-tu kar-mañ-ya-tan-dri-taḥ |

ma-ma vart-mā-nu-var-tan-te

ma-nuṣ-yāḥ pār-tha sar-va-śaḥ ||3-23||

God does his duties without expecting anything in return. If god doesn't do his duties, then the world would be chaotic, a good example is the sun god. He rises and sets on time everyday, not waiting for anybody or doing it for a reward. He just does it, because he is supposed to do so. If he waited for someone to reward or remind him, then his sunrise and sunset time would be affected. Plants won't get enough sunlight, and their circadian rhythm would be affected, this in turn will affect the food source for humans. If this is how chaotic it would be for Sun God, think about the Protector of the Universe. This applies to every human being, because we all have a duty and we are expected to do it sincerely and on time. If not, this will have a cascading effect as explained earlier. For example, if I wake up 20 minutes late from bed than the usual time, the consequence will be as follows. I will miss my school bus, my mom will have to drop me in school. She then will be late for work, I will miss the first hour of school and so on. This will continue for the entire day until the day ends. So, I learnt from this verse how important it is for a person to stick to his or her schedule and do their duties devoid of likes and dislikes.

*Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people, who are attached to action; he should engage them all in actions, himself fulfilling them with devotion.*

na bud-dhi-bhe-daṁ ja-na-yet

a-jñā-nām kar-ma-saṅ-gi-nām |

jo-ṣa-yet-sar-va-kar-mā-ṇi

vid-vān-yuk-tas-sa-mā-ca-ran ||3-26||

A wise man can't go to an ignorant man and say that whatever they are doing needs to be fixed. A good example is some people do Bhagavad Gita for the trophy, and some other people do it for learning the verses so they can implement them in everyday life. However, the people who do it for learning can't go to the people who

are doing it for the trophy saying that they are not doing the right thing. They are doing the right thing, but the intentions are focused on short-term outcomes. If possible the wise person should encourage the people to learn Gita while he does it for self-improvement.

Reshma Ramesh

Verse 3-39:

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।  
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥ 39 ॥

Chapter 3 verse 39 of the Bhagavad Geeta is very important because it describes desire and explains how dangerous it can be. Here, Lord Krishna uses two metaphors to explain how we can overcome these unnecessary desires. The first metaphor used by Lord Krishna compares desires to an eternal enemy (नित्यवैरिणा). By comparing desires to something as dangerous as a persistent threat to intelligent behavior, Lord Krishna underscores the necessity to be forever focused on containing desire because it may appear into the mind of someone even if this desire was previously subdued. The second metaphor Lord Krishna uses is comparing desire to a fire. A fire will continuously burn as long as there is fuel. In addition, fire can never say no to any fuel that is added to it. However, the fire will stop and expend itself once fuel is no longer provided. Therefore, we can remove our focus from things that we like a dislike in order to remove this driving force behind our desires. The language of war used by Lord Krishna, ensures the fascination of Arjuna during the war.

This verse is very important and intriguing to me because it highlights the importance of putting aside desires and focusing on being a better human being. All of these superficial wishes make people selfish and focus on the wrong thing. Many times I have felt a wish for something I did not need rather than focusing on things that would further myself. In the world today, with all of these electronics, it is very easy to get carried away with things that do not matter. In order to combat this we can reflect back upon this verse and see how we need to be focused and not let this fiery eternal enemy go unchecked. This unquenchable lust for self-satisfaction will only occur more frequently and become larger in size if we do not subdue them. We need to be wise and discriminate against what we want versus what we need or else we waste away our lives in the futile pursuit of trying to

satisfy their lust as Buddha said. In summary, if we don't suppress these desires, we will not be able to lead a life of true happiness because we will be busy trying to appease our wishes without bearing any fruit from our actions.

Rohan Nigam

Verses 3-38, 3-39, 3-40:

The verses that captivated me the first time I read them are verses 38-40. Weeks later, they continue to rouse me. Sri Krishna explains that desire takes root in the senses, mind, and intellect and "deludes the embodied by veiling his wisdom." Implicit within verse 40 is the simple notion that all embodied beings naturally have wisdom, which is profoundly inspiring! At the same time, the understanding that the knowledge of Truth, or wisdom, is at constant odds with a covetous enemy (desire, verse 39) is disconcerting. This dynamic coexistence of wisdom and desire is beautifully depicted in verse 38, in which Sri Krishna provides three examples of how wisdom can be obscured by desire, each example indicating a different extent of delusion: 1) desire lightly covers wisdom as smoke covers a fire, 2) desire is like a layer of dust on a mirror that blurs the reflection, and 3) desire completely obscures inner wisdom the way a fetus is cloaked by the mother's body. These three evocative images from verse 38 connect back to verses 27-29, in which Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that all actions are performed by the three gunas and our attachment to the effects of these actions indicates our delusion. So, the three examples from verse 38 seem related to the three gunas: sattva (smoke around the fire), rajas (dust on the mirror), and tamas (enclosed fetus). Just as attachment to the effects of the actions of the gunas shrouds the Truth to different extents, each type of attachment takes a different amount of self-effort to remove. With little effort, smoke (sattvik desires) can be blown away to reveal the fire inside. With more effort, dust (rajasik desires) on a mirror can be rubbed off. With the passage of time, a baby can finally be delivered from the womb (tamasik desires). Ultimately, after explaining that desire is the force behind sin, Sri Krishna directs Arjuna to control the senses and kill desire. As I reflect on why the analogies in verse 38 made such a strong impression on me, I notice that those descriptions are ironically the most sensorial! Sri Krishna brilliantly hooked me through my own sense attachment and delivered his directive on sense control.

Sahana Kukke

Verse 3-35:

The simple meaning of the verse 3-35 in Bhagavad Geeta is “ *Better is one’s own ‘duty’, though devoid of merit, than the ‘duty’ of another well discharged. Better is death in one’s own ‘duty’; the ‘duty’ of another is fraught with fear.*”

Often the duty here is misinterpreted as the duties assigned to one based on the caste, a person is born in. As per Geeta, real caste is determined by Guna and Karma, not by birth. That boils down to inherent qualities one possesses and the actions one does.

All our natural tendencies, likes, dislikes, inner urges, inherent skills are formulated based on the Vasanas imprinted over several past births. We have to explore these inherent potentials and realize the real appetite. Unfortunately, the reality in the world is different. A great example is: one is forced to become an engineer, even though he would shine as a great artist. Youth should be directed into a profession of their real choice, rather than the parents’ choice. We fail to discharge our right duty towards dissipation of vasanas as we’re being conditioned and controlled by family members, circumstances etc. Any remnants of the vasanas bring us back to the world again. Moksha can be attained only when we exhaust all vasanas. Vasanas can be exhausted by working out them properly. In that process we may have to replace bad vasanas with positive vibrant spiritual ones, ultimately dissipate all and break the endless birth-life cycle.

Arjuna is a prince with inherent vasanas and skills to fight against injustice, Adharma and protect Dharma. But he is inclined towards taking the path Sanyasa rather than killing his elders, teachers, loved ones etc. Krishna tells Arjuna not to go against his natural tendency and the duty to fight against adharma and protect Dharma. Even if he dies while fighting, he will attain better spiritual plane.

Svadharm is the spiritual duty to realize the SELF (SVA). We are lucky to have the human birth as this human body is a great vehicle to attain Moksha(liberation). Unfortunately, Paradharma is the more common thing we do all the time. We always go towards ego, senses and run after worldly objects and worldly fights. We attain temporary happiness only when these temporal desires are fulfilled. We will never attain unending happiness. These worldly pursuits bring us happiness and sorrow and increase vasanas. In fact, running after senses, objects of the world is equivalent to death, as the value of valuable human birth goes waste. Our inherent nature is DIVINE. However, Maya plays the whole cosmic drama to cover

up our real nature, SAT-CHIT-ANANDA swarupa. We tend to think unreal ones as real ones and run after these, rather than running towards the reality, the BRAHMAN.

Svadharm is following various guidelines from any of the chapters 2, 12, 13, 14 or 18- Sthitaprajna Lakshana, Devotees characteristics, Jnani’s characteristics, characteristics of Gunathitha or To-do list for Atma darsana respectively. Paradharma is acting in contrary to these guidelines.

Sai Ari

Verse 3-31:

The Bhagavad Gita is a religious document that teaches us the righteous path of life. It helps us to set the stage for what kind of life we need to lead. Chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita is called Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is the discipline of selfless action as a way to reach the ultimate goal of happiness.

In verse 31 in chapter 3, Krishna talks about “matam” which means religion, but also means “options”. In using these words he goes on to explain that the philosophy spirituality is the same anywhere, however, the options may vary on how to attain the goal of being one with Om, from one religious master to another. In order to become one with Om, one must work. However, the work one does shouldn’t be done for the sake of doing it or even for just the fruits of the action. Working with the equipments located inside our hearts and minds, add health and vitality to our inner personality as well as remove the bad parts of our personality and bring out the good in us. This can be achieved by using full faith and dedication (shraddha).

An example of this is the way some people do charitable works. Some people who do charitable works, do it for the title and expect something in return. On the other hand some people do these charitable works with their full heart and dedication towards helping someone, without expecting something in return. This dedication (shraddha), allows the person’s personality and behavior to be cleansed from their vasanas (traits passed on from birth to birth).

The Bhagavad Gita inspires me because, it allows me to be able to discriminate against right and wrong. It aids me in my daily life, and makes me a better person overall. The overall reason why Krishna gives Arjuna these little life lessons, is not only to just help him on the battlefield, but

because, he also knew that it would help him and many others in the future and lead a better life.

Samhita Ghorakavi

Verse 3-35: Importance of staying true to Swadharma

I think the Verse 35 about being authentic and true to your “Eternal essence” svadharma, is the most powerful verse in the path of Karma yoga. This verse is the key to sustained happiness and contentment. It has answered many doubts that I have had about my parenting style in USA. Relocating to USA and moving away from my family, relatives and friends helped me see everything in a different perspective. Just like an astronaut has a revelation known as “Overview effect” when he marvels at the earth from the outer space, coming to the US had forced me to look at my bandhu’s in India only as a witness-sakshi. For my family members and friends back in India life was going on and I had no part in it. No functions to attend, no fancy clothes or jewelry to be purchased no façade was needed to keep up appearances. . I grew up in a time when you listened to your parents without questioning them and even if you did, the typical answer would be “Because I said so!!” My identity was defined by my friends and family and relocating here had freed me from what I identified myself with. **So who was I?** I quickly realized that what I am, is not what I think I am... I am what my parents, friends and family thought what I should be like. Or I was what my perception of what I thought my parents thought I should be. So basically I am a perception of a perception of myself... a perfect recipe for un-happiness in my life.

“Today, I’m not what I think I am; I’m not what you think I am; I am what I think you think I am.”

Not knowing what we truly want, we end up in a job that pays us well and provides a fancy house in which we hardly spend time. 2 fancy dining tables one in the formal dining and one in the kitchen but no meals to sit as a family and enjoy together. What about true happiness and contentment? If this is the type of life we chose for ourselves, why do we feel unhappy, stressful and tired every day? Do I want the same for my kids? NO

Steve Jobs Said "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work."

So a big shift happened by learning the true meaning of this verse of staying true to one’s own svadharma and now I make a conscious effort to nurture the emotional health of my kids and focus more on fostering courage, confidence and compassion in them. Encouraging them to emotionally expand themselves and focus more on their true self.

Oprah Winfrey’s grandmother’s dream for Oprah was that she should get some “kind and good white folks” to work for. If Oprah had decided to pursue her grandmother’s dream she would have never had “Good white folks” working for her.

**At some point or another in our life we all have had tried hard to “Fit in”**

When my daughter complained that at school she is not able to “Fit in” I encouraged her to talk more about why she feels it is important to “fit in”. After several attempts to fit in with desirable groups and failing, she came to the conclusion that even if she got good at pretending to fit in and tried to “go with the flow”...the end result is not worth it. It is exhausting to live a life where you are always trying to pretend and you are not able to express what you actually feel. I encouraged her to be patient and let her experiment and open her heart to give a chance to other girls to be her friend. Soon she realized that the groups that looked like they were having lot of fun the so called “Cool kids” were often pretentious and never cared for feeling of others. Girls who kept to themselves actually turned out to be kind, quirky, smart and happy. Even though it was a long painful process it was totally worth it. Now she is happy to have just two very good friends who she can trust and be her most authentic self with.

As a parent instead of encouraging them to compete with others and comparing grades, we have switched our focus to competing with our own self. I strongly believe that you are your own best competition. Competition with others, encourages imitation and discourages our own creative talents and makes us lose our essence.

Fred Smith, the founder of Fed-Ex which is spread over 220 countries, was a student at Yale University. He got a “C” on his economics paper for proposing his business plan for a reliable overnight delivery system. Not giving up on his idea he worked hard facing many challenges barely able to stay afloat. But he stayed focused and never gave up on his vision and now he is famous all over the world.

We don’t tell them what to do but we have switched to laying out all the different options in front of them and giving them the freedom of choosing the option they like



the best. Letting them make mistakes instead of over protecting and allowing them to learn from their mistakes.

Not many know that Leonardo Da Vinci was a master procrastinator. He took 16 years to complete the painting of Mona Lisa. He got busy with his fascination for learning optics that transformed the way he modelled light in his painting and transformed him into a much better painter. Had he not stayed true to his fascination of optics and had rushed to finish Monalisa, it would not have turned out as his best master piece of all times.

Adam Grant – Organizational psychologist author of “Originals” says

“Originals are not that different from the rest of us....they feel fear and doubt, they procrastinate, they have bad ideas and sometimes it is not in spite of those qualities but because of them that they succeed.”

If Gurudev had not stayed true to his quest as a journalist to expose truth about sadhus and had he not questioned existence of God and meaningless rituals in our religion, we would never had Chinmaya mission.

So Krishna is right to dramatically emphasize that “Destruction in the course of performing one’s own duty is better than engaging in another’s duties, for to follow another’s path is dangerous.”

What I need as a parent is to encourage my kids to be authentic and true to their essential nature -svadharma. It is not about just striving for perfection but it is about teaching them emotional honesty in whatever situation they are. Does it mean that I let them do whatever they want and speak their mind when they are angry and lash out? No, with emotional honesty we also have to teach them that every actions and words play a part in something that is larger than yourself and extend out to our loved ones, our community and even to the planet itself. I thank Gurudev, Swami ji and Balavihar teachers for teaching our children that ...Sustainable happiness depends on mindfully staying true to our svadharma and at the same time being ethical and focused on greater higher goal.

Hari Om

Shabaritha

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Verse 3-35: Following Our Own Path

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् |  
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः || 3-35||

Translation: “It is better to follow one’s own (**dharm**a) path than to follow the (dharma) path of another. Nothing can be lost from following your truth, but following the words or actions of another is dangerous.”

We learn from this verse that each person has their own unique Dharma, energy, and force that leads them in their existence. When not following this greater force and focusing on pursuing other people’s path, one can easily lose their peace of mind. Looking around and seeing others’ successful existence can lure people into wishing for their way of life, but what we do not consider is that we each have a story and a fulfilling existence can only be achieved by following our personal path.

Hence, no matter what the odds may be, being bold to embrace and face everything that comes our way, will allow us to experience life at its fullest and experience inner peace and balance. Many times, we start defining our lives based off other people’s lives. By measuring our lives on a scale defined by others, we may please the crowd but there are consequences we must pay. The fruits of living a crowd pleaser life are filled with unhappiness and constant regrets. These two are not only detrimental to our spiritual wellbeing, but also to our physical health. When we are following our true nature, we will be at peace even in the most vulnerable situations.

Also through this shloka, Sri Krishna emphasized to Arjuna, that he was a royal prince educated and trained by the strength of his might to uphold and protect dharma or righteousness. Hence, even though war would bring suffering, it was necessary and appropriate for Arjuna to engage in it.

Now the question is, how can one ensure that they are living their life the way it is meant to be? We are all given unique gifts that not only benefit ourselves, but by uniting our individual talents we can help improve the world.

We must learn to value even the littlest things that we are provided with and that they are meant to bring a positive change to the world. One does not have to do big things, such as discovering life on the moon to make a positive contribution to the world. It is the little things that count. Having a vision that allows you to experience life as an opportunity to grow and to do something makes you a

well-rounded person. And it ensures that you will be remembered after being gone, and it represents the core element that will enable you to live a meaningful life.

Life is a combination of things we can control and things we cannot control. We come into this world with unique abilities and talents and putting them to work will allow us to live accomplished and beautiful lives.

A quote from the Bhagavad Gita beautifully summarizes this shloka: **“It is better to live your own destiny imperfectly than to live an imitation of somebody else’s life with perfection.”**

Shalini Gupta

Verse 3-35:

Everyone always talked about the Geeta, especially in Chinmaya. It was a very well known fact that Lord Krishna left humans a holy book on how to live life. As a longtime Balavihar, Shloka, and Summer Camp attendee, my exposure to the Geeta was very high. I chanted the verses and learned about the meaning. However, it was just there. The Geeta was the mighty river everyone knew about, but no one approached. It was very famous, but everyone just stayed in their houses, in their bubble. Even I didn’t recognize the power of the Geeta until now.

Verse 35. That was the one that spoke to me. “Better is one’s own ‘duty’, though devoid of merit, than the ‘duty’ of another well discharged. Better is death in one’s own ‘duty’; the ‘duty’ of another is fraught with fear (is productive of positive danger).”

Although it was written centuries ago, it still relates to daily life. The message is pure, “be yourself”, but its usefulness is abundant. Don’t go after others and what they’re doing. Establish your goals, your dreams, and your own accomplishments. Try your very best to be who you want to be, without letting the poison of others’ emotions inject itself into your mind.

Now looking back, I could see that I was also letting people sway me internally into things that I knew weren’t me. I could also think of many instances just like that happening to the people around me. I want to adjust that in me and go through everyday differently from now on. I want to focus on myself and fulfil the path God set for me. By not getting influenced, I can live my best life.

The task was simple, write a reflection about what inspired you in the Geeta while reading through the

meaning. It was another thing to do today, another thing to just get done. But I didn’t know it would actually change something mentally. I didn’t know the words would stir inside of me, manifesting into something meaningful, causing me to think deeper.

Shreeya Pullangari

3-27 to 3-29 and 3-37 to 3-38: I do, NOT !

Chapter 3 of Srimad Bhagavad Geeta is delightfully simple, yet deep in its import. Sri Krishna directly answers the doubts about action and duty that Arjuna expresses, and all the while inviting Arjuna to explore and understand the richer context behind his answers.

In verses 3-27 – 3-29, and again in 3-37 and 3-38, Sri Krishna elaborates on the sense of doer-ship, that is, the sense that I am the one who is performing an action and hence deserving of the result I seek. The Lord further elaborates on what propels this sense, and how our actions become sinful. In these verses, he focuses on the role of ‘ignorance’, ‘desire’, ‘vasana’, ‘mind’ and ‘gunas’ in propelling us to act. In so doing, He explains how nature acts, how we as individuals act and how those, among us, who have reached the highest portals of spirituality act.

#### Understanding our actions

Act, we must. The Lord has already established in earlier verses of Chapter 3 that we have no choice but to act. Our personality, comprising body, mind and intellect, has to act, just as everything in Nature (prakriti) is always in action.

Who is the one performing actions? Here, I have a choice to make – do I identify my sense of being with the energizing principle of Life in me **or** with the instruments of this personality – the body-mind-intellect complex?

The Life principle does not act, but the instruments of this personality act. Without the touch of Life-principle, the instruments are inert. I can choose to identify with the Life-principle and become a witness of the actions performed by the instruments which are enlivened by the Life-Principle.

Alternately, I can identify with the instruments themselves and become part and parcel of the actions. In the former choice, one remains unattached to the action, the ownership of actions (‘I am the doer) and the results of the actions. In the latter choice, one experiences the joys and sorrows of being part of the action, entertain the

thoughts of doer-ship and anticipate the results of the actions. One is actions being performed without ego, the other with selfishness and selfish desires.

Sri Krishna's advice – identify with "Me" – the life-principle, and act in the world through our instruments (body, mind and intellect). This is how the great masters act. We can strive to reach that level by shifting our identity to our true Self, the life-principle in us.

### How does Sense of Doer-ship Arise?

Born out of impressions, 'vasana', recorded in our minds from past desires, we are propelled to act to satisfy our desires. The attitude we bring to bear in our thoughts, words and actions when we are propelled to act are called 'gunas' (texture of our thoughts, sense perceptions and attitude we bring to our actions). These gunas (lethargic and dull – 'tamas', energetic and driven – 'rajas', and quietly dynamic and uplifting – 'sattva') are the performers of action. In our identification with BMI, we think we are doers. A wise person realizes that the gunas are the doers since gunas act at the body level through sense organs and organs of action, and at mind level by coloring the thoughts in the mind.

The Lord cautions that even those students of spirituality, who come to understand the false identification with our mortal personality, and role of vasanas and gunas, will remain under the sway of the gunas. However, the students can uplift themselves steadily.

### Sinful Actions

Coming under the sway of our desires, propelled to act by our vasanas and textured by our gunas, (a) we deviate from the performance of our duties, (b) become selfish in pursuit of satisfying our desires, (c) entertain more desires, and (d) become engrossed with the regrets of our past, anxieties for our future and in feverish agitations of the present. Thus, filled with desires and 'anger', deviating from performance of our duties, our actions become sinful.

### Uplifting ourselves from the sense of Doer-ship

The Lord advises us to focus our mind's attention on Him (the Life-principle in each of us), and hold our regrets, anxieties and agitations in check, and leave all the results of our actions to Him. Thus, we will become what we intensely focus on – our identification will shift to our true identity, the pure Self. By holding our mind in check, our actions become efficient. By offering the results to the

Him, our actions become divine. This is the secret of a Karma Yogi, a highly efficient and productive worker.

Sitaram Kowtha

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Verse 3-25:

*Saktah karmanyavidvaamso yathaa kurvanti bhaarata*

*Kuryaadvidvaamstathaasaktah cikirsurlokasamgraham*

*As the ignorant men act from attachment to action, O Bharata, so should the wise men act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world.*

At the beginning of Chapter 3, Arjuna is not yet convinced that running away from the battle is the wrong choice. He sees two paths now, one where he walks away to meditate and pursue Jnana and another where he acts in the world to fight. A similar question arose in our CHYK discussion group: are we are supposed to develop dispassion, control over our mind, senses, and actions, and have forbearance for our surroundings, or should we act to change our surroundings?

Reading about Karma Yoga in Chapter 3 helped us to answer our question. First, Lord Krishna establishes that we are always acting - we must breathe if only for the survival of the body. Therefore, the question is not 'Should we act?', rather, the question becomes 'What is the right action?' Having reframed the discussion, Lord Krishna then proceeds to state that all actions should be completed in the Yajna spirit - with a vision of selfless dedicated service. In verse 25, Lord Krishna says that the wise act for the welfare of the world, without attachment. The nature of attachment is a limited vision and limited identity. When I believe I am this body, mind, and intellect, and that my happiness will only come from changing my circumstances, attachments are what drive my decisions. If I can shift my vision to be greater, then my attachments fall away while I serve a greater cause.

Another aspect of our question is that engaging at the transactional level seems to go against any progress we may have made in detaching from the world. The solution to this conundrum is the wisdom of working without attachment. When completed out of attachment, karma binds us. When completed without attachment, that karma instead frees us from that bondage. That is the wisdom, the Jnana, with which we can now better perform Karma Yoga. We need that dispassion, self-

control, and forbearance to be able to detach from our ego to serve the higher ideal of selfless dedicated service.

Therefore, we must expand our vision from a selfish individualistic perspective to a greater perspective. First, we must expand our vision from ourselves to our community. The yajna spirit elaborated previously is based on the Vedic tradition of great Yajnas, sacrifices that involved the entire community getting together to participate and serve. If our vision is on our responsibility to family and community, our own selfish desires will not interfere with our service. But even then, attachments to family can still be limiting. Our vision must be pushed further still - to the welfare of the world, as this verse states. Even our attachment to family and community will fall away when we focus on serving the entire world. Lord Krishna will not stop here: in further verses, He will urge us to fix our minds on Him. Lord Krishna is a representation of Sat (existence or totality). As He shows us in chapter 10, the universe is contained in Him. He is formless, timeless, the cause of all. Thus, with our minds fixed on Totality, the highest ideal, we will act without any attachment.

The driving inspiration behind action should be our ideal. By holding an ideal, we will reduce our attachments to the lower and our actions will be in accordance to a higher principle. That ideal must also expand from beyond our own ego to our family, our community, the world, and finally to Lord Krishna. Slowly, all of our attachments will fall away and our actions will be aligned with our Jnana.

Srikanth Kowtha

Why and how of the self-realized action

Sitting down to write this gives me a golden opportunity to go one step beyond understanding the meaning of individual verses - assimilate the big picture and hence appreciate the logical flow. In Chapter 3 (verses 22-34), the secret of action from a non-attachment with a social welfare standpoint is impressed upon Arjuna through showing why and where of the Lord's (and also his wise followers') action arise from. I particularly liked the social awareness present in the advice to act in a way not to unsettle those who are still progressing. The person of higher awareness asked to be sensitive to the fact; this is because we know from earlier verses that the common folk follow these role models, therefore even if the wise realize the true nature of gunas and thus have mastered the art of navigating this field, should take into account those who haven't. For them, maybe renouncing all the

actions to Lord would be a better technique and is available. It is interesting that the paradox of free will is addressed - if all is the effect of the three gunas, where is even the question of restraint? The technique is hinted and expounded here: the attachment and aversion arise, first in the senses, then envelopes the mind and the intellect; by practicing control at the source, namely the senses, one could begin to crack open this impervious flow of gunas. As Arjuna himself is in constant contact with the satvik people such as Yudhishtira, he probably could not fathom the motives of somebody like Duryodhana after giving him so many chances to act rightly; he wonders that it appears as if some evil force is driving them, even against their best wishes, their own well being - what is this mysterious force? The answer to this everlasting puzzle in human condition is given by the one who himself is a master Mayavi - the desire and anger that envelopes the wisdom, so one is incapacitated in one's judgment - is the reason behind this mystery. Illustrated by the fire is covered by its own smoke; the mirror is covered by foreign particles; the embryo by womb. My interpretation of the last example is that it might be even necessary for this envelope till the mind matures. As it was pointed out of those people who have not fully mastered the ways of gunas, we can imagine them to be the embryos in the womb of these gunas - till the maturity happens, it is not safe to behave like a mature child, hence the envelope can be viewed as having a necessary cause. Ultimately, though sense control is a possible way to go about the liberation, there exists even a better way - knowing the Self who is superior to the intellect (which is in turn, superior to senses), the desire and the anger that forms the lesser self is conquered after all. Hari Om!

Srinivasan Adhinarayanan

Verse 3-30:

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।  
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥३-३०॥

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi saṁnyasyādhyātmacetasā ।  
nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ ॥3-30॥

This is the verse I have chosen to reflect upon. I remember Swamiji mentioning that this chapter is Gurudev's life story. Gurudev lived Chapter 3 and above verse is the backbone of this chapter. After Arjuna's initial turmoil in Chapter 1 Shri Krishna starts talking about death and how a *Sthitapragya*, one abiding firmly in the Self, would

behave in this world. Krishna here in Chapter 3 clarifies to Arjuna about Karmayoga in its true sense. *Karma* does not mean simply performing an action, but performing with the correct understanding and with a selfless attitude. Here, Krishna is getting back to the point by addressing Arjuna and reminding him to 'rightly' fight/face the situation that has presented itself in front of him.

The literal meaning of the verse is: Renouncing all actions in Me, with the mind centered on the Self, free from hope and egoism (ownership), free from (mental) fever, (you) do fight!

Here the word renouncing all actions in Me, does not mean in any sense to leave it all up to the Lord, but rather giving up the anxieties and self-centered motives behind the actions. If the mind remembers the Lord before we undertake any action, first the action becomes a joy, not a burden. Secondly, there is no worry about the fruits of action! Usually though what happens is that we work on something with worldly intentions and expectations and then when the time for the results come we want the Lord to intervene and either fix our mistakes or get us the result we expect.

Why is it so difficult to remember HIM before and during our work? I ask that question to myself. I think we get so caught up with the worldly 'drama' that we forget our real 'dharma'. That is why in this verse Shri Krishna is so much connecting with us to inspire us to act with the right understanding and not run away from what comes our way. One practical way to do this is to act for a day simply as an instrument of God. If HE makes my body do something, undergo an experience etc. that must be it then. I should surrender to HIS wish and separate myself from what may come. I tried doing it for a day and it felt on many occasions that I am in a drama. Though nothing out of the ordinary happened, but my awareness was there.

Work in this world without attachment to results (*nirashi*) specifically to results one insists on having. It is different from having a goal one is walking towards. Secondly, work without thinking yourself as the doer, without boosting your ego (*nirmamo*).

*Vigat-jvarah*: How to act without the fear, anxiety? For that the correct knowledge, understanding and bhakti are important. Just like no matter who and how we are, we ALL have something to be thankful for. Who arranged that for us? None other than God himself. So if he did that HE could do other things as well if only HE is let to act through us.

Swamiji's story of a child helping his dad by pushing the car from inside the car could also be relevant here. In this story the child proudly tells the adults that he was the one who pushed the car and that because of him they reached their destination. But one message of this story could be that when a fool (*moodha*) thinks that he does everything and feverishly works for it, he is being nothing but a fool and an ignorant. This is only boosting his false ego and nothing else.

Summarizing this verse we could practically understand it as when we are faced with a situation, it is not smart to run away from it, but rather face it/act by remembering Lord in our heart that whatever is presented is such so that HE can act through us, we simply need to let HIM work through us. Devoid of feverish excitement for the present, regrets of the past and anxieties of the future, we have to stay un-insistent on a particular result and work without foolish *ahankara*, ego.

Other way to look at it is that when something is simple why should we complicate it with our excitement and ego? There is a situation, we are chosen to face it, and so we have to face it. By keeping God with us (as Arjuna did) we are sure to win, so we are only making it easier to work hence, why not just do that!

Sudiksha Nimishe

Verse 3-30:

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।  
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥ ३० ॥

*mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannasyādhyātma-chetasā  
nirāśhīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigata-jvarah*

I have often wondered whether there is a blueprint or a dictum on how to be successful in life. How do we gain efficiency and be productive members of society? Why are we constantly oscillating like a yoyo between pairs of opposites like stressful-peaceful, happiness-sadness, successful-failure etc.? How to be consistently successful? I was confused with a multitude of opinions expressed in books and lectures, and nothing provided the desired clarity, until I reviewed this verse in the Bhagavad Gita. This stanza synthesized and unlocked the answers in a simple and yet elegant manner that I could use them in my life.

As human beings, we continually work, and we do this to achieve something that we believe makes us happy. The

desire may be to own a successful business or have a good marriage or good relationship with children or have a well-paying job or successful investments or take a fancy vacation. We all need goals to motivate us to perform consistent work, without which our efforts will be lackluster, and we will end up with inertia and ennui. However, while everyone works, some succeed while others fail. Furthermore, what are the right kind of goals and how should we work towards it?

We begin by identifying our goals and these are not merely to enrich ourselves or satiate our egos, but to fulfil our duties and be of service to others. We accumulate the knowhow, craft plans and prepare to work towards the goal. We should then dedicate our work towards our goal or ambition. Once we commit to do the work, we need to do it without any unnecessary excitement or agitation in the mind. Those tasks that need to be done quickly should be done so, while others have to be done in a methodical fashion. With clarity and focus, the work should be done with the best possible quality without cutting corners or quick wins.

One of the impediments to consistent work is past memories which often intervene and reminds us of failures and unexpected results. This has the propensity to drain our confidence and cause us to dissipate our creative energies. We should ignore the worries of the past and treat all failures as stepping stones for success. What about the results? What about constant doubts of not achieving the goals? We should also not worry about the anxieties of the future. We should perform work without any expectation or low expectation of the results or reward. If the work is done properly, then the results will always be good. The act of doing the work itself is the joy or the satisfaction and not the results. Finally, once we obtain the results, we need to remember to not attach the results to our action. There is no need to be over exuberant with a positive result or wallow in misery due to negative result. We should take the results as they are and move on to the next goal and work towards it.

Thus, the essence of success is knowing our goal, having the knowledge to collect and gather the knowhow, dedicating the work towards the goal without worries of past failures or anxieties of future results, and finally accepting the results as it is and move on to the next set of activities.

Suren Nathan

सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसः sak-tāḥ kar-man-ya-vid-vān-sah  
 यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत । ya-thā kur-van-ti bhā-ra-ta ।  
 कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तः kur-yād-vid-vāns-ta-thā-sak-taḥ  
 चिकीर्षुर्लोकसङ्ग्रहम् ॥ ३-२५ ॥ ci-kī-ṣur-lo-ka-saṅ-gra-ham ॥3-25॥

*As the 'ignorant' men act from attachment to action, O Bharata, so should the 'wise' men act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world.*

In this verse, Krishna is explaining to Arjuna that ignorant people do their actions for short term benefits, usually such actions would only benefit them. On the other hand, wise people have long term goals and their actions have a spirit of yajna. Yajna means doing work that benefit others without any expectation of personal gains. Once I read a story about Mahatma Gandhi, who worked to help fellow citizens get their rights. Mahatma Gandhi could have become a good lawyer and earned a lot of money, but he gave up his profession and worked towards people's right. He inspired others to come together and peacefully fight for India's freedom. His every action was devoted for the benefit of others.

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि mayi sar-vā-ṇi kar-mā-ṇi  
 संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा । san-nyas-yā-dhyāt-ma-ce-ta-sā ।  
 निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा ni-rā-śīr-nir-ma-mo bhū-tvā  
 युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥ ३-३० ॥ yudh-ya-sv vi-ga-ta-jva-rah ॥3-30॥

*Renouncing all actions in Me, with the mind centered on the Self, free from hope and egoism (ownership), free from (mental) fever, (you) do fight!*

Here, Krishna explains that people usually start thinking about the results before even performing. Instead, one should work hard and just focus on their preparation. For example, I learn a classical Indian dance form called Bharatnatyam. I participate in many performances at various places. Every time before I go onto the stage, I usually feel nervous. I start to think negative things such as, 'What if I mess up? What if I forget a step?' I don't want to mess up in front of a huge audience. This verse has taught me that if I work hard and practice my dance steps daily then I need not worry about my performance and I should just cheerfully present my dance.

इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिः in-dri-yā-ṇi ma-no bud-dhiḥ  
 अस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते । as-yā-dhiṣ-ṭhā-na-muc-ya-te ।  
 एतैर्विमोहयत्येषः e-tair-vi-mo-ha-yat-ye-ṣaḥ  
 ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम् ॥ ३-४० ॥ jñā-nam-ā-vṛt-ya de-hi-nam ॥3-40॥

*The senses, the mind, and the intellect are said to be its seat; through these, it deludes the embodied, by veiling his wisdom.*

This verse means that sometimes we like certain things so much that we get addicted to it. At that moment we tend

to lose control of our senses. We either forget to fulfill our duties or procrastinate them. Ravana was an intelligent man. He had read all vedas, and other scriptures and was also a great devotee of Lord Shiva. But after seeing Sita, he lost control over his senses because of his desire to have Sita as his wife. Ravana overlooked the fact that Sita was already married to Rama. His desire overpowered his wisdom and made him forget his duties as per the scriptures. Ravana lost his true personality and wisdom.

धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निः                      dhū-me-nā-vri-ya-te vah-niḥ  
यथादर्शो मलेन च ।                      ya-thā-dar-śo ma-le-na ca ।  
यथोत्खेनावृतो गर्भः                      ya-thol-be-nā-vṛ-to gar-bhaḥ  
तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ॥ ३-३८ ॥                      ta-thā te-ne-da-mā-vṛ-tam ॥3-38॥

*As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the womb, so this (wisdom) is enveloped by that (desire or anger).*

In this verse, Krishna is telling Arjuna that there is a thin line between the truth and “what appears to be the truth but is not.” Our ego prevents us from realizing that thin line. As in the last verse, chapter 3 verse 40, Ravana got distracted by his attraction for Sita. He had desired Sita and when his brother, Vibhishana, tried to explain him that his desire is not right, Ravana got angry. In his anger, he threw Vibhishana out of Lanka. Ravana’s desire prevented him from knowing the difference between what was right and what was wrong.

Tanirika Choudhry

Verse 3-31 and 3-32:

I read and studied verses 31 and 32 of Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3, and was very inspired by what I read. Karma refers to doing deeds. Every deed has a result, positive or negative. As I understand, what we have today is the direct result of our previous deeds. It appears to be an endless cycle of

1. do deeds
2. get result, good or bad
3. be born again to live the result
4. do more deeds and back to step 2.

It is not that hopeless, if we can detach from the result and do our duty without falling into the trap of desiring name, fame or money. This transforms Karma into Karma Yoga. It gives us a simple and clear path to uplift oneself, while being in the midst of the active world. It also helps

avoid downfall and distress we feel when desires are not fulfilled. In the two sloks, God is saying “*Those men who constantly practice this teaching of mine, full of faith and without caviling, they too are freed from actions. But those who carp at my teaching and do not practice it, deluded in all knowledge, devoid of discrimination, know them to be doomed to destruction.*”

As God states, the consequences of not following His will aren’t tiny. They cannot be ignored, for if they are, they can and will lead to total destruction. At the same time, God is asserting that those who perform deeds with the attitude of a witness, not getting caught in the trap of desire for result, they will be freed. This was a revelation for me. It meant freedom from the endless cycle can be achieved by me not just highly religious, old people doing meditation for years.

This inspires me, to follow the will of God to the best of my ability in every little task and I can live a happy life. In studies, I turned my focus to learning and not just getting good grades. In sports, I choose to play the best way, listen the coaches instead of focusing on simply scoring goals. At home, it is harder to be nice to my younger brother but I choose not be destroyed because of my foolishness. I consider it a good opportunity to help my parents when I help my brother do his projects.

I want to follow God’s will by not being very lazy, greedy, angry, or mean. It is easy to recognize these with a little awareness. I want to be kind and calm so that I can deal with situations without anything to cloud my thinking. Instead of dividing my activities and my prayers, now I am doing my activities as a prayer.

Teja Nallagorla

Verse 3-31:

*ye me matam idam nityam anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ śhraddhāvanto ’nasūyanto muchyante te ’pi karmabhiḥ*

**Meaning**

*Those who abide by these teachings of mine, with profound faith and free from cavil, are released from the bondage of karma.*

If we are bound to actions and objects, we will never be able to attain moksha, which is the ultimate goal. People advertised a misconception that spiritual realization was the jurisdiction of a higher class, and could only be achieved through accomplishing extremely secret and

difficult unknown rituals. The Gita proposed a new method where anyone regardless of their background can get the same result while performing any, and all actions selflessly. Therefore, practicing these teachings with faith, will relinquish us from the subjection of karma. Shri Krishna wants us to put the teaching into practice and try it out for ourselves.

When I'm at school, there is a lot of peer pressure; peer pressure to indulge in bad things. Making the right decision is not easy. I know I have to have faith in God and do what is right to please him. I will do my actions with faith, and do them with all my heart and devotion, no matter what the task at hand is. Two weeks ago, my friend asked me for answers to a test I had previously taken. I knew it was the wrong thing to do because it's cheating, but I also wanted to help my friend. When I got home that day, I was debating on what I should do about the situation. I did not want to betray my good friend, but I also did not want to cross the line. After careful consideration, I realized giving the answers would only lead to atrocious consequences, such as my reputation becoming ruined, my teachers losing trust in me, feeling guilty, and how I went against my personal morals to always be honest and do the right thing. Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3 is all about Karma Yoga, which is being selfless in all actions. It took a lot of courage to tell my friend that I will not be able to share my answers with her. I turned the situation around to tell my friend that I help her prepare for the test. If I shared the answers with her, and if she got a high grade, she would not be able to take full credit for it and that If I'm a good friend, I cannot do anything that will hurt her. Using verse 31 I knew what to do in a faulty situation such as this. Having faith in our scriptures and teachings of Shri Krishna is always the path to choose.

Trisha Dineshkumar

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## Understanding Marriage

*Article on the retreat by Saloni Khatri*

Chinmaya Mission Cleveland hosted its first Understanding Marriage Retreat with the theme of Joy of discovery on April 20-22, 2018. It was held in beautiful serene surroundings of Mohican Lodge in southern Ohio. The retreat was facilitated by Vilasiniji and Vivekji. It was attended by 77 adults and 35 children. Each family was given a copy of Ishavasya Upanisad. The discourses on



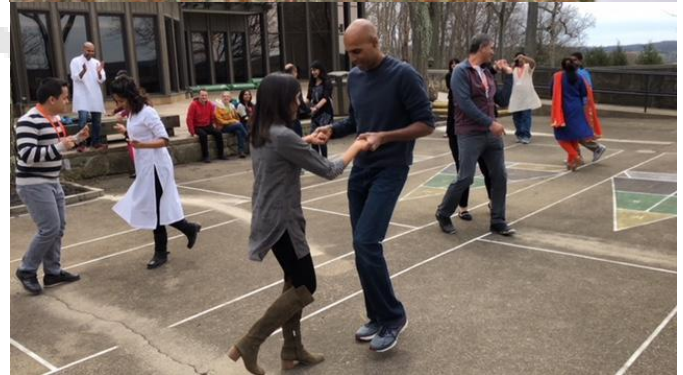
Upanisad by Vivekji were very insightful. The attendees were encouraged to develop the vision to perceive marriage retreat as a movement to understand oneself and one's spouse. The attendees were also encouraged to observe silence post-dinner till breakfast next morning so that there was time for inner reflection.

The mornings started with mini discourse and meditation session led by Vilasiniji. The seekers were given insight into the depth and power of Gayatri mantra. Everyone had opportunity to absorb the divine chants during this session and meditate on its illumination power.

During the course of two days, adults had multiple discourses by inspiring Acharyas. Couple's breakout sessions were organized which gave time to each couple to practice what was learnt in sessions. Vilasiniji, with the background in psychology had an interactive session for couples. The attendees had opportunity to play soccer, hike on trails. There was also a session of family movie montage and swing dance.

It was a well-organized retreat offering opportunity for learning self-development, loving without attachments, living a dharmic life as a couple, paving a pathway for inner peace.

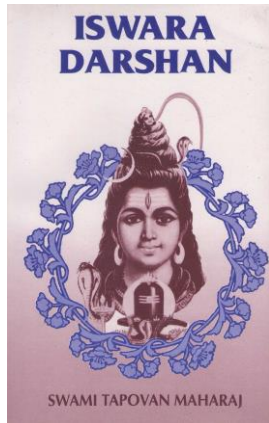
"To give love is pure freedom, to demand love is pure slavery." ...Swami Chinmayananda



## Messages from an autobiography of a Mahatma -6 (Iswara Darshan)

Sitaram Kowtha

**Editor's Note:** In this series, selected excerpts from the book "Iswara Darshan" by Pujya Swami Tapovan Maharaj of Uttar Kashi, are provided by Sitaram Kowthaji to inspire the students of Vedanta to delve deeply into the glories of a mahatma who inspired our sadguru, Swami Chinmayananda.



### 6. Bhavnagar Visit Cut Short and lure of Gruhastha Ashram

#### Goal of Peace and Joy

Peace of the soul alone is eternal peace. Joy of the soul alone is everlasting joy. He who turns away from objects and whose mind is fixed in the immanent Self alone enjoys eternal peace and eternal bliss. It is to him that the Vedantins call Jeevan Mukta. This is the unique goal of the wise. Owing to his samskara, Subramania had from his very childhood fixated upon this goal. Having performed spiritual exercises like the restraint of both the mind and the body, with vigor and attention, he had already made good progress along the path day by day. Not content with the rate of progress, he had wanted to quicken his steps towards the goal and that was why he went to Bhavnagar (in Gujarat).

At Bhavnagar, a beautiful building had been assigned to him for his stay. He had his meals with Sivanantha Sarma at his house. Sivanantha Sarma had taken care of everything to make his stay convenient and comfortable. His wife and sons too vied with each other in making him feel at home. Swamiji as guru and Daya Sankar as friend, did their best to minister to his bodily and spiritual needs.

#### Obstacles in the Path

"Innumerable obstacles arise in the path of good work", the wise ones have said. Just as big fish swallow smaller fish, God's will often swallow our cherished hopes.

It was not God's will that he stays at Bhavnagar and continues his studies. A letter from home urged him to return, "your presence here is essential". Not only the letter, but other pressing duties forced him to return.

Upon his return home, his relatives felt almost the joy of resurrection. As for himself, he was perfectly detached. He attended to all his duties whether he liked them or not. He was scrupulously careful in the performance of his duties, to not let anything come in the way of his studies. He used every opportunity to study philosophical books in English and Sanskrit and discuss ideas contained in them with learned men. Among those that he discussed with, were Sri Narayana Menon – a neighbor, and Sri Ryrur Nair – a lecturer in Sanskrit at Victoria College in Palghat.

#### Marriage Lure

His relatives and friends busied themselves with efforts to get him married. Beautiful girls too tried to charm the handsome young man and captivate him. But their fond assault on the citadel of his mind, fortified with discriminating thoughts and fixed on devout worship of the Lord, failed miserably. He triumphed over all temptation. There is nothing wrong with a householder's life. It is not impossible for a householder to lead an ideal life with thoughts of God. But Subramania, who had chosen the path of Sanyasa, could not be lured by the prospects of marriage.

Kavya Vachaspathi Sri Daya Sankar who had sat with him at the feet of Swami Santyananda Saraswati at Bhavnagar, wrote letters full of literary beauty urging his friend to marry. The letters were steeped in sentiment of love and held out temptations to any ordinary man. The letters cited, for example, poems of Bhartruhari and Kalidasa. Sri Daya Sankar urged him to marry now, and in old age take to Sanyasa and endeavor to realize the Self.

Relative and parents of eligible girls too exerted considerable pressure upon him. In the midst of all such temptations, he remained immovable as a mountain and majestic as the sea.

## Attachment and Brahmacharya

Food is for the hungry. He, who has no hunger, requires no food. Only those who long for worldly welfare need the performance of worldly duties. Relation to women by marriage and the performance of householder duties are for men of attachment. The man who has no desires, does not require it.

In man, attachment to worldly desires leads to sorrow and suffering. It is true that Sastras enjoin the presence of a partner during the performance of worldly duties and other worldly duties. But, why should those who have realized that the true nature of worldly pleasures, hanker after them?

In the world today, the dominant tendency is to follow other people's bounden duties rather than their own. Like hunger and thirst, lustful feelings too manifest in man, with irresistible vigor. Who can resist the furious onslaught of that natural desire?

There are many with opinions that strict continence (Brahmacharya) is a pure figment of imagination. They contend that as long as there is vital force in man, it will compel him to act in obedience to the dictates of his feelings.

These opinions have proven to be wrong, as exemplified by the lives of many heroic, strict, lifelong Brahmacharins whose minds were fixed on the Self. Their fixity of purpose, firm faith, steadfastness and above all, the merit amassed in their previous lives enabled them to remain true to their ideal.

For most, the ideal is not easily attainable and so it is better for them to marry and become householders. Those, who break this tradition and repudiate the time-honored institution of marriage, deviate from the path of good conduct and become scum of the society, exposing themselves to a series of miseries. Alarmed by such familiar experience, parents, relatives and friends often show unseemly hurry in getting young men and women married. Their desire is excusable, and their method may be impeccable. Subramania's relatives and friends proved to be no exception. If they tried to persuade him to marry, there was nothing extraordinary or improper about it.

Subramania stuck to his ideal, as he had already conquered his senses, his mind remained fixed in discrimination and dispassion. His conduct won the love and admiration of the wise people who heartily praised him.

To Be Continued

## Iswara Darshanam - IX

### *Discussion of the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Gita – Acharya Sadanandaji*

The one who has not realized that Lord is omnipresent and exists everywhere and in every form, He can invoke the presence of the Lord in a particular form that his mind can develop devotion to the Lord. It is a sAdhana or vision that needs to be invoked as one perceives and transacts with the world of plurality which he thinks is different from the Lord. For a jnaani, it is a fact all forms are the expression of God, yet God is not any particular form, but pervades all forms as their very essence.

The Iswara sRiShTi or Lord's creation is Iswara himself appearing as many. Hence I do not have to close my eyes to see the Lord, as we do whenever we want to think of the Lord. Hence anything and everything that I transact with is nothing but Iswara or with Iswara. That is jnaanam; and to have that vision as goal is sAdhana or spiritual discipline. Religion involves the spiritual discipline – to help conversion of oneself from ekaruupa Iswara ( God in a particular form) to aneka ruupa Iswara (God present in every form).

#### **Spiritual exercise:**

For those who are interested in developing this transformation of eka ruupa to aneka ruupa, here are some spiritual exercises. As soon as I get up from the sleep, first I must visualize the presence of the Lord in me, and then see that divine presence in others close by, as well as in all things and beings that I am going to encounters throughout the day. I should pray to the Lord that I should have that Iswara dharshanam in and through all my day's transactions. Thus, my viswaruupa darshanam becomes Iswara darshanam, and all my actions become prayer to that Lord appearing in various names and forms. Karma-yoga naturally follows if I keep that vision. In addition, all low tendencies such as anger, greed, etc, will get diminished if I keep that vision as much as possible. It essentially helps in re-tuning the mind to minimize all my raaga-dweshas or likes and dislikes during my transactions in the world, and I would have more objective vision or equanimity or what Krishna calls as sama darshanam, since I see only Iswara in all things and beings, appearing in verities of name and forms. However, in spite of this auto-suggestion, while I am transacting in the world, I forget the knowledge that I am transacting with Iswara in various names and forms, due to my emotional attachments to things and beings, or to names and forms. Hence raaga-dweshas do flare up while

I am emotionally involved during the transactions. However, with practice, what Krishna calls as abhAsa and vairAgya, the vision of Iswara becomes firm. Hence, as part of this exercise, before I go to bed, I again visualize the Iswara in me and the world of things and beings that I had encountered during the day. This way one can slowly neutralize one's raaga-dweshas and the invoked Iswara darshanam becomes a reality when this knowledge becomes firm in the mind. It is a very slow process and even a life-long process, since our raaga dweshas or likes and dislikes and emotional attachments are deep-rooted. Krishna says, yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvancha mayi pashyati, tasyAham na praNasyAmi, sa ca me na praNashyati – those who see Me everywhere and everything in Me, they are never away from Me nor I am away from them – That vision forms the essential goal of the spiritual discipline.

Hari Om !

To be continued.

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## Gurudev Jayanti Ice-cream & Swamiji with Gurudev's portrait

Photos



*Ice-cream during Gurudev's Jayanti celebration*



*Swami Dheerananda with Gurudev's portrait*