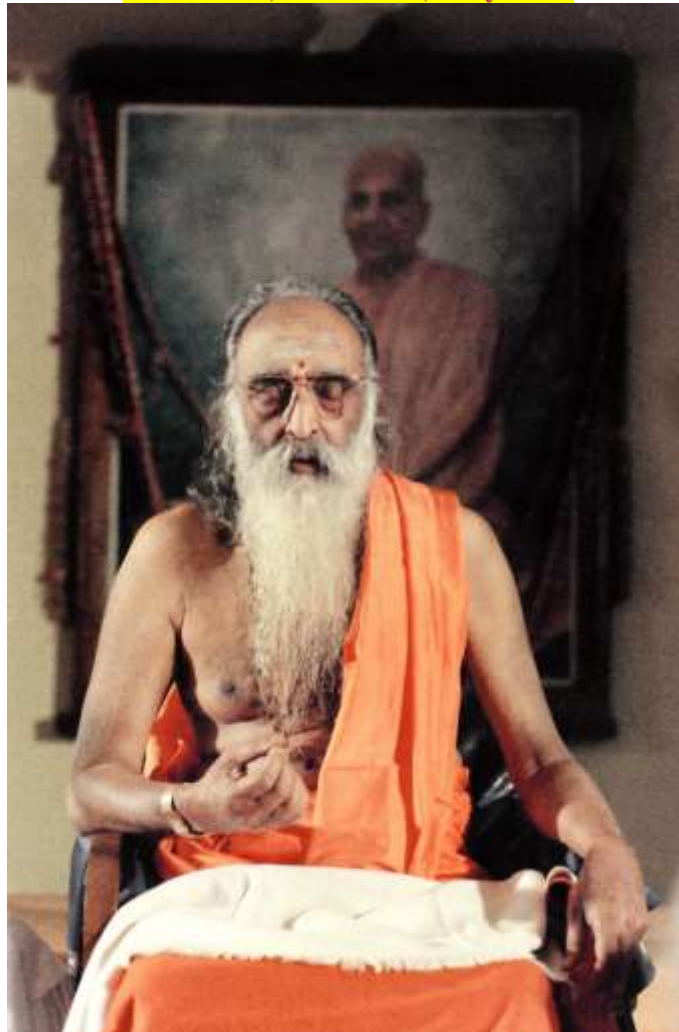


Chinmaya Smrithi



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

Volume 29, Number 3, May 2019



Chinmayam Jagadeeshwaram Pranamamyaham

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 7].

अमृतत्वस्य नाशस्ति वित्तेनेत्येव हि श्रुतिः ।
ब्रवीति कर्मणो मुक्तेरहेतुत्वं स्फुटं यतः ॥ ७ ॥

*amṛtatvasya nāśasti vittenetyeva hi śrutih |
bravīti karmaṇo mukteraheturvaṁ sphuṭaṁ yataḥ || 7||*

Meaning: It is clear that Liberation cannot be the effect of good works, for Shruti herself declares that there is no hope for immortality by means of wealth.

Adi Shankara quotes from the scriptures in support of his assertion that money and Karma alone cannot lead to liberation. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the rich man Yagnavalkya, who was not able to get peace inspite of all his riches, distributes all his wealth among his two wives. One of his two wives, Maitreyi, questions him "Where are you going?". He replies that he is going in pursuit of immortality which cannot be attained through wealth. Even the hope of attaining immortality is not possible with money. This truth is brought out in the weekly Vedic Aarathi chanted in every Balavihar session. Even to attain deep sleep, one has to renounce the "perceiver I", the "feeler I" and the "thinker I".

One can get money in this world through Karma but as explained above immortality cannot be purchased with money; so, it is evident that Karma cannot help in attaining immortality. Karma is not against Jnana. However, as stated in the Atmabodha, Karma is always prompted by desire which is caused by ignorance. Even

Nishkaama Karma can bind if it is done with a desire for recognition or with a feeling of "doership". When Karma is performed with a sense of doership, one has to stay here and enjoy the result of the Karma. Even getting the desired result leads to suffering and bondage in the long run because one has to remain identified as a perceiver, feeler, thinker to enjoy the fruits of action.

It is very clearly stated in the Shruti that Karma cannot lead to Mukti or liberation. Only egoless action will help in reducing the pressure of the Vaasanas which then helps the mind become quiet, alert and vigilant. Equipped with a quiet, alert and vigilant mind, one can strive to remember the Self through contemplation. Karma is caused by ignorance. I don't know my true Self; this leads to an erroneous identification with the body, mind or intellect and in turn leads to desires for various objects, emotions and thoughts. Since Karma is born from ignorance, it can never lead to liberation.

Realized masters also work for the welfare of society. The main difference is that while the ignorant person works "for happiness", the Realized master works "from happiness". Before realization, all the good works will help with purification of the mind. Even if one considers the issue from a logical perspective, the cause of our unhappiness is Moha (delusion) caused by the Avidya (ignorance) of our true Self; it is not the lack of literacy or any other external achievement. Once a person realizes this, the person should seek the right teacher who will help him find the solution to get rid of his Moha.

Calendar and Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

- May 11: Adi Shankara Jayanti at Chinmayam.
- May 18: Balavihar Graduation Tilak ceremony at 3 p.m. at Chinmayam.
- May 19: Guru Charane – a musical showcase by Purvi Nanavaty from 5 to 7 p.m. at Chinmayam.
- June 24 – July 19: Summer Camp at Chinmayam, Silver Spring, MD
- July 8 -12 – CHYK summer youth camp led by Vivekji and Shankarji at Chinmaya Somnath.
- July 12 – July 14: Building Bhakti – yearning for the divine – a Vedantic retreat for members aged 17 to 40 – Discovering Srimad Bhagawatam with Shri Vivekji and Shri Shankarji at Chinmay Somnath, VA
- July 22 – Aug 16: Summer Camp at Chinmaya Somnath, VA.
- July 29th to August 4th: Discourses on Shri Krishna Leela by Swami Swaroopananda during the 26th Chinmaya Mahasamadhi Camp at Pittsburgh PA.

Study Groups

- Please contact Sri Ravi Ravichandran ji by email at 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 . 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 2019, are due by June 30, 2019
- Email submissions to smrithi-editor@chinmayadc.org.
- Browse Past editions at www.chinmayadc.org/Smrithi/Smrithi.htm

Useful Links:

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust www.chinmayamission.com
Chinmaya Mission West www.chinmayamission.org
Chinmaya International Foundation, E-Vedanta Courses www.chinfo.org
Chinmayam Chapter – Silver Spring MD website <http://chinmayam.chinmayadc.org/chinmayam-chapter/>
Chinmaya Somnath Chapter – Chantilly VA website www.chinmayasomnath.org
Chinmaya Frederick Chapter – Urbana MD website <http://www.frederick.cmwrc.org/>
Chinmaya Richmond Chapter – Richmond VA website www.chinmayarichmond.org
CMWRC – Washington Regional Center 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)

Editor: K.A. Lakshmanan

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

BV students – Bhuvan Devarsu

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

News & Tidbits

Ramacharitamanas Parayanam

For the second year, the Chinmaya family celebrated Rama Navami with a week-long recital of the entire Tulasi Ramayana. The recital was held from April 5 to April 13 accompanied with various Indian musical instruments and many families enthusiastically participated in the program.

Chinmaya Jayanti Celebrations

In an offering of love and gratitude, the Chinmayam family put together a grand celebration of Pujya Gurudev's birthday. A cooking contest was organized by the Devi group in which almost 30 members brought in three dishes and competed for prizes. More than 80 members participated in a grand play "Katha Ek Sakha Ki" which captured the quintessential values of friendship. The whole event was capped by Mahaprasad shared by members.

Arpanam

Please refer to the CMWRC website to learn more about this exciting new consolidated fundraising initiative. It offers the Chinmaya family an opportunity to donate at various levels on an on-going basis to support the current and future growth of CMWRC. Inspired by Gurudev's message that true loving is not in passive taking but in dynamic giving, the program is expected to help the mission pay down its debt while also positioning it for future growth to continue to spread the spiritual message of Vedanta. Donors making an Arpanam pledge may fulfill the pledge during the calendar year, and all tax-deductible offerings, such as Gita chanting registration, membership, Bala Vihar, enrichment, Guru Dakshina, event sponsorship, etc. are recognized towards the fulfillment of the pledge.

Please make your pledge today !

Hanuman Jayanti Celebrations

Hanuman Jayanti was celebrated on April 19. Swami Ishwarananda, visiting from California, was present on the occasion. Please see inside this edition for Pujya Gurudev's message and Swami Swaroopananda's message on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti.





Life of I workshop

Swami Ishwarananda conducted a 2-day interactive workshop based on his book "Life of I". Using the characters and the story in the book as a backdrop, Swamiji posed questions to the participants on various paths such as Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. He was able to explain complex Vedantic concepts in a lucid manner and emphasized the importance of recognizing the presence of the divine and the need for divine grace for one's spiritual practices to be ultimately successful.

Shishu Vihar Camp

Swamini Supriyananda conducted a 2-day workshop in Chinmaya Somnath on April 26-27 about the importance of inculcating values in children at an early age. This workshop was directed towards teachers and volunteers who work with children in Balavihar and in the Chinmaya Blossoms pre-school. The camp was well attended by members from all over the east coast and well received and provided many unique insights into the importance of spending quality time with the young children.

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Bala Vihar

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- Pujya Swami Chinmayananda

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Arpanam

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Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water,
that I accept, offered by the pure-minded with devotion
Geeta Chapter 9, Verse 26

True loving is not passive 'taking'
but a dynamic 'giving'
- Swami Chinmayananda

Pledge Today Generously

-  *Patram (Leaf) - \$2700 and above*
-  *Pushpam (Flower) - \$5400 and above*
-  *Phalam (Fruit) - \$10,800 and above*
-  *Toyam (Water) - \$21,600 and above*

**Grow Spiritually and Help Our Center
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Follow us on Facebook!

Exciting news! We now have a Chinmayam Facebook page for our Silver Spring center where we can showcase our vibrant community, events and activities. **We request all members to "follow us" and "like us"** to receive important updates, information on events and special guests, photos of your children in Bala Vihar, quotes from our Gurudev, and more. Updates will be sent to your phone or email accounts. **Don't be left out - join now !**

Step 1: Login at Facebook.com (or join Facebook by creating your profile - it's free and easy)

Step 2: Search Chinmaya Mission DC

Step 3: Click on "Like" and "Follow"

Step 4: Click on "Invite Friends" and send the page to your friends, members and non-members.

**Publicity team needs volunteers who are active on social media! Please contact
Amita Jain, amitajain815@gmail.com**

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Meena Sankar, meena17.sankar@gmail.com



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Conducted By

Swami Dheerananda

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- SHLOKAS & BHAJANS • FUN FRIDAYS •



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Sibling discount \$100

For rising 1st to 8th grades as of September 1, 2019

Questions: mdsummercamp@chinmayadc.org



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- Outdoor Athletics • Art • Inspiring Stories •
- Shlokas & Bhajans • Fun Fridays •



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Registration (from April 1, 2019): \$1400

Sibling discount available

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only 108 seats available

Questions: summercamp@chinmayasomnath.org

Sri Adi Shankara's Vivekachoodamani Class by Pujya Swami Dheerananda

Attend Pujya Swamiji's class on Sri Adi Shankara's Vivekachoodamani!! In-person or via web!

Recording and Dial-in Information:

- The class will be live streamed via Zoom. Please use the information below to access the live stream video and/or audio.

Venue: Kailas Niwas

Day: Every Thursday, starting Oct 4, 2018

Time: 7:00-8:30 PM Eastern Standard Time (US and Canada)

Zoom Webinar ID: 872-939-557

To join via the Zoom client (for video and audio on PC/Mac/iOS/Android), please click the link below which will prompt to install necessary software automatically.

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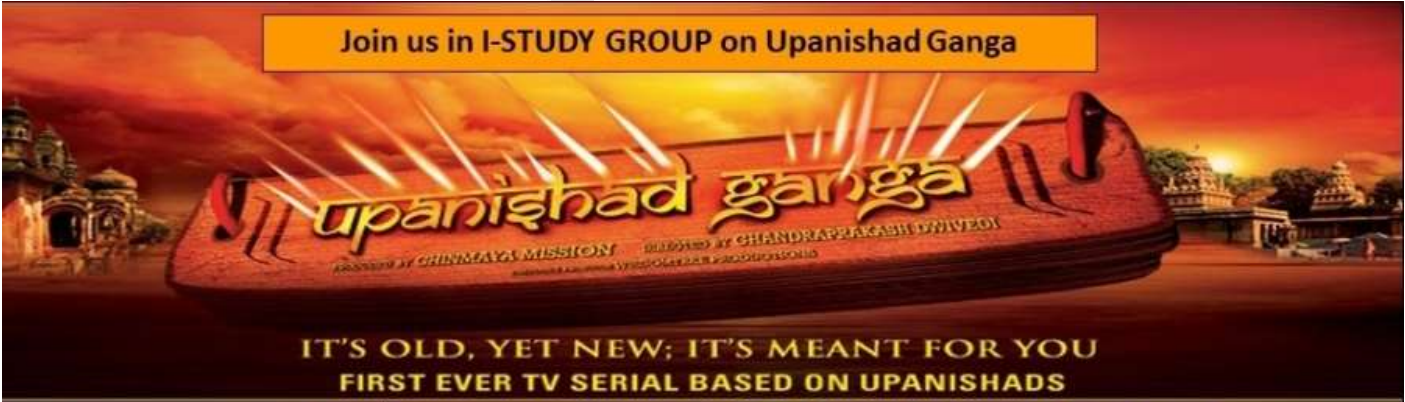
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- Class recordings can be found [here](#). Please do not rely on the recordings for missed lectures.

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VENUE: Chinmayam
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TIME: 3:00pm - 4:30pm

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Click here to participate
Short URL - <https://goo.gl/wWnKZn>



PROGRAM:

3:00pm - 3:10pm

3:15pm - 4:15pm

4:15pm - 4:30pm

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Antakshari followed by Mangalam

Swamiji's talk and closing

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Learn more about Chinmaya University by clicking this [link](#).

Like Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth on [Facebook](#).

Attached are additional materials for your review and get insights into Chinmaya University:

1. [Swami Advayananda's presentation](#) about Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth's unique Vision & Inception (video)
2. [Chinmaya University - An appeal for support](#) (video)
3. [Chinmaya Shree: Bi-annual Newsletter of Chinmaya University](#) (PDF)

Chinmaya University looks forward to your **continued support and engagement** in the years to come. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any information or clarification.

In His Seva,
On behalf of Dr. AppaRao Mukkamala
Managing Trustee

Swami Advayananda's presentation : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO9ts04tSM8&feature=youtu.be>

Chinmaya University: An appeal for support: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NADht0NBRxM>

Chinmaya Shree: Bi-Annual newsletter of Chinmaya University:

https://gallery.mailchimp.com/80619a985e5d6e34c2ba01298/files/a46d5eac-b4e8-44f6-94b1-9b553915eb57/CVV_Newsletter_Dec_2018_Volume_1_issue_1_Final.01.pdf

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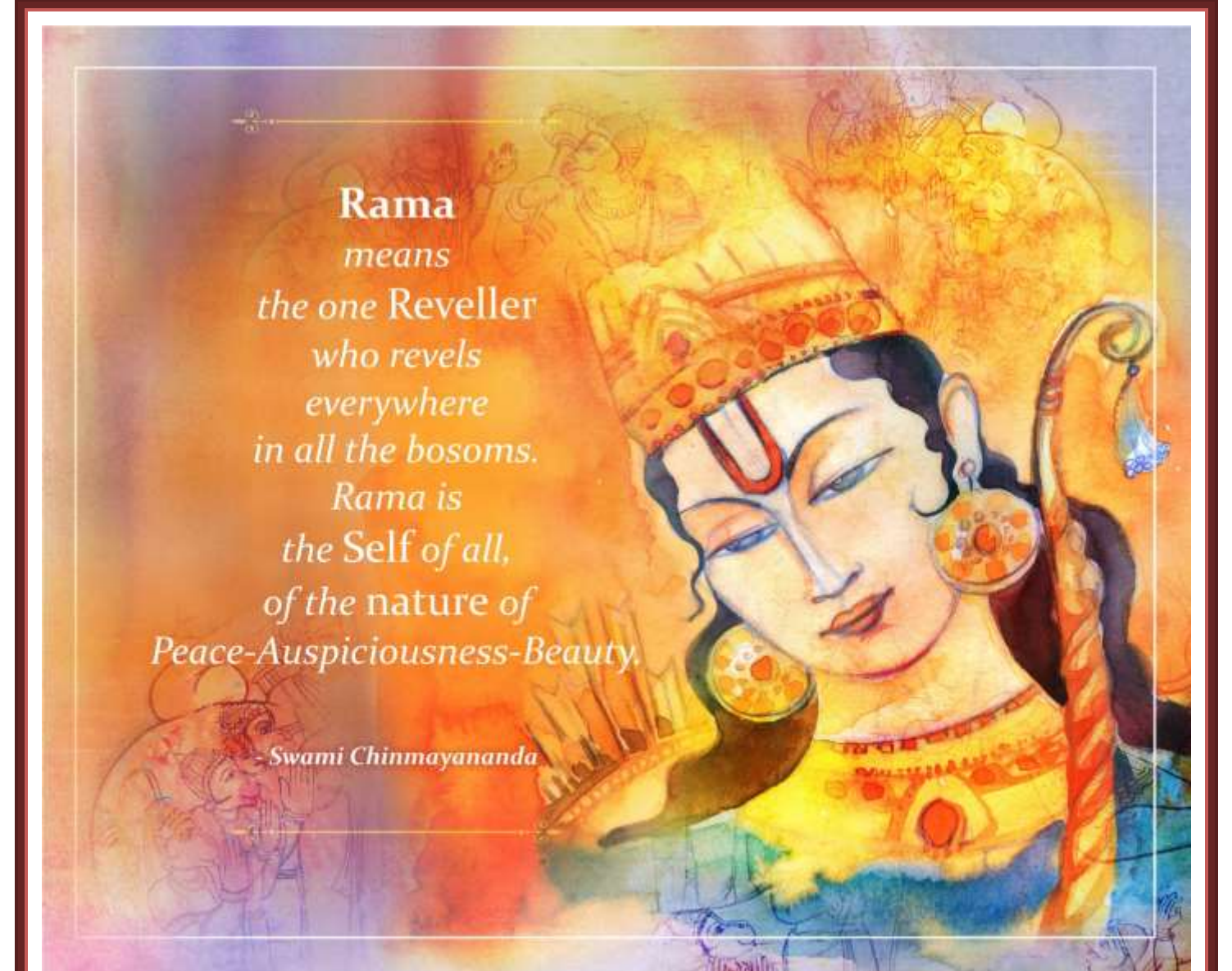
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Rama
means
the one Reveller
who revels
everywhere
in all the bosoms.
Rama is
the Self of all,
of the nature of
Peace-Auspiciousness-Beauty.

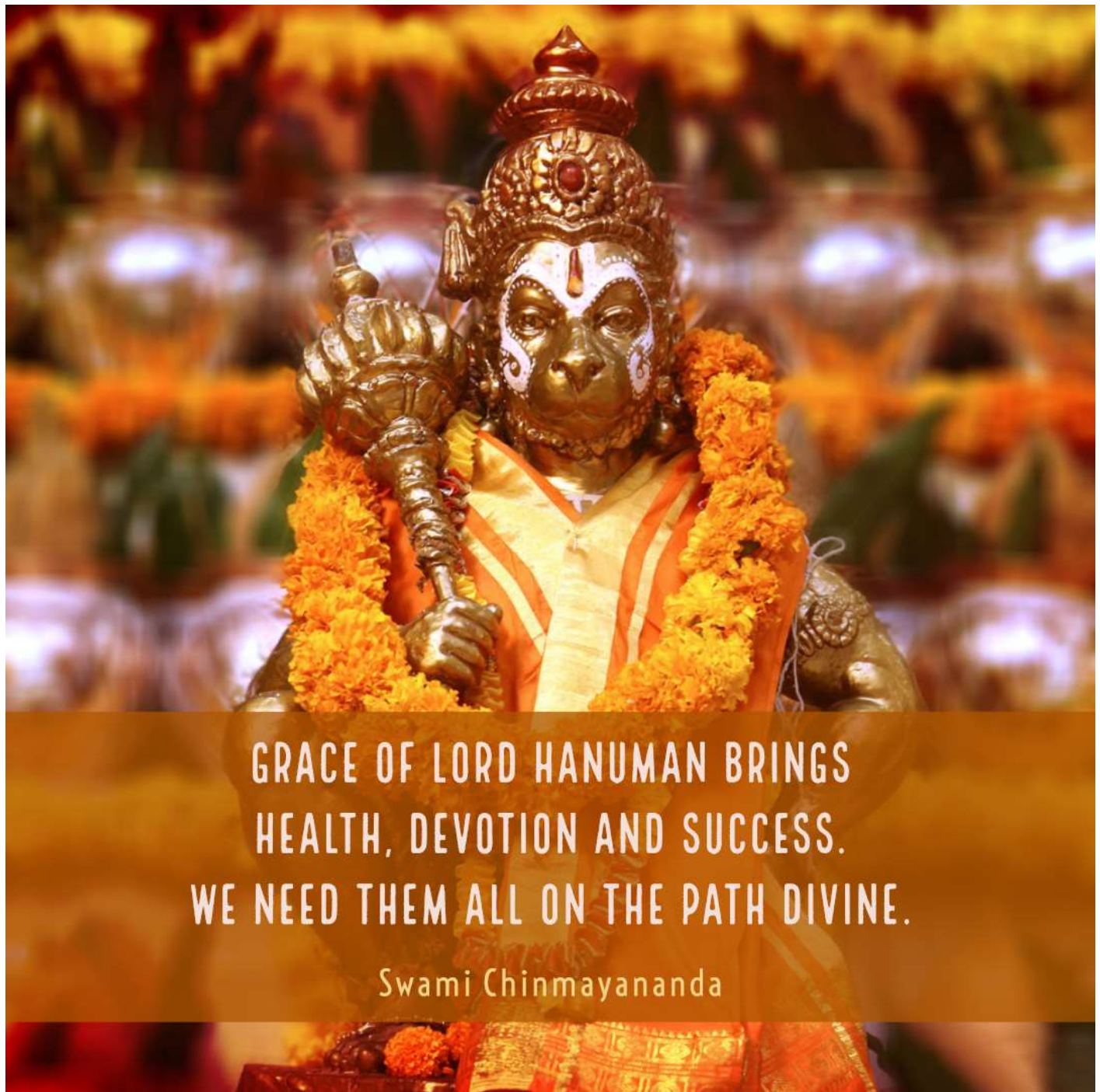
- Swami Chinmayananda



Happiness is what ultimately satisfies us,
and this happiness is Rama.

Be Happy | Make Rama Happen.

- SWAMI SWAROOPANANDA



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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.

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- Bala Vihar magazine for children, parents and Bala Vihar teachers. subscription link: 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

2019 CMWRC Gita Chanting Competition Writing Submissions

Various CMWRC members

Editor's Note: [The following are submissions from the "Writing" category of the 2019 Geeta Chanting Competition (Chapter 12 – Bhakti Yoga – The Art of Devotion: Verses 1-20). 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:

Akshaya Balaji
Alok Shastry
Ameya Sriram
Amit Mukherjee
Anant Shastry
Avyay Potarlanka
Avyukth Selvadurai
Brinda Anantha
Chakradhar Nallagorla
Dakshesh Nimishe
Deeksha Sesha
Deva Palaniappan
Dinesh Dhanasekharan
Gautam Tangirala
Jahn timer Kirkire
Kalpana Panigrahi
Keshav Kowtha
Krishay Iyer
Krishnan Seshadri
Latha Krish
Mahesha Loganathan
Mukesh Sureshbabu
Mythreyi Shastri
Nikhita Reddy
Nirmala Koti
Padmaja Emani
Prakash Sesha
Radha Kowtha
Raghuveer Rao
Raj Pajjur
Sahana Kukke
Saiprasad Ravi
Sanyogeeta Sawant
Shabaritha Meda Ramalingam
Shruthi Rajesh

Shruthi Venkatachari
Sitaram Kowtha
Solees Sevugan
Soumya Maturi
Sowmya Sevugan
Srinivasan Adhinarayanan
Sriram Padmanabhan
Sudiksha Nimishe
Suren Nathan
Swathi Sevugan
Tanrika Choudhury
Teja Nallagorla
Vidhya Shyamsunder
Alisha Mahajan

Verse 18

samaḥ śhatrau cha mitre cha tathhā mānāpamānayoḥ

śhītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣhu samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitāḥ

He, who is the same to foe and friend and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment...

As individuals with different ideals and different judgements, we are often predisposed to treat people different due to their actions and the way that they have affected us in the past. If someone has disrespected us, or has committed actions that we do not approve, we will make these judgements of the individual, which will further affect our perception of them. However, our responsibility does not lie in this respect, it is not within our right to make judgements about people based on their actions, that right rests with God and God alone. Our personality should be the same in every situation. "Samah" here is used twice to emphasize the importance of equanimity, and the absence of hate. Even an individual that one considers a 'foe' should respect one's righteousness. This ideal can be seen in Yudhistira, who although was the recipient of Duryodhana's disrespectful actions, was still revered due to his dharmic nature, and admired for his prowess in this respect. Although Karna resented Arjuna for archery, Karna still respected Arjuna for this same reason. This verse in particular emphasizes the importance of remaining the same in every situation, treating everyone in the same way regardless of their affiliation with you, and acting in the same manner regardless of the environment that you are in. 'Honor' and 'dishonor' are merely words that we associate with our ego, and one's connection to one's ego results in it's creation. It's important that our morals, values and ethics do not change. Judge the actions of an individual, not the people themselves. Our responsibility in this world is to respond to the stimuli that we receive, not to react, and to control our responses to maintain balance. An individual who has detached themselves from the ego, from the presence of 'I' and 'my,' doesn't have strong reactions to a stimulus and is forever peaceful. It's important for us to consider every aspect of the world as an extension of the atman that rests inside us. Our purpose in this world should be to give maximum happiness to the maximum number of people for the maximum time. Even within the Bible it states:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know

what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13

World peace can only be brought about by peace from the individual. As Buddha himself said, "Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without."

Akshaya Balaji

Verses 8-11

From the eighth to the eleventh Slokas in chapter 12, Lord Krishna reveals various methods of attaining liberation, each path suitable to devotees who have attained a certain level of spirituality.

In Sloka 8, Lord Krishna says to "Fix your mind on Me only, place your intellect in Me; then, (thereafter) you shall, no doubt, live in Me alone." The body identified being keeps his mind and powers of discrimination busy with sense objects, thus he undergoes untold dissatisfaction and trouble. The practice of yoga frees the mind and intellect from slavery to senses, and concentrate these faculties of perception on all knowing God. The sadhaka perceives the all-knowing wisdom of soul in the self. In realizing the oneness of soul and spirit, the sadhaka is then able to feel the blessedness of the infinite Brahman, not only in the material world but also beyond.

In Sloka 9, Lord Krishna says, "If you are unable to fix your mind steadily upon Me, then by the Yoga of constant practice, seek to reach Me, O Dhananjaya." When a sadhaka, again and again fights his restlessness and distractions, and with ever increasing intensity tries to feel divine communion with Lord in meditation, he will form a good habit of calm interiorization. In time this habit will displace the previous habit of bondage to sense objects, and will lead ultimately to realization of divinity. For a newly aspiring Sadhaka, regularity and continuity of yoga (abhyasa yoga) is essential. Those who persist in meditation will ultimately succeed.

In Sloka 10, Lord Krishna says "If you are unable even to practice Abhyasa Yoga, be you intent on performing actions for My sake; even by doing actions for My sake, you shall attain perfection." If a sadhaka falters in Yoga practice, being habitually restless and materialistic, then with devotion and faith in the Lord, he should support his meditations by increasing efforts to perform in Lord's name all physical, mental and spiritual activities. His

meditative activities and outside work of physically, mentally and spiritually helping others should be motivated by the sole desire to please God. In time he will feel the presence of Lord who is ever conscious of the struggling sadhaka's efforts. Lord Krishna is counseling the restless devotee on the path of meditation.

In Sloka 11, Lord Krishna says "If you are unable to do even this, then taking refuge in Me, self-controlled, renounce the fruits of actions" In this verse, Lord Krishna advises that just by cultivating a simple faith in God, even a blind faith in the beginning will do, and by trying unselfishly to perform good deeds and meditation without focusing on the results, that devotee in time will grow in spirituality; his mind and heart will become purified. A mind, free from the likes and dislikes that are born from selfish actions, is able to manifest soul qualities.

These verses provide me great inspiration as I pursue meditative practices. They show the right attitude I should have towards the experiences in meditation. Assiduously performing meditation without preconditioned expectation of results, my sadhana would be better. I should not be disturbed and distracted by any frustrated cravings for rewards. Just as a person who uses the right methods to squeeze oil out of mustard seeds, so I should have faith in sincere sadhana. Even though God is not perceptible in the beginning, with constant practice, loyal devotion, and the unselfish performance of good actions, material and meditative, someday the merciful bliss of God will flow in my heart.

Alok Shastry

Verse 3

To me, Hinduism seemed to be a religion of dichotomy: the one others saw versus the one I knew seemed irreconcilable. How can a religion that advocates for equality condone a caste system (imported or otherwise) or not allow non-Hindus into temples? Despite my ongoing education on these matters, one question continued to confound me -- How can one have faith in an all-pervading Being and yet worship individual gods? The 12th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, which discusses the yoga of a devotee, was not where I was expecting the answer to be.

In Verse 3, Chapter 12, Bhagavan speaks about his devotees, discussing "Those who worship the imperishable, the indefinable, the unmanifest, the omnipresent, the unthinkable, the unchangeable, the

immovable, and the eternal," those terms being Bhagavan. This verse stood out to me because I had never seen Brahman so precisely noted. For the first time, the endless tumble of magnificent adjectives conveyed that absolute scope. I had thought it easy to imagine Brahman, but in reality, I was imagining the same singular, defined god.

The next verse, Chapter 12 Verse 5, began to clear things up for me. In this verse, Bhagavan enumerates that "Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on 'the Unmanifest'; for 'the Unmanifest' is very hard for the embodied to reach." After that mind-numbing description of Brahman, I could see the difficulty of that concept. I am struggling with it, and I attend Bala Vihar -- imagine how a farmer, with precious little time to be philosophical, would react. One word stuck out to me -- embodied. Although we are all Brahman, we are confined by our finite-ness, making it very difficult to reach an understanding of the absolute.

Finally, the last verse, Chapter 12 Verse 7, was the moment of clarity. The definition goes: "For them, whose minds are set on Me, verily I become, O Pārtha, the Saviour out of the ocean of finite experiences." This was the verse that made it all click. We, as humans, drift on an ocean of finite experiences, and thus, it is difficult to reach out and find the infinite. But Brahman becomes our life-raft. And Brahman accepts -- just as we should -- that any kind of concentration on the infinite validates that connection. And that raft is whatever one needs to be anchored to some semblance of infinity in a bounded existence.

If I were that humble farmer, I would work from sunup until sundown, then I would come home, eat dinner, and say a short prayer in front of a murti. Perhaps that would be the extent of my offerings. But Brahman accepts that hard work and singular murti all the same. The unimaginable concept of Brahman can be attained in a finite god because of the sincere devotion from a finite man. Thus the dichotomy was not a dichotomy at all -- rather, it was a rope, stretching from the heavens to a small figure in a limited sea, connecting man to Brahman however possible.

Ameya Sriram

Verse 15:

I will try and be honest. The idea and the thoughts around Bhakti or Bhakti Yoga do not come naturally to me. Being a Software Developer, I am more of a Karma person. Why

one asks? This is because Karma is supposedly 'easier'. You do something to the best of your ability and ta daa, the job is complete. You walk away with accolades, perhaps get a raise at work or are admired by your colleagues. You are on top of your game UNTIL the bubble of false security bursts. And that's when reality sets in!

Bubbles can burst in the strangest of ways. One such way was when I had the opportunity of participating at a Bhiksha Lunch with our Pujya Swami Dheerananda. The Bhiksha family had invited us and two other members to join them. However, when they arrived to serve, the number of guests swelled to double that amount. Even as the rice, sambar and curry slowly diminished, and it started becoming clear that there would not be any food for the hosts left, they served each and every guests with love, devotion and respect with the "Atithi Devo Bhava" spirit. The grace and the belief in the Lord and their ability to handle the situation was unwavering. That experience made me mildly aware of the power of Bhakti Yoga and I began to contemplate.

Up until that point, Bhakti for me was always something meant for the elderly who had discharged their Sansarik duties. For us Grahasthas, Karma was the way to go! But what is this Bhakti and why is it so powerful. This is because Bhakti gives you freedom and Lord Krishna explains this really beautifully in Verse 15. The Lord says that whoever is immersed in this is freed from the agitations of the world and worldly perturbations like fear, anxiety and envy.

We are constantly in what I feel is an ego-cycle. We do our actions, look at our results, wait for some praise and based upon the response go back to doing the same or slightly different actions whichever boosts our ego. The Yoga of Bhakti helps us break that cycle. It helps us manage our Karmas much better by channeling the attitude with which we undertake our actions. If we cannot focus our mind on the Lord, we can still undertake our actions with a desire to renounce the fruits of the labor and still attain perfection. As the Lord goes on to explain in verses 11 and 12, this detaches the individua

's ego (and his actions) from his activities and provides a detoxing mechanism for ego addiction we might have. That is the true strategy of Karma Yoga and it was interesting that this beautiful chapter on Bhakti Yoga weaves a thread through Karma Yoga and helps individuals like myself navigate the sansar just a little bit better!

Amit Mukherjee

Chapter 12:

Thoughts are always wandering in my brain at the speed of 100 miles an hour! Attending shloka class, participating in the Gita chanting competition, especially this writing category are exercises to help focus our minds on spirituality. Chapter 12 showcases Bhakti yoga, where we learn to focus on values that Bhagwan represents—completely surrender to the Lord, when you become a devotee of God, engage in japa, and listen to stories related to Bhagwan. The ultimate goal is to become one with Bhagwan. In Bhakti yoga, trying to improve the quality of our thoughts is the main focus.

Jnana yoga focuses on realizing the truth and becoming one with Brahman, basically, deep life thoughts like where did I come from helps to change the direction of our thoughts. In Karma yoga, reduce the quantity of our thoughts, be active and dedicate our actions at the greatest altar. Do not be concerned with the results. On the other hand, Hatha yoga is a multi-fold path where yamas (dos) and niyama (don't) plays important role followed by samadhi. But at the end of the day, I still find myself thinking - do I have enough money to pay bills, why did he/she say this, why can't they be polite, why, why, why.....I wonder if this is the magic of Maya. Why is it so difficult to break the pattern of thoughts? Maya makes us believe in what does not really matter. Birds and animals don't work or pay bills, and don't get into depression.

Dr. Anant Shastry

Verse 8

My favorite verse in the bhagavad gita, is chapter 12, verse 8. First, I will chant this verse:

May-ye-va ma-na a-dhat-sva

Ma-yi bud-dhim ni-ve-sa-ya

Ni-va-sis-ya-si may-ye-va

A-ta urdh-vam na sam-sa-yah

Meaning:

Fix your mind on Me only, place your intellect in Me; then, (thereafter) you shall, no doubt, live in Me alone.

In chapter 12, Bhakti Yoga, Prince Arjuna asks Lord Krishna if it is better to worship a manifested form, or to

contemplate on the unmanifest. In this chapter, Krishna answers by saying that the attitude and the characteristics of a devotee are more important, rather than their preferred type of worship. And that, if you are completely focused on god, you will be one with god, and you will be dear to him.

The reason that this is my favorite verse, is because right when I saw the meaning of this verse, immediately, it reminded me of what my dance teacher constantly tells me. Whenever we are preparing for a performance of an item, my Kuchipudi dance teacher emphasizes the expressions that are necessary, and the engagement of the audience during the dance. She tells me that I have to get myself into that character and to be 100% focused on god when I am praising or describing god, and then those expressions will come out naturally, without me even having to think about it. Dance is also a form of devotion, so in order for me to improve my skills as a dancer or devotee, I must fix my mind on god only, and become one with god.

Thank you!

Avyay Potarlanka

Verse 15

yas-mān no-dvi-ja-te lo-kaḥ

lo-kān no-dvi-ja-te ca yaḥ

har-ṣā-mar-ṣa-bha-yod-ve-gaiḥ

muk-to yaḥ sa ca me pri-yaḥ

This verse says to not agitate the world and not to get agitated by the world. Also, about letting go of fear, anxiety, joy, and envy. The world is like the manifest form. People agitate the world in many ways, and not agitating the world is extremely hard. One of the biggest ways of agitating the world is through pollution. People pollute the Earth in many ways. For instance, throwing trash everywhere, making loud noises, and disposing of toxic waste in our water sources, etc. This agitates the world by ruining all our natural resources and harming the animals and other creatures that also live on Earth. In order to stop agitating the world, we have to stop pollution. Even if we can't stop completely, we should at least try to reduce it. This is what is said in verses 12-8 to 12-10. These verses say to fix your mind on God and if you can't practice yoga to be able to fix your mind on him. If you cannot also do that then show your devotion through

actions. This idea can be applied to the issue of pollution. Even if you can't completely stop polluting the world, try to recycle. If you can't recycle all the time then at least don't litter. Keep trying to make the world better even in the smallest way possible. There is a quote which says that cleanliness is next to godliness. This is true in the way that if you are clean and keep the world around you clean you can reach divinity. You will have peace within yourself. In conclusion, this verse to me, tells me to be aware of the world and do our best to help it.

Avyukth Selvadurai

Verse 18

sa-mah sat-rau ca mit-re ca

ta-thaa maa-naa-pa-maa-na-yoh

si-tos-na-su-kha-duh-khe-su

sa-mah san-ga-vi-var-ji-tah || 18 ||

In the 18th Sloka Bhagwan Says:

The people who look at everything equally are the dearest to me. That means who treat their enemy and their friend the same. Their behavior wouldn't change. They will react to honor and dishonor by other people in same way. Either heat or cold won't bother them or they won't care about it. Either happiness or sadness there is no difference for them. Some people may praise, or some people may scold you. We should treat them as the same.

Brinda Anantha

Verse 10

The sloka that I chose is sloka number 10. This sloka teaches me that If you aren't able to perform abhyasa yoga that you can do anything for Krishna's sake. That teaches me that you can do puja to God. and that you can do many more things to god like singing song and chanting. Another way to worship God is to go to the temple and offer sweets and other foods to the poor. My last way that you can worship God is to follow all of the holidays that are celebrated for God as my parents say. When anyone forgets devotion, festivals help remember Krishna again. That is what I learned from chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita.

Chakradar Nallagorla

Verse 13-14:

adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca |
nirmamo nirahankāraḥ sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣhamī ||
santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ |
mayyarpitamanobuddhiryo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||

अद्वेष्टा सवभ ूतानांमैत्रः करुण एव च |

ननमवमो ननरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी || 12-13 ||

सन्तुष्टः सततायोगी यतात्मा दृढनश्चयः ।

मय्यर्पितव मनोबुद्धियो मदभक्तः स मेऽप्यः ॥ 12-14 ॥

“He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, he, my devotee, is dear to me.” I find these two verses to have a lot to say about what someone should do to live an ideal life. There are a lot of different ideas around these two verses but for this reflection, I want to reflect mostly on the part that states “He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from egoism, and forgiving” because I’ve found lately that this is something that I can relate to in my life. Sometimes it can be extremely hard to forgive someone for actions that they do against you or someone you care. I was very mad at a person who just did something very hurtful to a friend. Often, we judge others based on preconceived notions we have of them, which is a bad practice. Maybe this information we were given about them was false or it was simply not all true. Regardless, we should treat others with basic respect and not be rude to them especially without having met the person at all! In 2018 I struggled a lot with forgiveness, more than I ever had to. So, I will focus on my experiences with this. In the summer I went through a tough experience where I watched a friend, I really cared about get very hurt by someone else’s decisions/actions. It left me confused and I was lost for a time, trying to figure out what to make of the whole situation. At that moment I chose to be complacent and let things happen, and that decision stayed with me for a long time. For the longest time I

couldn’t forgive this other person for hurting my friend. I could see that my friend was very affected by it, but it was out of my capacity to change it as I was merely a young adult and had no authority and capacity to intervene. I wrote bad things about this person in my journal. I wanted to scream and let out all my rage at them for their actions. Moreover, I spent a lot of time stuck in the past wondering if what I did was right or not. It really affected my mood for several days, weeks. Dakshesh Nimishe However, eventually I decided that that was not going to help me. All of this thinking just kept agitating me. Although it took me a long time, I’m happy to say that I have forgiven for what happened. I no longer have the hatred or agitation I once felt because now I firmly believe that everything in life happens for a purpose, and things will eventually correct themselves. While there are many things I wish that I could change on my own, that’s not the way the world works. I believe that what I can change for the better I will, and what I cannot change I will not try to, as time will fix it. Is this just a foolish idealistic thinking? No. I have a belief that things get better. In conclusion, that is how I recently dealt with forgiveness in my life. I learned to be more content, peaceful with small changes that happen in my life, and not be agitated by them. Sometimes it’s as simple as “Do your best and leave the rest.” I will continue to do my best to make myself better and help others by being a great friend or family member. But what I cannot change, I will try not to get as mad about, because in time, I believe that some change for better will happen.

Dakshesh Nimishe

Verse 12

Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita stresses the Bhakti Yoga. Arjuna commences the chapter posing an extremely relevant question: is it better to worship a physical, manifested form or meditate the unmanifested forms of the universe? After carefully reading chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita, I felt that Verse 12 gave me an answer I most resonated with.

Swami Chinmayananda defines chapter 12 verse 12 as “‘Knowledge’ is indeed better than ‘practice’; ‘meditation’ is better than ‘knowledge’; renunciation of the fruits-of-actions’ is better than ‘meditation’; peace immediately follows ‘renunciation’.” After reading this verse, I felt a solid understanding towards all components except for the very first – what is the point of knowing something if one cannot apply one’s own knowledge? There have been so many instances in my life where I

have been constantly reminded that mere knowledge has no power without applications. Upon reading Swami Chinmayananda's commentary, I had a stark realization—spiritual knowledge is an entirely different manifestation of knowledge than the calculus I am learning in school. In that case, it is definitely true that no amount of spiritual practice will foster improvement without one's full knowledge and understanding. The Bhagavad Gita contains messages applicable to every human being on this planet, however simply reading the Bhagavad Gita with the expectation of self-improvement will not lead to it; only knowledge and a willingness to gain knowledge from the text will have that effect.

My journey in Chinmaya Mission started quite late, in the Tapovanam class. And for a while, it felt as if I was doing practice without a basis, and thus I found it difficult to truly understand the Gita. My understanding of the Gita eventually developed to where I am today after endless reflection—my form of meditation. The very first time I stood up on the stage to discuss a verse from Chapter 2, I found myself making very basic connections between the verse and my life. However, each time after, I was able to better understand the verse and communicate my understandings in a manner that involved much deeper reflection. I recounted more and more experiences about my spiritual and intellectual growth than my physical or academic growth. With this meditation, I had gained a much better understanding of what it meant to let go of my attachments; something I attempted to fathom for so long.

Every year, I hear the words "Chant Gita. Enchant Krishna," in Chinmaya Mission. To me, these words represent the core lessons provided in Chapter 12 Verse 12. Chanting Gita with a purpose and an understanding of why we are chanting Gita is what will enable us to feel its effects. Krishna gives us extremely valuable lessons in every verse, but his lessons cannot be imbibed in us unless we ourselves enchant him with our knowledge and willingness to learn.

Deeksha Sesha

Verse 12

*śhreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānam viśhiṣhyate
dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgas tyāgāch chhāntir
anantaram*

This shloka from chapter 12 verse 12 says that many people do mechanical practice such as doing rituals and do their religious practices, but they don't engage their

mind in God. Some people think that devotion to God is nothing more than performing an empty ritual. Performing rituals mechanically is necessarily not a bad thing, but Sree Krishna tells us in the Gita is that higher than mechanical practices is spiritual knowledge, knowledge allows us to go beyond the rituals and purify the mind. As we increase our knowledge through devotion it allows us to engage the mind in meditation strengthening our intellect for the next stages.

This shloka has helped me in my life because I thought from a very young age that doing pooja and rituals would allow us to pray to God and that would be enough, but as time came by I realized that pooja and rituals are not enough for praying god and increasing your knowledge, what matters most is devotion to god. Through devotion to god I can solve my problems and reach greater heights with my spiritual knowledge allowing my mind to become clear so that I can focus on my daily tasks. When i have a clear mind I can gain more knowledge and it will allow me to get blessings from God.

Deva Palaniappan

Verse 1

We have only three ways to end a sentence - a period, a question mark and an exclamation mark. We like simplicity. We like a form to understand God. We imagined God in a form that is closer in appearance to a man. But when we think of God through the Vedanta studies, we begin to question the form. We wonder if we should focus on the formless or the multiple forms that were presented to us growing up both physically and spiritually. Is the devotion to the formless God superior to that of Gods with many forms? Arjuna begins to have similar questions and wants to know more! Is the devotion to the formless God better than God with the form? How we want God to appear to us is very much a personal choice. With form or formless, it does not matter, but we as humans have an inherent tendency to use a form, to begin with. God with form is simple and easy to comprehend. We even try to address multiple Gods with a variety of forms in Bala Vihar so that the younger kids are prepared to respond to those who are inquisitive about this portrayal in the religious scriptures. Our Vedanta texts have a liberal approach and freedom of choice in deciding between the formless and God with form. We begin to understand Arjuna's predicament with the subject from Chapter 12, Verse 1.

arjuna uvācha:

evam satata-yuktā ye bhaktās tvām paryupāsate
ye chāpy akṣharam avyaktaṁ teṣhām ke yoga-vittamāḥ

Arjuna is probing regarding who is more perfect—the devotees who worship the personal form of God or those who worship the impersonal Brahman. Arjuna’s curiosity confirms that God has both aspects - the all-pervading formless Brahman and the personal form. A short story describes the conundrum about forms of God. In this story, the ant world gathers at their annual meet up where they discuss various ant-issues. The ants, unlike the humans, agreed on just about everything. They even agreed on a higher power, an ant-God, and that there should certainly be one. But the challenge began and all the differences started to surface when they agreed unanimously that their God must have two antennae-like themselves. They could not decide where the antenna should be positioned on the ant-God. The situation became uncontrollable, and a casual argument became physical and the ants attacked each other. There were body parts strewn all over the place. When things settled, a large, very handsome ant stepped out of the darkness and a very charismatic, a beam of light with powerful magnetic eyes came out. All the ants stood still in awe of him. Who was he? Could this be their ant-God? They stared in admiration, some even fell prostrate. When they looked closer, they found that he had no antenna! The inference from the the story is that the form does not matter. But it is easy to associate God to a form and relate to. Lord Krishna implicitly points out that worshipping the personal God is relatively easier than worshipping the impersonal God. God is perfect and complete, and so He is both formless and possessing forms. We have to follow what we can comprehend. If we can focus our mind on a form and reduce agitation in our mind, we should build up on that. Our ability to focus on a form prepares us to focus on the formless later but start simple.

Dinesh Dhanasekharan

I think that the entire twelfth chapter of Gita is very important because it allows you to know that there is more than one option of devotion. Before reading this chapter, I thought that I would have to be thinking about Krishna all the time and think that everything is Krishna. This would mean forcing to concentrate my mind on the idea of Krishna was Omnipresent or everywhere at once. However, after reading the twelfth chapter I understood there are many ways to be devoted to Krishna. I enjoyed

the surprise that Krishna’s OWN favorite way is not thinking that he is omnipresent.

Krishna’s favorite way for us to be devoted to him is to think of him as our friend. This is within my thinking ability. We are being devoted by being kind to each living thing that we meet. Since Krishna is in all of our hearts we have to take good care of ourselves as well, and that will be good devotion – not being selfish. However, some people still would like to think of Him as the omnipresent so he gives that as an option. This chapter also shows how giving Krishna is. He is seen as the God whom you pray to and he gives you a boon, plus he will help you to reach Him. And He gives you many choices of how to help him and does not limit it to one super hard way to do it. This chapter taught me that even with a full schedule there is always time for Krishna. That is what chapter twelve of the Bhagavad Gita taught me about Bhakti or devotion.

Gautam Tangirala

Verse 10

I selected verse 10 from Chapter 12. The verse itself contains the words

“abhyāse ’py asamartho ’si

mat-karma-paramo bhava

mad-artham api karmāṇi

kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi.”

The reason I selected this verse is because Krishna’s main point discusses what his devotee can do to attain Perfection even without complete renunciation. Krishna’s words directly translated mean, “If you are unable even to practice Abhyasa-Yoga, be you intent on performing actions for My sake; even by doing actions for My sake, you shall attain perfection.” When I asked my dad about this verse, he asked me if I understood the true meaning. I told him I thought it meant that if we perform all actions while thinking of God- if we perform actions for God only, we will attain perfection. My dad did that small smile where he knows I’m wrong but didn’t know how to say it. What he explained to me, in the following minutes was that the devotion described in this verse is like the devotion Meera Bai had. She sang, lived, and breathed all for the Lord--which is what Krishna is asking us to do here. While reading Gurudev’s commentary, it is easy to see both what my dad was saying, and what I originally thought. Gurudev explains that Krishna gives hope to “an

ordinary average man.” He continues, saying that Krishna is giving us a new “path” to follow in this verse. This verse didn’t just impress or inspire me, it helped me realize something. I had always thought that without true and full renunciation we could not attain perfection. But I should have known that Lord Krishna always has a way for us--and that is seen here in this verse. I was so surprised to see and realize this, but it made me immensely happy. As of right now, I don’t think I can go straight to the Meera Bai level of devotion. But I will do my best to think of God in every action I perform-- and I promise to always remember that what I do is my gift to him. Like the quote that Gurudev once said, “What you have is his gift to you, what you do with it is your gift to Him.”

Jahnavi Kirkire

Verses 6-12

“Devotion” is one of the starting points for spiritual growth. It is the seed we are endowed with by the grace of God, and if given proper care and nourishment it evolves even further. The firm conviction in the existence of the higher-supreme power/Ishwar/Brahman is a prerequisite to embark on this journey to eventually reach the supreme goal. In fact, a little bit of introspection is helpful to select the itinerary of this travel. Lord Krishna has provided options catering to all types of mental/intellectual combinations. Our creator knows us too well!

Meditating upon/worshipping the personal form of God is more in tune with the capabilities of the equipment that we are born with. We experience the world with our sense organs and intellect; these are the means with which we are easily able to relate to our beloved “God.” To me, this option makes sense and feels natural in order to connect and stay connected with the Lord. However, one must know and exercise the right way to worship. For that, Lord Krishna emphasizes that mere physical rituals are not sufficient and the mind must be absorbed in thinking of God at all times. The intellect is subject to many defects and imperfections which is an impediment in perfecting the art of worship, so Lord Krishna additionally stipulates that devotees surrender the intellect to HIM. Only by worshipping with this firm attitude and putting it in constant practice can one expect to dwell in God and eventually be liberated from the stronghold of Maya.

Lord Krishna has laid out a sequential path for self-development indicating his acknowledgement that his

devotees are of different abilities in keeping their mind and intellect steadily fixated on the “manifest form/Ishvara”. There are some who are able to stand apart from the wandering mind and can immediately tame it every time this happens with their intellect. Lord Krishna assures these devotees that doing this exercise repeatedly (*Abhayas-yoga*) will indeed give desired success over time. For those devotees who are unable to practice *Abhayas-yoga*, Lord Krishna suggests to consider themselves as God’s equipment and perform all actions in the service of the Lord. This path leads devotees to engage in selfless activities which helps calm their mind, exhaust the existing vasanas, and facilitate contemplating on the Lord. The path of self-development is also available to those seekers who do not fall into any of the above groups. Lord Krishna advises them to renounce the fruits of their actions. This technique enables the devotees to remain in the present and conserve their energies by curbing their anxieties and fears of a future which may or may not even happen. It brings a quietude to the turbulent mind and allows intellect to strengthen.

Undoubtedly, controlling the mind is a challenge but it is comforting to know that based on where we are in the ladder-of- ideas, we have the discretion of selecting the option that suits us best and assists us get closer to our ultimate destination.

Kalpna Panigrahi

Verse 2

“Those who, fixing their mind on Me, worship Me, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme faith, these, in my opinion, are the best in YOGA”- Chapter 12, Verse 2

In Gurudev’s commentary on Verse 2, He discusses a folly that generally exists among communities of seekers. He says, “Generally, there is a feeling that the path-of-Devotion is very easy.” But as Gurudev later says, “...for self-development, each type of seeker, according to the vehicle available, chooses either the path-of-Devotion or the path-of-Action, or the path-of-Knowledge. To each one of them his Path is the easiest.” There isn’t an easiest path, just the path easiest for the specific seeker. The Path of Devotion is difficult for those who are tuned to other paths. For that matter, the Path of Devotion is difficult for those who *are* tuned to it.

Fixing one’s mind for Worship may come smoothly for a short period of time, but Lord Krishna in verse 2 is asking for more than that. He says a devotee must be ever steadfast and endowed with Supreme Faith. Fixing one’s

mind on the Lord is difficult, as it's not just idle thought but moving past one's identification into a state of totally merging with the Lord. Being steadfast in one's faith is difficult as focus wavers quickly and being firm requires continuous focus. And being endowed with supreme Faith is difficult, as there is no room for doubt or ego that arise often.

So why does the feeling about the ease of Bhakti arise? Perhaps it is because the first step on its Path seems easy. To many, embodying an attitude of selfless dedicated service, as necessary in Karma Yoga, or beginning a path of self-study and reflection, as necessary in Jnana Yoga, is very difficult. Yet in comparison, Bhakti Yoga starts with Bhajans or Poojas, which are easy to start and practice. But that is only the first step on the Path of Bhakti, and the following steps test the seeker.

In Upadesa Sara, Sri Ramana Maharshi lays out all the steps in traveling the Path of Bhakti. In ascending order: Pooja, Singing of devotional songs, Loud Japa, Soft Japa, Mental Japa, Meditation, Unbroken Meditation, and finally Enlightenment. Intellectually, the steps are easy to understand. As one ascends this ladder, the amount of discipline required to properly practice Bhakti increases. Each step prepares us a bit more to reach the three qualities that Lord Krishna requires in devotees. We become more able to fix our minds on the Lord for longer and with greater ability to disregard distractions. And practicing Bhakti to a greater degree allows us to cut out doubts and ego.

Yet despite the simplicity of the steps involved, practicing is obviously difficult. Especially in the world of 24 hour updates on our phones and constant attention-seeking on social media, working on our concentration and ego-removal is harder than ever. Travelling down the path of Bhakti is not easy, but it is so worth it.

Keshav Kowtha

Verses 13-14

12 - 13 Meaning

"He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving..."

12 - 14 Meaning

"Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, he, My devotee, is dear to me."

Paraphrased Meaning:

This means that people who are nice to the universe and to other people, who are calm and is not uncontrolled, is "closer" to Bhagavan.

Connections:

This is similar to the Chinmaya Mission Pledge. In the 3rd paragraph it says "We live honestly. The noble life of sacrifice and service. Giving more than what we consume and giving more than what we take." This means that we do not take more than what we need and give back with interest. Just like a bank. We ask for a loan and we give back the money with some interest. In the 5th paragraph, it says "We believe that the service of our country is the service of the Lord of Lords. And devotion to the people is devotion to the supreme self." This means that people who are providing services are servicing the lord. Also, people who are dedicated to other people, are dedicated to themselves to service them.

Krishay Iyer

Verse 5

For my written reflection, I selected Verse 5 of Chapter 12 in which Sri Krishna explains to Arjuna that the path of Jnana is a difficult one, and in later verses directs Arjuna on the seemingly easier path of Bhakti.

kleso'dhikatarastesamavyaktacetasam

avyakta hi gatirdukkham dehavadbhiravapyate (XII-5)

Gurudev's literal commentary for this verse:

Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the 'Unmanifest'; for the goal, the 'Unmanifest', is very hard for the embodied to reach.

The path of Jnana with its use of logic appeals to us, as we seek to satisfy our intellect. The Vedantic introductory texts such as *Drig Drishya Viveka*, *Aparokshanubhuti*, and Gurudev's talk on *Logic of Spirituality*, we understand the fundamental arguments of Vedanta – that we are not our body, mind, or intellect; that beyond the waking, dream, and deep sleep state, there is a fourth (Turiya) state which

is the substratum of all states. Intellectually we are able to discern that this underlying awareness is the Self, and that is our true state. Yet, we continue to be affected by the vicissitudes of life, and the goal of enlightenment remains ever elusive.

The reasons are two-fold:

1. The prerequisites for the path of Jnana are difficult! The bar is set VERY HIGH!!

In the *Vivekaçudamani*, Sankara outlines four (truly speaking there are nine!) essential qualifications (*sadhana catustaya*) BEFORE embarking on the path of Jnana Yoga:

Viveka – Discrimination (ability to discriminate between the Real and the Unreal)

Vairagya – Dispassion for worldly things, rejecting the temporary.

Shamaadi-satka-sampati – Six-fold virtues of the mind – Restraining of the mind (Shama), control of the senses (Dama), withdrawal from worldly objects (Uparati), forbearance (Titiksha), fixing the mind on the Self (SamaDhanam), and intense faith in your Guru and the scriptures (Shraddha)

Mumukshatvam – Burning desire for God-realization

There are few amongst us that can claim to check even one of these boxes! Even the most perfect of Yogis, like Gurudev, and Swami Sivananda, underwent years of rigorous austerities before attaining the Self.

2. Our minds are inherently impure, conditioned with Vasanas from perhaps numerous earlier births.

Our minds have layers of tendencies from which countless desires spring forth. As stated earlier, merely satisfying our intellect is not enough, as most of us are “a servant to the servants (senses) of our servant (mind),” i.e. we are subject to the whims and desires of our mind, which in turn is a servant to the senses. Inherently, our minds look outward to the world of names and forms; Atman being beyond name and form, and unmanifest is therefore beyond the normal “grasp” of the mind. To purify and control the mind, one must first gain mastery over their senses.

This is why Sri Krishna prescribes Bhakti Yoga as a solution for salvation. In Chapter II (verses 59-63) of the Gita, Sri

Krishna states that even if one controls their senses, traces of deep-seated desires will eventually rise up and overcome the spiritual aspirant, and one must be ever vigilant.

Therefore, the mind’s outgoing tendencies have to be turned toward other “attractions” through Bhakti. The mind must be trained to love God, instead of dwelling in the transient pleasures of objects. Through Bhakti, the mind is quietened and eventually is purified to realize the Self in us.

For those who are skeptical that God can be achieved through Bhakti alone need only think of numerous instances where God’s compassion and love overflows for his Bhaktas - Lord Krishna washing the feet of his dear friend Sudama; or of St. Teresa of Avila who had a vision of Lord Jesus. Jesus asks Teresa – “Who are you?” She replied, “I am Teresa of Jesus. Who are you?”

The Christ said, “I am Jesus of Teresa.”

In closing, there was a spiritual seeker set upon the path of Jnana. Convinced of its superiority over the other Yogas, he said to his Guru – “Aren’t the other Yogas just rungs on the spiritual ladder to get to Jnana Yoga and then one can realize the Self?” The Guru smiled, “Yes, but remember, the ladder can be always turned around.”

Krishnan Seshadri

Chapter XII describes the path and art of devotion and starts with an interesting question posed by Arjuna - who is the better seeker? The one who is immersed in divine love to the Lord Manifest or the one who contemplates upon the unmanifested-infinite?

The Divine Lord starts his discourse by specifying the three essential conditions to become a noblest devotee-

- total sincere merger of the mind with the Lord - discipline at the emotional level
- ever ready and steady, unwavering mind - perform all actions as worship of the Lord, with the understanding, that the world outside is Lord Himself (discipline at the physical level)
- perfect complete shraddha - discipline at the intellectual level

This stanza helps us to understand that all three aspects (emotional, physical and intellectual) of one’s personality need to be unified and centered to help one proceed

further in one's spiritual progress from the state of ego to higher state of self.

The next two stanzas describe those who contemplate the unmanifested -infinite form of the Lord. Gurudev in his discourse talk on this chapter, calls contemplation as "Adventure in thinking"

To succeed in this path of contemplation, there are three essential conditions -

- all sense organs of perception and action must be in control
- intellectual equanimity in all times, places, experiences and conditions
- Self-dedication in serving at one's best with the intent on the welfare of all beings

He indicates that paths may be different to reach the goal - our individual GPS may show two different routes to the same destination (Supreme Self). One may pick the highway (with tolls / faster speed / no stops) and another may prefer back roads (slower speed with many traffic lights). One will pick the route based on one's personal make up preferences. Whichever route one chooses, the destination (result / goal) achieved remains the same, if the rules and restrictions prescribed for those routes, are strictly adhered to. One must be cautious not to get distracted by all the worldly attractions (rest areas / food court/theater etc.) that each route may entice and stop or delay the spiritual journey. If one follows His instructions carefully and faithfully either by emotional or rational thinking upon Him, He is sure to save us from this terrible ocean of samsara which is full of scary crocodiles of birth, death, jealousy, deceit, sorrows etc.

There are two aspects of Brahman - Sagun (With Form) / Nirgun (Formless). Since man has a form, it is easy for him to worship God with form. Saguna worship will eventually help him to contemplate upon the nirguna nature of God. Based on one's percentage of vasanas, one may be in the grades of A, B, C, D or even F in their lives. The lower the vasanas %, the higher, one's grade is to contemplate upon Him. One need not worry, if one's grades (related to vasanas) are low - Lord Krishna provides a solution of Abhyasa Yoga (yoga of constant practice). Keep on trying to bring the fickle monkey mind under control to burn the vasanas, with the help of personal mind trainer (our supreme Lord). Even if constant practice is difficult, then take refuge in Him and direct all the actions towards Him, keeping Him in one's thoughts, expressing gratitude through karma yoga.

I conclude with a prayer to Him to bless us, with all of the precious virtues such as contentment, equanimity, equipoise, controlled speech etc. mentioned in verses 18 and 19 of this chapter. May we all be dear to Lord Krishna!

Latha Krish

Verses 8,15

Bhagavad Gita chapter 12 describes Bhakti Yoga. Arjuna wants to be one with Divinity, so Lord Krishna walks him through the precise knowledge of divinity. He explains that Arjuna can embrace divinity by devotion.

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोकः	yas-mān-no-dvi-ja-te lo-kaḥ
लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।	lo-kān-no-dvi-ja-te ca yaḥ ।
हृषामयमयोद्देहैः	har-ṣā-mar-ṣa-bha-yod-ve-gaiḥ
मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥ १५ ॥	muk-to yaḥ sa ca me pri-yaḥ ॥15॥

Bhagavan Sri Krishna says when someone does not agitate the world or does not get agitated by the world, who is also free from joy, envy, fear, and anxiety those people are dear to Lord Krishna. I can relate above qualities to Bhakta Markandeya. Markandeya, the son of Rishi Mirkandu and his wife Marudmati, was born with intellectual qualities but with a short life span. As per the boon granted to Mirkandu, his son will survive until his 16th birthday. When there is light there can be no darkness. Similarly, when there is perfection of divinity, joy and peace prevails. Markandeya was not agitated or disturbed by the information. He was not filled with anxiety nor anger when he came across this message from his parents. All he had was complete faith in Lord Shiva. His faith was such that, at the moment of distress he completely hugs Shiva like a child hugging his mother in distress. His action is completely in line with verse 8.

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व	may-ye-va ma-na ā-dhat-sva
मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।	ma-yi bud-dhīm ni-ve-ṣa-ya ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव	ni-va-siṣ-ya-si may-ye-va
अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥ ८ ॥	a-ta ūrdh-vam na saṁ-ṣa-yaḥ ॥8॥

My understanding of both verses is that if we have complete faith in what we are doing and have passion for it no doubt we will achieve it successfully. We can do our work perfectly if we don't get distracted by the happenings around us. But if we distract someone else or

get distracted by someone else, none of us will get our work done. But why would we need to distract someone else? It would be a waste of our time while we can do our work properly and quickly. It will be in our best interest if we can keep fear, envy and anxiety away from us in the process of getting our work done. These qualities will lead us to achieve our goals in effective way. Markhendheya was meditating on Lord Shiva. He did his work and let Yama do his Job. The outcome was decided by the divinity, Lord Shiva.

Mahesha Loganathan

Verse 15

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोकः लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैः मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥ 12-15 ॥

My favorite verse from chapter 12 is verse 15. This verse has taught me why one should ignore the attention seekers and how to focus on their own work.

Yas-mān-no-dvi-ja-te lo-kaḥ - Not agitating the world

Lo-kān-no-dvi-ja-te ca yaḥ - Not being agitated by the world

If we want to be successful, then we are not supposed to bother other people and if someone tries to bother us, we are not supposed to pay attention to them. Being an attention seeker or paying attention towards such person will waste our time and energy. Rather, focusing on our time and action will make us feel good and satisfied. If we are paying attention to others willingly or unwillingly, we are going to lose the focus on our present. So, we may not be able to do the work on time which will lead us to anxiousness. For example, during partner reading time in school, we have to focus on reading with a partner and not on seeking attention. If we complete the task then we will be happy that we learnt some new things. If we are not focusing on reading then the teacher will call us and the entire class is going to look at us. This might be an embarrassing situation for both the reading partners.

Har-ṣā-mar-ṣa-bha-yod-ve-gaiḥ Muk-to – Free from joy, envy, fear and anxiety

yaḥ sa ca me pri-yaḥ - he is dear to me

Joy means happiness, envy means we are moving towards egoism, fear means scared of something/someone, anxiety means worrying about something on the last minute or about things that

happened in the past. If we want to be successful then we must be free from joy, envy, fear and anxiety. If we focus on these feelings then we will not even know what is going on around us. We will be occupied with that feeling and we will not do what we are supposed to do. If we are free from joy, envy, fear and anxiety then we will not be bothered by the outside world and we will be focusing on whatever we are doing.

I would like to quote Bhakta Prahlad as a best example for this verse. Even though Prahlad was different from others around him, he was neither agitated by the people around him nor was agitating the people around him. No matter what happened to him, he was just focusing on his work, dedicating his mind and intellect to Lord Vishnu. When his father Hiranyakashipu tried to kill him for not following his orders, Prahlad didn't show any of the feelings – joy, envy, fear or anxiety. He was determined to do his duty with complete devotion.

To conclude, I may not have mastered all these qualities, but I am trying my best to achieve those.

Mukesh Sureshababu

Having seen Lord Krishna in his Vishwarupa, feeling a deep love and adoration for his friend, who is now his mentor, Arjuna asks: which road is the correct one – the path of devotion to a personal God or the one where a person awakens with knowledge of the Unmanifest? I have asked myself this—while my being resonates to the message of Advaita Vedanta, I wonder sometimes if I am missing something. Where is the feeling, the emotion, the love? Lord Krishna's answer to Arjuna elevates the path of devotion as the BEST means to realize God. We are human beings with a strong identification to our limited body and mind. Through this limited vehicle, we explore the world around us and develop strong likes, dislikes, and attachments. In fact, our survival depends on these attachments: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Attachment is easy and natural. We just need to develop some awareness and consciously attach to God. Developing an overwhelming attachment to God is sort of like having a healthy diet—replace the junk food with a large portion of fruits and vegetables, and this will minimize your troubles for both body and mind.

Both paths—knowledge and devotion--start with a little dose of trust—a belief that there is something bigger and grander than me and mine. When we start paying attention to this little voice and feed this idea with spiritual practices, the faith turns to conviction. After all,

do we need to believe that the sun rises in the east? No, we KNOW that. So also, we start to KNOW in our inner being that there is a grand play of which we are but a small part. At first it seems that there is a fork in the road and the two paths diverge. But I have found that the more I listen (shravana) and cogitate (manana) on the revelations in the Upanishads, I feel more love for God. When Lord Rama asks Hanuman, the BEST devotee of all, what he thinks of Sri Rama, Hanuman responds—as this body and mind, I am your servant; as the subtle body, I am a small part of YOU; when I am established in Knowledge, there is no difference between you and me. Lord Hanuman’s answer reflects my varying relationship to God. On a daily basis, when I pray in the morning, I am a devotee. When I listen to a Vedanta lecture in the car, I feel that I could come close to understanding that all is Brahman. In fact, they are not different paths at all; they are different states of one mind and nurturing each approach strengthens the other.

Dr. Mythreyi Shastri

Verses 15,18

Bhakti Yoga is about devotion to divinity. Chapter 12 speaks about Bhakti Yoga. At the end of the Chapter 12, Krishna gives 33 qualities that a best devotee should have. I am very impressed with following two verses (12-15 and 12-18).

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोकः yas-mān-no-dvi-ja-te lo-kaḥ
लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः। lo-kān-no-dvi-ja-te ca yaḥ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैः har-ṣā-mar-ṣa-bha-yod-ve-gaiḥ
मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥ १५ ॥ muk-to yaḥ sa ca me pri-yaḥ ॥ 12-15 ॥

He by whom the world is not agitated (affected) and who cannot be agitated by the world, who is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety – he is dear to me.

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च sa-maḥ śat-rau ca mit-re ca
तथा मानापमानयोः। ta-thā mā-nā-pa-mā-na-yoḥ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु śī-toṣ-ṇa-su-kha-duḥ-khe-ṣu
समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥ १८ ॥ sa-maḥ saṅ-ga-vi-var-ji-taḥ ॥ 12-18 ॥

He who is the same to foe and friend, and also in honor and dishonor, who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment...

The person I could find these qualities in is Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. He did not get affected by others’ words neither did he affect others with his words. He just stayed focused on his work. Who is free from joy, envy, fear and anxiety means the one who does not let those feelings overtake

him. He always stays calm. The failure of the launch of Agni Missile was one incident in his life where he displayed these qualities along with “Tulya Ninda Stutir Mauni”. A lot of people criticized him during this event, but he stayed silent for all the criticism and did not let the feeling of fear or anxiety caused by it to overtake him. He was equal in honor and dishonor, who stayed focused on his work no matter what goes around him. Both the verses tell the same thing, to be focused. In several other incidents he displayed such qualities. In Verse 8 it is explained that if one puts his whole mind and works hard in what he is doing the result will be fruitful. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam displayed these qualities during a incident in his life. When he was studying at Madras Institute of Technology (M.I.T), he was assigned a project along with 5 other students. He took up the responsibility of the aircraft design. Somehow their progress was slow. One day, he was called by their design teacher Professor Srinivasan, the then director of M.I.T to his office. He said “Kalam, I expected better work from you. I want the completed project with me on Monday morning. Or else I will have to stop the scholarship.” Dr. Kalam had come to M.I.T by scholarship. It was already Friday and the scholarship meant a lot to him. He asked for extra time, but the Professor remained adamant. He hardly ate and worked all day and night. By Monday morning his work was almost done. The professor had been observing him. He was quite impressed and told him “Well done, Kalam. I knew you were capable of much more when I called you on Friday. And you have proved me right”. This incident shows the importance of hard work along with focus.

For the past few days, I have understood how this value - focus has helped me. When I was studying for my Math Olympiad, I developed interest which made me focus. Because of my interest I was able to enjoy it. Not only did I enjoy it, I also started getting the concepts better in my mind. In this way, the importance of focus, which was emphasized by Sri Krishna to Arjuna, followed in every step of his life by Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam becomes part of my character, for sure I’ll be able to pursue my dreams one day.

Nikhita Reddy

Verses 4-12

Lord Krishna says that, controlling one’s senses by keeping one’s mind intact with the intellect in any consequence and cheerfully performing actions for the well-being of the society would certainly reach him. When a child behaves differently at different points of time like

being mischievous, crying, laughing, screaming, and obedient, all through this behavior change, mother looks at the child as only same daughter/son and treats accordingly. Like, the soldiers in the border who are always vigilant and lovingly performing their duties for the welfare of the beings despite hardships, tragedies, success, and failures (being even-minded) in his day to day life taking Country's protection as their supreme goal.

Lord Krishna stresses here that, greater is the trouble of those who set their minds on "The Unmanifest", as senses in reality are entry points for earthly interests, which would ultimately push us into destruction. It is with the help of actions through body organs that the mind admires materialist objects. This breaks harmony and steadiness in meditation.

Restraining senses cannot happen overnight. It must be practiced and should be a deliberate effort to achieve. Challenges exists, overcoming those and striving to achieve the goal should be the motto, pushing us ahead to reach the goal. In the process of restraining the senses, the focus should be more towards the practice rather than the result.

Performing actions attentively with right knowledge, renouncing the results lead to Peace. Only in Peace one can distinguish the difference between the atman and brahman. Since it's clear that the highest goal of a human being is to identify the Supreme self, and this is possible only when the Body, Mind and Intellect are all aligned. Henceforth, I will Physically, Emotionally and faithfully practice aligning my Body, Mind and Intellect in one focal point.

Nirmala Koti

The Supreme entity is both personal and impersonal. Practitioners of the spiritual path are also of two kinds—devotees of the formless Brahman, and devotees of the personal form. But the path of worshipping the formless is very difficult. The knowers of the Truth have stated that there is only one Supreme Entity that manifests in three ways in the world—Brahman, *Paramātmā*, and *Bhagavān*." They are not three different Gods; rather, they are three manifestations of the one Almighty God. Living beings are of an infinite variety of natures.

The Supreme Lord who has created this variety also possesses an infinite variety of aspects to His personality. For the sake of our finite comprehension, we classify the infinite manifestations of God into categories.

Devotees of the personal form receive the help of divine support in their *sādhana*. Devotees continuously offer their hearts in interrupted bhakti, God quickly bestows His grace upon them and removes the obstacles on their path. Captivity in Maya and liberation from it is determined by the mind. If it is attached to the world, one is in bondage, and if the mind is detached from the world, one gets liberated." Each time the mind wanders toward other objects and ideas, the devotee must strive to bring it back to God through remembrance of His Names, Forms, Virtues, Pastimes, Abodes, and Associates. The instruction to practice to remember God is also often easier said than done. The mind is made from the material energy Maya and it naturally runs toward the material objects of the world, while taking it toward God requires conscious and determined effort. The purified intellect will more easily be able to comprehend transcendental knowledge, and we will be able to move to the higher levels of *sādhana*. By practically controlling the mind through meditation, we begin to develop detachment from worldly pleasures. The Supreme Lord dwells in the hearts of all living beings The soul is a servant of God by its inherent nature, and as we become enlightened with this knowledge, we naturally dedicate ourselves to the Supreme Lord. The heart of the devotee contains an ocean of love for God. Shree Krishna says that such devotees are very dear to Him. Devotees who are also firm in their faith that if they surrender to Him lovingly, by God's grace they will achieve the highest realization. Those who make the Supreme Lord as their goal and cultivate devotion with great faith, imbued with the virtues mentioned in the previous verses, such devotees are exceedingly dear to God.

Thus, in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, in the Science of the Eternal, in the scripture of Yoga, in the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the twelfth discourse ends entitled: The Yoga of Devotion.

The soul's Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved, and resting place are all God. Hence our one and only *dharma* becomes loving devotional service to God. This is also called *para dharma* or spiritual *dharma*.

Padmaja Emani

Verse 5

The verse I chose for writing my reflection on is:

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ||

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते || 5 ||

kleśho 'dhikataras teṣhām avyaktāsakta-chetasām

avyaktā hi gatiṛ duḥkhaṁ dehavadbhir avāpyate

The literal translation is “Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on ‘the Unmanifest’; for the goal, ‘the Unmanifest’, is very hard for the embodied to reach”.

In chapter 12, the Path of Devotion or “Bhakti Yoga”, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna as to which form of yoga or meditation is better to attain supreme faith - whether to meditate upon the manifested form of the Infinite or the unmanifested-supreme. In the earlier verses, Lord Krishna explains that those who are able to control their senses, can in deed attain supreme faith by fixing their mind upon the Imperishable, the Unmanifest. However, here Lord Krishna is saying that one who is attached to the senses will find it difficult to take to steady and continuous meditation upon the subtle theme of the Infinite, Formless and All-pervading Supreme.

It is very hard to fix one’s mind upon a chosen point of concentration, as the fickle mind will always try to run wild into variety of thoughts. Hence, it is easier to focus by fixing the thoughts on the lord’s manifestation. The goal of meditation is to attain renunciation of all worldly stresses as described in verse 15. Even for beginners, transcendental meditation techniques can help with concentration and mindfulness.

Prakash Sesha

The Journey towards becoming a Bhakta is very nicely laid out in the Chapter 12. For many years I thought that it was very difficult to embrace Bhakti. Lord Sri Krishna says Renunciation of fruits of Actions is better than Knowledge and Meditation. Reflecting on what is renouncing fruits of Actions and how to do it, gives me some comfort that perhaps gaining Bhakti is not that difficult.

From my understanding, the three steps for Renunciation of fruits of actions are as follows. 1) Have small and large goals that are aligned with a higher purpose. 2) Work towards the goals, thinking of God, while staying in the present with no regrets about the past and worries for the future. 3) Accept the results the way they come. All these three steps constitute the renunciation of fruits of actions.

The first step starts with our journey towards the Karma Yoga. We slowly take up some small goals to help others

within our families. Then, the goals get bigger and we try helping many more and larger communities for higher purpose. This leads to Bhakti.

The second step is of thinking of God while working. It is surely difficult to do this as we get caught up with transactions. The transactions bring lot of emotional issues and ego in the way. One way of thinking of God is focusing on the work itself. To overcome the emotional issues, we will always need to keep in mind the higher purpose and that we are His instruments. And this leads to Bhakti.

The last step is accepting results as they come. And this is the key for renunciation of fruits of actions. If we can understand that we cannot do anything without God and everything we have is because of Him, if we accept all the dishonoring results, and if we accept that what we get is only for our betterment, then peace will immediately follow. And that is Bhakti

Making ‘Renunciation of fruits of actions’ a goal of life helps us become Santushtah and attain contentment in every moment.

Radha Kowtha

The question Arjuna poses Krishna in chapter 12 is it better to worship the Nirguna Brahman or is it better to worship the Saguna Brahman. In the Advaita Vedanta tradition, **Nirguna Brahman (Brahman without qualities)** is Para **Brahman**. Saguna **Brahman (Brahman with qualities)**. Arjuna's question is which form of devotion does the Lord prefer.

Lord Shri Krishna says that there are three paths to reach him .

1. The path of Devotion
2. The path of Action
3. The path of knowledge.

The path one has to choose is the one which suits the devotee the best. Every person has different personalities and what works for one may not work for the others. If one picks a path that suits one personality then the chances of success are higher.

In the path of devotion, the first step is fixing one's thought on the lord; it must done in such a way that one concentrates on the Lord merges onto him. The personality of the Lord then should flow through the

devotee to the world around him. The second quality is self-control or control of one's senses organs. Upasana is needed for one to be attuned to the higher principle and be merged with it. The third quality that is needed faith or Shradha. If one has to go down this road of devotion one must have faith that they will reach the end goal they are searching for.

Even those for worship the lord as the Nirguna Brahman, the nonperishable and unmanifest form of the lord, they also reach the Lord if they serve the world around them with a peaceful equanimous mind. It is difficult of humans to follow this path because it is difficult for them to comprehend the Nirguna Brahman. Those devotees who follow the path of devotion and renounce all actions on to the lord. Renouncing all actions onto the lord means having lost one's own identity and identifying totally with the lord and seeking him as the supreme goal.

For those who cannot fix the mind totally on to the lord initially they can do it with a little practice. (Abhyasa Yoga). The mind is fickle and it is difficult for one to concentrate on the lord for a long time for those people Krishna says do action for my sake. That means one does all the work in the name of the Lord. This is the first step in the destruction of ego. If this is not possible then Krishna says do the action and leave the fruits of action onto me. This means working without the fear of result. The actions that are performed with devotion and without the fear of results lead to the reduction of vasanas.

The method of worship one picks depends upon the extent of the vasanas one has. A person with more vasanas may need more time and practice to reach the Lord than a person with less vasanas. Knowledge is better than practice, meditation is better than Knowledge. Renunciation of fruit of action is better than meditation and peace follows renunciation. It is better to understand the end goal when performing spiritual practices. These practices are the stepping stone to the final goal but they are the end goal. Attaining the knowledge is one step in the right direction. After that one must meditate to inwardly assimilate the knowledge attained. After meditation one must renounce one's quest for fruits of action. This step is needed for destruction of vasanas and for one to attain total peace.

Raghuveer Rao

In my Sri Lanka yatra with my guru Vivekji, I learned something so simple yet profound. That is, "What you learn and practice alone will be carried with you to your

next life. What you earn and yearn will be left behind". That statement made me evaluate what I am doing. Am I spending my time wisely? Am I putting my energy and efforts in the right direction? I started contemplating on the right way to attain happiness, permanent happiness. Which path is the right way? We know we have 3 major paths - Path of contemplation on formless (Jnana) or

Path of devotion and worshiping a form, rituals, and prayers in a temple – (Bhakti) and

Path of action (karma)

What is the best way? Being part of Chinmaya Mission, I am fortunate to have all the options available - to be part of rituals and pujas or be part of study groups and discussion groups or be a sevak and work. I have a choice but wanted to be sure so I turned towards Bhagavad Gita to find the answer, and guess what!! Krishna says it does not matter which path you choose as long as you bring your mind to Him through devotion or through contemplation or through actions. Now what? That leads me to think one should have faith in whichever path one is taking. **Faith, not Belief.** Belief will break down when calamity strikes. Belief will die under pressure. Faith, once developed, gets stronger the more it is tested. Faith is discipline at the intellectual level. Faith is developed by studying the scriptures and reflecting upon the learning.

Why read scriptures? Can we find a definition of God in scriptures? Can God be described in words? Can we quantify faith in our heart? To be able to comprehend chapter 12, a certain level of maturity or a certain level of thought development is necessary. Scriptures say that God cannot be defined; this means that what we now know is only BMI, PFT, and OET. In terms of these, we cannot describe the Lord. Because He is unique, He is something other than what we all experience in the world of time. Therefore, a descriptive definition of God is not possible. But, indicative descriptions are possible. In that case, how does one find happiness or reach God? Chapter 12 has quite a few indicative descriptions to find the best way to find happiness (moksha), but for me, I felt below is the fundamental definition of one who can achieve that goal.

One who is learning to contemplate and understanding the scriptures; one who does not allow his mind to wander and does not give in to sense organs. Sense organs are to be kept under check, Intellect under control, never allowing the poise of one's intellect to be disturbed by things or situations around them; One who orients all his actions to the Lord; One who brings his mental

attention to the Lord exclusively will automatically head in the right direction and will attain real happiness; Most of all one who has Faith in what he is doing and has the right Guru who can lead and make one understand.

Raj Pujjur

Verse 7

Spiritual progress doesn't seem to come easily. The more I try to withdraw from the world of objects, emotions, and thoughts, the more I notice the distractibility of my mind. I've heard this is normal, but there are days it is hard to believe I can ever slow my mind. Forget slowing it to a stop! In these low moments, Sri Krishna's "divine covenant" in Verse 7 of Chapter 12 in Srimad Bhagavad Geeta is like the firm grip of a parent on a little kid's bike as she tries to ride alone. It gives me direction. It gives me confidence. Sri Krishna promises that He will lift from samsāra those who set their minds on Him and only Him. Could the same mind that gets distracted also set me free if only I choose the path of the Divine? I have heard the answer is yes, and I am learning how to make good, thoughtful choices in that direction. As I listen to and observe my Guru Swami Dheeranandaji, digest Pujya Gurudev's commentaries, and spend time with like-minded people, I am beginning to learn how to steady my mind. But who is this "I" that is beginning something? Sri Krishna reminds me in Verse 16 of Chapter 12 that the ones who are dear to Him are those who renounce every new beginning (sarvārambhaparityagī), letting go of the feeling that "I" did anything at all. After all, generations upon generations of spiritual seekers have come and gone - "my" path is not new. So I continue seeking, even when it seems like I am going nowhere, because I know I am not alone.

Sahana Kukke

Verse 11

In Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita Arjuna has finally seen Lord Sri Krishna's divine form, and he is confused as to whether it is better to worship a tangible, manifest form or if it is better to meditate on an intangible unmanifest form. Lord Sri Krishna then explains the characteristics of a devotee that truly matter.

Earlier in the chapter Lord Krishna explains those who do mediate and focus on the unmanifest ultimately will reach Lord Sri Krishna. In verse 8 of the Gita Lord Sri Krishna explains to properly worship him we must fix our mind on Lord Krishna only, as well as give Lord Krishna control of

our intellect. Of course, all this sounds very easy, after all how tough can it be to focus on only one concept while worshipping? However, the reality of the situation is that in the modern world it is very difficult to train our minds to be able to properly worship the lord. However, Lord Krishna can predict this task will prove difficult for many at first and advises us to follow abhyasa yoga to bring our minds back under control and train them to be able to focus only on Lord Sri Krishna. In verse 10 Lord Sri Krishna continues to advise us on what to do if we are unable to follow his previous instructions, and he tells us to perform actions for his sake, which will still allow us to attain perfection. But what does this mean? Lord Krishna is saying we should reevaluate why we perform our actions, and rather than performing actions for our own gains and pleasures, we should refocus our mind and instead perform actions for Lord Sri Krishna instead. For example, if we are exercising, we can develop a new mindset by making our intent to improve our bodies, so we can better serve the lord with it rather than thinking about our own gains. This shifting of mindset can be applied to many scenarios, whether it be our jobs, studying, taking care of those around us, etc. But even this can prove difficult for many people and in chapter 11, lord Krishna has declared that at the very least we should perform our actions as we have been performing them, but we should renounce the fruits of our actions. In doing so we will be able to purify our minds and move up towards the other more effective methods of worship prescribed by Lord Sri Krishna. These 4 verses are of interest to me because they all show us how we can improve ourselves in our everyday lives. We don't have to keep straining our mind to focus on Krishna alone. if we are clearly unable to do this, but rather if we slowly change the way we think about our actions we will be able to reach Lord Sri Krishna.

Saiprasad Ravi

This chapter is especially dear to me, as this was the very first chapter I chanted as a young girl. It has only taken me forty odd years to get to the meaning of what I chanted! At this stage memorizing is much harder and so I chose to write a reflection on the chapter.

The chapter begins by Arjuna asking the universal question – who is better - people who worship God as unmanifested and without attributes (nirguna nirakara) or those whose who worship God with qualities and forms (saguna sakara).

Universally people “see” God differently. Some seek him in nature, others as divine incarnation, and some in murthis. Worship to some is rituals, to others it is praying in temples, mosques, churches etc. Some believe worship is serving mankind. Each feels his or her way is superior and seek validation.

Lord Krishna answers this question and explains that neither is superior. People who worship both the formless and the form reach God or truth. The personal and the impersonal, the physical form and the transcendental form, are the two sides of the coin of ultimate Reality.

Lord Krishna further elaborates that though both paths lead to the same destination, worshipping God with form is relatively easier.

A person who is competent to worship the formless aspect of God must have a complete mastery over the senses, be tranquil under all circumstances, and be engaged in the welfare of all creatures. One must be free from body-feeling and be established in the feeling of the existence of the Self alone, if one wants to succeed in worship of formless Absolute. This is can be unrealistic for ordinary seekers and thus for them, worshipping a God with form and attributes is the natural course.

There are obvious differences in the two paths but true faith and devotion – Shraddha and bhakti are essential cornerstones of both. True devotion, bhakti is defined as the highest order of love for God. It is intense love of God to attain Him without any ulterior motives. It is seeking God’s grace and serving with love and dedication to please Him.

Shraddha is not blind belief. As Gurudev defines it, Shraddha is ‘my belief in something I do not know so that I may know what I believe in’.

As the lyrics of a popular bhajan by Jagjit Singh go - *“Shraddha se bhakti milti hai, Bhakti se bhagavan- kar eiska vishwas ye prani gita ka hai gnan.”*

This means that Shraddha (faith) is essential for Bhakti (love of God) and Bhakti is essential to realize God.

The highest liberation is possible only by realization of God as the very Self in all beings, and it comes only through maturity of devotion to the personal God and by His grace.

The most important thing is to develop faith in and love of God. God has the power to manifest before a devotee

in any form, regardless of the devotee’s chosen form of worship.

Sanyogeeta Sawant

Bhakti yoga is described as yoga of unconditional spiritual love and union with God using devotion as our instrument. It calls for faithful devotion to God (in a form) or higher power (formless). It is about creating eternal loving relationship with the divine source.

I grew up watching parents and elders in my family who religiously spent an hour or two everyday, doing elaborate pujas, chanting sanskrit mantras and singing hymns. Growing up I was so sure that I would do the same but as an adult often found it difficult to follow and do elaborate pujas and rituals. I had started convincing myself that I was not as devoted enough to spend time praying and singing hymns, the specific way which the elders of my family did.

Thanks to Chinmaya mission and Balavihar books, I realized that the reason why I was not 100% involved in this form of bhakti yoga was simple ... I did not know the meaning of most of the religious texts and mantras. Learning the meaning of each verse in Hanuman Chalisa made it much easier for me to chant it everyday. Hanuman is symbol of a perfect selfless devotee. “Han’ means annihilate and “man” means mind indicating one who has controlled his mind. Going through the verses and its meaning made me realize that he is a true picture of sthitapragnya “Liberated man” according to Bhagavad Gita. I started using Hanuman ji as my guide and inspiration on the path of bhakti yoga.

In one of the discourses by Swami Dheerananda, he told us a story about the ritual of putting a cat under a basket before Satyanarayana puja. The story validated my realization that the path of bhakti yoga is so individual and that’s the beauty about it. Each person has a different emotional composition and in bhakti yoga we can let our emotion be our internal compass. Nobody can tell us how or who to worship. We can draw on our individual techniques to open our hearts and let the love and devotion flow.

If at first it is external worship of the Divine in shape or form, then Sri Aurobindo says " If it is purely external , then of course it is the lowest form; but if done with pure consciousness, it can bring greatest possible completeness to the adoration by allowing the body and the most external consciousness to share in the spirit and act of worship".

Bhakti yoga: incomplete without gratitude:

Bhakti doesn't mean that you have to worship a specific deity only at a specific time and only in a specific way. What it means is that you identify a source of spiritual inspiration to revere and call on for finding comfort, love. It is something you do to invite the flow of grace into your heart. "That something" for me was cultivating a sense of gratitude in my heart. By practicing gratitude every day once in the morning and once before sleeping at night, I started becoming more aware of how vast the creation is and appreciation of how we perfectly fit in the creation. It helped me develop immense love for a higher power that I had initially found missing. Gratitude plays an important role in keeping us on the path of bhakti yoga, a path that demands active cultivation of positive emotions like joy, gratitude and willingness to broaden the parameters of your heart to become one with the creator. When we activate a sense of gratitude with focus of our attention and intention, we create whole new abundant energy inside of us filling us with love and joy that we can shower on everyone around us. Everything around us seems like it is transforming into good energy and we see divine power working through everything we sense and feel through our senses. That is how Hanuman ji felt. Every event in his life was a gift from his master to be accepted without a question.

Importance of Seva or service on the path of bhakti yoga: Hanuman ji, practiced bhakti as a dasa bhava or the attitude of a servant. This method according to vedas is perfect for destroying the ego.

"A devotion that keeps concentrated and silent in the depths of the heart but manifests in acts of service and obedience, is more powerful, more true and more divine, than any shouting and weeping devotion." - The Mother (Aurobindo ashram).

Shabaritha Meda Ramalingam

Verse 12

'Knowledge' is indeed better than 'practice'; 'meditation' is better than 'knowledge'; 'renunciation of the fruits-of-actions' is better than 'meditation'; peace immediately follows 'renunciation'. (12, 12)

In this particular part, the Lord is explaining how to attain peace if you are unable to perform yoga, to "renounce all fruits of action." This means that when you do anything, it should be purely out of selfless goals, you should gain nothing from it at all. A person who does charity work

because they enjoy the happy feeling they get after doing it is still motivated by selfish goals. This part impressed me the most because it asks you to call into question the reason you do everything. Often, you are told to do what will make you happy, but this calls that into question because doing something for your happiness is causing you to get attached to that happiness which chains you to this world. The ultimate goal is to disconnect from all attachment in this world which is stated in the next few lines, "who is free from attachment and egoism...he, My devotee, is dear to me." You can only attain that goal by doing everything for the benefit of other people.

The beginning of this verse, "'Knowledge' is indeed better than 'practice'; 'meditation' is better than 'knowledge'" is interesting to me because of the definition of the words. Knowledge here means, "understanding", to comprehend what and why you are doing this instead of "practice" or mindless repetition. But, better than "knowledge" is "meditation" which is the process of making what we understand our own firsthand experiences. However, it is not going to cause you true peace unless you give up the fruits of your actions, give up your personal gains from fully understanding these concepts. This is what really impressed me, that to truly gain internal peace you need to give up any attachment and selfish gains from your goals, a truly Herculean task.

Shruthi Rajesh

Verse 15

In Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna explains the greatness of devotion to God. He describes the different forms of spiritual expression as well as qualities of a true devotee. In verse 15, Krishna tells Arjuna characteristics of an ideal devotee. Verse 15 translates to: "*He by whom the world is not agitated (affected) and who cannot be agitated by the world, who is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety – he is dear to me.*" Krishna says that a man of perfection is one who does not cause any agitations to the world around him. With the Sun comes light, and similarly with the ideal one comes joy. Devotion softens the soul, and therefore devotees naturally have a gentle attitude towards the world around them. One important aspect of Hinduism is the belief that God is in everyone; devotees see God in everyone, and therefore can cause no harm. Next, Krishna says that a man of perfection is one who cannot be agitated by the world. True devotees have a strong foundation and serene nature. In addition, devotees see God's grace in everything: the light and the dark, the pain and pleasure, and the joy as well as sorrow.

One of the main flaws of humanity is attachment to material possessions. This attachment causes greed, fear, and envy. Ideal devotees are freed from this attachment, which gives them true harmony with God.

While all of us may not be the ideal devotee, we all are capable of applying this verse to our lives. In life we face many trials and tribulations in which we must learn to remain calm and look for the positives. Life is full of opposites, and we should strive to maintain a balance for our internal serenity. For example, once I had applied for a job, and I ended up getting agitated because I was not hearing back. After working myself up to the verge of a breakdown, I realized that it was not worth the frustration. In these types of situations, instead of getting worked up, we should remain in the moment and stay grounded. By keeping ourselves optimistic, we can radiate good energy, and spread the positivity.

Shruthi Venkatachari

Verses 13-20

Sri Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, heaps praise on the literary genius and spiritual import of Geeta Chapter 12, as a work of perfection. In this chapter the paths of yoga – bhakti (devotion), dhyana (meditation), karma (selfless dedicated service), jnana (subtle knowledge of divine Self) and sadhana (abhyasa or spiritual practice) are shown to merge, leading the devotee and seeker into a singular purpose, reaching a state of oneness of being.

In chapter 7 of the Geeta, Sri Krishna declares that there are four types of devotees. Of the four, Jnani is dearest to Him and He is dearest to jnani. In chapter 12, Sri Krishna inspires Arjuna on the true values of a devotee. To a jnani - one who come to full identification with the divine - the Lord is exceedingly dear. This jnani could not have reached this highest state of being by merely acquiring knowledge. It is possible only when such divine knowledge becomes experiential, and in this state of experience, all yoga sadhana merge. Such a jnani, Sri Krishna declares in chapter 12, verse 20, is 'exceedingly dear to me'. In other words, there is no separate identification of the Lord and the jnani.

Often, there is a debate if path of devotion is superior to path of Jnana or vice-versa. The values enumerated by Sri Krishna in this chapter touch on the full and subtle discipline and integration of our thoughts, words and actions in the understanding of the divine nature; and in dedicating our lives to the service of the divine in faith. Thus, the teaching in Chapter 12 nullifies the various

arguments and renders them useless. One cannot make progress on the path of jnana without devotion. For knowledge, without devotion, is mere punditry and not exemplary living. Similarly, one's devotion cannot be blind - a devotee in their journey on the path of devotion come to fully grasp the subtle import (jnana) of the divine nature, resulting in firm conviction and steadfastness. Regardless of one spiritual journey on the path of jnana or bhakti, the devotee will shine in their exemplary character and selfless service.

It is during this study that I realized that not only Swami Tapovan Maharaj (Guru of Swami Chinmayananda), but also Sri Gurudev himself exemplified the values of a true devotee! Here is a sampling of the values of a true devotee from Chapter 12 which are invoked in describing glory of Sri Gurudev in the Chinmaya Ashtottara Sata Namavali (108 glorious names of Sri Gurudev):

- Aniketa (for whom the Lord is the abode)
- Yatatma (self-controlled)
- Karuna (compassionate)
- Kshami (forgiving)
- Advēshta, Maitra (no hatred towards beings; being friendly towards all)
- Yogi (one on the path upwards from worldliness to divinity)
- dṛiDha Nischaya (one of firm conviction)
- Anapeksha (one devoid of external dependencies, expectations)
- Suchi (one who is pure, disciplined and organized, physically, mentally and intellectually)
- Santushta (ever contented)
- Lokano Dwijate (never a source of agitation to others)
- Na Dwijate ChayaH (never agitated by external situations, storms – physical, mental or intellectual)
- Sama Duhkha Sukha (all equanimous in pain - pleasure, joy - sorrow, honor - dishonor)

A jnani, Tapovan Maharaj, taught Swami Chinmayananda. Swami Chinmayananda, a jnani, took the Geeta worldwide to teach everyone to seek that higher state of being, and become exceedingly dear to the Lord. Today, his disciple, Swami

Dheeranandaji is teaching us how we can also become dear to the Lord. With this understanding, the joy of study of Geeta, the inspiration it offers, and the devotion it generates, becomes the light to guide our sadhana. How blessed we are!

Hari Om ! Shri Gurobhyo Namah ! Sitaram Kowtha

When I was reading the Ninjago Lego Movie Book, I read about Master Wu describing the qualities a ninja must have. Ninjas need to be brave, tranquil, humble, respectful, and balanced. When I read this, it reminded me of the 33 qualities Krishna described to Arjuna in chapter 12 of the Bhagavat Geetha.

The first quality a ninja must have is bravery. Bravery is like the qualities “free from joy envy fear and anxiety”, “forgiving”, and “equal to friend and foe”. Bravery means to be confident, try new things, take risks, don’t be scared and try new adventures. Lloyd need to be brave in the book because everyone was being mean to him. They were mean to him because his father was the evil Lord Garmadon. He didn’t care that people were making fun of him, he still protected them when they were in danger.

The second quality a ninja must have is tranquility. Tranquility means being peaceful and calm. Tranquility is like the qualities “steady minded”, “don’t agitate the world”, “don’t be agitated by the world”, “neither rejoices”, “nor hates”, “nor grieves”, and “nor desires”. Lloyd had to be calm to reach his true potential and find his inner piece. When the cat swallowed Lord Garmadon, Lloyd had to be calm to talk to the cat and get him out of the cat. If Lloyd was agitated by what was going on around him or agitated the cat he couldn’t save his father.

The third quality a ninja must have is humbleness. Being humble means caring about others and not caring only about yourself, not thinking you are the best at everything and not worrying about all the things you want in life. Being humble is like the qualities “free from attachment”, “free from wants”, “free from egoism”, and “homeless”. Lloyd is humble when he saves people from dangerous situations. He doesn’t worry about getting hurt himself, he only cares about saving others.

The fourth quality a ninja must have is respect. Respect is like the qualities “self-controlled”, “mind and intellect dedicated to me”, and “silent”. Lloyd was respectful to Master Wu. He always listened to his master.

The last quality a ninja must have is balance. Lloyd was balanced as a Ninja because he didn’t let people’s bad

words or good words affect him. He still did his job as a ninja. Balance is like the qualities “equal in pleasure and pain”, “equal in cold and heat”, “equal in honor and dishonor”, “unconcerned”, “untroubled”, “renouncing all undertakings”, and “equal in criticism and praise”. If Lloyd focuses on the qualities of a ninja he will be a good ninja. If I get the 33 qualities, I can be a devotee who is dear to Krishna and I might become a ninja too!

Solees Sevugan

Verse 12

Chapter twelve of the Bhagavad Geeta is a beautifully written chapter stressing the super-excellence of the path of loving devotion over all other types of spiritual practices. This chapter begins with Arjuna asking Krishna a question regarding the topic of yoga which therefore is the basis of this chapter of the Bhagavad Geeta. Arjuna asks Krishna if he thinks devotees devoted to the personal form of God or those who worship the formless are more perfect. To this Krishna simply replies that both paths of the devotees lead to the realization of God. Although this statement is made by Krishna he regards the devotees that worship his personal form as the best yogis. The main portion of this chapter is Krishna explaining that the cultivation of knowledge is greater than mechanical practice. Higher than the cultivation of knowledge is meditation and higher than meditation is the renunciation of the fruits of actions. This eventually leads to great peace. The other remaining verses of this chapter talk about the great qualities of God’s loving devotees that are very fond of him. Within Chapter 12, a verse that stood out to me was verse 12 which goes:

śre-ya hi jñā-nam-abh-yā-sāt jñā-nād-dhyā-naṁ vi-śiṣ-ya-te |

dhyā-nāt- kar-ma-pha-la-tyā-gah tyā-gāc-chān-ti-ra-nan-ta-ram ||

The direct translation of this verse is, ‘Knowledge’ is indeed better than ‘practice’; ‘meditation’ is better than ‘knowledge’; ‘renunciation of the fruits-of-actions’ is better than ‘meditation’; peace immediately follows ‘renunciation’. I found this verse very interesting and applicable to my life because of this verse’s meaning. Many people in today’s world do various spiritual rituals for the sake of material gain but not to engage themselves and their mind in God. For example, when someone buys a new car or house, they will call a priest to do some kind of puja but many people don’t understand the true reason behind other than that it has been something

passed down from older generations. Even me as a student can apply to this kind of mentality. If I have an exam or something I have to prepare for I will pray to god to do well, but now that I go back and reflect upon my actions in that scenario, I realize that it was all for the material gain at the end, not to be engaged in god. This is mainly why this verse caught my attention because of how relatable it is to my life. Krishna goes on to tell us in this verse how to get rid of this. He says that by controlling the mind through the practice of meditation, we can start to detach ourselves from all of the worldly pleasures. This will then lead us to the next step, renunciation of the fruits of actions or in other words rejecting the results that we yearn for when we perform some kind of action. When this is done, the mind will become detached from worldly pleasures and the intellect will be strengthened for the higher stages.

Soumya Maturi

Verses 13-19

Chapter 12, “Bhakti Yoga”, is about having God in your heart and how to be a true devotee. When learning about the qualities of a true devotee I remembered the story of Kannappar. Kannappar had many of the qualities listed in verses 13 through 19 of Chapter 12 and related to verse 19 the most because he was equal with others, silent, content, and full of devotion. The lesson learned is that it doesn't matter how you pray, what matters is that you have God in your heart.

Kannappar started as a hunter named Tinnan. Tinnan found Lord Shiva in the forest and became devoted to him. Since he was a hunter, he didn't know much about how to pray to God. Tinnan really wanted to do puja for the God, so he carried wild flowers on his head, river water in his mouth and meat in his hand. He used his feet to remove the old flowers off of Lord Shiva. Every day after Tinnan left the regular pujari would come and clean up Tinnan's “mess” and do puja. One day Tinnan saw that Lord Shiva's eye was bleeding and he took out his own eye to heal God. Shiva's other eye started to bleed and Tinnan was ready to give his other eye. This showed that Kannappar was a true devotee of Lord Shiva.

Kannappar was equal with others and had no ego. He didn't think his way of doing puja was the best or that he was better because he offered meat to god. Kannappar was also silent and content because he was happy with what he had in his life and didn't want more. He never felt he should keep his eyes for himself and he didn't worry

about his own pain, he gave it when he thought Shiva needed it. Kannappar continued his prayers every day regardless of any obstacles and he used what he had (meat and water in his mouth). Lastly, Kannappar was full of devotion because he was ready to give anything to God even if it meant he would be blind. No matter what, Kannappar thought about Lord Shiva all the time and was truly devoted to God.

My favorite quality of Kannappar is being full of devotion. I like this quality because it is good to dedicate your mind and intellect to God. I also want to be devoted to being a good a student. I can always improve myself and dedicating myself to my studies and activities will make me a better student. Just like our Chinmaya Mission pledge states being “courageous and disciplined”, not having “false values, within and without us”, practicing “sacrifice and service”, keeping “on the path of virtue, courage and wisdom” with the Lord's grace, and knowing my “responsibilities”, this will help me be a devoted student and devoted to God.

Sowmya Sevugan

How did Arjuna come up with these wonderful questions to ask which are some things that people struggle with even today? Or should I say, how are people such as yours truly facing the same questions as Arjuna when the times and personalities cannot be more different? And Sri Krishna leaves no stone unturned in his response. In a recent talk by Acharya Shubani ji at Chinmayam, we learnt how Sri Ved Vyasa played such an instrumental role in bringing together all the scriptures and what he had to go through for doing so. Taking this moment to pay my salutations to the great master, through whose rendition we have this wisdom alive now. Arjuna, just like a modern day patient who wants to know from doctor the medication options thoroughly before accepting the treatment plan - wonders which is the best? Yogic pursuit of the Formless, Unmanifested, Imperishable, Immovable, Omnipresent. Or a steadfast devotion to the divine form of the Supreme Lord. And the supreme doctor of the mind and beyond, lays out the challenges that lie in the Yogic pursuit of the Unmanifested. He does not disparage the Yogic path - but he says “in his opinion” - there are some issues. Hardships. In the ocean of death and birth, swimming without the help of the grand ship called KrishnaPrem, can be a little tricky. And ultimately? Land in the same place where the ship with all its luxuries lands, imagine spotting those passengers alighting with a yawn, when you swam with your last breath and reach the same place - if at all. Notice how all these paths are

producing the same qualities - equanimity towards opposing types of experiences, steady mindedness, renunciation, freedom from agitation - and all these qualities are dear to Sri Krishna - knowing this helps in our own endearment to these. Just like the color violet morphs into indigo that morphs into green and ultimately to red, these seemingly different paths are all connected in the rainbow -like colorful spectrum that spiritual life is. It is amazing that Sri Krishna acknowledges the difficulties even in the path of devotion - however subtle. He does not say, just do it - and leave us without instructions. Fixing the mind 24/7 on the Lord should be tried first. Meera, Andal and many other Saints naturally chose this. If that is a tall order for many of us, constant practice is the second best. The third choice is also present for the extroverted action-oriented personality - orienting those actions towards the Lord. If the world imposes its own course upon oneself, then the fourth option of going forth with that course - but upon destination, instead of owning those fruits of the action, practice renouncement there. Surely, no excuses for this? Unless the grip of ego is too strong. Therein, lies the problem, and therein these solutions.

Srinivasan Adhinarayanan

A good Sanatana Dharmi has one great aspiration, and that is to attain Moksha. Moksha can be seen as Freedom from Samsara, or it could be Freedom from Ignorance.

Our attention is naturally diverted towards our physical wants and desires, abandoning the spiritual for later. However, it times of crisis we are forced to delve deep within ourselves to find a path out of suffering. This is the situation that Arjuna was in.

In the previous 2 chapters Krishna shows his true form (Vishwaroopa darshana) to Arjuna. Arjuna wanted to know whether Krishan is truly someone he can believe in. Having received that answer, he then asks Krishna who He considers as the best devotee. Thus, Krishan explains.

To Krishna, a true devotee must be steadfast in their devotion. Even in that he creates a distinction. There are those who need a form to devote themselves, and there are those who can be devotees to a formless Him. The latter is much more difficult. Either way, a steadfast devotion is a common attribute that leads them away from SAMSARA to MOKSHA

If this steadfastness is too difficult, then He says come down a notch and try ABHYASA or constant practice to attain that steadfastness. If ABHYASA is proving too

difficult, then try performing actions for His sake, meaning do your actions for a good cause. If even that is too difficult, then just renounce the fruits of all your actions and take refuge in Him. Simple.

Therefore, the steps are: practice, then knowledge, then meditation and finally renunciation of the fruits of our action. Now, these are lofty goals, but something to aspire to.

Who then is such a perfect devotee? Such a person: who neither hates nor loves, is compassionate, is free of egoistic attachments, is equanimous in pleasure and pain, is content in the self, is firm of intellect, doesn't agitate or get agitated, and is free of petty thought and wants: he/she is the most beloved. Obviously, this is no easy task. And hence the Geeta prescribes different paths to get there – either through actions, devotion or knowledge.

My interpretation is that one must first decide that the goal of attaining peace is of importance to us. Then, we must decide our path, suited to our personality. Choose a form such as a personal deity, or choose the formless such as Brahman, the Universal Spirit. Both paths demand a steadfast devotion. Then choose how to get there. The goal is renunciation of the fruits of ones' actions. However, that path has to be determined by one's own abilities. Some of us can get there by intellectual pursuits (jnana), or devotion (bhakti), or action devoted to the Lord(karma). All paths lead to Him so there is no worry there. The only requirements are steadfastness, devotion and good intent. That's it.

Sriram Padmanabhan

Verses 6-12

Verses 6 through 12 Chapter XII of Bhagavad Gita is about Bhaktiyogah, path of devotion. These verses are where Lord Krishna is benevolently talking to the likes of me I feel, where he is giving multiple options and ways to be a Bhaktah. Here, the Lord is saying that meditate in ME, fix your mind in ME, and if you are unable to fix your mind in ME then by constant practice try to reach ME. If you are unable to do that then think of ME before acting, devote the actions to ME. And for those like me, he compassionately even goes further by saying that if you cannot even do that then taking refuge in ME renounce the fruits of all actions! This is where I find myself. Lord Krishna gave me so many ways to give the reins of my mind to HIM that I must trust him. But the big question is - how? Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda ji very aptly said, "It

is more important to know how to think then what to think". So how am I to think to live these teachings? How am I to offer the fruits of 'my' actions to the Lord? This is how I have come to understand and live. First, I started with watching my mind not get attached to the happiness, excitement in the present and not get excessively unhappy in the sorrowful times. I feel I am being tested every now and then to live this and I only hope I am passing these tests because I hold on to HIM tightly during such testing situations. After all we create our world for ourselves with our own vasanas. I need to hold HIS hand firmly and let HIM use me as HIS instrument. The other thing that is helping me with devoting the fruits of actions is to see HIM in every person. 'Hari ko har main dekha' is one of saint Kabir Das ji's composition meaning, see Lord (Hari) in everyone (har). If I am doing actions by HIM, for HIM, through HIM then where is me? If HE is the one I am loving, arguing with, interacting with then... 'All izz well'! So, I start my day with such small mantras and then whole day is only HIS play! Few other such mantras inspired by the 12th chapter that I have tried and experienced are: I will keep smiling no matter what (sa-ma-duh-kha-su-khah ksa-mi), I will be a constant in this ever changing world around me, meaning I will be the same even if people's behaviors, circumstances around me change (sa-mah-sat-rau-ca-mit-re-ca), I will be same for praise and (non-constructive) criticism (tul-ya-nin-da-stu-tir-mau-ni). There are several others that can be drawn from this chapter. All are in essence, same, only if we really understand. I am hoping that living life in these small doses will help me live it consistently for sustained abhyasa.

Sudiksha Nimeshe

Verses 13-14

अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ 13॥
सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ 14॥

*adveṣhṭā sarva-bhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva cha
nirmamo nirahankāraḥ sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣhamī*

*santuṣṭaḥ satatam yogī yatātmā dṛiḍha-niśchayaḥ
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

We live in an increasingly connected society where distances are rapidly shrinking and global coordination

and cooperation in business, economics and politics are the order of the day. Yet, in these exciting times, there seems to be problems everywhere. Income disparity, intolerance, extreme ideologies, greed, lack of economic prosperity and conflicts pose a threat to harmony and civil living. While countries and governments try to address these issues, change cannot happen unless it originates at a grass root individual level. As Mahatma Gandhi famously said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world". But how do we effect this change in ourselves?

The answer is provided in the Gita verses which details the quality of a devotee who is near and dear to the Lord. Who can this devotee be, but one embraces and lives the philosophy of 'Vasudaiva Kutumbakam' (World is one family)?

The model citizens who are also change agents, realize that human life is to be cherished and enriched to help realize its full potential. They exhibit no malice towards one another and realize that the life in them is the same that pervades every other living being. The model citizens understand that we share this beautiful pale blue dot called Earth and that it is our duty to leave it in a better shape when we leave than it was when we were born. They respect all the flora and fauna and learn how delicate the interconnected ecosystems are. They oppose efforts to dominate nature for purely exploiting and enriching themselves to the detriment of others. They are friendly and compassionate, deriving happiness by giving and seeing it blossom in others. They realize their successes have been paved by others in front of them and live their life in gratitude, attenuating their ego and letting humility seep in. They clearly identify their wants to ensure they are addressed and reduce the needs to allow them to focus on others and tend to their welfare. Since most conflicts occur due to ideological differences, the model citizens use their intellect to foster better understanding, employ the forgive and forget paradigm and harbors no ill will. They are also fully aware that these cannot be practiced without strong and firm conviction and the ability to persist during trying times to achieve the end goal.

Suren Nathan

Verses 8,11,15

In Summer Camp [2018] we learned about Chapter 12, which discusses Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga is devotion to divinity. Many of Gurudev's quotes relate to Chapter 12.

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व	may-ye-va ma-na ā-dhat-sva
मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।	ma-yi bud-dhīh ni-ve-śa-ya ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव	ni-va-si-sya-si may-ye-va
अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥ ८ ॥	a-ta ūrdh-vam na saṁ-śa-yaḥ ॥ 12-8 ॥

One quote that relates to chapter 12 is “Accept. Surrender. Let Him be the charioteer of your life.” This quote best relates to verse 8 and 11.

By taking refuge in the Lord, you are surrendering to Him. A saying in Tamil, “எதை நினைக்கிறாயோ அதாகவே மாறிவிடுவாய்” (what you think you become) best explains if you think of Krishna you will be one with Krishna. Also, we must watch our thoughts for they become our destiny.

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि	a-thai-ta-dap-ya-śak-to'si
कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।	kar-tum mad-yo-gam-ā-śri-taḥ ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागम्	sar-va-kar-ma-pha-la-tyā-gam
ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥ ११ ॥	ta-taḥ ku-ru ya-tāt-ma-vān ॥ 12-11 ॥
for they will become your character. Develop your character, for it becomes your destiny.”	

If Krishna is in our thoughts, he will guide our destiny. Taking refuge in the Lord, leads one to Krishna. So Gurudev's quote and verse 11 both mean if one surrenders themselves, Krishna will guide their life.

Another quote by Gurudev is, “Silently hear everyone. Accept what is good. Reject and forget what is bad. This is intelligent living.” This quote relates to verse 15.

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोकः	yas-mān-no-dvi-ja-te lo-kah
लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।	lo-kān-no-dvi-ja-te ca yaḥ ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैः	har-śa-mar-śa-bha-yod-ve-gaiḥ
मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥ १५ ॥	muk-to yaḥ sa ca me pri-yaḥ ॥ 12-15 ॥

By silently hearing everyone, one isn't agitating the world. By rejecting the bad, one isn't agitated by the world. By accepting only good one is free from joy, envy, fear, and anxiety. The best example that demonstrates this in everyday life is a lotus in a swampy area. Even though it lives in a swampy area, it remains pure; not agitated by the world. The presence of the lotus makes the swamp nicer; not agitating the world. Like a lotus we too should remain pure in all surroundings and make them better with our presence in a peaceful way. Another example is

Lord Shiva who swallowed the poison during the churning of the ocean. The Halahala remains in His throat not harming the rest of His body. Lord Shiva controls the poison in his neck, we should control negativities in our surroundings, not to have effect on our thoughts.

By following the path to divinity, described in verse 11, one can get the qualities, described in verse 15. If one can't follow a path, they must try to get the 33 qualities as described in Chapter 12 and without knowing they will be on the path towards divinity. The path towards divinity and qualities all reflect Gurudev's quotes. Finally, if you let the Lord guide your life you will live intelligently. If you live intelligently the Lord will guide your life towards success.

Swathi Sevugan

Verses 13-20

In verses 13-20 of chapter 12, Krishna explains the qualities that one should have in order to be a true devotee who is dear to Him. Some of the qualities that stuck out to me are; hate none, be content, self-controlled, dedicated, do not agitate nor get agitated by the world, don't desire, and be free from attachment. Learning the meaning of these verses has changed my perspective towards certain behaviors that used to affect me. In verse 15, Krishna explains to Arjuna that one should not get agitated by anyone's comments. Instead, they should consider it as a play where they are directing and the other people are merely acting. One should consider such comments as a small joke. For example, I have severe allergies and I get a bad rash around my eyes. At my school, some of my peers would comment about my rashes and I would get agitated and become very self-conscious. After reading this verse, I realized that my allergic reaction is a part of me, a physical outlook and people around me are just actors trying to agitate me and bring down my self-esteem. I have started to ignore such comments and now I just smile back at them. When these people noticed that their remarks don't negatively affect me, they have gradually stopped commenting. By standing calmly, I felt happy and content. Even though I was not getting agitated or reacting to any comments about me, I also made sure not to agitate or provoke anyone. I have also started observing and reading about great people who have been adored and respected around the world. There are many examples in history of people that had many qualities that are described in verses 13-20. Not going too far, my seventh-grade English teacher is respected by students and teachers throughout

the school. She is friendly to everyone, self-content, dedicated, and does not get agitated by antics of middle school students. She is always calm and happy and goes above and beyond because she wants to help every student. Recently, she received a Master teacher award from the county. I am sure it's her dedication, passion, and many other qualities that have brought her this recognition. Verses 13-20 have given me different ways to reflect and improve myself. These verses have taught me that having these qualities, one can strive to be a good human being and a true devotee to God.

Tanirika Choudhry

Verses 13-14

In verses 13 and 14 of Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12, God states the actions one has to follow for someone to be dear to him. The meaning of these two slokas is: “✓ He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to me, he, my devotee, is dear to me. ✓” Here, God explains the characteristics of a perfect human being. He says that this is the ideal characteristics for a human, as everyone wants to be held dearly by God. These two verses inspire me to act with compassion towards others and think before I act. They inspire me to reduce my anger and look at the good in everything, so that I can bring out the best in me. These two verses are very important to me as they are outlining the path to become dear to God.

Teja Nallagorla

Geeta Chapter 12, Bhakti Yoga, the Yoga of Devotion is a the most inspiring chapter to me due to it's simplicity for a new Geeta student. As a naïve person studying the Geeta, this chapter inspired me to make a commitment to myself to begin my journey for the “Geeta-way-of-life.” First, this chapter directly addressed my quandary on whether saying my daily prayers in front of god's statue, in our temple at home, visit the near by temple, etc. means anything or keeping the Lord in my mind is better. For that matter, even the meaning of Bhakthi is difficult to understand. This chapter's shloka, Gurudev's transliteration, and SwamiJi's discourse all combined, articulated in words what I can never express in my own words my own confused stat of mind. My prior understanding is now being overridden with new

understanding that I'm already an atomic part of the Lord Himself and that the formless, nameless, imperishable, indefinable, all-pervading, unthinkable, unchanging, immovable, eternal supreme Lord is truly everywhere (in me and in others). Verses 12-2 to 12-12 provides me confirmation that reciting my shlokas in front of a form or idol is a perfectly fine way for me to move my attention to the lord (using my Body such as eyes to motivate me). I am understanding that I can further kick it up a notch by keeping my attention to the lord in the form of meditation (using my Mind). I feel getting one step closer to OM is being directly addressed in verses 12-13 to 12-20. I feel in these verses, Lord Krishna is motivating and inspiring me to step further in how we humans view each other and treat others. Examples are, being friendly and compassionate, free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, self-controlled, and free from joy, envy, fear and anxiety. Easier said than done, the most inspiring verse is 12-18, “He who is the same to foe and friend, and also in honor and dishonor, who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment.” I am taking this verse as my personal challenge to move my Mind and Intellect away from being judgmental of others and inspiring myself to be balanced “samah” in my day-to-day life. In a given day, if I interact with an average of 10 people, this one verse is a challenge me to see the divine in them. I can start with one a day and increase that number over time with practice. I ask for the grace and blessings of the Lord, Gurudev and SwamiJi for success in this personal endeavor, as this is not easy task. Thus, beginning my journey in the Geeta-way-of-life, one relationship at a time.

Vidhya Shyamsunder

Verse 16

The Gita helps provide a positive role for emotions; thus, our thoughts and feelings can be reinvented as the paths to spiritual perception, instead of being rejected as roadblocks. It first underscores that material emotions act as “bumps in the road” or barriers because they contort our vision, making undesirable common things seem desirable. Consequently, it repeatedly urges us to evolve spiritually and mature beyond the grip of those emotions. Chapter 12, Verse 16 reinforces this concept when Krishna explains to Arjuna that “those who are indifferent to worldly gain, externally and internally pure, skillful, without care, untroubled, and free from selfishness in all undertakings, such devotees of Mine are very dear to Me”. The individuals who become unconcerned with

worldly gain, are then given the highest priority to the loving of god. This relates to the real world in the comparison of the loss or gain of \$100; if a very affluent individual were to be given \$100 they would most likely be indifferent to it, and if a very poor person were to receive \$100 it would be held to a higher importance. This line conveys the message of cleansing our minds of negative emotions such as jealousy, anger, or ego, and instead keep a pure state of mind. When our mind and thoughts are diluted with impure and negative emotions, we may not be thinking or doing the correct actions, because it is all in our mindset. This verse additionally refers to indifference of skill or troubles, because we must have an outlook on the opportunities presented to us as a choice to serve God with great skill and attention. And, in these situations we must not fear for the future and live in the action of the present.

Alisha Mahajan

Shraddhanjali

Samadhi of Swami Chaitanyananda



Swamins, Brahmacharins and Members of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide

Dear All,
Hari Om!

This morning, 27th April 2019, Swami Chaitanyananda of Chinmaya Mission Kolkata took final refuge at the feet of Pujya Gurudev, at Kolkata.

Swamiji joined the Vedanta course in Sandeepany (Himalaya), Sidhbari in 1986. On the successful completion of the course in 1988 he was given the name Brahmachari Nandan Chaitanya.

From 1988 to March 2000, Swamiji served devotedly in various Chinmaya Mission centres – Assam, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Madgaon (Goa) and Satna (Madhya Pradesh). He tirelessly applied himself to all the grass root levels activities of the Mission – Jnana Yagnas, camps and classes for children, youth, senior citizens and teachers.

Swamiji received Sannyasa Deeksha from Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda in March 2000. Thereafter, as Swami Chaitanyananda, other than a short posting to Boston (USA), he continued to spread Pujya Gurudev's message of the scriptures in Allahabad, UP (2001 to 2010), and Kolkata, West Bengal (2011 till date).

Swamiji's dedication to the Mission was deep and unwavering. Ever smiling and always cheerful, he touched and transformed many a heart. He will be fondly remembered by those whose lives he impacted, and his gentle presence will be greatly missed.

Our respectful homage to Swami Chaitanyananda.

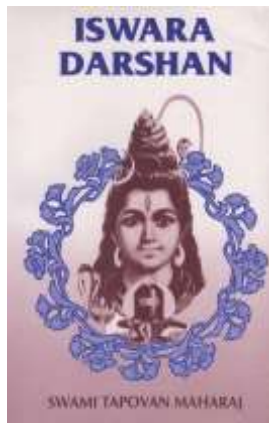
At His Feet

Swami Swaroopananda

Messages from an autobiography of a Mahatma -12 (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 sadhguru, Swami Chinmayananda.



Part 2 Chapter 2 – Rishikesh and Yatra in Himalayas

Beggar and Sannyasin – What is the Difference?

Sages have always been profuse in their praise of a Sannyasin's life – a life abandoning hearth and home, kith and kin – in short, wealth of every sort. But, does this life which several persons adopt as an effortless means of livelihood, lead one to the goal of life? What special benefit does a sannyasin gain, that an enlightened man, whatever be the ashram, can destroy his desires, gain perfect control over his body and mind, and obtain true knowledge?

The beggar is as light as a feather, and equally worthless. He is of no use to himself or to anyone else. Afraid not only of the strong, but also of the weak, he wanders listlessly here and there and wastes his time in idleness. How can such a fellow reach the goal of human life?

One may wonder why these people after giving up thought of the body and the senses, go about like ghosts and goblins, despising the world's attractions and forming a burden to the industrious section of the population. Let the aspirant, if he is enlightened and is an earnest seeker of knowledge, leave his home, wander about or stay in monasteries or temples. If he is afraid of the evil emotional effects of worldly contact, as deer is of the

hunter, if it is such weakness of the mind that drives him out of his home, is he not a coward deserving our pity?

True indeed! They alone are true heroes whose minds remain unmoved even when assailed by causes of powerful emotion. Who can escape scalding if he touches fire? Who can escape biting, if he treads on a snake? Similarly, if one meddles with sensuous pleasures, how can he escape the pollution (of the mind)? Sensuousness does not discriminate between enlightened or unenlightened persons.

He alone is a true Mahatma who shuns worldly pleasures like poison, who divers up all desires, who continues to perceive Truth wherever he wanders and finds it in all living things, always without let or hindrance. If a man's mind remains calm and steady in face of all provocations, if it remains cheerful and capable of attaining samadhi, if it is ever fearless and firm, he will be different from all ordinary men even if he remains at home.

Even today, this most glorious and solitary method of mendicancy, sustaining oneself like bees on honey gathered from numerous flowers, has not completely gone out of fashion. Under the influence of this wonderful hoary tradition, many cultured persons even today give up everything, attain a stage of desirelessness, and proceed along this way of life. Whether it is useful or useless to adopt Sannyasa and go about sustaining oneself on 'bhiksha', Swami Tyagananda entered upon that way of life inspired by that great ideal.

Rishikesh

Swamiji found an abode in Brahmananda Ashram a bit away from the hustle-bustle of Rishikesh on the banks of Ganga. He had met the head of the mutt, Swami Hridayananda, in Nasik, and it was at that time he was invited to come to this ashram. While Swami Hridayananda had moved to Nasik, the ashram was run by a Malayali swami named Narayana Puri, who was not well versed in the scriptures but considered himself as a great scholar. Narayan Puri accorded respect to Swamiji only because he was from the same state and district and was known to Swami Hridayanandaji. Taking up a hut on the ashram site, Tyagananda pursued a life of austerities and penances with greater rigor than before. Detached in spirit and indifferent to pleasure and pain alike, he

passes his days there in joy. The affairs of the ashram were in disorder and no regular meals were provided. Tyagananda had to support himself up food obtained either at the ashram or elsewhere.

As winter settled in, Tyagananda's body became emaciated and feeble for lack of nourishment. He had no woolen clothing to protect him from biting cold. He suffered severely. Long accustomed to one meal a day, typically rice, green vegetable curry and yogurt, he found 'chapathis', made of wheat flour, hard to stomach. He grew thinner and weaker. But he put up with all the discomforts patiently and cheerfully, taking it as his tapas. 'Tapas' means to turn pain into pleasure. He continued to bathe in Ganga daily, despite the benumbing cold temperatures.

A Sannyasin cannot afford to be idle. He must be always alert, and his life must be full of suitable activity. He must serve as an ideal for mankind. Convinced of this truth, he lost no time in drawing up a time-table to be followed every day. He followed it rigorously and cheerfully. Eager to amass fresh knowledge he had included the study of religious books as an item of his daily program. Fortunately, in a library nearby, established as a memorial to late Swami Rama Teertha, he came across a fine collection of religious and philosophical volumes. He took them out and read them, concentrating his mind with student like attention. He exhausted all spiritual books written in Sanskrit, English and Hindi. These included treatises on Buddhist, Jain, Christian and other religions. They helped to develop his mind and widen his outlook. The study of books dealing with religions other than his own helps to dispel the erroneous view that the reader's own religion is the only true religion.

Partly for physical exercise and partly for the enjoyment of nature's beauty, he made a part of his routine to go out on evening rambles. On one such walk along the banks of Ganga, he came across Sri Raghavacharya, who was instructing his disciples on Vedanta. He belonged to the Visisht-Advaita Vedanta philosophy. He invited Swami Tyagananda, offered a seat with respect, and engaged in conversation to display his erudition:

Pundit: "Do you know Sanskrit?"

S, replied in Sanskrit: "A little."

P: Recognizing that Swamiji knew Sanskrit, "... in which scriptures have you specialized yourself?"

S: "Nothing in particular. I have only a general knowledge of the various systems, and still trying to acquire more."

P: "What are the authorities on which Sannyasins... rely to establish that Brahman is without attributes and that one can secure liberation by sheer understanding of the Mahavakyas?"

S: "Of course, there are Srutis, Anumana (inference), etc. in evidence."

P: "How can illusion of the nature of darkness find a place in Brahman which of the nature of light?"

S: "How can there be the dark shadow in the bright moon?"

Thus, the Pundit's questions and demeanor became more heated, but through sheer logic, Swamiji answered them patiently, and then took leave.

Over time, Swamiji and Sri Raghavacharya held many such discussions and got to know each other well. Similarly, Swamiji approached many sadhus and became friends with many. Thus, he became a member of the brotherhood of sannyasins. Swamiji began to realize that it is rare to come across true sannyasins. Most of the sadhus he met had some weaknesses or eccentricities.

True Saints – Few and Far in between

Forest upon forest we have, but not all of them contain sandalwood trees. Some sannayasins are scholarly in Sanskrit, others in English; some are 'avadoota' – no shelter or clothing; some who are proud of their peculiar order; and yet others pluming on the color and cut of their robes. There are many who don the garb of sannyasin but lack education and culture. They lead licentious lives, intoxicated, breaking rules, know nothing about God and breaking vows of sannyasa. They bring disrepute to the brotherhood of sannyasins.

How few are the true sannyasins who shun external pleasures and practice self-restraint of the mind, tranquility and devotion; who possess the knowledge of the Eternal Truth and find the Self in everything!

As summer arrived in Rishikesh, the heat was more oppressive than in Kerala! Partly to escape the heat, partly to journey the beautiful Himalayan landscape and partly to find places for lovely peaceful solitude, he decided to travel northward to visit Uttarkashi, Jamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath, among other spiritual places. He was mindful of difficulties – not knowing regional language, being poor at the art of securing bhiksha, having no money and no one to help him.

Sri Raghavacharya offered him money and arranged for his stay in a few places.

Himalayan Upland

The inner regions of the Himalayas is a strange and beautiful country. Here and there are villages inhabited by mountain folks wearing strange clothers and talking strange jargons. Here and there are formidable forests haunted by ferocious wild beasts. Silvery streams coming down the steep mountains add to the beauty of the landscape. Catching sight of the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, Swamiji had forgotten all about the Earth inhabited by man. He felt as if he had been bodily lifted up into some region in heaven where peace reigned supreme.

Uttarkashi is beautiful and peaceful and a fit abode for those who seek peace. The auspicious spot offered great joy to Swamiji's mind. Then and there he decided to spend more time in Uttar Kashi.

Sanatana Dharma and Good versus Wicked

An aging sadhu queried about Swami Tyagananda journey to sannyasa, and verbally accosted Swamiji as if he had trespassed and appropriated someone else's paternal property. Upon learning that Swamiji was not a Brahmin and had not been formally initiated into sannyasa, this sadhu questioned legitimacy of Swamiji. Thyagananda smiled, but did not respond.

"Some people are good and noble by birth; others are born wicked and ignoble, who must live all their lives in disgrace and as objects of contempt and ridicule. The Creator himself is responsible for such a division in the society!" Such an erroneous view has been prevailing among fools in the world for a long time. Sanatana Dharma – Humanity is essentially one and indivisible. Who will not wish to destroy artificial rules and customs that cut up humanity into little bits? Only what will last through all ages, prevail in all parts of the world and be acceptable to all communities ensuring progress, prosperity and happiness to them, can truly be called Sanatana. All else that divides people and people, and create ill will and rivalry at different times and in different places can never be Sanatana. The divine qualities are the means and Godhead is the end. In my view, this is Sanatana Dharma.

Finishing tour of Himalayan Upland

After two to three weeks in Uttar Kashi, Swamiji visited Gangotri, followed by a trek to Gowri Kund, leading to

Kedarnath. He performed various sadhanas, taking bath in holy rivers and singing hymns. Following that he proceeded to Badrinath. Badari shines like a Sandal mark on the broad forehead of the Divine Himavan, whose lovely peaks like Sumeru, Gourisankar and Kailas are the sporting grounds of the Lord. It is a consecrated spot by the tapasya performed by great rishis like Nara, Narayana, Vyasa and Suka.

Swamiji experienced hosts unwilling to provide food or shelter. He had to continue his journey without food. It took twelve days to return to Rishikesh from Badri, and Swamiji returned to the ashram. Compared with many aged sannyasin, Swamiji was a novice. But due to his strict adherence to self-control, piety, and continued path of dispassion, he had already established himself as any of his elders. He always asked himself, "What am I gaining by accepting Sannyasa and withdrawing into Himalayan regions that I could not have gained at home?" With deep faith he held his mind ever under control and made good progress towards his goal. Certainly it is possible for a householder, courageous and generous, wise and discriminating, to engage himself in spiritual sadhana even in the midst of domestic and social duties, and meditate upon God, provided he has conquered his senses. Yet, he cannot concentrate his mind upon God and God only all his waking hours, and that is why a Sannyasin is superior to householder.

To Be Continued

Iswara Darshanam - XV

Discussion of the 11th Chapter of Gita – Acharya Sadanandaji

Time, kaala or yama, the god of death, forms the instrument of destruction. Hence Arjuna says many jivas naturally heading towards the mouth of the VirAt purusha. When one is born, his death is already guaranteed – jAtasyahi dRivo mRityuH – that which is born must die. How fast he is approaching the death depends on his praarabda. This is the eternal wheel of action and results and the transactional world is bounded by this. In the natural calamities the praarabda of many beings are bound together.

In addition to natural disasters, there are also man-made destructions that will result in mass scale destruction. Here two factors get involved. One is the praarabda of jivas and the other is the deliberate willful actions of the people who are willfully causing these mass-scale destructions. Those who are responsible for such heinous actions, whatever may be their justification, cannot but suffer the consequences of their actions, whether in this life or in the life after. The law of karma is impartial in this. Krishna emphasizes this by saying as karmaphala daata or giver of fruits of actions, He is impartial. He says, samOham sarva bhUtEshu namEdvEshvOsti napriyaH, I am impartial to all; neither favors somebody or disfavors others. The mythological stories are abundantly projecting these incidences showing even incarnations undergo suffering because of the cause-effect relationships. Rama suffers because of the actions done in the past. These stories are projected to develop dispassion towards gains and losses, so that mind becomes free from these attachments, and becomes ready to concentrate on higher things.

From this, we gather that nobody suffers unnecessarily. Iswara only provides the results of actions, appropriate results for appropriate actions. Hence Geeta emphasizes that the one must uplift oneself by oneself, and nobody can do it for them.

UddharEdAtmAnam AtmAnamavasAdhayEt| Atmaiva
hyAtmanO bandhuH Atmaiva ripurAtmanaH|

It is our choice to reach higher or to go down the drain. Hence, we are accountable for any willful actions, good or bad. If we are suffering now, we need to understand that we are exhausting the results of wrongful actions done in the past or past lives. Hence even a jnaani has to undergo suffering or pleasures due to the actions done in the past;

however, he understands that the praarabda does not belong to him but to his BMI. He watches his BMI undergoing the suffering or pleasures. The ajnaanis may think seeing the BMI of mahatma suffering that the jnaani is also suffering his praarabda; but from jnaani's perspective, he does not own the properties of the BMI as his properties. He understands that he is or was never a doer therefore never a sufferer. He recognizes that he neither has sanchita, praarabda or AgAmi karmas, as they all belong to the prakRiti that includes the BMI. For a seeker this understanding should become a sAdhana or discipline of the mind. Hence Krishna says one must bear the ups and downs in life considering that this is all part of praarabda that BMI must undergo. However, he has to use this knowledge to ensure that all actions are done with Iswara arpita buddhi or offering to the lotus feet of the Lord, which implies that, they must be all dhArmic actions.

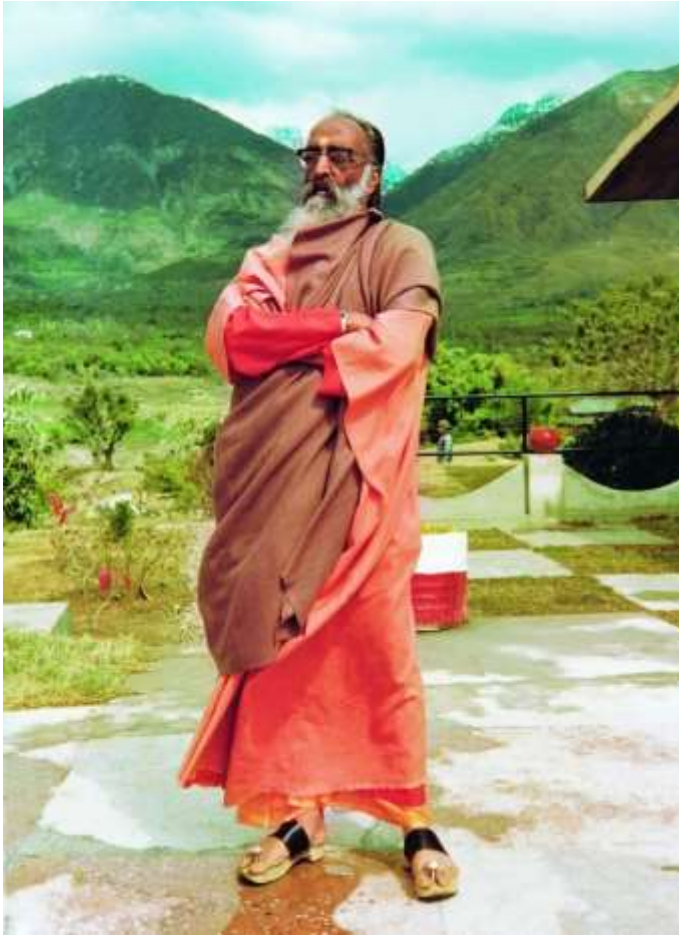
mAtrAsparshAstu koutEya shItOShNa sukhaduHkhadAH|
AgamApAyinOnityAH stAnstitikshasva bhArata||

Heat, cold, pleasures and pains come due to contact with the sense objects. They come and go, and are not permanent. Hence Arjuna forbear them as everyone experiences these due to their praarabda. None can avoid the results of actions done in the past. This understanding should help us to act properly in such a way that the results do not affect the person – and that is the essence of karma yoga.

To be continued

Gurudev Uvacha

Inspiring Quotes from Pujya Gurudev Chinmayananda



[Editor's Note: Continuing the series of inspiring quotes from Gurudev].

The real test of a Perfect One is not in the jungle or in the cave but in the market-place where he is teased by mischiefs of the world.

The sun gives and demands nothing; The earth, the moon, the rains, spring, flowers, rivers, everywhere in Nature, the Universal Rhythm is to 'give' lovingly and not demand of others.

Whatever He gives shall be what we need!

If obstacles are not placed before a seeker he will not grow into the stalwart stature of the Perfect!

Pain is his kindest means to wake us up the quickest.