



25 Years of **Hindu Heritage Family Camp**

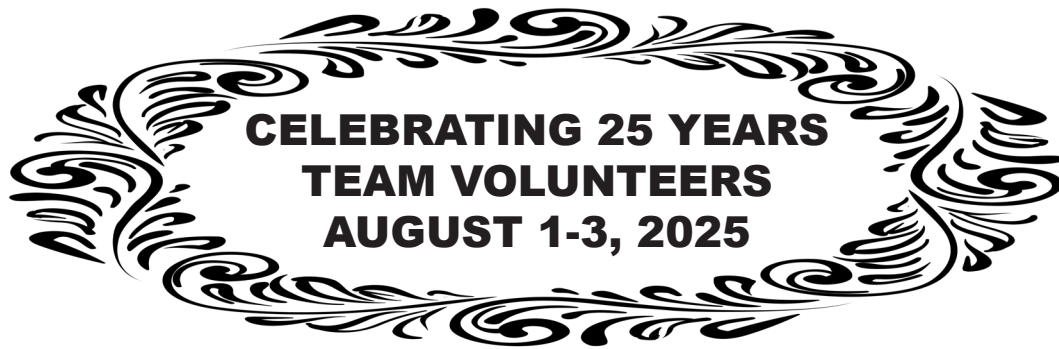
organized by

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana

3350 German Church Road, Indianapolis, IN 46235

www.htci.org

Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council (HMEC) Publication 2025



Below are the committees for the camp and its members:

1. **Registration and Check-In Committee**
Neil Shah, Chetan Dave, Hardik Shah,
Atharva Sahu, Ravi Kheradia, Uma Kalluparambil
2. **Program Committee**
Kumar Dave, Hansa Dave, Sanjay Mehta, Natraj Chandramouli, Priyesh Kheradia
3. **Decoration Committee**
Anita Anil Gupta, Priyam Rajsheel, Rajnish Chauhan
4. **Games and Yoga Committee**
Priyesh Kheradia, Uma Vashistha, Aniket Biswal, Ravi Kheradia, Uma Kalluparmbil
5. **Safety Committee**
Executive Committee Team Members - Jo Marimuthu, Rajnish Chauhan, Hardik Shah
6. **Food Committee**
Sarita Bajpai, Hansa Dave, Shewta Sahu, Hansa Garg, Ruchi Shah
7. **Announcement and Program Flow Committee**
Priya Menon and Chetana Kids (Ridhima Tomar, Rishma Chauhan, and a few others)
8. **Gala Committee**
Smitha Kalluparambil, Poornima Kini, Shriya Una, Deepali Songirkar
9. **AV Committee**
Rajnish Chauhan, Sagar Manas
10. **HTCI Camp Book Souvenir Committee**
Madhu Bhargava, Kumar Dave, Hardik Shah, Sanjay Mehta

*Picture Coordinator - Sanjay Kalluparambil

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the late Ram Bhargava for his invaluable contribution and time. Mr. Bhargava was one of the founders of HTCI and a steadfast supporter of the Camp. The Hindu Community of Central Indiana dedicates this Commemorative Book to Shri Ram Bhargava.

Many thanks to Madhu Bhargava for compiling and designing this book. She has been editing and printing for Balagokulam for over 25 years, and we greatly appreciate her hardwork and dedication.

Dedication

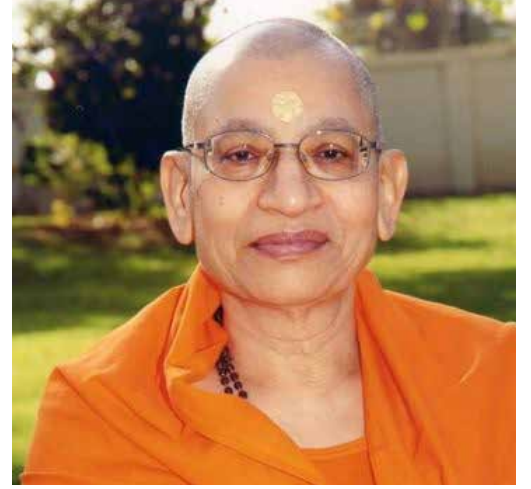


The Camp family of Hindu Temple of Central Indiana (HTCI)
dedicates this book to
Swargiya Shri Ram Bhargava, one of the HTCI's founding members.



Blessings

I congratulate Shri Kumar and Hansa Dave and the team of volunteers for organizing Hindu Heritage Family Camps consistently for 25 years. The special feature of every camp has been that it has been organized around a theme and three to four seasons are devoted in the camp for covering the various aspects of the theme. For that purpose, the information has been compiled from authentic sources and systematically arranged to guide the teachers for effective communication to the students who would learn it and also gain an understanding of how to implement the teaching in practical life.



As I see the notes compiled by Shri Sanjay Mehta, who has done a thorough job of covering all aspects of the theme in a given camp, it becomes clear that a lot of hard work has gone behind gathering the information and making it comprehensive. The book that is being published contains the camp notes for all the 25 years and provides a greatly valuable treasure of information which will be available to the community at large. The readers will greatly benefit from the material provided for their own learning and also passing it on to the next generation.

Hindus are often ill-informed or mis-informed about Hinduism for lack of an opportunity to gain authentic and comprehensive education about Hinduism. The material in this book is well organized and concise and therefore, the reader will get essential information on important aspects of Hinduism in one volume. There is no doubt that this publication will be a great contribution in providing education about Hinduism to people in general and Hindus in particular.

I pray that this publication finds wide acceptance, that people get authentic information about the Vedic Heritage and that the modern youth becomes most benefitted in terms of learning about the tradition and putting it into practice for self-growth and success in life.

SWAMI VIDITATMANANDA

2000



2025

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana

3350 North German Church Road, Indianapolis, IN 46235

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25th Anniversary of Hindu Heritage Family Camp

August 1-3, 2025

at

Versailles State Park

1387 U.S. 50 East

Versailles, IN 47042

Contacts

This book is a compilation of insights and notes from 25 years of family camps organized by the Hindu Temple of Central Indiana (HTCI). The objective of this compilation is to serve as a valuable resource for the Hindu community. It is designed to be used by any temple or group as a comprehensive guide for organizing similar camps. For further assistance, please contact the following individuals:

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Mera Mandir, Mera Ghar
-A Dual-Generational, Father-Daughter Perspective-
By Bhakti Modi, MN & Sanjay Mehta, PA

What does “Mandir” mean to you?

Bhakti: Growing up primarily in the U.S., Mandir always meant a place to go on weekends. Like many other children here, I would attend Mandir on Sundays for educational (religion/language) and dance classes. It was a place where I could openly and comfortably identify as an Indian and a Hindu. Everywhere else, I had to speak only in English, dress in Western clothes, and try to fit in. In Mandir, I could say Namaste, speak in Hindi, do pranaam, and wear Indian clothes without feeling judged. I felt like I belonged, surrounded by people who looked and acted like me. Growing up as a minority, this was a blessing I never realized I needed until I was much older. Mandir was a home away from home and a place of serenity and safety.



Sanjay: This question has been raised to me a few times by kids in camps and Bal Vihars. I found my answer in a simple anecdote: Once, someone asked a Mahatma, “Why do you go to the Mandir?” He replied, “I (body) do not go to Mandir, my Atma goes to the Mandir.” I keep that perspective in mind while visiting Mandir for darshan. It does not matter in front of which deity I am standing; it is just Atma (Jiva) facing the Paramatma (Brahman).

On social grounds: When I left Bharat over three decades ago, I never imagined that “Mandir” would hold such a different significance outside of Bharat. In Bharat, “Mandir” was a place to visit for darshan and was part of my (and the majority of Hindus’) daily routine. Here in America, it is a weekly routine. Beyond a spiritual connection, Mandir has been the epicenter of social ties and activities. It is also a meeting place for like-minded people and community members. In essence, for me, Mandir is a Shraddha (encapsulated in Gyan), Sanskriti, and Seva Kendra.

What advice can you share with other Hindus of your generation?

Bhakti: It is important for our generation (25-35) to not look at Mandir as just a place of worship where we go on festivals and major events with our family (elder parents and/or young children). We are extremely lucky because our elders of previous generations put their heart and soul into creating these Mandirs for us. They did the hard part of bringing and establishing our culture in this country. It is now up to us to sustain it. We must understand the value of our heritage, learn it the right way, and leave the right kind of legacy for the next generation.

Sanjay: The only thing I can request (not advise) people of my generation is to keep the focus of Mandirs on Spiritual (Adhyatma/Sadhana), Social (Seva), and Cultural (Sanskriti), in that order. This is important to help develop the Hindu identity of our kids and grandkids and help them maintain their Bhartiya roots. I often share the following “prescription” on how to remain a practicing Hindu: Rx (Daily) - 3Gs and 1R: Chant Gayatri mantra, Read Bhagvad Gita, Sing Geet (bhajan), and meditate on Shri Ram’s character. Swami Dayananda Saraswati of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, PA used to say, “We (Hindus) have diamonds (values) to offer to the world, but first we need to know that for ourselves.”

Congratulations to the HTCI team on celebrating the 25th Anniversary milestone of the Hindu Heritage Family Camp!

* Bhakti Modi works as Healthcare Analytics Manager in Minneapolis, MN. Sanjay Mehta works as an Information Technology Auditor in Pittsburgh, PA.



hindu heritage family camp

July 20-21, 2024



July 2025

Dear Campers and Parents

Namaste

With God's grace, blessings from elders, and well wishes from many, we are able to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Hindu Heritage Family Camp. We are honored to celebrate this milestone event at our beautiful temple, the Hindu Temple of Central Indiana. Over the years, we have all learned a lot on this journey. Each year focused on a specific theme which the activities (for the kids, teens, youth, adults and seniors) were all planned around. These activities included yoga, prayers, games, Baudhik sessions, jeopardy, cultural programs, and arts and crafts. The intent has been to convey meaningful messages and memories for all ages. Along with gaining knowledge and learning, we have been having fun, making friends and enjoying each others company. This camp is a testament to teamwork, with many youth involved in organizing and implementing it. Our community has come together as one big family.



We would like to thank everyone who helped organize the camp. Special thanks to the HTCI Executive Committee and Board for their continuous support. A special thanks to Shri Sanjay Mehta for preparing notes for the camp, traveling, and conducting classes for youth and adults year after year. Special thanks to Madhu Bhargava for editing, reviewing, and printing the camp books for the last 25 years. Madhu ji has spent countless hours compiling this 25th-year book. We are also grateful to VHPA and HSS for their continued support over 24 years.

Lastly, we would like to thank God for His grace in choosing us for this work. We have compiled a book of our camp notes from the past 25 years, which we plan to make available online for everyone to use.

This has been a small attempt to preserve and propagate Hindu heritage within the community.

Regards

Kumar & Hansa Dave

Guru Balgokulam and Chetana



hindu heritage family camp

July 20-21, 2024



August 2025
Celebrating 25 Years

Dear Campers

I am honored and delighted to invite everyone to the 24th annual Hindu Heritage Camp, which will be hosted on the sacred temple grounds. The Camp's vision is to illuminate the lamp of divine knowledge within each of us, bringing peace and joy into our daily lives. It serves as a practical guide to living, promoting respect for the divinity in all animate and inanimate beings. The camp caters to the needs of intellectuals, retirees, householders, students, and parents, ensuring a diverse audience. The program has been meticulously designed to offer something for everyone, including games for the young, interactive lectures for the elderly, and arts and crafts for school children.



At the camp, we foster a collegial and friendly atmosphere, encouraging vibrant discussions and the exploration of real-life problems through solutions inspired by our timeless scriptures. We cherish our rich heritage of Sanatana Dharma, the values imparted over 5000 years ago, and recognize our responsibility to pass down this ancient and contemporary wisdom to our children, thus preserving the chain of knowledge from generation to generation. By learning from historical stories, we strive to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Through teachings of Ahimsa, Asteya, Aparigraha, and Satya, we are reminded to control our senses and embark on the journey inward to discover our true selves. In doing so, we realize our interconnectedness with all creatures, comprehending the profound meaning of "Vasudeva Kutumbakam."

As a united group, we readily acknowledge the futility of discriminating against people based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or religion. Through symbolic gestures like "Namaste," the tilak on our foreheads representing our divine energy, and the ashes or Bhasmam reminding us of the transient nature of our bodies, we reject the artificial boundaries between fellow human beings. Living by the principles of Sanatana Dharma allows us to harmoniously coexist with nature and all beings.

As the President of the Executive Committee of HTCI, I am humbled by the immense collective creative energy that has gone into planning the camp's itinerary, the thought-provoking content within this book, and the nourishing meals prepared by dedicated volunteers in the temple kitchen. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Hansa and Kumar Dave, Shri Sanjay Mehta, and all others who have worked tirelessly to make this camp informative, successful, and joyful.

Yours truly,

Ravi Dinakaran
President, Executive Committee HTCI

Message from HTCI Balgokulam Youth Coordinator

Dear Campers,

This year, adults and children gather once again to enjoy a weekend filled with learning, art, games, discourses, and dialogues. We are truly grateful to have our youth, children, and parents joining us for this special camp.

Over the past 25 years, we have explored many meaningful themes, and this year's theme, Dhyan (meditation) and Yoga, is especially relevant. In today's fast-paced world, stress and pressure are part of daily life, and it is essential for our children to learn tools for inner peace and balance from a young age. Meditation and yoga help build mental clarity, emotional strength, and overall well-being.

Our team of teachers, along with Hansa and Kumar Dave, who founded this school more than two decades ago, offer our families a weekend of togetherness and reflection.

My daughters, Nikhita, a college student and Balgokulam alumna, and Natasha, who will begin college this summer, have both benefited tremendously from their years at Balgokulam and the camps. Though our camp may not offer luxury, it provides something far greater: the beauty of nature, the joy of community, and the calm of being unplugged. Being in nature itself is healing, fresh air, open skies, and the grounding energy of the earth help us reconnect with ourselves. We are incredibly proud of our children, who embrace this journey with such enthusiasm, and we are deeply thankful to our dedicated teachers, who have been nurturing and guiding them for years through Balgokulam. Our goal is to raise good human beings, those who live with purpose, values, and compassion, ready to serve society and bring light wherever they go.

I hope that, like me, you too will one day recognize the deep value of the wisdom from our Shastras, shared here in the loving embrace of Mother Earth. Our children are our wealth, our greatest treasures offered to the world, and we hope we have equipped them with wisdom, compassion, grace, and gratitude.

With love and pride,

Priya Menon

Balgokulam Youth Coordinator, 2022–2025



Message from HTCI Chairman, Board of Trustees

Dear Campers,

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I welcome you all to the 26th year of the exciting and enriching HTCI Camp experience. As Chairman of the HTCI Board of Trustees, I am honored to be part of an initiative that brings together curious minds, spirited individuals, and dedicated mentors in a shared journey of learning, growth, and adventure.



This camp is not just about activities and schedules—it is about discovery: the discovery of new skills, new friendships, and perhaps even new perspectives on life. Whether you're here to challenge yourself, connect with others, or simply enjoy nature and creativity, know that every moment has been thoughtfully designed to inspire and empower you.

I urge each of you to embrace this opportunity fully. Step outside your comfort zone, try something new, support one another—and most importantly, have fun. The memories you create here will stay with you for a long time; I say this from my own personal experience. I moved to Indianapolis from Dallas in 2004 and attended the HTCI Camp. One of our closest friends in town is someone we met at camp, and we've remained friends for over 20 years. I also reconnected with a friend I had previously met in Mumbai at work but lost contact with—and it was through camp that we became close once again.

Both my daughters, Divya and Bhavi, enjoyed the camp experience and learned a great deal while helping with camp organization as well as Balagokulam. They both graduated from Chetna after completing high school as youth coordinators and still fondly remember their time at HTCI Camp.

My sincere thanks to Hansaji and Kumarji, who have been organizing this camp for the past 26 years, and to all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this camp a success. I would also like to personally acknowledge Shri Sanjay Mehtaji, who has made it a point to come from Pittsburgh, PA to attend this camp since its inception.

Your commitment and passion are what make experiences like this possible.

Wishing you all a safe, joyful, and transformative camp!

Warm regards,
Mohan Sarda
Chairman, HTCI

Early History of The Hindu Temple of Central Indiana

Madhu Bhargava

The idea of building a Hindu Temple in Indianapolis originated from the Geeta Mandal, the city's first Hindu organization, which began in May 1981 with the blessings of the late Swami Chinmayananda Ji.

From the start, the organization held monthly 2-hour activities every second Sunday from 10 AM to 12 PM. These sessions included reciting Vedic prayers and hymns, singing devotional songs, and discussing Gita shlokas and discourses based on the Bhagavad Gita, followed by lunch. This 44-year tradition, which started at the International Center of Indianapolis and continued at the India Community Center, is now held at our temple.



India Community Center

Geeta Mandal helped bring Hindu families closer, promoting values of Hindu heritage, especially among children. They learned to work together as a team both at home and outside. Regular children's classes evolved into the formal establishment of Balagokulam in the mid-90s, organizing weekly classes and yearly Hindu Heritage Family Camps. I am privileged and delighted to have participated in printing the materials for Balagokulam and the family camp souvenirs.

The idea of building a Hindu Temple stayed dormant for a long time but always simmered in the hearts and minds of our Sanatan Dharma diaspora in Central Indiana. The push to build the Temple gained momentum when Ram Bhargava convinced a few family friends to buy a parcel of land at South Post Road in Indianapolis, which was being auctioned in 1999. Six families—Madhu & Ram Bhargava, Babli & Subhash Mahajan, Shanti & Gupteshwar Pathak, Kusum & Vimal Patel, and Kiron & Mohan Razdan, known as H-7—came together and purchased the parcel from which they donated nearly 14 acres for the Temple.

The initial fundraising event for the Temple was held on Dusshera day, October 7, 2000, at the Post Road land, under the guidance of the H-7 families. On this significant day, the Bhumi and Lakshmi Puja ceremonies were conducted to mark the beginning of the Temple's construction. More than 108 families took part, each pledging \$10,000, and collectively the diaspora raised over \$1.2 million.

For practical considerations, the H-7 group donated over 13 acres of land on German Church Road, where the current Temple stands. The construction of our Temple follows age-old Agama traditions and Vastu Shastra principles, guided by Sthapati Muttiah of Chennai, India. Our temple replicates the design features of famous temples across India, offering a pilgrimage experience in a single visit.

The groundbreaking ceremony at German Church Road took place on Vijaya Dashami day, October 5, 2003, and Phase 1 was completed in November 2005. On February 6, 2006, the members of the Geeta Mandal Community and the Sanatan Dharma diaspora of Central Indiana, ceremonially transferred the Radha-Krishna murti and Shiva Lingam to the newly completed Phase 1 Temple building.



**Phase 1
to
Phase 3**



The Board continued to plan for the Second and Third phases of development. During 2008–2009, when I served as President of the Executive Committee of HTCI, concerns were raised regarding the security and safety of the building, as well as the need for a separate entry adjacent to the shoe area. In the revised plan, the classroom entry, which was originally located at the back outside, was relocated inside, and provisions were made for a full basement. Architect Sanyog Rathod of Sol Design, appointed by the Temple, incorporated these requirements and proposed additional design features, including large skylights for natural light, high ceilings, a spacious worship hall, and a full basement with classrooms. These changes reduced costs, optimized space utilization, and transformed the Temple's architecture, enhancing both its functionality and aesthetic appeal.

Phase 3 began in 2013 under the leadership of Sthapathi Sri Umanandam, involving 27 Shilpis who carried out all the traditional Indian architectural work. A unique architectural feature of our Temple is the depiction of the Vishwaroopam darshan visible from the skylight at the main gate entrance and the Meenakshi Kalyanam when you exit the Temple.

The five-day grand opening of the Temple was celebrated with the Maha Kumbhabhishekam Ceremony held on June 3-7, 2015.

The beautiful Temple we see today is a labor of love, built through countless hours of work by the Sthapatis and Shilpis, the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, volunteers, members of the Sanatana Dharma Community, and the Temple's professional cleaning crew. Their dedication and hard work have made this dream a reality, creating a significant landmark for the Hindu community in Central Indiana. I hope many generations are able to benefit from our Temple's design incorporating the traditions of ancient temples with entrance improvements to fit colder weather.

**HTCI Grand Opening covered
by the
The Indianapolis Star
IndyStar.com
Monday, February 6, 2006**



METRO&STATE
SECTION B • THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR • MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2006 • INDYSTAR.COM/NEWS

CELEBRATION: Hindu women enthused as spiritual sculptures were placed at the new Hindu Temple of Central Indiana, 3350 N. German Church Road on the Far Eastside, on Sunday. Ceremonies were held over the weekend to celebrate its opening.

TEMPLE SANCTIFIED
HINDU WORSHIP CENTER IS THE FIRST IN INDIANA

By James A. Gilstrap
James A. Gilstrap is a staff writer for the Indianapolis Star.

With the symbols of their God in place, Hindus who joyously celebrated the statues' arrival Sunday can today begin regular worship in the new Hindu Temple of Central Indiana.

"This is the only temple in the whole state of Indiana," said board chairman Giridhar Ahuja, one of hundreds who helped sanctify the new building and house the deities in weekend initiation ceremonies.

The Far-Eastside temple — in reality a wing of a much grander facility being built in phases — opens today at 3350 N. German Church Road.

On Sunday, following a day during which the temple and its congregants were sprinkled with purifying holy water as part of the prayer and preparation for its opening, Hindus applauded as the deities were introduced.

"There's a misconception that Hindus believe in many gods," said Indu Vaidyan, who described the deities as "aids to meditation" that, like all of creation, are imbued with divinity.

"We believe in just one God that takes many forms," she said. "It's not simply the form, but the grace of God that we are welcoming in this place now."

One of the deities, the Radha Krishna, had been at the India Community Center on the Northwestside for 20 years. Until today, the center was the place where the

EMOTIONAL MOMENT: Anil Sojani (right) hugged a fellow temple member after the final statue was in place Sunday.

See Temple, Page B2

Lessons from Quarter-Century Journey of Hindu Heritage Camps

Om Sri Gurubhio Namaha

Vimal Patel

Concerned about preserving the relevance of the most ancient Hindu Heritage of Bharatiya Vedic culture for our children growing up in the dominant Christian culture of this country, the Geeta Mandal of Indianapolis embarked on holding yearly weekend Family Camps to impart universal Hindu values in action.



We began our first Family Camp at the India Community Center in the year 2000 and now we are celebrating the journey of 25 years at the Hindu Temple of Central Indiana. This journey of the Hindu diaspora is also associated with the development of the first Hindu Temple in Indianapolis, home of our weekly Balagokulam education activities. During this journey, the Hindu diaspora, through these Hindu Heritage Family Camps, has explored many dimensions of the universal Vedic wisdom intuited by our ancient sages.

On a practical level, these ancient sages distilled Hindu wisdom and declared that the universe in which humanity finds itself functions with two basic principles: 1) *Rutam*—the laws, orders, or regularities without which no scientific or moral discoveries would be possible. 2) *Yajna*—sacrifice for the good of all existence. These sages surmised that the universe runs on sacrifice, which maintains *Rutam*, the cyclical orders, and the most significant human actions are sacrifices of personal gain for the sake of something higher and nobler. If *Rutam* is the moral law, *Yajna* is the human response to live in accordance with that law, taking nothing from life but everywhere seeking to give oneself to life.

Thus, selfless service in Bharatiya traditions is embedded in the way of living itself and is passed on from one generation to the next through living experiences of the family, community, and exemplary role models from extended society to their children. Let us imbibe this cardinal point of self-sacrifice in the service of others through a story taken from our Great Epic Mahabharata:



King Yudhisthira performed a *Yajna* for the well-being of his subjects. The *Yajna* was conducted in a grand manner with expensive and precious gifts given away to all the subjects. Everyone in the kingdom felt that it was one of the grandest *Yajnas* ever witnessed. As the people were praising the *Yajna* and their King Yudhisthira, they saw a small mongoose which had a strange body. One side of it looked normal like any other mongoose, but the other side gleamed like pure gold. They saw it rolling on the floor and repeatedly looking at its body as if it expected some change to occur, but nothing happened. Everyone was stunned when the mongoose spoke and then looked at Yudhisthira and the people and said that there was nothing impressive about this *Yajna* and it was merely a show and nothing else.

Hearing the mongoose's words, Yudhisthira was pained and wondered why it should be so when he had so painstakingly followed the rules of the *Yajna* and given away charity to the poor and needy. The mongoose then addressed everyone and said that it would relate a story and they could decide for themselves!

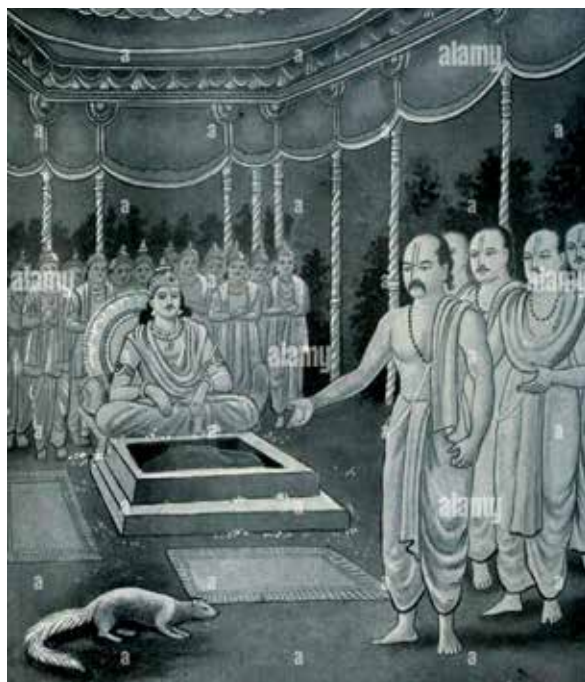
"Once upon a time long ago in a small village lived a poor man with his wife, son, and daughter-in-law. Though they were extremely poor and lived a hand-to-mouth existence, they were pious in nature and bore all the hardships of life with patience and equanimity.

Once a great famine struck the village. Being already poor, the family suffered greatly. The man went out and managed to procure a little rice and dal with great difficulty. His wife and daughter-in-law cooked the food and divided it into four portions, one for each of them. As they sat down to eat, they heard a knock at their door. Opening it, they found a weary traveler half dead with fatigue and hunger.

Immediately welcoming the man inside and allowing him to wash and rest a bit, the man of the house, without any hesitation, offered the traveler his share of the food. But after eating, his hunger seemed not appeased. His wife then came forward and offered her share of the meal. Her husband was reluctant, but she said that she could not eat while her husband was starving. When the traveler still remained hungry, his son said that it was the duty of the son to fulfill the wishes of his parents and gladly gave away his portion. Finally, the daughter-in-law, too, gave away her portion of the food, saying that she too wanted to take part in this great sacrifice that all her family members were participating in.

While the mongoose was relating the story, a great hush fell over the assembly hall of King Yudhisthira. The mongoose continued the story and said that suddenly there was a brilliant light and the Dharmaraj Devata, who had come in the guise of the traveler, appeared before the poor family and blessed all of them, granting them liberation, saying that they had performed the greatest Yajna of all.

The mongoose, which had been passing by the house looking for food, accidentally fell on some scrap of food that had remained on the floor after being offered to the traveler. It was amazed to find that the side of its body turned gold. Since there was no more food left, the mongoose said that it had been wandering to all Yajnas in the hope that there would be another such great Yajna where the other side of its body too could be transformed into gold. It even tried the same thing in King Yudhisthira's Yajna but was disappointed with the results.



Thus, it concluded that Yudhisthira's Yajna could not have been as great as that of the poor man and his family. Saying this, the mongoose vanished from the scene. The mongoose was actually Dharmaraj Devata, who had been cursed in an earlier birth and could regain his original form only if he humbled a person who was an embodiment of Dharma, like King Yudhisthira.

The story of the mongoose is a great story in the history of Bharatiya civilization, emphasizing that it is the quality of feeling that is important and not the quantity that is of great importance in life. On a personal note, don't you think that all of our Balagokulam teachers, along with parents, students, and many other volunteers under the leadership of Hansaben and Kumar Dave, assisted by Sanjay Mehta, would pass the litmus test of selfless service with flying colors!

The question for us all is, are we prepared to imbibe the universal human values to align our actions to work in accordance with the natural laws with self-sacrifice as our response to a given contextual need? At the organizational level, all of us are sure that these Hindu Heritage Family Camps are preparing us with the knowledge to imbibe selfless service for others as vividly narrated in the mongoose story from the Mahabharata!



Attended Balgokulam and Chetana

My name is **Ridhima Tomar**, and I am currently a college student at Purdue University. Since my freshman year of high school, I have been actively involved in Balagokulam. Initially, I joined to engage with the community and contribute through various volunteer opportunities, such as Youth Cooking, supporting the 5K race, and participating in previous camps.



As I immersed myself in Chetna classes, I formed a profound connection with the mandir. The guidance of dedicated teachers and participation in events like the camp enriched my understanding of Hinduism and its values. These teachings have become a cornerstone in my life, helping me navigate my duties and stay true to my cultural roots. This foundation has empowered me to remain confident in my beliefs as I venture into new experiences and environments.

In addition to my spiritual and cultural growth, serving as the Youth Coordinator provided me with numerous public speaking opportunities. This role significantly enhanced my social and networking skills, fostering personal development and boosting my confidence. These skills have been invaluable, supporting me in my academic journey and professional endeavors.

Hindu Mandir

Preya Dave

Our Hindu mandir has been my spiritual anchor since childhood. The vibrant colors, the scent of incense, and the warm smiles of the community members created an atmosphere of belonging that has shaped my life in countless ways. As I grew, so did my connection to this sacred space and the people within it. The mandir became more than just a place of worship; it became a nurturing ground for my personal growth. Through the various programs and activities, I discovered my voice in public speaking and honed my leadership skills. These opportunities, offered with love and support from our mandir community, laid the foundation for the confident adult I am today. I watched my parents dedicate their time to teaching young children about our rich heritage, instilling in me the value of service and the importance of passing on our traditions.



Now, as a mother of three, I find myself following in my parents' footsteps, teaching at the mandir every Sunday. It's a profound joy to see the cycle continue, to witness the spark of understanding in my students' eyes as they connect with our cultural roots. The mandir has been a constant in my life, reinforcing my Hindu values, providing a sense of purpose, and strengthening my self-identity. It's not just a building; it's a living, breathing entity that continues to inspire and guide me. As I look at my children learning and growing within these walls, I'm filled with gratitude for this incredible community that has been, and will continue to be, a beacon of light in our lives. Each time I step into the mandir, I'm reminded of that pivotal moment and the journey it sparked. The cultural pride that blossomed from the beginning has only grown stronger, rooting me firmly in a heritage that I now pass on with joy and reverence. The mandir didn't just give me a community; it gave me the priceless gift of belonging – to a tradition, a culture, and a way of life that continues to enrich every aspect of my being.

Hindu Scriptures

The Abrahamic religions or Semitic religions namely Christianity, Judaism and Islam call themselves the religions of the Book. This automatically means that other religions do not have their Books or scriptures. This, along with many others, is a common misconception about Hinduism perpetuated by followers of these religions. Hinduism or Sanatan Dharma (eternal religion) is the oldest continuously practiced religion in the world. It is as old as humanity and will go on as long as humanity exists. That is why it is also called Manav Dharma. The vast Hindu religion and all its branches and sects are based on Vedas, the oldest books in the library of humanity.

The Hindu scriptures are classified into two groups: Shrutis and Smritis. Shrutis, meaning revealed knowledge are the Vedas. As the name suggests, Vedas have no authors. The Vedas are accumulation of intuitive knowledge and experiences of Rishis and sages inspired by Divine revelations. Smritis are the epics called purans and the great epics Ramayna and Mahabharata. They also include various shastras or various books on different branches of philosophy, psychology, grammar, medicine and law etc.

The Vedas are four: Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. The Rigveda underlines the path of jnan or knowledge, the Yajurveda underlines the path of Karma or action and Samveda that of Bhakti or devotion and Atharvaveda represents a synthesis of the three. The four Vedas together form the foundation of Indian religions, philosophical and cultural systems and observances. Indian or Hindu culture and civilization has survived the ruthless ravages of time during all these millennia only because it is based on the firm rock-foundation of the wisdom of the Vedas. To possess a proper understanding and insight into Indian (Hindu) culture, thought and wisdom, it is essential that one has a good grounding in the Vedas, the supreme authority and knowledge of the people now called the Hindus. All the Shastras are derived and based upon the fundamental knowledge of the Vedas. Being the outpouring or the breath of the Supreme Being, they constitute the highest authority of religion and righteous conduct. The term "upnishad" literally means, "setting at rest ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit". They form the sacred doctrine whose sole aim is the exposition of the secret meanings of the Vedas. They are the fountainhead of the Vedanta and Samkhya philosophies.

The apparent and the so called polytheism in the vedas is, as a matter of fact, an aspect of the Vedic monism and monotheism. The Vedas have categorically declared many times that Reality is one; sages call it by various names. (Ekam Sat, Vipra Bahudha vadanti). God is one, but its dimensions are several. The various Vedic gods are simply the different manifestations of the same Reality. This so called multiplicity of gods amply reflects the essential Vedic doctrine, "All paths lead to the same goal". The Truth is one, and every one is seeking it. The individual temperament, time, place, name etc. create the so called differences. There is nothing than Brahman, and the world is but the manifestation of Him: What was, what is and what shall be: All is Om, Whatever else is beyond the bounds of threefold time: That also is Om.

Yash Pal Lakra

Source: Rig Veda by Dr. B.R. Kishore.



2019



2021



2022



2023

CAMP PICTURES 2019-2023



CAMP PICTURES 2000-2019



CAMP PICTURES 2000-2019



CAMP PICTURES 2000-2019



CAMP PICTURES 2000-2019



Hindu Heritage Family Camp Summary of 25 years starting from 2000



2000 page 23

India Community Center, Indianapolis
Saturday, October 21, 2000

Theme: Challenges in Balancing the Dual Culture

2001 page 31

India Community Center, Indianapolis
Saturday, October 12, 2001

Theme: Our Ancestors

2002 page 39

India Community Center, Indianapolis
Saturday, October 19, 2002

Theme: Our Shastras (Scriptures)

2003 page 45

Clarion Hotel, Indianapolis
Saturday, June 7, 2003

Theme: Our Festivals

2004 page 49

Lincoln City, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 20-22, 2004

Theme: My Dharma

2005 page 57

McCormick Creek State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, September 2-4, 2005

Theme: Yoga

2006 page 69

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, June 30-July 2, 2006

Theme: Mandir (Temple)

2007 page 79

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 17-19, 2007
Theme: Upasana - Our Spiritual Practices

2008 page 85

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 15-17, 2008

Theme: Hindu History

2009 page 91

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 21-23, 2009

Theme: Ashtanga Yoga

2010 page 99

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 20-22, 2010
Theme: Icons of Hindu History

2011 page 103

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 19-21, 2011
Theme: Seva-Service to Humanity

2012 page 109

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 17-19, 2012
Theme: Right Conduct - Value System

2013 pag 115

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 23-25, 2013
Theme: Take up one idea, make that your life

2014 page 119

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 22-24, 2014
Theme: Matru Devo Bhav

2015 page 129

Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 7-9, 2015
Theme: Upanishad - The grandeur of Hindu teaching

2016 page 137

Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 5-7, 2016
Theme: Ramayana

2017 page 149

Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 9-11, 2017
Theme: Sampradaya-Spiritual Tradition of Bharat

2018 page 155

Versailles State Park
Friday-Sunday, August 3-5, 2018
Theme: Dharma - 10 Attributes

2019 page 167

Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 2-4, 2018
Theme: Learn from Our Ancestors

2020 page 171

Virtual Camp from 10am-3pm (Google Meet)
Saturday, September 12, 2020
Theme: Rishte - Affectionate Bonds with the World

2021 page 177

Day Camp at Hindu Temple of Indiana
Saturday, August 7, 2021
Theme: The Bhagavad Gita - A Handbook of Life

2022 page 191

Day Camp at Hindu Temple of Indiana
Sunday, August 28, 2022
Theme: The Gem of Bhagavad Gita - Karma Yoga

2023 page 195

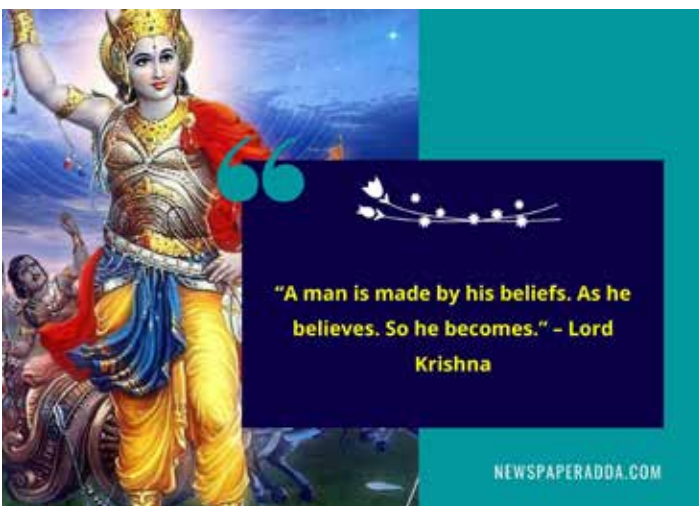
Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 25-27, 2023
Theme: Upasana Yoga (Meditation)

2024 page 202

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana
Saturday-Sunday, July 20-21, 2024
Theme: The Gem of Bhagwad Gita, Gyan Yoga

2025 page 207

Versailles State Park, Indiana
Friday-Sunday, August 1-3, 2025
Theme: Dhyana Yoga





2000 Youth Camp

Indian Community Center, Indianapolis IN

Saturday, October 21, 2000, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Theme: Challenges in Balancing the Dual Culture



Camper's Notes

Organized by:
Geeta Mandal of Indianapolis
in Association with:
VHP (World Hindu Council) of America

Challenges

- Living as a Hindu Family
- Creating a Hindu Environment at Home
- Daily Routine in a Hindu Home, Duty, Discipline and Self Control
- My Language, Dress and Food
- Young Ambassadors: Proud to be a Hindu
- Hindu Culture and American Culture: Mutually Exclusive or Mutually Inclusive
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Adjustment: Teen Age Behavior and Values
- What I Do and Do Not Understand about Hinduism

Standup and be Different

VS

Flow with the current and be one with the Crowd

You Can:

- Create a Positive Impact on the American Society, Environment, History with your life (Words and Deeds).
- Make a difference not by preaching but by ***Setting an Example***
- You Have Great Things to Offer Because of Your Ancestral Heritage; draw upon that storehouse.
- You can make this a better place than before through your:
 - *Thoughts*
 - *Art*
 - *Music*
 - *Dance*
 - *Literature*
- Finally, you must Enrich the Class at School and the Community in which you live in

It is your Duty to do this -
You are the greatest Ambassador of your
Ancestors and Your Heritage

What I do and do not understand about Hinduism

Who is a Hindu?

One who believes in Vedas and follows the teachings of Vedas is a Hindu.

Swami Vivekanand said “All our rituals, prayers and sacraments are extracted from Vedas”

Our Sacred Books

- Four Vedas
 - Rig Veda
- Yajur Veda
- Sam Veda
- Atharva Veda

Each Veda consists of Mantras, Rituals, Meditation, ways of knowing and realizing truth / God.

- Upanishads (Essence of Vedas)
- Bhagvad Gita
- Ramayan
- Mahabharat
- Puranas

Brahman

Brahman is eternal, the almighty, and the cause of all manifestations. Brahman is formless and partless. He is Sat-Chit-Anand (absolute existence-absolute knowledge-absolute bliss). He is the creator of this universe. Essence of everything is Brahman. The word "Brahman" is not to be mistaken as Brahma or Brahmin.

Dharma

All actions, qualities, offering, duties which shastras (our sacred books) teach us to lead to our spiritual good (becoming an integrated individual),

Karma and Re-birth

Karma is an action that brings back results in this life or in future lives. Karma is divided in three categories: Agami karma (determine future), Sanchit (accumulated) and Prarabdha karma (past actions). Individual is the maker of his own fate that is the "Law of Karma".

Yoga (Union)

Means of uniting self (Individual) with the Paramaatma (God) through selfless service and love to humankind, devotion and intellect.

Guru

To purify the spirit, to achieve the perfection of Atman, energy comes from another great atman that is Guru. Once initiated by Guru one can successfully travel on the path of "Search of Truth".

ॐ/OM

Cosmic sound/vibration that includes all other sounds and vibrations. In Bhagvad Gita, Bhagwan Shri Krishna said "I am **Omkaar** in all the sounds". OM is indeed Brahman.

References: Writings of Swami Vivekanand, Swami Chinmayanand, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Shri Bansi Pandit and discourses of several DharmAcharyas.

My Language, Dress and Food

- Literal meaning of “Culture” (‘Sanskriti’ in Samskrit language) is ‘ a type of progressive civilization’. It comprises of mainly Language, Dress and Food.
- Arya or Hindu Sanskriti, now popularly known as Indian Culture, is more than ten thousand years old. Arya means ‘noble or wise’ in Samskrit
- Our culture is alive today because of the strong foundation laid by our ancestors
- Culture is not just following the traditions, it is respecting and preserving our Language (Literature), Dress and Food
- India has many languages, dresses and variety of food items. Name and form of these things may vary from region to region within India. But these are parts of one Culture as many colors are parts of one Rainbow
- Most of our languages are derived from Samskrit. All the Hindu names are from Samskrit and are meaningful
- Most of our food items have same ingredients although their names are different. Our food is meant for body and mind. We are the only people who offer food to god before we eat
- Our dresses are so designed such that they bring dignity for self and respect for others
- We, the current generation, are lucky to have such a strong and live culture
- ***Let us work hard to Preserve it***



Daily Routine in a Hindu Home, Duty, Discipline and Self Control

Daily Routine

Waking Up -



We look at our hands, remember Devi Lakshmi, Saraswati and Sri Krishna, and say:
Karagre Vasate Lakshmih, Kar Madhye Saraswati.
Kar Moole Tu Govindah, Prabhate Kar Darshanam.

We remember the Mother Earth and ask her forgiveness for stepping on her:
Samudra Vasane Devi, Pravata Sthana Mandale.
Vishnu Patni Namastubhyam, Pada Sparsham Kshamaswame.

Greeting Parents and Brothers/Sisters -



As others wake up we gently greet them with:
Jai Shri Krishna, Jai Sri Ram, Ram Ram, Namaste. Panv Lagi.



Shower -

As we take our shower we chant the following mantra, invoking the waters from all the sacred rivers of Bharat to purify our body:

Gange Cha, Yamune Chaiv, Godavari Saraswati.
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri, Jalesmin Sanidhim Kuru.

Surya Namaskar -

We do at least three Surya namaskars.
Om Mitray Namah, Om Suryay Namah, Om Ravaye Namah.

Puja -

We go to the pooja room, light the lamp and do pranam to Ishwar.



Go to School - Come Home and Finish Homework - Go and play with friends.

Helping Mother and Father in the Kitchen - Taking Prasad for Pooja.

We help mother and father in the kitchen as they get the meal ready. Since food is sacred, we take a little bit of the cooked food as prasad for aarti.

Pooja/Aarti with the Family

We do pooja and aarti as a family. Every body must be present for pooja and aarti.

Bhojan Mantra -

Before starting dinner, we thank Ishwar for everything including the meal:

Bramha Arpanam, Bramhavir, Bramhagnau, Bramhanahutam.

Bramhaivatain Gantavyam, Bramha Karma Samadhina.

Dinner -

While having dinner, all our conversation is in our Mother Tongue. We avoid talking in English during dinnertime.



Study

We study hard to excel in school.

Night Prayer -

Before sleeping, we fold our hands, remember all the things we did during the day, the things we did not do during the day, our mistakes, and ask Ishwar to give us strength and courage to be better the next day:

Kara charan kritam vak, kayajam karmajam va,

Shravan nayanjam va, manasam va paradham.

Vihitam Vihitam va, sarva metat kswamasva.

Jaya Jaya karunabdhe, Shree Mahadeva Shambho.



Special activities on Saturdays/Sundays:

On Saturdays we do special things such as a Hawan with family. We help clean the home, specially the mandir and moorties. We visit the Hindu Temple in town. Finally, we go to the Bal Vihar.

Discipline and Self Control

Shad Ripus (Six Enemies)

There are six big enemies we have to watch out for:

Kama (impure desires), Krodha (anger), Moha (attachment), Mada (arrogance), Lobh (greed), Matsarya (jealousy).



The Ten Friends - Yamas/Niyamas

But there are ten great friends we can make to fight the six enemies:

Yama (five restraints) -

Ahimsa (Non-injury), Satya (Truth), Asteya (Honesty), Brahmacharya (Celibacy), Aparigraha (Non-stealing)

Niyama (five observances) -

Saucha (Purity), Santosh (Contentment), Tapa (Hard work), Swadhyaya (Self Study), Ishvara-pranidhana (Remembering Ishwar)

What makes a Hindu Home Special

- It is clean. The shoes are kept outside the home. We worship purity.
- It has Rangoli/Mangala at the front entrance.
- It has the Tulsi plant and many others. We worship Mother Earth and everything in Nature.
- It is a temple. It has a Pooja Ghar, Moorties & Pictures of Devis and Devatas.
- It is filled with good books. We worship Knowledge.
- It has the Bhagwa Flag, the symbol of our great ancestors. We worship and sacrifice, strength and hard work.
- It has Om. We worship Truth, Peace and Oneness.
- It has Hindu musical instruments (tabla, sitar, mridangam). We worship classical art, classical dance and classical music.
- All speak in their mother tongue and Samskrit. My language is my Mother.
- The food that is cooked is first offered to Ishwar as Prasad. We worship food; we can never disrespect it.
- You first serve others and then serve yourself. We worship service for others.
- You love those younger than you and respect those elder than you.
- You do everything for the young, out of love; and do everything for the old, out of respect.
- There are no rights in a Hindu home - you only have duties: sacrifice and respect.

The Hindu Family: Prays together, plays together, stays together

Quiz I

Q1: Fill in the Blanks:

1. We say the Bhojan Mantra before _____.
2. After taking our shower we do _____
3. In the evening the whole family does _____ together.

Q2: Label the daily activities in the right order: 1, 2, 3, etc.

- _____ Shower
- _____ Surya Namaskar
- _____ Wake Up
- _____ Pooja/Aarti with the Family
- _____ Puja
- _____ Help Mother and Father in the Kitchen - Take Prasad for Pooja.
- _____ Bhojan Mantra
- _____ Night Prayer
- _____ Go to School; Come Home; Finish Homework; Play
- _____ Dinner
- _____ Greet Parents and Brothers/Sisters
- _____ Study

Q3: Match the following:

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| Ahimsa | Celibacy |
| Satya | Honesty |
| Saucha | Truth |
| Brahmacharya | Non-injury |
| Asteya | Purity |

Q4: True or False:

1. A Hindu home is dirty _____
2. In a Hindu home the young is loved and the old respected _____
3. Bhagwa is a sacred symbol _____
4. In a Hindu home if you don't feel like eating you throw away the food _____
5. In a Hindu home you first serve yourself and then serve the others _____
6. Everyone fights for their rights in a Hindu home _____



2001 Youth Camp
Indian Community Center
Indianapolis, IN

Saturday, October 12, 2001, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Theme: Our Ancestors



Camper's Notes

Organized by:
Geeta Mandal of Indianapolis
in Association with:
VHP (World Hindu Council) of America

Bal Vihar –Sustaining Hindu Heritage

Sanjay Mehta

A few years ago this incidence took place in Houston, Texas. One day a young student returned home from college in a very upset mood. "What happened my son?" his father asked, "you seem unhappy today." The son replied, "We had a group discussion in our class today on religion and culture. Few in the group were Christians, few Jews and few Muslims, all were confidently talking about their faith and teachings, and I could not talk much." Father said, "Because, you never learned!" Son asked, "Why didn't you send me to Bal Vihar when I was a kid?" Father answered, "We used to try to wake you up every Sunday morning for Bal Vihar, but you always wanted to sleep late and disregarded our efforts". Son asked, "Why didn't you slap me and wake me up?????" This incidence is alarming to all the Hindu parents living in America. None of the parents want to see this happening to their kids. Knowing our heritage, our faith and other values bring confidence and pride in children. Five to fifteen is the right age to inculcate Hindu values in kids. That is the reason ten out of sixteen vedic samskars (sacraments) are performed by the time child reaches age of 10. These samskars are the impressions, which lay the foundation of a perfect character.

By the grace of god and hard work, Hindu community has built many temples and community centers all over the United States. We need to build volunteers who can continue this sadhana & protect these centers in future and sustain our heritage. The Bal Vihar provides an opportunity for our children to collectively discover their cultural bond with Bharat and develop pride in their Hindu identity.

Most of the Bal Vihars running across the country are balanced in their approach; activities promote physical, intellectual and spiritual well being of the participants. The program is designed to develop volunteer spirit in children, a sense of awareness of our obligations to the society, a sense of belonging to a global family. It is open to children ages 5 years and above. Activities include: Yoga, language class, stories, prayer, inspirational songs, poems, bhajans, skits, crafts, celebration of festivals and indoor & outdoor games. The Bal Vihar is a weekly 1½-hour's program.

Vaidehi, 14 said, " I go to Bal Vihar to learn interesting thing about my culture and religion. I learn yoga, mantras which are the ideals of our culture".

Sujith, 9 said " I go to Bal Vihar for learning more about my religion and yoga".

Bhakti, 13 said " I go to Bal Vihar to understand my religion, culture & to practice it."

Bal Vihar is an extension of the family and not a school.

Our Ancestors

Sri Ram



Childhood Stories

- Ram Janam
- Hanuman devotion to Sri Ram and Sita
- With Rishi Vishwamitra – Slew Tarka and drove away Mareecha, Subahu from the ashram. Learned all the sciences, arts and literature from Rishis

Role as Family Member

- As an Ideal Son – understood and did his duty as a son. No talk of rights.
- As an Ideal Brother –
- As an Ideal Husband

Protector of the Society

- Asuras – Protecting the defenseless Rishis against Asuras (terrorists)
- Ravana in Lanka – Annihilating a root cause of Adharma in the world –
- Bali – Fighting against injustice

Virtues

- Truth – was the embodiment of Truth
- Dharma – was the embodiment of Dharma: righteous thinking and living
- Honor (Maryada) – Keeping the spoken word; walk your talk.
- Friendship –
- Strength and Humility –

Places visited

- Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Panchvati (Godavari), Kishkindha, Rameshwaram
- Lanka

What do we learn from Sri Ram's life

- Stand up for your principles. Be courageous, protect Dharma and Truth. Keep your word (promises).
- Never give up in spite of all odds; make the best of even a difficult situation. Life is not a bed of roses, but it is exciting, challenging and full of adventure if you have the right ATTITUDE.
- Service to society – give up your personal pleasure and comfort for the good of society. Always put others before you.
- Learn from your teachers and achieve in life.

Our Ancestors

Sri Krishna



Childhood

- Lilas of Bal Gopal – Putna, Kaliya, Govardhana, Kamsa
- With Rishi Sandipani – Sudama, Rishi's Son.

Role as Family Member

- Child – playful, mischievous, witty, innocent, charming, helpful, fearless
- Adolescent – student, friend, fearless, protector, respectful
- Husband – Caring, kind, brave, always there
- Friend / Brother – helpful, caring, counselor, inspiring
- Father – Pradhyumna

Protector of the Society

- Destroy wicked people – Kamsa, Jarasandha, Narkasura, Kauravas
- Protect the defenseless – Gopis, Draupadi, Rukmini
- Educate and inspire – Gokul, Vrindavana
- Build a new community – Dwarka and Yadus
- Guide the whole world – Jagadguru , the world teacher

Virtues

- Fearless, bold, strong, humble
- Principled, a Yogi
- Caring, loving, best of friends
- Establisher of Dharma
- Wise and practical

Places visited

- Mathura
- Gokul, Vrindavana
- Dwarka
- Magadh
- Hastinapura/Indraprastha

What do we learn from Sri Krishna's life

- Standup for Dharma, for Truth, for Justice
- The right attitude throughout your life, in spite of difficulties.
- Strive for achievement and excellence at every stage of your life
- Maintain a balance in life: Karma, Gyan and Bhakti – action, intellect and spirituality.

Our Ancestors

Adi Guru Shankaracharya



- Birth name – Shankar
- Born at Kaladi, Kerala (South), India in year 788 AD
- Sanyas (renouncing the material world) at age of 16
- Left the body in 820 AD at the age of 32

Shankaracharya's work:

- Traveled all over India to spread the teachings of Vedanta and uniting Hindus
- Established four major religious contents (peeth)
- Sharad peeth, Sringeri, Karnatak (South)
- Jyotir peeth, Badrinath, Uttar Pradesh (North)
- Dwarka peeth, Dwarka, Gujarat (West)
- Puri peeth, Puri, Orissa (East)

Followers:

- Swami Vivekanand, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Raman Maharshi, Yogi Arvind, Guru Nanak, Sri Tyag Raj, and all Hindus.

Our Sacred Duty

- ◆ We, our children, and our children's children depend upon the cultural heritage of our past in order to flourish in the present and move swiftly into a bright, fulfilling future.
- ◆ The cultural heritage of Bharat – like mother Ganga – is alive and vibrant; its spirit is boundless, and it embraces and nourishes all life through which it flows.
- ◆ The rich and profound harvests of Hindu heritage have satisfied spiritually hungry souls, season after season, generation after generation.
- ◆ We must never fail to serve and protect the roots of that ancient tree, our culture, which tirelessly and ceaselessly nurtures us and offers us wisdom.

In Indian Culture

Why do we

Indian culture is admired and respected worldwide for its beauty and depth. Almost every Indian custom and tradition has scientific, logical, historical, social, or spiritual significance. Understanding the lens meaning to an otherwise mechanical following of the customs is often misunderstood as mere superstitions that fade away in time.

Why do we do Aarti?

Aarti, performed at the end of a pooja or to welcome an honored guest, involves waving a lighted lamp in a circular motion before the deity. This act signifies the worshipper's love and devotion, seeing the beauty of the Lord in all its glory. The camphor used in aarti symbolizes the burning away of ego and tendencies (vaasanas), leaving no trace, and emitting a pleasant fragrance. This represents the spiritual progress of sacrificing oneself to spread love and divinity. Touching the flame at the end signifies the desire for divine vision and noble thoughts.

Why do we ring the Bell in a Temple?

Ring the bell in a temple is not to wake up the Lord but to produce an auspicious sound, similar to the universal sound of OM. This sound creates auspiciousness within and without, preparing us to gain the vision of the Lord. The act of ringing the bell signifies the beginning of worship and creates a divine atmosphere.

Why do we blow the Conch?

Blowing the conch during aarti or before a battle generates the primordial sound of Om, representing the world and the Truth behind it. The conch, especially the Paanchajanya blown by the Lord, symbolizes Dharma. The sound of the conch signifies the victory of Dharma over Adharma, creating a divine atmosphere.

Why do we offer a Coconut?

Offering a coconut during a havan or homa symbolizes the breaking of the ego. The marks on the coconut resemble a human head, and breaking it represents the surrender of inner tendencies (vaasanaas) and the mind to the Lord. The coconut, known for its selfless service, signifies the dedication of all parts of the tree for various uses, reflecting selflessness and purity. It also represents the three-eyed Lord Shiva, symbolizing divine vision and insight.

Why do we Chant Om?

Om, the universal name of the Lord, represents the three states of consciousness (waking, dream, and deep sleep), the three deities (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva), the three Vedas (Rg, Yajur, Sama), and the three worlds (Bhuh, Bhuva, Suvah). It symbolizes everything, from the material to the sacred, forms and formless. Chanting Om connects the individual to the universal consciousness, embodying the ultimate truth and reality. The silence between two Om chants represents the formless, attributeless Brahman, encompassing the entirety of existence and beyond.

Why do we touch our Elders' Feet?

Touching the feet of parents, elders, teachers, and Sadhus is a gesture of respect in Hindu culture. It symbolizes recognition of their age, maturity, nobility, and divinity, acknowledging their selfless love and sacrifices. This practice, often performed on special occasions, reflects the strong family ties in Indian society and values the blessings (aashirwaad) and good wishes (sankalpa) of elders. It is a way to humbly acknowledge the greatness of another and to seek their blessings for one's well-being.

Why do we Fast?

Fasting, or Upavaasa, is a common practice among Hindus, meaning "to stay near the Lord." By abstaining from food, one's mind becomes more alert and pure, focusing on noble thoughts and staying close to the Lord. Fasting is a self-imposed discipline to cultivate control over the senses, sublimate desires, and maintain mental poise and peace. It should be undertaken with joy and not lead to weakness or irritability, ensuring that the goal behind fasting is noble and spiritual.

Why do we not touch Paper and Books with our Feet?

In Hindu culture, knowledge is considered sacred and divine. Therefore, touching papers, books, or people with feet is avoided as a mark of respect. If done accidentally, a reverential touch and an apology follow. This custom, ingrained from a young age, fosters a deep reverence for knowledge and books, emphasizing their high position in Hindu culture. It also extends to worshipping books, vehicles, and instruments once a year on Saraswati Pooja.

Why do we offer Food to Ishwar before eating?

Offering food to Ishwar before eating is a practice to acknowledge that everything, including our actions and their results, is due to His strength and knowledge. This act changes our attitude towards food and eating, encouraging purity, sharing, and gratitude. Food offered must be pure and the best, symbolizing a respectful and cheerful acceptance of what we receive. This attitude of offering and acceptance extends beyond food to encompass all aspects of life, recognizing everything as prasaada (divine grace).

Why do we worship Kalash?

The Kalash, a pot filled with water and adorned with mango leaves and a coconut, symbolizes the inert body filled with divine force. The water represents primordial creation, the leaves and coconut represent creation, and the thread signifies the love that binds all creation. Worshipping the Kalash invokes the blessings of holy rivers, Vedas, and deities, symbolizing immortality and the life-giving force.

Why do we do Namaste?

Namaste is a common greeting among Hindus, meaning "I bow to you" in Sanskrit. The gesture, with folded palms and a bowed head, symbolizes reducing one's ego in front of another, signifying friendship and humility. It acknowledges the life force or divinity within each individual, recognizing the oneness of all beings. The act of Namaste is a respectful salutation to the divine presence in the person being greeted, indicating a meeting of minds and hearts.

Why do we light a Lamp?

In Hindu homes, lighting a lamp, or “diya,” at the pooja place is a common practice. It is often done at dawn, dusk, or both times of the day. Some households even maintain a continuously lit lamp, known as “akhand deepa,” 24/7. This practice is rooted in symbolism where light represents knowledge and darkness signifies ignorance. Ishwar, or God, is considered the embodiment of “chaitanya” or the principle of knowledge, which enlivens and illuminates all. Lighting a lamp symbolizes the removal of ignorance through knowledge, just as light dispels darkness. It serves as a witness to our thoughts and actions during any auspicious occasion. The traditional lamp has special significance: the oil or ghee represents negative tendencies (vaasanas), the wick represents ego, and lighting it with spiritual knowledge helps to slowly exhaust these tendencies and burn away the ego. As the flame always burns upwards, it reminds us to strive for higher ideals. A single lamp can light hundreds more, signifying how knowledge, when shared, increases in clarity and conviction.

Why do we have a Prayer Room?

In Hindu homes, a dedicated prayer room is a common feature where family members worship the Divine. This space is considered the Master’s room of the house, reflecting the belief that the Lord is the true owner of the house and creation, while we are mere temporary occupants. This practice instills humility and reduces false pride and possessiveness. The prayer room, filled with sacred thoughts and vibrations, influences the minds of those who spend time there, pervading the entire home with a sense of sanctity and reverence.

Why do we do Pradakshina?

Pradakshina, or circumambulation, is performed in temples to acknowledge the Lord as the center and essence of our lives. It is done clockwise to keep the Lord on our right, symbolizing auspiciousness and a commitment to leading a life of purity and righteousness. This practice signifies that the Lord is the focal point, guiding and strengthening us in our daily activities.

Why do we wear Tilak and Bindi?

Wearing a tilak or bindi, especially on the forehead, is a common practice among Hindus. It is applied to saints, the Lord, and even to welcome or honor guests. The tilak invokes a feeling of sanctity, symbolizing a remembrance of the Lord and a commitment to righteousness. It is applied to the spot between the eyebrows, known as the Ajna Chakra, which is the seat of memory and thinking. This area emits significant energy, and the tilak helps to cool and protect it, preventing energy loss and enhancing mental clarity.

Why do we worship Tulasi?

Tulasi, regarded as Devi Lakshmi, is worshipped in Hindu homes for its self-purifying qualities. Women light a lamp, water the plant, and do pradakshina around it, symbolizing the sanctity and divine presence of Tulasi. The leaves are offered to the Lord in pooja, reflecting the belief that Tulasi is incomparable in quality and holds a special place in Hindu worship.





2002 Youth Camp

Indian Community Center, Indianapolis IN

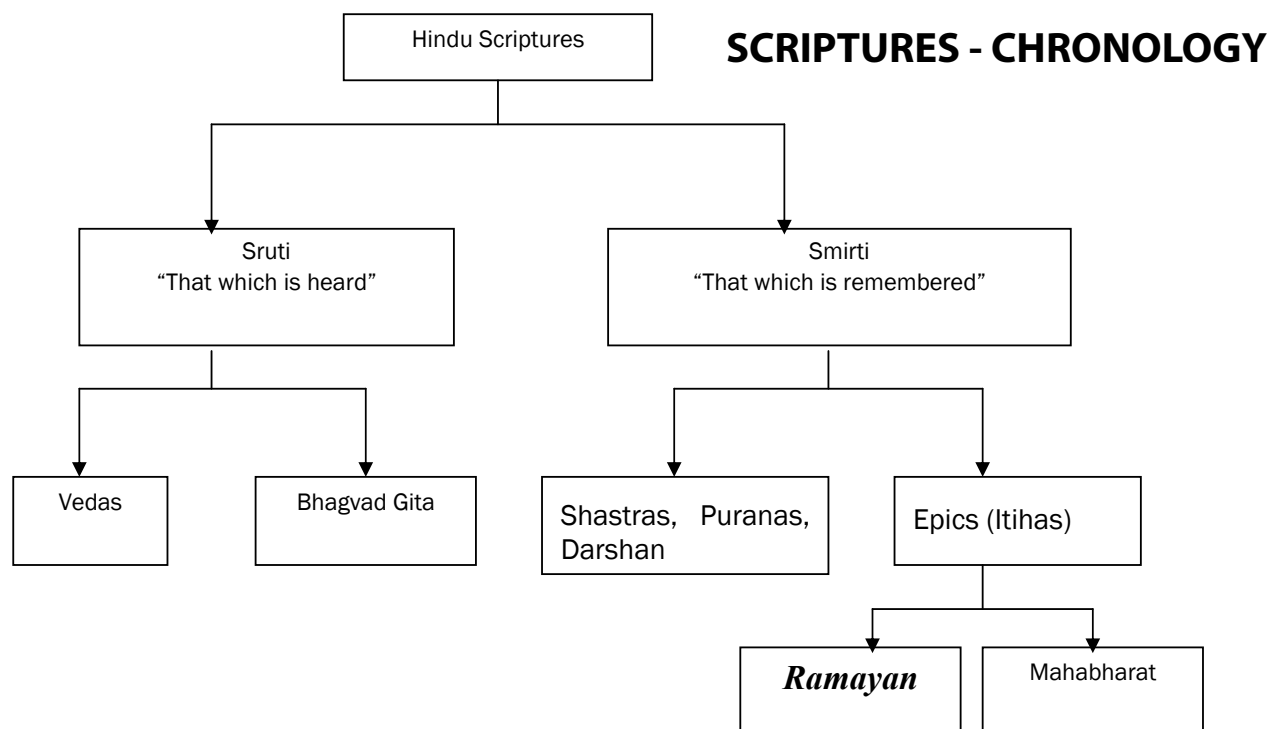
Saturday, October 19, 2002, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Theme: Our Shaastras (Scriptures)



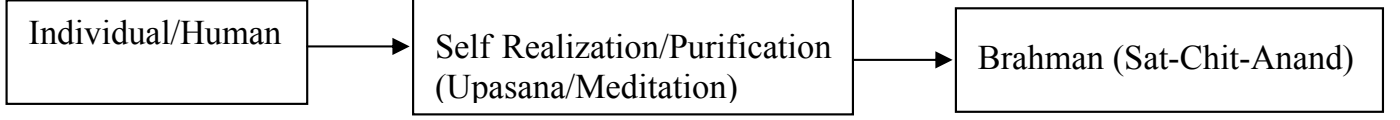
Camper's Notes

Organized by:
Geeta Mandal of Indianapolis
in Association with:
VHP (World Hindu Council) of America



Scripture	Time Frame	Compiled By	Content
Rig ved	6000 BCE	Rishis	10,500 mantras deals with General Knowledge
Yajurved			1,900 mantras, deals with knowledge of Karma
Atharaved			1,800 mantras, deals with Upasana
Sam ved			5,600 mantras, deals with knowledge of science
Upnishads	1600 BCE	Rishis	Essence of Vedas (end part of Vedas)
Ramayan	600 BCE	Valmiki	Story of Sri Ram
Mahabharat	2000 BCE	Vyas	Story of Pandavas, Kauravas and Sri Krishna
Bhagvad Gita	2000 BCE	Vyas/Sri Krishna	Immortal dialogue between Sri kishna and Arjun.
Yuga Darshan	200 BCE	Patanjali	Sutras (formulas) on ashtanga Yoga.
Manu Smirti	200 BCE	Raja Manu	Laws of righteous living
Sanskrit Grammar	500 BCE	Panini	Grammar rules of Sanskrit
Bhaagvat Purana	300-1500 CE	Vyas	Story of Bhagvan Vsihnu. Ways of devotional offerings
Other Puranas: Shiv Purana, Garud Purana	300-1500 CE		Devoted to and stories ancient kings, heroes and sages.

Essence of Shaastra



God has revealed the eternal truths by inspiring Rishis through the Vedas for the well-being of all people.

Content of Vedas is not only theory of perfect life, but also a technique of perfect living.

Vedas say ‘Enlighten men, we neither harm any one, nor impose ourselves. We act accordance with Vedic principles and ideals.’.

Mahatma Gandhi said “I am a Hindu because it is Hinduism which makes this world worth living”.

अग्निमीडे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् । होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥

Agnimeede Purohitam Yagyasya Devmrutvijam | Hotaram Ratnadhatamam || Rig 1

I the beginning of yagna I salute to ‘Agni’ - the leader of the creation, the one who enlightens the universe.

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः

Aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishwatah.

Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.

एकोहं बहुस्याम्

Ekoham bahusyam.

I am one, let me become many.

विद्यासमम् नास्ति शरीरभूशनम्

Vidyasamam Naasti Sharirbhushanam

There is no other ornament for the body other than learning.

समेद्रो मेधया स्प्रणोतु

Samendro medhayaa sprnotu

He, whose form is manifold – that Indra (Omkaara - Ishwar) may fill me with intellectual vigor.

Six great sayings (Mahavakyas) are :

"I am Brahman" (Aham Brahmasmi). This states the identity of the inmost consciousness of the individual with that of the supreme Divine.

"The Self is Brahman" (Ayam Atma Brahma). This also states the identity of the soul with the Absolute but in a more objective and less direct manner. It is the same Self in all beings that is the same Absolute truth.

"That thou art" (Tat tvam asi). Whatever we see or think about we are that. Not only is the I That, the You is also That. The consciousness in the other is also the Divine.

"Intelligence is Brahman" (Prajnanam Brahma). It indicates that the Divine intelligence is present within us and has the power to return us to the Divine.

"The Universe is Brahman" (Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma). The entire universe is the Divine, which includes our self.

"He am I" (So'ham). This shows the identity of the self with the Divine Lord inherent within the natural movement of our breath. "So" is the natural sound of inhalation, "ham" of exhalation.

Ten characteristics of Dharma (Righteousness):

Dhriti (perseverance and patience)	Kshama (unperturbed ness)
Damah (self-control)	Asteya (honesty)
Shaucha (internal and external purity)	Indriya Nigraha (sense control)
Dhi (intelligence)	Vidya (applied knowledge)
Satya (the truth)	Akrodha (absence of anger/peace)

Last but not the least

धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah

One who protects Dharma is protected by Dharma

नाभिषेको न संस्कारह, सिंहस्य क्रियते वने । विक्रमार्जित सत्वस्य, स्वयमेव म्रिगेन्द्रता

Naabhisheko na samskaaraH, simhasya kriyate vane | vikramaarjita satwasya, swayameva mrigendrataa.

There is no crowing ceremony for the lion in the forest. It's declared the king of all the animals by virtue of its own strength. (**We achieve by our own efforts**).

“Garva se kaho hum Hindu hain”

What is Puja / Upasana

- Worshipping god for self purification.
- Various forms of worships we do are derived from Vedas, these are simplified to the level of understating (of truth) of Upasak (worshipper).
- Here god is perceived in some fashion, which is within domain of human senses. Upasana is a technique of making mind and intellect sharp to apprehend Brahman (Omkar, Truth). In the early stages of sadhana Brahman is manifested as Shiva, Ram, Krisha, Durga or any other form on which sadhak (worshipper) can pivot his/her thoughts.

१	आवाहनं समर्पयामि	aawaahanam samarpayami
२	आसनं समर्पयामि	aasanam samarpayami
३	पाद्यं समर्पयामि	paadyam samarpayami
४	अर्घ्यं समर्पयामि	arghyam samarpayami
५	आचमनीयं समर्पयामि	aachamaneeyam samarpayami
६	स्नानं समर्पयामि	snaanam samarpayami
७	वस्त्रं समर्पयामि	vasthram samarpayami
८	यज्ञोपवीतं समर्पयामि	yajnopaveetham samarpayami
९	गन्धं समर्पयामि	gandham samarpayami
१०	अक्षतं समर्पयामि	akshatham samarpayami
११	पुष्पं समर्पयामि	pushpam samarpayami
१२	धूपं आघ्रापयामि	dhoopam aaghraapayaami
१३	दीपं दर्शयामि	deepam darshayaami
१४	नेवेद्यं समर्पयामि	neivedhyam samarpayami
१५	नमस्कारं समर्पयामि	namaskaram samarpayami
१६	क्षमापनं समर्पयामि	xamaapanam sSamarpayami

What is Yajna

- Yajna means “sacrifice and surrender to God”. It means act of offering the best one has, for the welfare of others.
- As ritual worship, yajna involves offering material such as butter (ghee), grains, seeds, leaves, while chanting mantras.
- Yajna results in “development of Spiritual power”
- It purifies the atmosphere.

Material needed

- Samidha (dried and clean wood sticks)
- Havan Samagri (ghee, camphor and other seeds, leaves etc.)
- Bowl and spoon for ghee
- Bowl and spoon for Water (aachman)
- Small Yajna vedi (Kund): If you do not have one, it can be made with some metallic pot and aluminum foil.

ब्रम्ह नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम्.

The all pervading, Eternal Brahman is seated in Yajna .

Follow the detail vidhi (procedure) to perform yagna, this procedure is extracted from Vedas. Many scholars and organizations like gayatri parivar and arya samaj have prepared small books which has English translation too.





2003 Youth Day Camp

Clarion Hotel, Indianapolis IN

Saturday, June 07, 2003, 9:30 am - 4:45 pm

Theme: Our Festivals



Camper's Notes

Organized by:
Geeta Mandal of Indianapolis
in Association with:
VHP (World Hindu Council) of America

Hindu Festivals: Our Cultural Heritage as well as Challenge

Meenal Pandya, Wellesley MA

A wise man once said that if you want to know the true character of a person then find out what makes him laugh. Similarly, it should be said that if you want to know about any culture, look into the kinds of festivals that it celebrates. Festivals reflect the true character of a culture: what it values, what its ideals are, what is considered fun, and what hidden messages are being reinforced. In other words, festivals are the key indicators of the inner beauty of any culture. The Hindu culture teeming with festivals and these festivals reflect what our ancestors valued and cherished. Festivals are the mirrors thru which we can see Hindu society. Each festival is celebrated in its own unique style and often there are slight variations from region to region within India.

When we try to celebrate Hindu festivals in America, however, it often feels like we are transplanting something onto a foreign soil. It is like bringing a plant from Africa and trying to grow it in South America. Culture and its festivals are live things that need care and nurturing, enthusiasm and understanding, warmth and watering to grow in a foreign soil. There are many practical and cultural problems that we face. For example, since Hindu festivals are not part of the mainstream culture in America, there are no observed public holidays on the days that this festivals fall. As a result, we often resort to celebrating them during a weekend that is closest to the actual day. There are other inherent problems such as difference in the climate of two countries. For example, every January 14 Hindus celebrate Makarskranti – a festival that is associated with kite flying in certain parts of India; however, it may be difficult to fly a kite in America in January simply because the weather is not suitable for that activity. Similarly, Navratri, known for dances in the streets in India, or Holi, where bonfires are lit at every crossroad in India, may not be practical or advisable in America. Also, different parts of India celebrate each of these festivals slightly differently so when we try to celebrate these festivals outside of India, we are faced with a challenge of integrating various types of celebrations to make them both practical and relevant.

How can we meet this challenge while keeping the true essence of the festival and the celebrations that are associated with the festival? We need to be resourceful and creative. Each one of us should try to understand the essence of each festival and try to bring out its beauty with creativity. Let us understand why we celebrate these festivals in the first place, and what is the most significant aspect of each festival, and how we can successfully combine the beauty, the essence, and the soul of each festival that is consistent with the life we live here. Each of these festivals is unique in its origin, its celebration, and its message. Here we have tried to look at four important festivals and the message that each one of them offers.

Holi:

Holi is the festival of colors. It is the day when we splash colors on each other, and light a huge bonfire. It is truly a welcoming of the spring. The festival of Holi reminds us to add colors to our lives by bringing spontaneity and by bringing smile to others. When we rejoice by sharing colors, and happiness with others, we bring true joy to everyone around us. Holi is

also a story of the young prince Prahlad and his faith in God. It has been said that faith can move mountains and doubts can create them. When we celebrate Holi, let us resolve to strengthen our faith so that we become strong and can stand up for what we believe in – even in the face of a much higher power, just like Prahlad.

Diwali:

The biggest festival of Hindus, Diwali, is the festival of lights. By lighting a lamp during the darkest nights of the year, we remind ourselves that even a tiny lamp of knowledge can remove the darkness of ignorance. Hindus have always emphasized the value of knowledge of self and Diwali reminds us to bring light to our lives and to the lives of others. So no matter where you are in Diwali, no matter what else you can do or not, light a lamp. One of the most beautiful aspects of Diwali is offering prayers to Goddess Laxmi – the Goddess of Wealth. By elevating wealth and material possessions to the level of Goddess, our ancestors have placed it on a higher pedestal of sacredness. The celebration of Diwali is a reminder to us to “respect” the wealth by acquiring it thru “right” means and by not abusing it in our every day life.

Navratri/Dussera:

Navratri is a celebration of female power of creation, energy, love, compassion and even destruction of evil forces. It is important to point out that Hindus have praised, prayed and feared the female power throughout the ages – even going beyond the concept of equality. For young people growing up in this country there is a lesson to always recognize and respect the variety of roles women play in our lives from mother to companion and the tremendous impact they have in the lives of individuals as well as in a community. By worshipping the maternal power, our ancestors have raised the status of motherhood to the highest level. Navratri is also celebrated by dancing in the praise of this maternal power. It is a beautiful way to show the love, respect, and devotion to Mother Goddess. Dussera – the tenth day of Navratri is a celebration of destruction of evil power – the ten-headed Ravana.

Rakshabandhan:

Rakshabandhan celebrates the special relationship between a brother and a sister and is unique to Hindus. The bond between a brother and a sister is sacred in every Hindu family. It is a relationship of love and protection. It is a bond of mutual trust and solidarity. Rakshabandhan highlights the power of prayers and good wishes in the face of danger. Rakhi, a delicate thread, also signifies that this strong bond can be fragile if not taken care of properly.

So when you see thru the mirror of festivals, you can see what our ancestors have valued, and why these messages cross boundaries of time and country. Let us together work to preserve them so that our future generations can enjoy them and learn from them.

Meenal Pandya has written several books for Indians living outside of India. Her two children's books “**Here Comes Diwali: The Festival of Lights**” and “**Here Comes Holi: The Festival of Colors**” have been very popular amongst young children, teachers, and librarians. Her other books are “**Vivah: Design a Perfect Hindu Wedding**” and “**Pick a Pretty Indian Name for your Baby**.” She also offers a free newsletter “www.MeeRaLinks.com” in which she offers articles, tips, book reviews, recipes and other tidbits to her readers.

Why Do We Celebrate Festivals?

Celebrating festivals in Hindu culture serves to blend spiritual, cultural, and social aspects of life, providing several benefits:

Breaking Monotony: Festivals offer a refreshing break from daily routines, rejuvenating mind and body.

Spiritual and Cultural Connection: They bridge spiritual practices with cultural expressions, ensuring traditions are passed down.

Maintaining Tradition: Festivals help maintain a connection to roots, passing down rituals.

Promoting Unity: They bring people together in love and joy, fostering community spirit.

Discipline and Reflection: Festivals promote self-discipline through fasting and silence, encouraging mindfulness and spiritual growth.

Health Benefits: Dietary regulations during festivals act as natural detox and weight control measures.

Uniqueness of Hindu Festivals

Religious Nature: Centered around the worship of specific deities.

Ritual Observances: Include pujas, temple visits, and honoring elders.

Self-Discipline: Involves fasting and silence.

Cultural Component: Features traditional dance, music, and dress.

Eco-Friendly: Emphasize respect for nature and the environment.

Attitude During Festivals

Spiritual Reflection: Time to review life, seek forgiveness, and plan future actions.

Gratitude and Dedication: Express gratitude to the Divine, parents, teachers, and society.

Celebration of Life: Promote a positive outlook and joy.

Celebrating in the American Context

Weekend Observances: Festivals can be celebrated on weekends to fit schedules.

Respectful Understanding: Maintain Hindu traditions while respecting other cultures.

Flexibility in Practices: Substitutions in rituals are allowed if needed.

Youth and Festivals

Understanding and Participation: Youth should learn the significance and procedures of festivals, taking on leadership roles with elders' guidance.

Teamwork and Leadership: Encourages teamwork, harmonious relationships, and leadership qualities.

The Hindu Calendar

Yugas: Four ages—Krita, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali. The current age is Kali.

Samvatsara: Lunar calendar year. Commonly used calendars are Vikrama and Shalivahana Shaka, with a 60-year cycle. The current year is 'Swabhanu.'

Masa: Lunar month. Currently Ashadha.

Paksha: Fortnight, Bright (Shukla) and Dark (Krishna). Currently Shukla.

Tithi: Days of a Paksha, counted from 1 to 14. Today is the 7th.

Hindu festivals celebrate cultural heritage, foster spiritual growth, and promote unity and joy within the community.



2004 Hindu Heritage Camp

at

Lincoln City, IN

08/20/04 to 08/22/04

Theme: My Dharma



Camper's Notes

Organized By:

Geeta Mandal Of Indianapolis

in Association:

VHP (World Hindu Council) of America

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh of America

THEME of 2004:
My Dharma

What is Dharma?

Kanchan Banerjee

The word Dharma literally means 'that which holds together' or 'sustains a being'. It includes religion, but it is much more. It is a combination of rule of law, duties, laws of being, the principles & forces that sustain a being and the path of righteousness. Every action, thought or speech that sustains growth and promotes harmony is part of Dharma.

The Search for Truth and discovering Dharma

There is an eternal search of mankind for the truth. We have developed physical sciences to know the physical world. But, these sciences do not tell us about our inner self. The science, which deals with the nature of "Self", is called spiritual science.

Religion and spirituality are not the same. Religion at best may give us ethical training and bring self-discipline, and it may show us various outer ways of reaching something supernatural, often called the Supreme Reality or God. Spirituality leads us to Self-realization, which transcends all external rules, religious activities, practices and rituals, and it goes beyond all religious identities.

Dharma literally means the true nature or the combination of principles on which something exists. Water's Dharma is to flow so we put it in a glass instead of putting on a plate. Fire's Dharma is to burn so we handle with care. Youth's Dharma is to involve into physical activities so they play baseball, basketball, etc. Earth's Dharma is to rotate around the sun so we plan for day and night. The electron's Dharma is to rotate around the nucleus so they build atoms.

Dharma is like a coin. On one side are the principles and on other side are the supposed actions to adhere to the principles.

How do I know that I'm in tune with my Dharma?

Take an example of "family" Dharma. We need to know first what are the principles based on which a family is built and maintained (e.g. co-operation, love etc.). Is my action bringing peace, progress & harmony in my family and the members? If the answer is 'yes' then knowingly or unknowingly I am with the principles of 'family' and my actions are 'dharmic'.

*The Dharma of the human being is to discover the Universal Truth and to become one with the reality in the process of searching for the Truth. The Sanskrit name for Eternal or Universal Truth is Sanatana Dharma. Almost all spiritual leaders of India have equated **Sanatana Dharma** with the **Hindu Dharma**. Through thousands of years of research and experiments the truth has been revealed through many different Rishis (sages) and created a vast tradition, called Sanatana Dharma.*

*Kanchan Banerjee is founding member of Hindu Students Council, an international forum of Hindu students at University campuses in USA.

Session 1:- My Dharma

In different time periods and in different situations our Rishis and Gurus (wise people) have defined and explained Dharma in different words, but the core meaning remained the same. In this session we will discuss the definition and meaning of Dharma and see how much we know and understand it individually (My Dharma).

We will see how dharma is explained at four different time periods:

Vedas and Upnishads

Rishis said:

"Dharnath dharma uchyate" – that which sustains (holds) everything (human, animal, nature) in universe and maintains harmony among things is **Dharma**.

Smritis

Manu Maharaj wrote in Manusmirti:

Ten characteristics of Dharma:

Dhriti - (perseverance and patience)	Kshama - (unperturbed ness)
Damah - (self-control)	Asteya - (honesty)
Shaucha - (internal and external purity)	Indriya Nigraha - (sense control)
Dhi - (intelligence)	Vidya - (applied knowledge)
Satya - (the truth)	Akrodha - (absence of anger)

***Sant Tulsi Das ji* wrote in Ramayan (500 years ago)**

"Parahit saris Dharma nahi bhai"
Welfare of others (all living being) is **Dharma**

***Pramukh swami maharaj* (currently living in Gujarat India)**

"Paraspar preeti prasarave aija Dharma" (Gujarati)

That which strengthen bond of love among each other is **Dharma**.

If we analyze above four explanations, we find that core meaning remains the same, “Dharma is that which holds, integrates and sustains. That which elevates the inner personality/inner beauty to bring about: harmony, happiness, morality, good conduct, fearlessness, selfless love, honesty....”.

The sun rises everyday, transfers its energy to all living beings; water flow downwards ...this is the **Dharma of Prakriti** (Nature).

When we see an elder or a disabled person in need, most of the time we act instantaneously to help.... our inner self guides us to act in such a way this is **Maanav Dharma** (Humanity).

In first 25 years of our lives, most of us get an opportunity to learn/study. Parents and society spend all the required resources on us. Our duty is to work hard to acquire all possible knowledge and fulfill their expectations this is **Vidyarthi Dharma** (Students).

Likewise any action/deed that results in enhancing the inner beauty of the self and brings harmony in the universe at a particular time is **My Dharma**.

Upnishad says:

धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah

One who protects Dharma is protected by Dharma

Gita says:

Swadharme nidhanam shreyah

Better is death in one's own Dharma(duty)

Let us think about these statements. Why are these statements true?

Group discussion: Discuss character of Yudhishtir, Acharya Chankya, Mother of any great personality.

Vrittena bhavatyaryo na vitten na vidyah - Mahabharat
One becomes Arya(noble person) by good character,
not only by possessing wealth and knowledge.

Session 2:- Friendship/Companionship: Association with the GOOD

Fragrance of sandalwood, a rose flower or any other object cannot flow against wind, but fragrance of human virtues/values/character can flow in all directions and are everlasting.

- Gautam Buddha.

One of the foundation stones of friendship/companionship is good character/conduct.

One can perfectly play a flute or violin or any other instrument solo, but when it is to be played with a tabla, as part of an orchestra, it needs a “sangat” (harmony). In normal life this sangat is the life energy of friendship/companionship.

What are the characteristics of a good friend/companion?

One who respects and possesses inspiring values

One who takes pride in his/her identity

One who understands difficulties of others

One who is ready to sacrifice some thing for others

One who shares things and thoughts

One who is truthful in praise and criticism



How do we maintain this relationship?

In a circus there was a master and his disciple (master and disciple were also good friends). Disciple used to balance himself on a bamboo rod resting on his stomach, while the master is holding other end of the bamboo on his palm. Master said to his disciple during the show, “I will take care of you and you take care of me, this show is our bread and butter.” Wise disciple, said: “master, your take care of your self and I’ll take care of my self, that way we take care of each other also.”

Disciple’s statement answers the above question. To be good (truthful to your self), capable and resourceful (saksham, samarth) is the basis of long lasting friendship/companionship.

How to be good?

Sit with and listen to learned ones, read Gita, Ramayan other books.

Have Shraddha in Ishwar.

Group discussion: Discuss friendship of Sri Krishna and Sudama, friendship of a small boy and Gopal.

For ages 14 and above group: Grishastha and Vanaprashtha.

Married life is termed as **Grihastha Ashram** by our Rishis. A meaningful explanation of married (family) life is given in our shastras. The institution of family (Grihastha) for Hindus is based on the trust, sacrifice and sanctity of companionship and friendship. The duties and responsibilities of **partners** are well defined.

The Rishis exhort you to fully engage in the four noble aspirations: **Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha**. They ask you to work hard and prosper, produce an abundance of wealth

(academics, physical strength and material comforts) for yourself and others, achieve great things, gain prominence in the society and enjoy life fully. The Vedas ask you to enjoy every moment of your life and live your self to your full potential (as part of the divine), BUT within the bounds of Dharma and Moksha (enlightenment).

The Rishis gave you a beautiful method for accomplishing this, called the *four Ashrams* (the four stages of life): ***Brahmacharya*** (student), ***Grihastha*** (family life), ***Vanaprastha*** (social service), ***Sanyasa*** (unattached living).

The Brahmacharya period is the student life, devoted to preparing yourself academically, physically and spiritually. You lay a solid foundation for the rest of your life. You acquire all the skills, the tools, the discipline, the inner strength and determination to perform great things. **In this stage everything is provided to you. You take from the society.**

The Grihastha period is the family life. The family is the **cornerstone** for our society. The family is what makes and sustains the society. This is the period when you find a compatible life partner, and together you work hard to create wealth for yourself and others. ***The important thing to remember is that your family has to be strong and prosperous for the society to be strong and prosperous.*** If the family is weak, the society is weak. If the family is happy the society is happy. If the family is wealthy the society is wealthy. So first and foremost we have to create educated, strong, caring, prosperous families that are guided by ***DHARMA***. Only such families can take care of their children (students) and their elders. **In this stage you produce for the society and sustain it.**

The Vanaprastha period is the social worker's life, devoted to serving the society. It is **not** a period where you head towards the forest for meditation. No. It is a period when you realize that all the families in a society are interdependent just as all the trees in a forest are interdependent. During the Vanaprastha period you give back to the society. As parents you gave to your children, you sacrificed for your children but you never expected anything in return. It was selfless service you did for your family. **In this stage you give and grow in scope to include the society as a whole.**

The final stage of life is Sanyas where you expand your thoughts and actions to cover all of creation, beyond the bounds of the immediate community.

But for you children, the first two stages are the ones to focus on. Carry out well, and with sincerity, your duties as the student and as the family person. The rest will follow naturally.

Group discussion:

Discuss successful functioning of the following relationships and how it may influence you?

For Examples: Your parents, Your grand parents, Sri Ram and Sita, Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi or Any other couple.

Pratham Bhakti santan kar sanga - Ramayan
Maintaining company of the good people is devotion to Ishwar

Session 3:- Upanayana

Introduction

In the Vedic wisdom, there has been a deep conviction that man, due to his contact with the world, loses his native purity, and that he must be born again to enter the spiritual realms.

This 'second birth' making the person a 'twice-born' has a Sanskrit term 'Dwija'. The ceremonial initiation of the child to this second birth, Dwijatva, is the sacrament of Upanayana. It is the act of preparing the young man for citizenship. It signifies the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood.

Definition of the word 'Upanayana'

The sage Bharuchi defines Upanayana as:

'upa sameepe acharyadeenaam vatoh neetihi nayanam praapanam upanayanam'

At this ceremony of Upanayana, the father assumes an additional role of becoming the 'guru' of his son. He takes charge of his son as a teacher to impart the disciplines of the tradition, the Vedic knowledge, restraints and observances necessary for a spiritual life. For this purpose, the father and son approach the gods. (guror vrataanaam vedasya yamasya niyamasya cha | devathaanaam sameepam vaa yena asau neeyate asau)

Purpose

The purpose of the ceremony is to focus the attention of the child, the father, and the family to the importance of learning, knowledge and proper conduct. Herein, a vow is taken to impart and learn purity and good conduct. (shoucha achaaram cha shikshet). From now on, the child's personality gets refined and he attains the supreme status of a *Brahmana*. (samskaraih samskrito brahmano bhavet - Sage Vasishtha)

Gita Mandal is going a step further in obtaining the commitment of society also through this public ceremony!

Brahmana

Contrary to the popular understanding of Brahmana as the name of an elitist Hindu class, a Brahmana is one who is characterized by his qualities and actions. He is a Brahmana, who displays the following; Calmness, self-control, penance, cleanliness, forgiving, honesty and sincerity, knowledge of Brahman, knowledge of the sciences and faith in God. (shamo damas tapah shaucham kshaantir arjavameva cha | jnanam vijnanam astikyam brahma karma swabhavajam)

Who needs this commitment?

Any parent who desires for his child the noble qualities of consistency of mind and speech, of equanimity, of adherence to truth, character, of control on speech, mind and body, of honesty and sincerity must commit to this duty.

Any one, irrespective of class, creed, color, gender can assume these vows. The Vedas sanction this right to one and all without exception. The only pre-requisite is faith and commitment to the Veda, our most holy scripture!

Upakarma

Gita Mandal, Indianapolis has been conducting the Upanayana annually. Many might have been initiated in the earlier years. As part of this ceremony, we will perform 'Upakarma' for them.

'Upa' means 'exalted', 'elevated'. Karma is action. Hence Upakarma is an exalted activity.

This ritual is observed annually in the month of Sravana by all 'Dwijas'.

At this ceremony, we pledge ourselves to the study, preservation and propagation of the Vedas. We also perform one of the five Mahayajnas, namely, Brahma Yajna.

All our actions bear fruits, pleasant or unpleasant. Performing of the five Mahayajnas (known in Sanskrit as Pancha Maha Yajna; Deva, Brahma, Manushya, Bhoota and Pitru), absolve us from the inevitability of Karma.

Brahma Yajna is commitment to the study and contemplation of Vedic scripture. The Vedic lore consists of the 4 Vedas including their Upanishads, Sutras, Itihasa (Ramayana and Mahabharata) and Puranas.

The study of the Bhagavadgita undertaken by the Gita Mandal members and well wishers is indeed an ongoing observance of Brahma Yajna!

dhiyo yo nah prachodayaat - Ved
Ishwar may enlighten our mind



2005 Hindu Heritage Camp

McCormick Creek State Park, IN

09/02/05 to 09/04/05

*Theme: Yoga: The way to discover
happiness within and around*



Camper's Notes

Organized By:

Geeta Mandal Of Indianapolis

in Association:

VHP (World Hindu Council) of America

Hindu Swayamsevak

YOGA FOR YOUTH

My Dear Youth:

Every one desires to be happy and successful in life. Here is something that all of you can think about, learn, and put into action to achieve excellence.

It is very important that some of these convictions are embedded in you as you are developing and growing. If you imbibe these teachings and practices, your whole life will be governed by these deep rooted inner thoughts and strength. To unite with this inner core, this inner, unchanging consciousness is “YOGA.”

Yoga is the union between your outer world and inner worlds. This harmony is paramount to progress. This harmony brings creativity, strength, peace, joy, and ultimate satisfaction.

So now let us examine how we can achieve such harmony; Sage Patanjali, the greatest yoga master, has written extensively on this science called “Ashtang Yoga” or “eight limb yoga.” The first five are associated with the external world, while the last three are associated with the inner world. But all the limbs are equally important.

EIGHT LIMBS

YAMA – Truthfulness, non-violence, continence, non-stealing, not collecting more than needed.

NIYAMA– Contentment, internal and external cleanliness, self-study, self-restraint, and adoration of God.

ASANA – Postures for contemplation.

PRANAYAMA – Technique to control “prana” or vital energy.

PRATYAHARA – Restraining of the sense, withdrawing from its objects of desire.

DHARANA – Holding and fixing the mind on certain points to the exclusion of all others,

DHYANA – Contemplation of the self or atman.

SAMADHI – State of super- consciousness.

As a youth, please try to think and learn yoga. It will enable you to achieve the greatest heights in life. Find time for daily exercises, daily pranayama practices, and reading good books. Eating a fresh and healthy, vegetarian diet leads to improved memory and clarity of thinking. Doing regular morning and evening prayers, as well as sitting in silence in front of God leads to outer and inner harmony.

Mahatma Gandhiji used to say that “Gita,” the most read Hindu scripture was his mother. The Gita is another great book on yoga. It will provide you with an answer for any confusion you may have, so long as you get into the habit of reading it daily.

So my dear youth, be ready and prepared to take on the greatest challenges and feats of your life-live with love, energy, concentration and wisdom. Do not allow the irregularities of life to disturb you at any time.

With Love,

Veena S. Gandhi

* Dr. Veena Gnadhi is resident of NJ. She is a Physician, Yoga teacher and active community leader. For many years she was national youth coordinator for VHP of America.

The Seven Gems

Krishna Bhatta

Bhagavad-Gita, conversation between Krishna and Arjun, happened some 5000 years ago. The teachings still make sense and therefore Gita is still relevant today. It is conversational, logical, and practical and it transcends any nationality, religion or creed. Bhagavad-Gita is universal.

1. Gita is for the Youth

Bhagavad-Gita was told by Krishna to Arjun who at that point of time was in his prime. Arjun was young, inquisitive, energetic, enthusiastic, adventurous and enterprising. These are essential qualities that represent the youth. Gita, therefore, naturally is meant for the young.

2. Simplicity is the hallmark of Gita

Gita has a simple beginning. There is great depth in Gita, but it is obtained and attained by simple conversations. No conditions are attached. No high sounding sermons appear. The book starts with a simple question, a simple request, and a simple desire.

3. Gita is an art of crisis management

The first chapter ends with the title of "Arjuna's vishad yoga". The closest English word to vishad is despair. Depression and crisis come close too. Can vishad be yoga? The more I think of it the more I feel that perhaps this is the best way to manage a crisis. If you really look at the situation at the end of chapter I, it is pretty dismal. There is a crisis inside of a crisis. War is a crisis itself. The Pandavas and the Kauravas are at the beginning of a war. The formalities have been completed. The war has been declared by blowing of the conchshells. And, Arjuna goes numb. He does not want to fight. He has put down his bow and is prepared to die if that comes of it. How bad can it get? And the Bhagvadgita says it is yoga (vishad yoga). What makes it yoga? The view that Gita is presenting here is that every crisis has a hidden opportunity for growth.

4. Gita is a message for Freedom

We all know that Krishna was born in Jail. The locks of the Jail all broke. The doors were flung open. The guards fell asleep. The night was dark and it was raining outside. The birth of Krishna was a sign that freedom is here. Krishna's birth appears to be synonymous with liberty in his times. His whole life is a living example of freedom. How can any one imprison a person like Krishna?

5. Gita is a formula for success

Let us understand the Karma Yoga in brief here.

Yogah Karmashu Kaushalam

There are many definitions of yoga. Krishna's definition is so practical. Yoga should make us work efficiently. How do we bring efficiency in our work? There are several modern concepts of how to become efficient. It usually revolves around decreasing waste and increasing productivity.

6. Gita teaches Devotion

Success can easily make us feel proud. We can forget all the other factors that might have contributed to our success. Success puts that chip on the shoulders. How do we stay humble? How can we still remain in touch with the masses? We have to realize that all that has happened to our life is an opportunity provided to us by the existence. We can then be thankful for what we have got. Devotion is nothing but a deep gratitude that arises inside our hearts and expresses as a "thank you." We do have to stay in touch with our hearts. A balance has to be achieved. Bhakti Yoga teaches us this very quality that is such an essential part of our lives.

7. Gita is a search

We all ultimately want to know who we are. How do we get to our center? The answers are there in Bhagavad-Gita.

* Dr. Krishna Bhatta is a resident of Maine. He is co-founder of Gita Foundation, ME and author of book 'Gita today'. His news paper columns on gita are very enlightening.

What is Raj-Yoga?

- A way to realize the Supreme Being / unite with Ishwar by transforming physical and mental energy into spiritual energy.
- This transformation of energy is achieved through yogic practices.
- Raj-Yoga is also known as Ashtanga (asht = 8, anga = part/limb) i.e. Yoga of Eight Limbs. It is a royal (Raj = Royal) path to the happiness and peace.
- Though yogic practices are being performed by our ancestors from time immemorial, more than 2,500 years ago Rishi Patanjali formulated this science (Yoga) into a system; named Ashtanga Yoga or Raj-Yoga.
- Rishi Patanjali has described Raj-Yoga principles in the form of short statements called 'Sutras'. 'Patanjali Yoga Sutras' is one of the most read books in the world by yoga practitioners.
- The one who has full control over body and mind can be considered as the perfect, the royal one.
- One of the hallmarks of raja-yoga is balance personality.

Raja Janak lived in a palace but regarded nothing as his own. He was a man of true renunciation.. Janak was well known as a yogi. One day a sanyasin came to the palace to test Janak's spiritual strength. Seeing the king surrounded by pomp and luxury, the sanyasin thought to himself, "How could this man, living as he does, in the midst of luxury, have attained to Ishwar?" Just then was heard a cry: -- "The palace is on fire!" Immediately, the sanyasin ran out to save his loincloth, which he had washed and hung on a rope to dry. When he returned, he was astonished to find Raja Janak sitting there, unconcerned. The sanyasin asked: -- "O King, did you not hear that the palace was on fire? How is it, then, that you sit here as though nothing has happened?" Raja Janak quietly answered: -- "What is mine (atman) is with me: it cannot be burnt by a fire. If God desires to burn this palace, be it so." Seeing Janak's cool mind and balanced behavior in abnormal circumstances, the sanyasin realized why Janak is regarded as a Yogi. Raja Janak was a man of true renunciation.

Supreme state of Mind is hallmark of Raj-Yoga.

Raj-Yogi King Janak



**Raj-Yogi Paramhansa Yogananda,
Founded Self-Realization Fellowship, LA USA**



How to practice Raj-Yoga?

- The practice of prescribed Raj-Yoga principles leads to the termination of all miseries and attainment of eternal happiness.
- There are many good books and commentaries on Raj-yoga available these days, but a practitioner must seek guidance of a guru.
- Some of the practices suggested by Rishi Patanjali are:
 1. Yama (restraint / moral practices)
 - Ahimsa (non-violence)
 - Satya (truth)
 - Asteya (non-stealing)
 - Brahmacharya (virtuous conduct)
 - Aparigraha (non-possessiveness)
 2. Niyama (Observances / Individual Discipline)
 - Shaucha (purity)
 - Santosha (contentment)
 - Tapas (austerities)
 - Svadhyaya (study)
 - **Ishwara-Pranidhana (Surrender to Ishwar)**
 - *The word 'Ishwar' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'eesh', to rule. The word Ishwar suggests 'personal God' but also includes the idea of the impersonal para Brahman.*
 - *All beings have emanated from, sustained by and return unto Ishwar*
 - *Ishwar is the first and eternal teacher.*
 3. Asana (comfortable posture)
 4. Pranayama (the regulation of breath)
 5. Pratyahara (discipline of senses)
 6. Dharana (concentration)
 7. Dhyana (meditation)
 8. Samadhi (super-conscious state)

How does a Raj-Yogi behave?

- He/she has a healthy body and is in a balance state of mind while performing day-to-day activities.
- A yogi keeps himself engaged in selfless services of the mankind.
- He/She observes strict dietary discipline, only eating that which is created by nature for humans to eat.
- He/She offers self and fruits of his/her actions to Ishwar. Jap, Swadhyaya (reading), fasting and company of good people are parts of his/her daily routine.

<p>The one who sees the true equality in all beings and always eager to share pleasure and pain with others, is a Perfect Yogi.</p>	<p>Gita 6/32</p>
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What is Gyan Yoga?

- A way to communicate with Brahman by acquiring Divine Knowledge.
- Knowing things is Information, not knowledge or Gyan.
- Knowledge does not come from outside, it is to be acquired from within through inspiration from gurus, good books, listening to wise people and practicing right teachings in personal life.
- Just as food kept in the grocery store is not a nourishment until it is properly consumed, converted and absorbed into the blood stream, likewise information is not knowledge until it is experienced and practiced by the self.
- Gyan Yoga leads the devotee to experience his unity with Ishwar by breaking the layer of ignorance. *For example:* though space (existence) inside and outside of the room is same but we assume inside and outside space as different due to layer of walls (ignorance). Once the wall (ignorance) is dropped there is only ONE space / existence (Unity – Yoga).
- This is the path that requires self-control, self-discipline and intellect.

A father used to take his son to the temple every Sunday. After sometime, the son started asking questions about truth, Ishwar, and other spiritual subjects. The father was happy that his effort of taking his son to temple is paying at last, his son was becoming knowledgeable. One day while walking outside, the son said to his father, I have observed that many people are telling lies, people are cheating each other, some people are dirty, some are not helping others etc. It seems that there are not many good people around". The father stared at his son, with a sorrowful face and said, "Oh!, My son, I took you to the temple to purify your-self, but after learning (**knowing**) of good things (*good samskars*) you have started analyzing and criticizing others. That is not true knowledge; that is not the purpose of learning and that is not what our scriptures say. My understanding that you have been acquiring knowledge was false. Looking at faults of others is not the purpose of Divine Knowledge. The ultimate goal is to purify one-self.
A pure person purifies others!

How to practice Gyan Yoga?

- Read spiritual texts such as the Gita, Ramayana, Bhagvatam, Vedas, and Upanishads.
- Inquire within self to find out “what I can change in my character from the teachings of these texts”.
- Ask questions to learned people and spend time in their company.
- Develop selflessness and love of Ishwar, increase strength of body and mind.

How does a Gyan Yogi or Gyani behave?

- Using knowledge acquired from the scriptures and gurus, a Gyan Yogi uses his/her mind to inquire into his/her own nature i.e. works towards purifying him/her self. Gyani has equal behavior towards all human, animal and nature.
- He/She is the person of 'inaction in action', that means all his/her actions are untouched by 'I am the doer' ego.
- A Gyan Yogi always sees Brahman/Truth in all actions (*karma*) performed.

Gyan Yogi Swami Dayananda



Gyan Yogi Adi Guru Shankara



There is no purifier in this world like knowledge

Gita - 4/38

What is Bhakti Yoga?

- A way to communicate/unite with Ishwar/Bhagwan by the power of unconditional love.
- In everyday life we toss up and down due to emotions.
- These emotions could be a feeling of joy, grief, worship, dislike, and love.
- Nothing material in this world can control these emotions. Bhakti yoga is the way to balance these emotions by diverting them towards Ishwar.
- This path appeals mainly to those of an emotional nature.
- An ordinary person gets *temporary happiness* (pause in thoughts) by performing some acts like; playing games, watching favorite programs, seeing natural beauty. The happiness is *temporary* because it is produced by dependency on some external objects which are also temporary.
- A Bhakta (Yogi) gets permanent happiness by continually engaging him/her self in the service of Ishwar (eternal existence).

Sri Krishna fell sick. No drugs or charms had any effect. The Mother, Yashoda, felt deeply worried. She asked Krishna: -- "Shyam, my darling, we have tried everything within our power, but your fever keeps on mounting. Won't you tell me what will make you well once again?." Sri Krishna smiled and said: -- "Ma, only one thing can cure me." "What is it my child? Tell me that I may procure it without delay". Krishna said: -- "Mother, apply the dust, of the feet of someone who loves me dearly, on my forehead and I shall get well."

"That is easily done!" said Yashoda. "The whole town is full of *gopis* and *gopas* who love you more than life itself. Yashoda goes out. She enters the house of a *gopi*. "Welcome Mother," says the *gopi*. "What can I do for you?". Yashoda explains to her the situation and asks for the dust of the *gopi's* feet. As the *gopi* listens to this strange request, the colors of her face changes. "Mother!" she says, "You know fully well that there is nothing in the world I would keep from Beloved Shyam. I would gladly lay down my life for His sake. But this I can never do. It is written in the scriptures that a devotee will suffer if the dust of her feet touches the forehead of the Bhagwan". Yashoda moves from house to house. She meets *gopis* and *gopas*, -- lovers of Sri Krishna. They all tell the same. At last, Yashoda meets Radha. To her, she makes the same request. And Radha says to her: -- "Mother! All that I have belongs to Shyam. Take what you will, -- the dust of my feet or the crown of my head! ". Surprised, Yashoda says: -- "Radha, do you know what that means? Whoever gives the dust of her feet to the Bhagwan has to suffer!". Calmly answers Radha: -- "Blessed, indeed, need be, for the sake of the Beloved, I will give up everything! Take the dust of my feet, Mother, and do not delay. If only that the Beloved gets well, I shall gladly bear the tortures for many births!" Yashoda is speechless. In silent wonder she gazes at Radha's face. Yashoda picks up a little of the dust of Radha's feet and returns home. Sri Krishna is no longer on his sickbed. He is eating butter with great relish. Yashoda now knows that Krishna's fever was his leela (a play). After that day, no one questioned why Radha was so dear to Krishna. The law of love is the law of sacrifice. *Bhakti is Unconditional LOVE.*

How to practice Bhakti Yoga?

- Seek blessings of a Guru / Spiritual master.
- Focus mind and emotions on Ishwar/Bhagwan through Bhajan, Keertan (prayer/worship) and rituals.
- Read/Listern to the life stories of Bhagwan thorough texts such as Ramayana, Bhagvatam, Puranas.
- Regularly visit temples, attend satsangs (company of Bhaktas).

How does a Bhakti Yogi or Bhakta behave?

- A Bhakta has totally balanced emotions because he/she has diverted them towards Ishwar.
- He/she is always found in the blissful (ananda) state. He does not loose his coolness when he attains or looses his desirable things.
- A Bhakta feels well protected.
 - A child feels protected in the crowd or in a strange place by either holding parent's finger or when parent has held child's hand. In first case responsibility lies with child too, but in the second case total responsibility lies with parent. Likewise a Bhakta feels well protected because bhagwan is responsible (by holding) for him/her.
 - In one the stanzas of 'Om Jai Jagadish hare' aarati, we say to bhagwan, "Deen bandhu dukh harata, thakur (master/owner) tum mere". This is an example of Bhakta's emotions, an expression of total surrender.
- A Bhakta regrets those moments in which he/she has forgotten Bhagwan.
- He/she worships/meditates on Brahman in some form/aspect such as Sri Krishna, Sri Ram, Mahavir, Durga, Ganesh,

Sri Krishna Bhakta Meerabai



Sri Ram Bhatka Hanuman



By devotion Bhakta knows Me in truth, what and who I am; and knowing Me in truth, he enters into permanent happiness.

Gita - 18/55

Karma Yoga is defined as “discipline of action” or “performance of action with un-attachment to the fruits and even to the action itself”.

How do we do this?

- Bhagwan Sri Krishna says in gita, “No one can ever remain for even a moment without performing action. Everyone is made to act helplessly indeed controlled by the qualities born of Nature”.
- Whether we practice yoga or not, we all have to perform actions. These actions are the results of our past and present *samskars* (***mental impressions***) and qualities of nature.
- If we keep performing actions without divine guidance (yoga) we are likely to accumulate bad *samskars*. These bad *samskars* will result in bad karmas in present and future births, while good *samskars* will result in good karmas in present and future births; *that is the Law of Karma*.
- Bhagwan further tells in gita, “Surrender all actions to Me as a worship, I will take care of you.” So in essence, if I become a Bhakta (practitioner of Bhakti Yoga) by surrendering all my actions and their fruits to Bhagwan, I also become a Karma Yogi.
- Karmas (Actions) performed by a Bhakta, Gyani or Raj-Yogi are pure/dharmic in nature, they are focused on the adherence to duty (dharma), hence it can be stated that Karma Yoga is resultant of Bhakti, Gyan or Raj-Yoga.
- Karma (actions) is at it’s best when it is performed as ‘Selfless action’ and when the Yogi has accepted that Ishwar is the doer, I am nothing more than an instrument.

One of the most respected Gurus Swami Shivananda, who lived in Rishikesh-Bharat, has suggested easy ways (Sadhana) for yoga practitioners. These are suitable for all ages, children to grand parents.

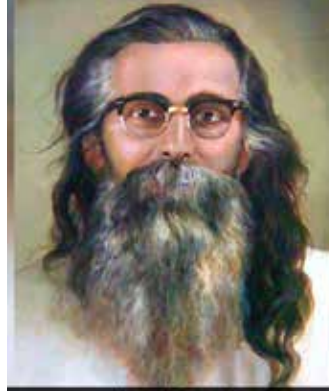
Day-to-Day Practice (Sadhana)

1. Have a fixed procedure of practice every day. One must keep fixed hours.
 - (a) JAPA/Keertan/Bhajan: Chanting some Mantra over and over to maintain the same consciousness (this is often useful in meditation).
 - (b) STUDY: Reading scriptures or texts on Yoga, e.g. Upanishads, Bhagvad Gita.
 - (c) MEDITATION: Should be performed at a fixed time and in a fixed place every day; face the same direction daily (either the East or the North) and sit in the same Asana (i.e. posture) every day. *Asanas and Pranayam should be performed before meditation.*
2. An Annual Resolution: Vow to give up bad habits. If you break this resolution, you should observe fast one day.
3. A Spiritual Diary: When you go to bed every night you should review what you have done since morning. This diary may consist of questions you may ask yourself, e.g. “How many times have I forgotten ISHWAR today?” “Did I get angry today?” etc.

Karma Yogi – Mahatma Gandhi



Karma Yogi – Guruji MS Golwalkar



Do Sadhana (practice) everyday, you shall achieve success in this very life.
– Swami Shivananda

Many Facets of Yoga

BEACH YOGA in London, UK

Yoga in Japan



HHC 05'-YOGA

Many Facets of Yoga

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION, Mahesh Yogi University Fairfield, Iowa USA



HHC 05'-YOGA

Many Facets of Yoga

Sudarshan Kriya was founded by Shri Shri Ravi Shankar



It is practiced in 140 countries around the world

HHC 05'-YOGA



Some of Famous Yogis



Swami Vivekananda



Bal Gangadhar Tilak



Chaitnaya Mahaprabhu



Dhruv

HHC 05'-YOGA



WHO IS A PERFECT YOGI?

Bhagwan Krishna ANSWERS in the Gita:

The one who sees the true equality in ALL beings, who is always eager to share pleasure and pain with others, is a Perfect Yogi.

HHC 05'-YOGA



Is it not a Matter of Pride that we belong to a lineage (family tree) of Rishis and Gurus who have taught Yoga to the World?



HHC 05'-YOGA



2006 Hindu Heritage Camp

June 30th – July 2nd, 2006
Versailles State Park, IN

Theme:

Mandir (Temple) is a Source of Self Purification and Community Strength



Camper's Notes

Organized by:

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana

In Association with:

VHP (World Hindu Council) of America
Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh of America

A HINDU TEMPLE (DEVAALAYA)

M.G. Prasad

Introduction:

The origin of the word temple can be traced to word the “templum” which were used by Roman soothsayers indicating a section of the sky and also a piece of the ground to gaze and mark divine signs for foretelling the future. Eventually, temple referred to a building constructed at the site. A Hindu temple refers to in Sanskrit language to Devaalaya consisting of two words namely Deva (God) and Alaya (House).

Purpose:

In Vedic Hindu view, an individual's body is referred as a temple with the indweller as God. The Vedic seers (Rishis) having realized God within themselves gave designs and functions of temples in scriptures (agama shastras) of Vedic Hinduism (Sanatana Dharma). Its purpose is to enable a devotee to use a physical temple and the ritualistic worship as a reminder to the spiritual journey to be carried out within oneself. In addition, it also serves as a place for celebrations of Hindu religious festivals.

Architecture:

A Vedic Hindu temple's architecture is a divine and yogic representation of a human being as shown in the figure (ref: Agama kosha by S.K. Ramachndra Rao). The feet represent the spire (rajagopura). The hands represent the walkway (prakaara) encompassing all around the temple. The main hall (mandapa) represents the abdomen. The entrance porch (antaraala) represents the heart. The sanctum sanctorum (garbha griha) represents the head. The deity is consecrated with religious rites in the sanctum sanctorum. There is proportionality between the size of the deity in the sanctum sanctorum and the sizes of the temple construction details.

Worship Rituals:

The ritualistic worship (pooja) of consecrated deities (vigrahas) is carried out by priests on behalf of devotees to remind them of the inward yogic process of approaching the indwelling God. The various steps in a pooja offered to the deity with prayers and mantras (in Sanskrit) include steps such as washing feet and giving sacred bath using milk and water. Then with screen closed the deity is decoratively dressed with special cloths, flowers and ornaments. After the decoration the screen is opened to devotees to signify removal of veil of illusions so that devotees can see the beautifully decorated God. Then fruits and food are offered and incense sticks and lamps are waved to the deity. During the waving of lamp by a priest, devotees need to see with eyes open the radiating face of the fully decorated deity so that its memory will provide the spiritual joy. Then the priests distribute the sacred water (teertha) and sacred food (prasada) that devotees drink and eat for spiritual blessings. Thus the entire ritualistic worship can also be seen as expressing love, devotion and respect to one's guest of honor. The joyful resonance between the external and internal worship provides the bliss.

The elaborate worship of consecrated deity along with sacred rituals with Vedic mantras and the materials used in rituals such as water, milk, flower, incense, sandal paste, bells, conch-shell etc is to help devotees to focus their mind on the Supreme Being. The Vedic seers have recommended the temple and rituals so that devotees through sensory experiences can spiritually experience the bliss of God. It is inspiring to remember the words of my Sadguru Sriranga, a seer-yogi, “The worship of

deities and rituals in a temple should be carried out with child-like loving mind by the devotees as little children play with joy using their toys as medium.

Role in Vedic Hinduism:

Vedic Hinduism or Santana Dharma is based on the Vedas and Vedic literature. Solutions and approaches to all levels of inquiry into the nature of soul, universe and God are provided in Vedic Hinduism. Rituals, Music, Dance, Yoga, Meditation, Vedanta etc express its many facets. The celebrations of Vedic Hindu festivals bring out the various aspects namely religious, cultural, educational and social. A devotee focusing on the meaning of the Vedic mantras and ritualistic procedures will gain the spiritual knowledge. One focusing on the prayers and feelings in rituals will experience joy of devotion. One focusing on service in a temple will experience the joy of selfless service. A temple plays an important role in providing a sacred place and means for spiritual development of a seeker.

Concluding Remarks:

A Hindu temple (Devaalaya) has not only religious purpose but also spiritual, cultural, educational and social objectives. It provides a place for devotees to focus and develop their spiritual insight. A Hindu temple in essence can be recognized in three forms. The first is oneself with God within. The second one is a dedicated room (with altar and deities) in a home. The third one is the Hindu temple in which devotees participate collectively that reflects the pluralistic nature of Vedic Hinduism or Santana Dharma. Thus a devotee needs to integrate all the three forms of temples to develop the spiritual insight and enjoy the peace and bliss.



Dr. M. G. Prasad is the Chairperson of the Education committee of Hindu Temple in Bridgewater, NJ

Bauddhik Session 1: Mandir

Insight into Mandir

What is a Mandir?

Mandir is a place of Upaasana (worship). It is a center of learning that helps us sustain our values. Mandir inspires us to live with pride in our philosophy and rich traditions.

On a spiritual plane, Mandir is a devalaya, a place where Ishwar “lives.” It is an extension of the Ishta Devata (personification of Bhagwan) that we have in our homes.

The history of temples is very ancient. Knowledge seekers built Mandirs at home for their personal pujas and built Mandirs in their towns where they could collectively perform spiritual practices.

Why we need a Mandir?

Over the ages, man has built various institutions such as schools, hospitals, and entertainment centers to fulfill their social and physical needs. At the same time man has built centers to fulfill their spiritual needs (desire to know the truth, seek happiness, peace and purification). We need the mandir to purify ourselves by learning and practicing good things and we want people around us to do the same for the formation of a harmonious society.

While Bharat remains the center of our inspiration, we have built thousands of other temples around the world. With changes in time and technology, Mandir architecture has also progressed, but the core of architecture has remained the same.



Mandir Architecture

Hindu Mandirs are built based on the specifications described in ancient architectural texts known as Vastu-Shastra. Our ancestors thoughtfully put down these architectural principles, mainly to form an environment of Spirituality in and around the Mandir.

We all experience an elevation of spirituality whenever we visit the temple. This feeling is not just because of the presence of murtees (deities) and the poojas performed there; physical structure, art and craft, directions, cosmic designs also play an important role in creating an environment of spirituality.

‘Agama’ principles are followed for the construction and worship practices of our Mandirs.

Bases on the geographical locations, need and traditions of local devotees the outside look of temples may vary, but the essential principles (of Agama) remain the same.

The following are the main parts and features of a typical Hindu Mandir:

Garbha Grih (Sanctum)

This is a place where deities are placed. The size of Garbha Grih is smaller than the outside of the Mandir. There is a divine feeling as we enter this place.

Mandapa or Praasad

This is enclosed area (some times like a hall) normally in front of Garbha Grih. Different types of artwork of can be seen in this area.

Prakaara

This is a passage outside (encircling) of Garbha Grih or the temple. Devotees do a clockwise Parikrama or Pradakshina (Circumambulation) of deity by walking in this passage with the feeling that the center of all his/her actions is Ishwar.

Shikhar

This is a tower shaped structure above the Garbha Grih. In some temples there are more than one Shikhars are built. A Kalash (sacred pot) and a Dwaj (flag) is placed at the top of Shikhar.

Gopura

It is a magnificent gateway that leads devotees to the Garbha Grih. This a tower like structure, sometimes called Raja Gopuram. Few steps are built that devotees climb to reach to the Gopura.

Hundi

A box or a container that has a slit at the top for devotees to put their offerings in material form.

Bauddhik Session 2: Mandir

Source of Personal purification

As we know, Ishwar/Bhagwan lives in each of us. We need to realize the existence of that Supreme Being within us. Some of us realize it soon and some may take births to realize it. In any case, this awareness is called Nirvaan or Moksha or Anand (permanent happiness).

Now this question arises: Since Ishwar is within us, why do we need a Mandir where we place deities (moortees)? Achievement of permanent happiness comes through practice; it is an aspiration. As in the case of many other areas of life, we need some outside help in the spiritual path as well. A Mandir is the center that fulfills such needs in addition to the fulfillment of social needs. When we visit Mandir with a desire to see (Darshan) Ishwar in some form, divine thoughts start flowing in our consciousness. While doing pranam or darshan, our heart, mind and consciousness are attached to the Supreme Being / Bhagwan. That is the moment in which we are in a pure state of mind, no negative thoughts arise, and positive energy starts flowing within us. This is the beginning of self-purification as we start getting glimpse of un-diminishing happiness.

Due to regular visits by devotees, a Mandir becomes a store house of spiritual energy. Any one visiting a Mandir benefits from its environment.

What do I get from Mandir?

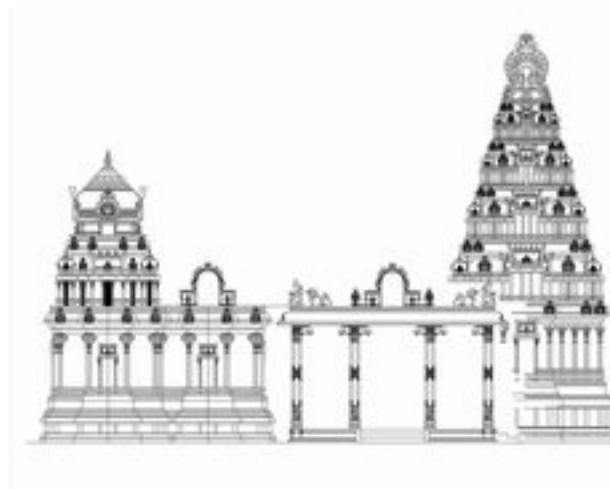
- Spiritual Elevation
 - We come to Mandir for Puja, Yagna, and Dhyaan.
 - Learn Cultural Values
 - Through various education programs like Bal Vihar, Bal Gokulam, and Vidya Mandir.
- Learn Traditions and beliefs
 - On many occasions we wear traditional clothes, prepare traditional food, and the young and old get a chance to spend time together. We learn many of our traditions from the elders.
- Learn ancestral languages and literature
 - Through various education programs like Bal Vihar, Bal Gokulam, and Vidya Mandir.
 - True meaning is sometimes lost in translation so it is important to know the ancestral language; we can then read the scriptures and literature in their original form.
- Meeting like minded people
 - In our schools and work places we mix with people of diverse traditions and beliefs. In mandir we meet those who have gathered for common goals and gains.
 - It helps foster friendships with other people of similar ethnic and religious backgrounds. In absence of relatives, these friendships become a social support system.
- Learn Music and Art
 - Through various programs, dance and music classes.

Source of Community Strength

Mandirs are built to meet spiritual, social and identity needs of our community. When our elders migrated from Bharat to foreign countries for professional growth, prosperity and knowledge transfer, they had strong faith in their Hindu heritage and way of living. They had a vision for future generations. With that vision and faith they started building spiritual centers. These centers have exceeded a mark of 400 as of year 2006. Invariably a gathering of more than 200 people is seen on weekends. Gathering of 200 to 500 devotees is common in most of the temples for festival celebrations or special occasions.

What does the community get from Mandir?

- Sense of belonging to a rich and sublime culture
- A way to pass-on heritage to the next generation
- Continuity and sustenance of diversity of Bhartiya culture
- Place to perform poojas and sanskars (child naming, up-nayan, graduation, marriage) with family and friends.
- Celebration of festivals and some Indian national and historical events
- Provides a forum to work for local, national and international Seva programs (charities). Mandir raises funds and goods for people in need or for those who are affected by natural disasters like Tsunami and Katrina.
- Mandir facilitates functioning of age-groups (youth groups, senior citizens groups). These groups provide an opportunity to share gains and concerns pertaining to particular segment of our community.



In essence, Mandir is a BRIDGE between ATMAN (individual soul) and PARAM-ATMAN (Supreme Being); it is a RESOURCE for our SPIRITUAL and SOCIAL needs; and it is our **IDENTITY** and **PRIDE**.

*Let us **RESPECT** and **PRESEVE** it.*

Bauddhik Session 3: Gita

Chapter 2 - Saankhya Yoga

Sanjay Mehta

Bhagavad-Gita, popularly known as Gita, is a dialogue between Bhagwan Shri Krishna and Arjun. Shri Krishna's answers to Arjun's questions are the essence of all our scriptures and teachings. In the 18 chapters and 700 shlokas, Shri Krishna has touched various areas of the Hindu philosophy.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "I regard Gita as the 'Mother', to whom the children (humanity) turned when in distress." One of Gandhi ji's favorite parts in the Gita were last 18 shlokas of 2nd chapter. In these shlokas, Bhagwan has described the character of a "Sthita Pragya (Steady Wisdom)" person.

One of the hallmarks of Gita is the philosophy of "Sthita Pragya (Steady Wisdom / Mind)." When our mind is unstable or unsteady, we remain in the state that in modern terms is called frustration, agitation, stress, nervousness etc. Arjun was in such a state of mind just before the great battle of Mahabharata. He was confused, disillusioned and deviated from his goal. Through his discourse Bhagwan Krishna helped Arjun to regain his wisdom, confidence and his commitment to his duty (Dharma).

In this session, we will discuss and contemplate the philosophy that has helped a great warrior Arjun and a great freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi at the time of their performance of duty / actions (Karma), in two different time frames in the history.

We all have to perform actions (Karma) at various stages in our life in various roles; as a student, as a sportsman, as a professional, and as a house holder. Our goal is to perform these actions with perfection. The foremost requirement of 'perfection in action' is to have 'Steady Mind / Wisdom'.

Arjun asks:

Sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa samaadhisthasya keshava;
Sthitadheeh kim prabhaasheta kimaaseeta vrajeta kim.

O Keshav (Krishna), who is the person of Steady Wisdom and the Super conscious mind? How does he behave (speak/sit/walk)?

Bhagwan said:

Prajahaati yadaa kaamaan sarvaan paarth manogataan;
Aatmanyeva atmanaa tushtah sthitapragyas tadochyate.

O Arjun, when a person gets rid of all unwanted desires of the mind and is satisfied within himself, then he said to be the person of 'Steady Wisdom / Mind'.

Life is full of pair-of-opposites; good and bad, victory and defeat, gain and loss, happiness and sorrow, pleasure and pain.

Duhkhashwa anudwignamanaah sukheshu vigatasprihah;
Veetaraagabhayakrodhah sthitadheer munir uchyate.

Bhagwan said, "The one, whose mind is not distracted by these pair of opposites, who does not crave after pleasures, and who is not possessive of his belongings, who is fearless and calm (absence of anger), is called a sage of 'Steady Wisdom'.

Bhagwan further explained the cause of the origin of 'agitation in Mind' or 'instability of Wisdom':

Dhyaayato vishayaan pumsah sangas teshu upajaayate;
Sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaat krodho'bhijaayate.

- Continuous thinking of the objects of personal possessions generates the attachment to these objects.
- From the attachment unwanted desire is born.
- When this desire is not fulfilled the 'anger /agitation' arises.

Krodhaad bhavati sammohah sammohaat smriti vibhramah;
Smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaat pranashyati.

- From anger comes deception (misunderstanding).
- Deception turns in to the loss of memory.
- From loss of memory comes the loss of 'power of discrimination' of good or bad.
- From the loss of 'discriminating power' (buddhi) the person loses his identity / self esteem and perishes / disintegrates.

Though we live in the world which is full of amenities we should live with our senses under restraint, like a tortoise who withdraws its limbs under adverse circumstances.

Bhagwan then tells that how to become a person of Steady Wisdom and what happens then:

Raagadwesha viyuktaistu vishayaanindriyaishcharan;
Aatmavashyair vidheyaatmaa prasaadamadhigacchati.

- Have self-control while living with all worldly possessions.
- Remain free from attraction and repulsion (pair of opposites).

And as a result such a person:

- Attains peace and happiness because his 'Mind /Wisdom is steady'.

In the remaining chapters, Bhagwan continues to explain various yoga practices to Arjun. At the end Arjun stands up with clear mind and confidently knowing his duty/dharma and we all know who won the battle of Dharma.

Above explanations are based on the teachings of Swami Sivananda and Swami Narayan dev tirth

Workshop

Project

Assume you have migrated to a major city in USA where there is no temple and no Indian community/cultural center that exists in the town. Since there has been an increase in American-Hindu population and a rise in material comfort, a need for a mandir to address spiritual needs arises. To make it a reality you need to draw a plan.

Start by brainstorming: Simply write down ideas, choose few issues you would focus, identify fund raising methods, activities temple will organize, utilities and maintenance, and the FUTURE of the temple etc.

Your plan should have a mission statement.

Project

You have just moved to a town where there is a temple being built. What activities would you like to see at the temple? How should it function to meet your needs?

Start by brainstorming: Simply write down ideas, choose few issues you would focus.

Your plan should have a mission statement.

Project

You have just moved to a town where there is a temple being built. What kind of activities would you plan to raise funds for the mandir? How should the money be used?

Start by brainstorming: Simply write down ideas, choose few issues you would focus.

Your plan should have a mission statement.

Project

You have just moved to a town where there is a temple being built. What kind of volunteer activities would you plan to help get the community involved and to help save money? How would you spread the word about community involvement?

Start by brainstorming: Simply write down ideas, choose few issues you would focus.

Your plan should have a mission statement.

Project (for Parents)

Mark main Mandirs/Tirth Sthans on the Map of Bharat. Write names of deities situated there and describe briefly the significance and history of the place.



2007 Hindu Heritage Camp

August 17th – 19th, 2007
Versailles State Park, IN

Theme:

Upasana: Our Spiritual practices



Camper's Notes

Organized by:

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana

In Association with:

VHP (World Hindu Council) of America
Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh of America

Bauddhik Session 1

Upasana - Defined

Upasana is a Sanskrit word that can be translated to 'Worship'.

It is comprised of two words: 'up' meaning near and 'asana' meaning 'to seat'. So upasana means 'to seat/stay near to Ishwar or Bhagwan'.

While doing upasana, a devotee finds himself in the zone of divinity. Upasana purifies a devotee's heart which eventually leads to 'permanent happiness'.

To an ordinary devotee, Upasana could entail 10-15 minutes to hours of practice, whereas for a spirituality elevated person, it is a 24/7/365 enjoyment while performing his/her day-to-day activities.

For most of us Upasana is progression, searching within self.

Once young Naren (later Swami Vivekananda) asked about Upasana to his Guru Ram Krishna Paramhansa. Swami Ram Krishna explained, "If a thief comes to know that there is treasure inside a locked box that he stole/found, he will put all his efforts to break the locked box to acquire that treasure." Similarly, once a devotee knows that Ishwar exists, he/she will put a lot of efforts to attain / realize Ishwar. All these efforts of a devotee to realize Ishwar are nothing but Upasana.

We have been doing Upasana for thousands of years. Our Rishis / Gurus have defined various ways that suit age, educational, social, spiritual levels of devotees. The common aim of all the Upasanas (Yagna, Abhishek, Keertan/Bhajan.....) is Self purification, realization of Ishwar/Bhagwan, and attainment of peace & happiness.

Let us analyze the ways that were practiced by Swami Vivekananda and great devotee Shabari. Swami Vivekananda realized (one to one connection) Bhagwan through knowledge of scriptures and logic i.e. through Gyan whereas Shabari, who was an illiterate tribal woman, realized Bhagwan through mere **dedication and faith i.e. Bhakti**.

Both Shabari and Swami Vivekananda continued performing their regular duties (Karma) while doing their Upasana. In fact, their Karma became pure through Gyan and Bhakti. In essence, we can say that Gyan or Bhakti results in PURE KARMA (Action) or our actions.



Bauddhik Session 2

Gita Chapter 12 - Bhakti Yoga

Sanjay Mehta

Bhagavad-Gita, popularly known as Gita, is a dialogue between Bhagwan Shri Krishna and Arjun. Shri Krishna's answers to Arjun's questions are the essence of all our scriptures and teachings. In the 18 chapters and 700 shlokas, Shri Krishna has touched various areas of the Hindu philosophy.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "I regard Gita as the 'Mother', to whom the children (humanity) turn to when in distress."

One of the hallmarks of Gita is the philosophy of "Bhakti Yoga", total surrender to Bhagwan.

In this session, we will discuss and contemplate the philosophy that has helped the great warrior Arjun and the great devotee Mira bai to reach Krishna consciousness.

In the twelfth chapter Shri Krishna explains how the path of devotion (Bhakti) is easier than the other paths of Upasana. In this path the devotee worships Ishwar in some form / manifestation like Shri Krishna, Shri Ram, Shiva, Durga or so. In this path devotee (Bhakta) develops a loving relationship with Bhagwan. Bhakti Yoga is about complete surrenders to Ishwar same as the child surrenders himself/herself to the mother. Due to the act of total surrender, the devotee relinquishes sense of doership in all actions and remains completely untouched by the sorrow and fear. He/she remains in the state of perfect contentment at all the time.

Arjuna Uvaacha

Evam satata-yukta ye bhaktas tvam paryupaasate
ye chapyaksharam avyaktam tesaam ke yoga vittamaah

Arjuna inquired; "What is considered to be perfect, those who are completely engaged in your devotional service (Bhakti), or those who worship your un-manifested form?"

Shri Bhagavan Uvaacha

mayy avesya mano ye mam nitya-yukta upasate
shraddhaya parayopetas te me yuktatama matah

Bhagwan Shri Krishna said, "The devotee whose mind is fixed on my manifested form, who is constantly engaged in worshiping me is considered by me to be the most perfect".

Klesho 'dhikataras tesham avyaktaa sakta-chetasam
avyaktaa hi gatir duhkham dehavadbhir avaapyate

For those who worship un-manifested Brahman, spiritual advancement is relatively difficult.

Mayya eva mana adhatsva mayi buddhim niveshaya
nivashisyasi mayya eva ata urdhvam na samshayah

Just fix your mind upon me and engage all your intelligence in me. In this way you will always be in union with me (Yoga).

Adveshta sarva-bhutaanaam maitrah karuna eva cha
nirmamo nirahankarah sama-duhkha-sukhah kshami
santushtah satatam yogi yatatma dridha-nischayah
mayya arpita-mano-buddhir yo mad-bhaktah sa me priyah

One who is not envious to any one, who is a kind friend to all living beings, who is not selfish, who is free from false ego / arrogance and balanced mind both in happiness and distress, who is always satisfied and engaged in devotional service (Bhakti) of mine, such devotee is very dear to me.

Ye tu dharma amritam idam yatha uktam paryupaasate
shraddadhana mat-parama bhaktah te ativa me priyah

The one who follows the path of devotional service (Bhakti) and who completely surrenders one self to me is very, very dear to me.

Complete surrender is the keyword in Bhakti yoga, which means surrendering all actions and more over fruits of all actions to Bhagwan. Converse of this will result in stress, nervousness and unsteady determination. In our day to day actions like quizzes, exams, speeches, sports and performances if we practice Bhakti Yoga (an act of complete surrender to Bhagwan) we will certainly reach to the goal with utmost peace and satisfaction. Bhakti Yoga (spiritual connection) will ensure steadfastness in our Determination; undeterred focus on the Goal and success.

An old proverb, "Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there", expresses power of Bhakti very well.

Above explanations are based on the teachings of Swami Sivananda and Swami Narayan dev tirth

Bauddhik Session 3

Upasana - Ways

The following are the ways we do Upasana (worship):

1. Yajna

Yajna means “sacrifice and surrenders to Ishwar”. It refers to the act of offering the best that one has, for the welfare of others.

2. Abhishek

Abhishek means “divine bathing” or “bathing for sanctification”. Abhishek (bathing) is performed on the Moorti (idol) of Ishwar, amidst the chanting of mantras with purifiers.

3. Shodash-Upachara Pooja

The word Puja has its origin in the Sanskrit word “Puj”, which means to honor, to welcome, to offer, or to pray. According to our scriptures, pooja can be performed in steps of 8, 10, or 16. Conventionally, Shodash-Upachara (Shodash = 16, Upachar = steps/hospitalities) is performed by most of us. It starts with Avahanam (Invocation) and culminates in Aarati (Prayer).

4. Jap

Jap means repeating Ishwar’s name (or a mantra) in a low voice or even in the mind while sitting in Sukh-asana or Padma-asana. It can be done with the help of a mala (bead).

5. Swadhyaya

Swadhyaya consists of two words; ‘Swa’ is Self, and ‘Adhyaya’ is study. Swadhyaya means the Study of the Self; Knowing our true/pure nature.

6. Yoga (Dhyaan)

This is a way to discover happiness and peace from within. Yoga is a union between JeevAtma (individual consciousness) and ParamAtma (Ishwar-universal consciousness).

7. Keertan / Bhajan

Devotional songs sung in praise and the glories of Ishwar are known as Keertan/ Bhajan / Prarthana. Singing Ishwar’s glory in devotionally formed phrases, supported by music, is another way to communicate with the omnipresent. 8. Shravan (Katha)

Shravan means “listening to”. It is not mere hearing or even seeing. The art of listening does not depend on sense organs alone; while listening, the mind goes behind the sound or the scene and registers the experience on the conscious mind.

9. Tirth Yatra

Bharat has been the Spiritual center for ages. Sacred sites (Mandirs, Ashrams, and Cities) in Bharat have played a key role in the development and preservation of our great culture. Some sacred places are also known as ‘Tirth’. The literal meaning of ‘Tirth’ is to ‘go across’. A Tirth Yatra (pilgrimage) takes us through the ocean of worldly sufferings and purifies us.

10. Vrat – Upavaas (including nature pooja)

Vrat means observance of self-discipline from certain distracting routines that may obstruct the spiritual path. Vrat enhances willpower and purifies the mind and body. Observing silence is called Mauna Vrat or Shabda Vrat.

Let us discuss our personal experiences in various ways defined above.

Workshop

Project

Assume you are the head of religious committee of your Mandir (temple). What are the different ways you would plan your spiritual programs catering to the need of a community comprising of young children to senior citizens? To make it a reality you need to draw a plan.

Start by brainstorming: Simply write down ideas, choose a few issues you would focus on, identify activities the temple will organize, things you will need to have completed these activities.

Your plan should have a mission statement.

Project

Use arts and crafts material to make things related to various upasana ways, for example Deep, Maala, Yagna vedi, Pooja thaali, Archana bag etc.

Project (for Parents)

List at least one person that goes well with each Upasana way. Write brief history of the person covering: Place, Timeline, Significant contribution to Hindu Samaj and any other point you think enlightening.



2008 Hindu Heritage Camp

August 15 - 17, 2008
Versailles State Park, Versailles, IN

Theme:

इतिहास

**Hindu History
The Ancient Past of Hindus**



Camper's Notes

Organized by:
Hindu Temple of Central Indiana
In Association with:
VHP (World Hindu Council) of America

Sri. Rangaraja Iyengar on "Importance of studying our Itihaas"

Bharat has one of the most ancient cultural and historic heritages in the world. The great sages have recorded the details of this in various scriptures. Vedavyasa and other maharshis had documented the happenings in various Puranas. However, as time passed these have been taught as mythical stories thus losing the importance that should have been given to a history.

In Sanskrit, "Pura" means "the past"; "Ayana" means "which happened" thus, Pura-ayana is a record of happenings of the past. But as the time passed, the word was pronounced simply as "Purana" Later people assumed that Purana is a myth and has only stories which never happened.

To simplify the study of our vast, rich history let us look at the Vedic calculation of time.

The Vedic concept of time is cyclic, rotating in cycles of four "Yugas"

Kruta(Satya)-yuga: 1,728,000 human years

Threta-yuga: 1,296,000 human years

Dwapara-yuga: 864,000 human years

Kali-yuga: 432,000 human years

Our history begins in Kruta yuga and spreads throughout Threta yuga, Dwaapara yuga and continues in Kali yuga, the current time.

Kruta yuga is also called "Poorna dharma yuga", the golden age, is the ideal age, characterized by virtue, wisdom, religion, and practically no vice or ignorance. Humans do not hate or envy each other, nor do they ever feel anxious, fearful or threatened. They solely worship the one Supreme Personality of Godhead, hear the one Veda, obey the one law, and practice the one religious process -- meditation on the Supreme. People live for about 100,000 years. Great sages like Kashyapa and Vashishta lived in Kruta yuga.

In Thretaa Yuga vice is introduced. The good qualities that humans had in Satya-yuga reduce by one third. People introduce religious rites, sacrifices, and ceremonies. They start to act with fruitive desires, expecting a reward for their work and religious activities. They live for a maximum of 10,000 years. Vishwaamitra and Sri Rama lived during this yuga.

In Dwaapara Yuga uprightness is only half of what it was in Satya-yuga. The Vedas are divided into four parts, and only a few people study them. Sensual desires and diseases begin to well up, and injustice spreads in human civilization. People live for a maximum of 1000 years

Parashara, Vedavyasa lived in dwapara yuga. The war of Mahabharata took place towards the end of this period and most importantly, Krishna preached bhagavad gita in this period.

Now, in Kali Yuga where only one fourth of human uprightness (dharma) remains and gradually reduces to nil as the age progresses. Kali-yuga, the iron age, the most degraded of the four Yugas men are short lived and have less intelligence. They are especially lazy in performing their spiritual duties and exceedingly slow to surrender to the Lord. They are misled, frustrated and, above all, always disturbed. The qualities of religion (truthfulness, cleanliness, forbearance and mercy) and the qualities of life (intelligence, duration of life and bodily strength and beauty) all diminish. The maximum duration of human life is 100 years, and even that is rare.

So, there is a great challenge and task on our shoulders. It's time that we, Hindus make an effort to understand our ancient history by studying various "pura-ayana" to practice the ethics and morals in them to improve the quality of life. Let us study our glorious itihaas and live a life of honor.

Session 1

Hindu Itihaas (History)

The word Hindu originated from the Sanskrit words ‘Sapta (Seven) and Sindhu (River)’. Eventually, Sapta Sindhu became Hapta Hindu. Hindu became Indus and eventually India. These Hindus lived around the Sindhu River and practiced the spiritual and cultural traditions that originated in India (Vedic, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh). Collectively all these traditions rooted in the soil of Bharat form the Hindu civilization. The word ‘Hindu’ is not a religious descriptor; it refers to the socio-cultural-spiritual expressions of that geographical region.

Four Pillars of our ITIHAAS (History):

1. Art and Architecture, 2. Customs and Traditions,
3. Heroic People, 4. Scripture / Teachings.

These pillars provide a description of our past and define our identity. Although the land from Himalaya to Southern tip was known as Arya-Vart (the land of Aryans/Hindus), Hindu rulers, scholars and entrepreneurs traveled to various parts of the world. They settled in Sri Lanka, China, and Singapore (Singh Pur). The prosperity of India attracted foreign invaders throughout time. However, Hindustani rulers never invaded foreign territories. Instead, wherever they went, they respected and assimilated the local culture.

We take pride in our Glorious ITIHAAS.

Shri Ram's Period (Ramayana Kal)

Based on our scholarly teachings, the oldest Bharatiya period is the time before Raja-Rishi Vaivasvata Manu. The Vedic culture extended from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean. During this time Vaivasvata Manu founded the Solar Dynasty. Manu's son Ikshvaku ably ruled Ayodhya and founded the dynasty into which Shri Ram was born. Some of Shri Ram's ancestors include: Harishchandra, Sagar, and Dasharatha (Shri Ram's father). Though many Kings were very influential, Shri Ram left had the biggest influence on the hearts of Hindus. Shri Ram was born in Ayodhya and believed an incarnation of Bhagwan Vishnu. Some scholars believe that Shri Ram lived in Treta Yuga (about 900,000 years ago). Shri Ram's virtues of Truth, Dharma, and humility still remain hallmark to Hindu History.

Shri Krishna's Period (Mahabharata Kal)

The descendants of the Yadu Clan are known as Yadu-Vanshis. The dynasty ruled all over the Central, the Northern (Delhi – Mathura), and the Western (Dwarika) parts of then Bharat. Born to Devaki and Vasudev, Shri Krishna came to this world circa 3228 BCE. He grew up Mathura and Vrindavan. Shri Krishna learned the scriptures under Guru Sandipani, in Ujjain. At the Gurukul, the relationship of Krishna and Sudama blossomed into a beautiful friendship. Shri Krishna created the city of Dwarika and moved there with all of the Yadavas. Another famous dynasty in Mahabharata period was the Kuru dynasty. King Shantanu ruled Hastinapur. Shantanu's forebears include the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Bheeshma Pitamah was son of king Shantanu. Of all the rulers in this period Yudhishtir is reputed as one of the very just and valiant. At end of the 18 day Mahabharata war Yudhishtir successfully ruled Hastinapur for 36 years. After Bhagwan Krishna departed the earth, the Pandavas decided to go to the Himalayas spend the remaining of their life there. Parikshit, Arjun's grandson, then

ruled the kingdom of Hastinapur. The Bhagvad Gita, continues to guide society today. Kala-Yuga (current Yuga) began after the departure of Bhagwan Krishna from the earth. For thousands of years Shri Krishna's loving and heroic character serves as an inspiration for the Hindu society.

Session 2

Indus valley / Saraswati Period (3300 BCE)

This ancient civilization depicts the continuity of traditions in the land of Hindus. This period dates back to 3300 BCE known as a Bronze Age civilization. Archaeologists found over 600 sites along the bed of the Saraswati and Indus Rivers. The Indus cities housed thousands of people and were very hygienic. The structuring found in the cities proved to be similar to present day engineering and architecture. The people of Indus Valley worshipped Bhagwan Shiva. Researchers state that a major earth quake dried up rivers and diverted the inhabitants toward the current day Ganges Plain. An early theory was that Aryans came from Europe and settled in India (later proven wrong). Historians found strong evidences in Indic literature that proves that Aryan culture is native to India.

Bhagwan Mahavir's Period

The details of the first 22 Tirthankars are not dated but their teachings continue. However, the lives and teachings of Bhagwan Parshvanath and Bhagwan Mahavir are remembered in history. Bhagwan Mahavir, born in Vaishali (Bihar), lived from 599 BC to 527 BC. Bhagwan Parshvanath lived about 250 before Bhagwan Mahavir. Society during this period was well established and prosperous. There was an upsurge of philosophical thinkers all over the world. Most thinkers separated philosophy and dharma as two different paths. However, great thinkers like Bhagwan Mahavir combined philosophy with dharma for the benefit of the mankind. Mahavir became a monk at the age of thirty. Later, Mahavir Swami spent more than thirty years traveling bare foot around India preaching the eternal truth. Through his simple ways, he showed how one could attain total freedom from the sufferings and cycle of life. Mahavir Swami preached: right faith (samyak darshana), right knowledge (samyak jnana), and right conduct (samyak charitra). Mahavir Swami was a great son of Bharat and Aryan culture who contributed a lot towards the unification of Bharat. In 527 BC, Mahavir attained Nirvana in Pavapuri (present day Bihar).

Bhagwan Buddha's Period

This was the time (*circa* 563 BCE to 483 BCE) when a prince gave-up all the comforts of his royal life to look for ways to remove suffering from the world. Buddha was born in Kapilvastu (Nepal). At the age of 35, he attained Enlightenment in Gaya, Bihar. After renouncing the material world, Bhagwan Buddha traveled for more than 40 years giving discourses all over Bharat. Buddha illustrated how individual sadhana (spiritual practices) can elevate society. He spread the eight fold path all over India to help overcome worldly suffering. Prasenjit, ruler of Ayodhya, took spiritual lessons from Buddha. Buddhism gradually spread throughout Asia to Central Asia, Tibet, Sri Lanka, China, Mongolia, Korea, South East Asia and Japan. As of today 375 million people all over the world follow Buddhist faith/tradition.

Session 3

Maurya Period

Mauryavansh led the Mauryan Empire from 322–185 BCE. This great empire ruled successfully, based on its military and political strength, with justice as a key principle. The empire had its capital city at Pataliputra. During this era, Indians were able to enjoy the benefits of social harmony, religious transformation, and expansion of the sciences and knowledge. The empire was founded by Chandragupta Maurya under the guidance of Chanakya. Chanakya's writings on politics and economy are treasures to Indian History. By 316 BCE, the Mauryan Empire stretched to Northwestern India. The Greek general, Seleucus, surrendered a large part of Gandhara (modern Afghanistan/Pakistan). Chandragupta Maurya practiced Jain teachings and spread its message to his subjects. King Ashoka (274 BCE) was a descendent of Chandragupta Maurya and most certainly the greatest ruler in the Indian history. He extended his rule to southern, including Kalinga (Orissa). During Ashoka's reign, the Mauryan Empire reached its zenith spanning from Afghanistan to Assam, in the east, and from Himalayas to modern Andhra Pradesh, in southern India. Emperor Ashoka erected thousands of stone pillars and magnificent Buddhist Stupas (dome shaped monuments). The Lion-Capital that Ashoka established at Sarnath (in modern Uttar Pradesh) is the national emblem of the modern republic of India.

Foreign Invasions (6th-18th Centuries)

The Arab invasion of Sindh started on the coasts of Maharashtra and Gujarat under Umar (634-644). The Islamic armies entered Sindh and advanced through Rajputana up to the central part of Bharat. However, strong opposition from Hindu forces made the success of the Arab armies short-lived. Their advance to the south was stopped by Chalukya, ruler of Gujarat. As the Arabs made advances towards Punjab and Kashmir they were blocked and driven back by Lalitaditya Muktapida (724-760) of Kashmir. In 1008 Mahmud of Gazani and in 1173 Muhammad Ghorī of Afghanistan unsuccessfully invaded India. The two Islamic invaders faced firm resistance from Hindu kingdoms of the Shahiyas, the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Parmaras, the Senas, and many more. The invading armies demolished Hindu temples and looted the of the society. In 1026 Mahmud Gazani repeatedly destroyed the ever famous Somnath Temple in Gujarat. The battle between Prithviraj Chauhan and Ghorī is an unforgettable chapter of history. In 1526, the Mogul dynasty was founded by Babur who defeated Lodi the ruler of Delhi in Panipat. Babur was succeeded by Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, and Aurangzeb. During Aurangzeb's (1658) reign many Hindus forcibly converted to Islam.

Rajput Period (7th-17th Centuries)

Rajput word is derived from Raj-Putra (Raj = King/Kingdom, Putra = Son).

Rajputs had a culture of bravery and sacrifice. The military ethos was complemented with support of the temples, paintings, architecture and classical music. Rajputs believed in Surya-vansh, Chandra-vansh, and Agni-vansh. Throughout history, Rajputs gave stiff resistance to foreign invaders to save the sanctity and sovereignty of Bharat. The **Bhakti Movement** originated in South India, Shankacharya, the great scholar from the south, traveled all over Bharat to unite Hindus on spiritual and social grounds. The Bhakti Movement served as the major unification factor amongst the rulers, Gurus, and the common people. Guru Nanak, the

great saint of Punjab, led the Bhakti Movement in and out of Punjab. Guru Nanak's movement later laid the

Session 4

Kingdoms of Hoysalas, Vijayanagar, and Cholas

The Hoysala Empire ruled southern India from 1000 to 1346. The Hoysalas are remembered for their architecture. The Hoysala kings were influenced by Jain and Vaishnav traditions. The Vijayanagar Empire, based in southern India, was founded by Harihara. Its capital city Vijayanagar holds impressive ruins of Hindu value. This Empire lasted from 1336 to about 1660. A Tamil dynasty (Chola) ruled from 850 to about 1350. The dynasty originated in Kaveri River valley (Tamil Nadu). Some other dynasties of south include the Pandyas and Pallavs. The art of sculpture attained a new height during this period. Temples at the Ellora, Sravan and Belgola came into existence under the supervision of these rulers. The southern region evolved into the centre of Hindu civilization and culture. Around 1334, foreign invaders entered and captured some parts of this prosperous and culturally rich region.

Maratha Period (16th to 19th Centuries)

Founded by Chhatrapati Shivaji in 1674, the Maratha Empire existed until 1947.

After a courageous and memorable lifetime of warfare with the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Shivaji died in 1680. The Mughal invasion started around 1682 and lasted till 1707. Shahu, Shivaji's grandson, was a great ruler reaching its greatest extents in the 18th century. Bajirao II, was defeated by the British in the Third Anglo-Maratha War, as the British cleverly annexed the Marathas. Despite the invasion, a number of Maratha states persisted as princely states until 1947. The great Maratha king Shivaji revived the political power of the Hindus in north India and prevented the spread of the Mughal Empire. Shivaji's valor, organizational skills, and devotion to motherland inspired Hindu masses all over the country.

The British and Freedom Movement

European nations entered India and set up colonies starting the end of 15th century. In 1498, the Portuguese first set foot in Goa. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I accorded a charter forming the East India Company to trade with India and eastern Asia. The British landed in India through Surat in 1624 and extended their pockets of influence to the rest of the country. The British East India Company indirectly administered large part of India through many puppet kings. East India Company looted enormous wealth from India and took it to United Kingdom. Some of the nationalistic leaders, spiritual leaders, and social reformers eventually realized the importance of throwing the British out from India for the sustenance and propagation of Bhartiya culture and heritage. These revolutionary leaders developed a profound desire for self-rule (Swaraj). The struggle for removing the British took a major decisive turn after the uprising of 1857. Freedom fighters reached their goal of freedom in 1947. The freedom movement saw the emergence of many patriots who fought, made sacrifices, and even died defending the country. The bravery of Lakshmi bai, spiritual power of Sri Aurobindo, social reforms of Swami Dayananda, self reliance of Tilak, wisdom of Rajaji Rajgopalachari, national integration of Dr. Hedgewar, heroism of Bhagat Singh, administration of Sardar Patel, and Satyagrah & Ahimsa of Mahatma Gandhi won the freedom from British rule and gave birth to Modern India, as we know it today, in August 1947. However, this date is just one milestone in the long and continuous history of Hindusthan.



Hindu Heritage Family Camp 2009

Theme:

Ashtanga Yoga

सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः

Sarve Santu Niramayah

May all be Healthy

August 21 - 23, 2009

Versailles State Park, IN

Organized By:

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana, Indianapolis
in Association:

VHP (World Hindu Council) of America
Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh of America

Session 1

What is yoga?

Yoga is:

- The union of Jivatma (individual consciousness) and Parmatma (Ishwar-universal consciousness).
- The way to discover happiness and peace from within.
- A process of gaining control over the mind; to calm down the mind.

There are several different forms of yoga. These forms include Gyan Yoga, Bhakthi Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Raj Yoga. Gyan Yoga is practiced by listening to the scriptures and gurus. Bhakti Yoga is also known as devotion to Ishwar. Karma Yoga is Righteous action. . Raj Yoga involves Asans (postures), Pranayam (breath control), and Dhyan (mediation).

Ashtanga Yoga

This week you will be focusing primarily on Raj Yoga, also known as **Ashtanga Yoga**. Ashtanga literally mean eight parts; asht is translated to eight & anga is translated to part/limb. Therefore Raj Yoga is the yoga of 8 parts. It is a royal (Raj = Royal) path to the happiness and peace.

More than 2500 years ago in Bharat (India) Rishi Patanjali put this practice of Yoga into a system called Ashtanga Yoga. Today it is practiced all over the world for health, peace, and a good state of mind.

Session 2

Yama

As you already learned from the first session, the closest English translation of Yama is “Restraint or Moral Practices.”

Moral Practice is exercising restraint over character degradation instinct to overcome greed, lust, anger, envy and jealousy. Yama is the righteous way we deal with outside world through inner practices. Five essential components of restraint are:

1. Satya (Truth)

Wise people have said, “Truth is Ishwar (God)”. It is the highest purpose of life to realize. It is a bridge between thought and word. Upholding of truth may require many sacrifices in life. This is one virtue around which all other moral virtues revolve.

2. Ahimsa (non-violence): Pronounced *a-him-sa*

It is a noble, deliberate, cool responsive behavior as opposed to provocation and anger. Ahimsa is a powerful weapon of peaceful resistance to disarm the most powerful on earth. Non-violence is a fire that burns the hatred and jealousy of the enemy but not the enemy. Great saints, Shri Ram,

Buddha, Mahavir, and Mahatma Gandhi preached and practiced non-violence to liberate and make the world a better place to live. Only through love for every life and humanity Ahimsa (non-violence) can be cultivated. Ahimsa is not meant to be a dormant. It does not teach giving up to the injustice.

3. **Asteya** (non-stealing): Pronounced *a-ste-ya*

To snatch someone else's property is stealing. Asteya or non-stealing is a virtue of purity and honesty of mind and action that drives away greedy, possessive desires highly detrimental to the spiritual progress.

4. **Aparigraha** (non-possessiveness): Pronounced *a-pari-gra-h*

It is a Hindu doctrine of renunciation and leading a thrifty life with bare minimum wants and needs to attain bliss. It is very common for all of us to get trapped into "more you have the more you want". We all want to do charity and social service (Seva) but many a times it becomes difficult for us to do that due to our very possessive instinct. Scriptures say that Aparigraha will help you perform selfless service (Seva) and Seva in turn will help you understand Aparigraha. Sharing with others is the simplest form of Aparigraha.

5. **Brahmacharya** (virtuous conduct) Pronounced *brahm-char-ya*

It is associated with chastity and celibacy. Brahm means Divine/Pure and Charya means way of life, so in simple terms Brahmacharya means moral conduct. Vrata, Upavas and other spiritual practices help in practicing Brahmacharya. When there is a conflict between the good and bad, right and wrong, the one whose mind and intellect are inspired by Brahmacharya will always decide good and right.

In a sense all these qualities are interrelated and coexist to help each other in moral practice and restraint.

Niyam

As you learned in the first session, The second part or limb of the Ashtanga Yoga is Niyam, the closest English translation of Niyam is Observances or Individual Discipline.

While Yama directs common man how to live and behave in society, Niyama guides his/her individual behavior within him/herself. Thus science of yoga places society before self.

In the quest for well defined higher spiritual values to be generous, selfless, pious, compassionate, loyal and humble, observance of certain Niyamas or rules are of paramount importance.

According to Rishi Patanjali five essential components of Niyam are:

1. **Shoucha** (Purity)

A pure mind only can give joy and peace to you as well as others. Cleanliness being next to godliness, a clean body in a pure mind is essential for purity of thought, word and action. Here purity is referred to as physical, oral and mental. Physical purity can be external and internal. Oral purity means to avoid unnecessary use of tongue and follow YAM steps to purify/modify speech. Mental purity is of course very important to keep one on path of sadhana. Eating fresh and healthy food and treating the body like a temple is shoucha.

2. **Santosh** (Contentment)

It is a feeling of fulfillment of a mission or goal. Our day-to-day physical needs can be fulfilled with the help of material objects; this fulfillment is sometimes misunderstood as Santosh. Yoga refers santosh to mental contentment which is a state of mind and is not dependant on outside matters or objects. Our scriptures state that the root cause of all sufferings is trishna (desires). With Santosh, yoga teaches us to learn to be content and remain happy with what we have and what we are.

3. **Tapas or Tap** (Austerity)

Tapa means endurance building. Continue to march forward on the path of Dharma or path of yoga despite physical or mental limitations is Tap. One should show discipline in thoughts, speech and actions. This helps mind seek higher spiritual aim. Seventeenth chapter of Bhagwad Gita, describes three types of tapas. Satvik (done with faith and not expecting fruits) Rajasik (done to attain status or recognition) and Tamasik (done with meanness to hurt others).

4. **Swadhyaya** (Study of Self)

Swadhyaya means self study. In simple terms it is learning and then meditate on what is taught. Study of sacred books is Swadhyaya. Reading and absorbing sacred texts elevates consciousness to a higher level where we start to realize that all creation is made for bhakti (adoration) rather than bhoga (enjoyment) and that all creation is divine and same divine energy sustains all of us.

5. **Ishwara Pranidhana** (Surrender to Ishwara)

The word 'Ishwar' is derived from Sanskrit root 'Ish' to rule. The word Ishwar suggests 'personal God' but also includes the idea of the impersonal Brahman. Ishwara Pranidhana means worship with complete faith. It is to believe in Ishwar's existence, have faith in His greatness and to completely devote oneself to Him without expecting anything in return.

Session 5

Asana



As you learned in the first session, the third part or limb of the Ashtanga Yoga is Asana (pronounced *aa-sun*). The closest English translation of Asana is "Comfortable Posture."

Asana is preceded by yama and niyama, the moral restraints and spiritual observances. Asana is a Sanskrit word for posture or seat.

Yogasana is a posture in harmony with one's inner consciousness. It helps us in balancing and harmonizing the basic structure of the human body. Various postures of Yogasana, which include standing and sitting asanas, help us to keep body healthy and mind tension free.

The main point in asana is that we let go of all effort. We perform a comfortable posture, happily and with pleasure. We achieve steadiness and ease of posture through slight persistent effort and concentration of our mind upon our awareness and Ishwara. We feel the body and let go of all the efforts. We control our breathing; breathe in and out in rhythmic manner, while doing the pose as per the asana rules. The comfortable posture of Asana turns our attention inwards and spiritualizes our mind. When we do the asanas with all awareness, we feel freed up and spaced out. This is the experience of uniting one self with Ishwar.

Well done asana clears out all our conflicts and dualities. Anytime we are confused and our mind is in conflict, we can do asanas. We can sit in an asana and we see the clarity that comes right away. The conflicts which use to bother no longer trouble us. Praise or insult, which would throw us out of balance, will no longer bother us.

We get more self-discipline when we do asanas daily. Our daily activities are regulated and we build a good habit pattern for better meditation. We control our awareness more. We become masters of our nervous system and our senses. Our bodies function optimally. As we keep doing our daily yogasanas, our bodies become healthy, glow with vigor and our immune system gets boosted.

No matter how many times we have practiced a certain asana, when it is practiced, it should be absolutely new. This way we can make the practice of asana a living and artistic creation that has never existed before and will never exist again, just as every moment is fresh. When we practice asana we have a chance to become present in this very moment and bring our attention to here and now- to the sensations and awareness we are feeling. We can observe our reactions, both positive and negative, to the pose, and we can observe the sensations of ease and difficulty that arise as we stretch and bend.

Whether we do Padma Asana, or any other Asana, our willpower strengthens and protects us from sadness. Every Asana fills us with a new perception and creative intelligence through its cosmic effect on body, mind, and breath. Asanas also prepare us for Rishi Patanjali's next step which is control of breathing, or Pranayama.

Pranayam

The fourth part, or limb, of the Ashtanga (A-sh-tanga) Yoga is Pranayam (pronounced pra-naa-yam). Closest English translation of pranayam is "Breath Control". (Prana = Life Energy and Ayam = Manifestation / Control / Regulation.)

Prana is not just breathing (oxygen); it is the life force that keeps the whole body functioning harmoniously. Pranayama is the technique or practice, which is related to the control or regulation of Prana, the Life Energy. One is said to be alive even if some of the main organs such as Brain, Kidney, or Liver are not functioning, but one is declared dead when the Prana is gone. Sanskrit equivalent of Death is Prana Gati (Prana = Life Energy, Gati = Gone).

We all have the same life energy (Prana) flowing within but only few of us utilize it to the fullest extent. Pranayam is the process of controlling, stimulating, regulating, or channeling that Prana (Energy) in order for us to live healthy and happy. Just as a bath purifies and energizes the body, Pranayama purifies and energizes the mind and, in fact, the entire nervous system. During pranayam the thoughts in your mind get suspended and the mind is absorbed in stillness leading to infinite joy of Peace (Samadhi) or super consciousness.

On the physical level Pranayam helps us control our thoughts & actions and on a spiritual level Pranayam helps us realize our true self (Atma Gyan). Progress, through Pranayam, at both physical and spiritual levels, results in a healthy, peaceful, and successful life.

Types of Pranayam

- Bhastrika (Bellows Breath)
- Kapalbhati (Cleansing Breath)
- Bhramari (Bee Breath)
- Anulom Vilom (Alternate nostril Breath)
- Udgeeth (Chanting Om)

Benefits of Pranayam

- Cleanses and tones up entire nervous system.
- Removes mental tensions and worries. Cools the Mind.
- Increases concentration.
- Strengthens the Heart.
- Strengthens the digestive system.
- Protection from cough, cold, and common allergies.



All these benefits can be enjoyed by anyone, provided Pranayam is practiced REGULARLY. One can enjoy the taste of the sweet only by eating the sweet itself. Writing the word 'sweet' on paper has nothing to do with actual deliciousness of the sweet. So, practice Pranayam yoga and enjoy the sweetness of life!

Pratyahar

The fifth part, or limb, of the Ashtanga Yoga is Pratyahar (pronounced *pra-thyaa-haar*). The closest English translation of Pratyahar is drawing back from external objects. In Yoga terms it is withdrawal of dependency of the senses on the external objects.

In the first four part of Yoga are external preparations for the internal journey which starts from Pratyahar. As the tortoise withdraws its limbs from external world on its will and as the horse rider controls the movement of the horse by controlling its rein, the Yogi control his/her senses by the practice of Pratyahar.

Without the mind / awareness behind the sense organs, seeing will be sight but not vision, hearing will be sound but not listening.

Generally mind dances to the tune of the senses. In Pratyahar we break link between mind and senses. This de-linking helps us over come feeling of like & dislike and brings about emotional balance.

While practicing Pratyahar senses become more acute and try to react negatively. More hunger, more passion, over sensitiveness are some on early consequences of this practice. The Yama and Niyama practiced earlier will help overcome this state.

Dharana

The sixth part, or limb, of the Ashtanga Yoga is Dharana (pronounced Dhaar-naa). Closest English translation of Dharana is concentration or uninterrupted attention. The word Dharana has its root in Sanskrit word 'Dhr' means 'to hold'.

Dharana means fixation of the mind on some object. Normally the mind is restless by nature and shifts from object to object. In Dharana, the mind is directed towards a single object and focus is held on that object using determination. When you concentrate and focus attention wholeheartedly on an object, you get so absorbed and drowned in it that the curtain between the subject and object vanishes and they become one with each other. The differentiation between the SELF and the OBJECT is ultimately removed. This intense focus ultimately results in the end of separation between "it" and "Me" - there is only one.

Dharna is the first critical step in entering the higher states of meditation to unite with Ishwar (God). Persistent focus can further reduce negative thoughts and influences, purifying the mind and bringing it closer to Ishwar. This practice is very helpful in all walks of life; Puja, Studies, Sports, Job etc.

There is some flexibility in the objects of meditation. Commonly used objects are pictures of Bhagwan or one's guru, candles, flowers, religious symbols or any sacred object. Some of the techniques rely on mantras or the sound of OM. In this technique, one tunes one's mind to the repetitive sound of the mantra or OM. Often a Japa-Maala, or a string of holy beads (typically 108), is used as an effective tool to focus the mind.

A continuous flow of Dharana is called Dhyan (meditation). If Dharana is the drop, then Dhyan is the river.

Dhyan

The seventh part, or limb, of the Ashtanga Yoga is Dhyan. Closest English translation of DHYAAN is Meditation - continued thought. In Yoga terms, it is a Controlled channelization of Mind (Chitta) towards the Object of Focus (for example Bhagwan). The word Dhyan has its root in Sanskrit word 'dhyaa-e' means 'to think'.

As we learned in the earlier session, a continuous flow of Dharana (concentration) is called Dhyan (meditation). If Dharana is the drop, then Dhyan is the river. It is a process of unlearning what has been learned so far. 'Meditation' is the ultimate remedy for 'Agitation'. Meditation is the most precious treasure chest of wisdom handed down by our rishis, saints and ancestors to the world for the benefit of entire humanity.

Samadhi

The eighth and final part, or limb, of the Ashtanga Yoga is Samadhi. The closest English translation of Samadhi is deep contemplation, a state of Super consciousness. The word Samadhi has its root in Sanskrit words 'sam' (together or integrated), and "dha" (to hold). Thus, the literal meaning of Samadhi can be "Wholeness."

At an elevated spiritual level Dhyana and Samadhi are inseparable as described by rishi Patanjali. A logical distinction can be made between the two in the sense that Dhyana or meditation has three components i.e. Subject (doer), Process and Object (Ishwar – God), whereas in Samadhi the first two get united with the Object. This can be simply compared with the entry of a flowing river into the ocean, in which condition the river loses its identity and becomes the ocean itself.

Samadhi is a state of complete peace, complete bliss (happiness) and being in Divinity.

Steps/Components of Dharana - Concentration

1. Exclusion of unrelated thoughts
2. Subject (the doer)
3. Process of Concentration (sitting in posture – aasan)
4. Object (Sacred word, Mantra, Bhagwan - God...)

Steps/Components of Dhyana – Meditation

Exclusion of unrelated thoughts

1. Subject (the doer)
2. Process of Concentration (sitting in posture – aasan)
3. Object (Sacred word, Mantra, Bhagwan - God...)

Steps/Components of Samadhi - Super-conscious state / Nirvana

Exclusion of unrelated thoughts

Subject (doer)

Process of Concentration

1. Only Object (Sacred word, Mantra, Bhagwan - God...) – Subject (doer) merges in the Object.

How to meditate

1. Sit on a soft, flat yoga mat in Padmasan (Lotus Pose) or Sukhasan (Easy Pose). Relax the body.
2. Close your eyes. Start chanting OM – Let the sound of chanting rise like a water fountain. Continue chanting, vibrations of OM will grow and expand around you. You can feel these divine vibrations.
3. After some time chant OM in mind only. Chanting will still be louder in the mind. Now slowly and steadily reduce the tone to mental whisper. Allow to dissolve OM chanting into silence within you (in the same way as water fountain comes to a steady close).
4. When you stop mental chanting, there will be a split moment of thoughtless state, hold on to that state as long as you can. As soon as thoughtless state breaks and new thought comes in mind, start chanting 'Chidananda Roopa, Shivoham, Shivoham - I am eternal blissful Shiva - love and happiness' – that will enable you to come back to thoughtless state.
5. Do this for at least 5 to 10 minutes everyday and enjoy the divinity (purity) within as you practice and progress.





Hindu Temple of Central Indiana • 3350 N. German Church Rd., Indianapolis, IN 46235 • 317-891-9199 • www.htci.org

Hindu Heritage Family Camp **2010**

Theme:

Icons of Hindu History

August 20 - 22, 2010

Versailles State Park, IN

Organized By:

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana, Indianapolis
in Association:

World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh of America

Session 1

Icons of our history (Itihaas) - Overview

Unfortunately **some of our historic events are undated** meaning the dates were not recorded. A possible explanation for this could be:

- Our ancestors never concerned about time stamping their deeds, because all our ancient teachings were for the entire human race and not for a particular group or region.
- Due to foreign invasions and destructions we lost our valuable history records.
- Natural disasters.

History is known to be a bridge between ‘present & past’ and ‘present & future’. It contains events both desired and undesired. There are no times in the history when unwanted events have not taken place and people with wrong intentions never existed. We need to learn lessons from both good and bad through historical experiences. History can be a foundation in which we can build our traditions, cultural values, and character on good things as well as try to avoid what was wrong and undesirable. **History is indeed the witness of the times, the light of truth. This weekend, let us begin attempting to seek that truth. Our ignorance of history makes us libel our own times.**

A few times our ancestors clashed amongst themselves over small territorial interests and material gains. Whenever such events took place, our dharma gurus and wise people came forward to resolve the situation. Due to many great people who worked for the unity and integrity of Bharat, we can still see our ancestral land upholding spiritual and cultural values founded more thousands of years ago.

India is also known HinduSthan (Hindu + Sthan i.e. place) and Bharat Varsha, the land of great Rishi and King named Bharat. India had a galaxy of mighty empires, unequalled religious philosophies and enduring social fabrics. We had great thinkers and statesmen, heroes and warriors, among us, with great armies at their command.

Unfortunately, Bharat was invaded and looted by foreign forces number of times. Each time, from all over the country, the daughters and sons of Bharat mata resisted invaders to protect their mother land. There are no times in the history when Indian rulers had invaded any other country or territory in spite of their mighty powers.

The icons of our history are the people who have protected ‘cultural and spiritual’ wealth of our ancestral land (punya Bhoomi Bharat) and those who have brought the pride to our race. Through their sacrifices and dedication, they have made the rich history worth unfolding. A few of them are:

- ‘Shri Ram’ - the great character
- ‘Bhishma’ - the determined
- ‘Buddha’ - the enlightened one
- ‘Chanakya’ - the genius
- ‘Adi Shankara’ - the great unifier
- ‘Andal’ - the great devotee
- ‘Bhamasha’ - the loyal
- ‘Padmini’ - the brave
- ‘Sri Aurobindo’ - the great scholar
- ‘Sardar Patel’ - the great administrator

Session 2

The great people that we have discussed in session-1 have impacted the social and spiritual lives of Hindus all over the world, and have endured the course of more than ten thousand years. Through their actions they have strengthened every fabric of the life of Hindus living in India or abroad.

Immigrant Hindus have brought rich traditions along with their professional skills to the USA. Let us analyze how the writings and life sketches of some of these influential icons have impacted our spiritual and social lives.

Shri Ram – The Hallmark of Social Ethics

Some scholars believe that Shri Ram was born more than 7000 years ago. Yet, other scholars give note of a different time line. Whatever account we may want to take, it is certain that he lived thousands of years from now and that he left a powerful example for the world to follow. He was born in the sacred city of Ayodhya which is located in the north of Bharat. In his later years he proceeded to be a great ruler of the kingdom. Due to his unyielding fulfillment of duties as a son, householder and ruler he has become an icon of Hindu values to the Hindus of all ages. He gave up his rights at various stages of his life to fulfill his duties. His life story called ‘Ramayan’ narrated by rishi Valmiki which is the most read book of Hindus. The character of Shri Ram left an everlasting mark on the psyche of Hindus.

Acharya Chanakya – The Master of Socio Economic Ethics

Chanakya has been described as one of the most brilliant political scientists the world has seen, and as one of the greatest figures of wisdom and knowledge in the Indian history. He played an important key role in the foundation of the great Mauryan Empire, the first of its kind on the Indian subcontinent. Chanakya was an adviser and a prime minister to the first Maurya Emperor Chandragupta and lived from 350-283 BCE. He groomed Chandragupta to be a great ruler and crafted India’s first great empire that was able to withstand the first onslaught of foreign invasions, starting from Alexander from Greece.

In addition to ruling, he completed pioneering work in the field of Economics and political science which researched and referred to even today in India and in some of the world’s leading universities. He authored one of the earliest and most comprehensive books in the field of political science, called the Arthauâstra. He has also been referred to by the names of Kautilya and Vishnugupta in his writings. Chanakya was a great visionary who envisioned India as a nation that would place itself as the forerunner – politically, economically and socially.

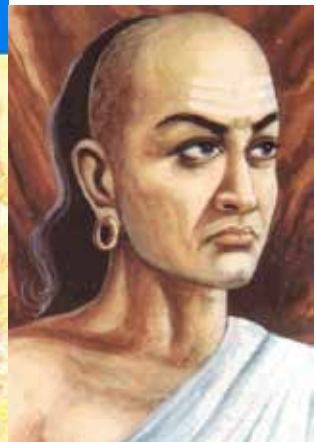
Acharya Chanakya’s quote, “Scriptural lessons not put into practice are poison,” becomes very relevant in today’s time.

Andal – The Rising flame of Devotion

Our (India's) history has been decorated by numerous spiritually elevated people, and many of them were women. One of the women devotees who lived in 8th century was 'Andal'. She was the adopted daughter of an ordinary man named Vishnuchitta. In many Hindu temples, particularly in Tamilnadu and some parts of Asia, Andal is worshipped as Goddess. Andal composed two poetic works (Tiruppavai and Tiruvempavai) in her teenage years. In her poems, she displays a culminating point for the rising flame of each individual's devotion to Ishwar (God). Verses from these two texts are widely recited in many parts of the world by Hindus even today. Andal of Tamilnadu can be compared to the famous Meera Bai of Rajasthan.

Adi Shankara - The Master unifier

Adi Shankaracharya was one of the greatest philosophers and unifier of Hindusthan ever known. Although he only lived for thirty-two years, his contributions in maintaining the Hindu Dharma, and underlying the unity of the sacred land of Bharat, remain unparalleled as of today. At very young age, Adi Shankar demonstrated his vast knowledge of scriptures and became known as Acharya (profound teacher). In Acharya Shankara's view, welfare and unification of Bharat was to be based on Dharma only. To establish this, he traveled all over Bharat spreading the message of Vedanta (Essence of Vedas), and established guiding centers in the four corners of Bharat: Sharada Peetha in the South, Govardhana Peetha in the East, Kalika Peetha in the West and Jyoti Peetha in the North. Even today these centers continue to guide, inspire and bind Hindus in Bharat and all around the world. It is apparent that Adi Shankara left his mark on the world in such little time he spent here as he attained liberation (moksha) in 820 AD at the age of 32.





Hindu Temple of Central Indiana

**Hindu Heritage Family Camp 2011
August 19 - 21, 2011**



SEVA

Service to Humanity = Service to God



Session 1

Give and Gain through Seva / Volunteering

The word Seva has its origin in Sanskrit word ‘Sev’ meaning to Serve, to Attend without expecting anything in return. ‘Seva’ is translated in English as ‘Service’ or ‘Volunteering’.

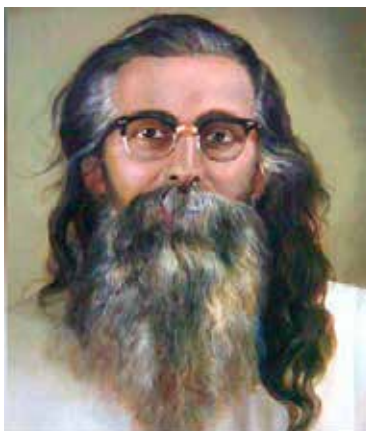
Seva is an act taken up to bring about a positive change in the society. It requires many qualities such as dedication, hard work, attitude towards sacrifice, and so on. But the most desirable quality of a volunteer is the aspiration to change himself/herself. Once, Swami Ram Tirth (a Social Reformer) gave an advertisement in the newspaper looking for volunteers. The advertisement stated, “Volunteers needed: high compensation will be paid to **those who want to change themselves.**”

The teachings of our Hindu-Jain scriptures give emphasis on changing of the self through Sadhana (Spiritual Practices) before going out to change/serve others through Seva. Our gurus have said, “First acquire purity and compassion through Sadhana and then go out and distribute through Seva.”

To clearly understand Seva/volunteering we will analyze life sketches of three of the greatest volunteers of modern time: Mahatma Gandhi, Benjamin Franklin, and Shri MS Golwalkar. Mahatma Gandhi was born in a well-to-do family, studied law in London and was a good earning lawyer. We all know the stories that narrate how he became a leader of masses and a great freedom fighter. If we look closely into his life work, we will find that the key ingredient of his strength was ‘Volunteerism’. He gave up his status and all of the comforts he had to become a volunteer and serve the masses for the majority of his life. One of his strongest messages for volunteers which he also practiced himself was; **‘Be the change you wish to see in the world’**. Inspired by Gandhi Ji’s work, a Swami (Monk) came to him and showed willingness to work with him in his social reform work. Mahatma Gandhi said, “You cannot do that because your status is of a Swami (Monk), people respect your status, your dress, your outlook. Only if you are ready to sacrifice all that, you can serve the people in need. You have to be like the people in order to serve the people.” And the story goes that the Swami (Monk) gave up his status and joined the team of Gandhi’s volunteers.

The list of Benjamin Franklin’s volunteer work is also very long. Two of his pioneer efforts that became milestones in American history are; the Public library system and the Fire department. He thought that if people in the community can volunteer their time for these two activities then society will be better served and administration will be better governed. These two activities are still popular among the volunteer services in America. His sense of duty was the strength behind all his volunteer work. We all are aware that in performing services many firefighters lose their lives. One TV program interviewed a young son of a deceased firefighter. The interviewer asked the son about his aspirations. “A firefighter,” the son replied. “But, your father died while firefighting,” the astonished interviewer said. The son proudly replied, “Even my Grandfather was a firefighter, I will pursue the same service and honor as them.” Such is the spirit and sense of duty that Benjamin Franklin envisioned for the community of volunteers.

Shri Madhav S Golwalkar was raised by modest and cultured parents. After finishing his masters in Bio Science he associated himself with a spiritual master in order to fulfill his spiritual quest. By



the grace of guru, young Madhav attained the state of a Yogi. Soon he realized that service to people is service to God. To serve the people, the society and the mother land he gave up the call from sacred Himalayas and remained with people for the rest of his life. He was the only son of his parents. His mother kept pursuing him to marry. After repeated refusal from the son, one day the mother said that if you do not marry our lineage (vansh) will be discontinued. Young Madhav humbly said, "If discontinuation of many lineages like mine will benefit the society than I am not worried." This young man later known as Gururaj has inspired millions of volunteers over the past seven decades. His message to the volunteers was, "An individual should dissolve him/her in the nation as a grain of salt completely dissolves in water."

The following are some of the benefits of volunteer work:

- It is a self-uplifting process for the volunteer.
- It **creates Social Capital** by forming human bonds between volunteer and the one who is being served.
- It helps the society and government during economic downturn. Volunteers can help people in need with their skills, time, and some discretionary funds.
- To many people, it is a part of their spiritual practices. To them, it gives spiritual elevation from within.
- It helps understand multicultural dimension of the society.
- It motivates volunteers to learn and acquire new skills.
- It generates a sense of community cohesion and leadership.
- Above all, it gives **self-fulfillment** if done with altruistic temperament.

Many a times we think of volunteering our time and material, but when it comes to reality we end up with excuses. There was a politician who used to talk a lot about volunteerism, giving, and sharing. Once, a press reporter interviewed him:

Reporter: If you have two million dollars, would you give one million to those in need.

Politician: Yes, I will.

Reporter: If you have two Lexus, would you give one to someone in need.

Politician: Yes, of course.

Reporter: If you have two bikes, would you give one to someone in need.

Politician: No, I cannot.

Reporter: You are willing to give up expensive things but not an inexpensive bike. Why so?

Politician: Because, I do not have two million dollars and do not have two Lexus but I do have two bikes in reality. If I say yes then I will really loose one of my bikes. (*You see, how difficult it is to give away even a bike!*).

Session 2

Avenues of Seva / Volunteering

We can perform Seva in various ways. The Seva act can be classified into the following four categories:

1. Karyatmak Seva (Seva through Action)

This includes providing physical help to someone in need. Both, server and the one being served are physically involved in this act of Seva. Some of the examples are; helping elderly people, serving food or medicine to needy, collection and distribution of material, cleaning temple property etc.

2. Bhavnatmak Seva (Seva through Emotion)

This includes fulfillment of Emotional needs of the person being served. For example; spending time with grieving friends, neighbor, family members, sending greetings to soldiers who are on active duty, reading or sending a prayer or sacred book to sick or elderly, celebrating birthday or festival with elderly or disable persons.

3. Gyanatmak Seva (Seva through Knowledge)

The old proverb says, "Give man bread and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to earn bread and you feed him for a lifetime." This type of Seva includes providing education help to someone who is underprivileged or ignorant. Education is not just about school, it is about raising the awareness about the issues related to better lifestyle – health, sanitation, rights and liberty etc. This helps elevate the intellectual level of the person being served and in turn provide a more positive lifestyle. Some examples are; supporting tribal area education projects like Ekal Vidyalaya, tutoring someone who is struggling with studies, donating books, sponsoring awareness programs, etc.

4. Danam (Donation in form)

This includes regular donation of money, new or unused items to the underprivileged members of the society.

The following are some obvious avenues for volunteers to work:

- Work for a non-profit group.
- Help raise awareness and funds for social causes.
- Help in community improvement projects.
- Give time to spiritual (temple), social and professional groups which are working towards betterment of the community.
- Mentor and tutor those who are less knowledgeable in any subject matter; physical or spiritual.
- Help seniors / elders in reading and writing.
- Small acts like clean up in office kitchen, temple rooms and your own community centers, offering your seat in a public transport to elderly, child or someone who needs it more than you, or even something as simple as once in a while writing a nice note/email to family and friends.

Conclusion: Volunteering requires the courage of giving up something personal to us (including our time), the spirit of **enjoying someone else's happiness**, and the consciousness for '**greater and global goodness**'.

Great volunteers like Mahatma Gandhi, Benjamin Franklin, and Sh. MS Golwalkar have proved through their lives that 'Greed is Good' is not the mantra of 'Social Harmony and Happiness', rather '**Giving is Good**' is the mantra for 'Social Harmony and Happiness'.

The great Ben Franklin said; "There are three categories of people – first are those who are immovable, second are those who are movable, and third one are those **who move** and move others."

So, let us be in the third category and become volunteers who move themselves (**be the change**) and help others move. In short, "**Give and Gain**".

Words of wisdom on Seva

Gandhi Ji's Talisman

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test:

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *Swaraj (Self-reliance)* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubt and yourself melting away.

- Mohandas K. Gandhi

Kindness to living being is kindness to oneself.

- Bhagwan Mahavir

Such persons, engaged in the welfare of all, at last achieve Me (God).

- Bhagwan Krishna in Bhagvad Geeta (12/4)



Session 3 (Project)

Prepare a Seva project presentation

Pick a project from section 1 of the outline. Use the guidelines given below to structure **and create a presentation** for a realistic Seva project.

How to do a Seva Project:

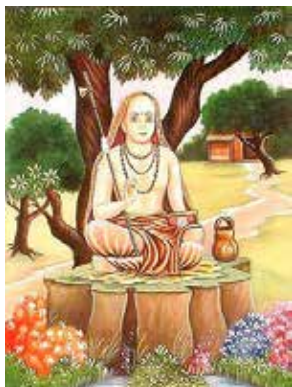
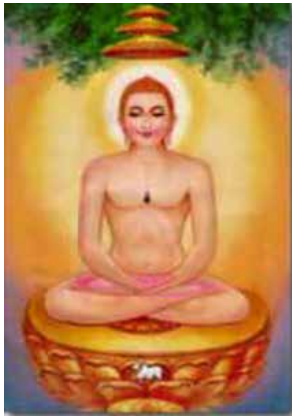
1. Decide on a service project
Examples of types of service projects:
 - Visit elderly home: play games, bake food, hear stories, spend time with elderly
 - Make holiday cards for residents of foster homes, assisted living facilities, troops overseas
 - Collect cans of non-perishable food for local food bank
 - i. Volunteer at local food bank – organize collection of food
 - ii. Help make food at soup kitchen or food bank
 - Perform regular cleaning of Mandir
 - Clean local parks, playgrounds, social areas
 - Arrange collection of books for library or Salvation Army
 - Read and provide books to children at an underprivileged school
 - Work for Ekal Vidyalaya (Tribal Education in India)
2. Assemble a group of people
 - Have a minimum of 5-6 people per service project
 - Assign one adult as advisor for project
 - Keep adult advisor regularly updated and informed through all steps of project
3. Delegate responsibility to each person relating to different aspects of service:
 - Get information on location and find out who to contact for information and set-up
 - Contact person at service site, and stay in touch with site coordinator with regular updates and details of project, number of people, and type of activity being performed
 - Work with adults in the community to raise funds and collect resources
 - Advertise the project within community before AND after service is completed
 - Write down a list of responsibilities to be performed during service
 - Make one person in charge of making sure all responsibilities are completed
 - Document service activity through pictures and note down observations, positive results, obstacles, and thoughts of volunteers and those being served
 - Organize a post-service reflection activity:
 - i. How did this event affect the community?
 - ii. How did this event affect you personally?
 - iii. Would you do this type of service again?
 - iv. What could be improved?
4. Follow-up after project is complete
 - Write a thank you note or letter to site coordinator for the opportunity and their cooperation.
 - Create a summary document including:
 - i. Pictures
 - ii. Details on type of service and events occurred
 - iii. Names and contact info of all people involved
 - iv. Contact information of site and coordinator
 - v. Notes from reflection from all people involved
 - Publish your summary as a press release in the local community



Hindu Heritage Family Camp 2012

Theme:

Right Conduct - Value System



Organized by:

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana, Indianapolis

THEME of 2012:
Right Conduct - Value System

Right Conduct - Value System

Guiding Principles for Individual 'Duty' and 'Discipline'

In our day to day life we deal with the outside world. All humans have deep desire to be treated well by others. Mahatma Gandhi said, 'I try and treat people the way I would want to be treated.' Based on these wise words we can say that 'dealing with outside world' is a two way street. One of the traits we all need to make movement on this two way street is 'Self Conduct or Behavior'. The driving force behind right conduct can be called a 'Value System'.

Dealing with family members, friends, teachers or even strangers in respectful and right manner is one of the aspects of individual conduct or behavior. Our Shaastras have defined a way to address this need. They call it "Dharma" - Guiding Principle for 'Value System'.

We can divide Value System into two categories: Internal and external

Internal: Purifying the Self (within)

1. Damah - (self-control), Indriya Nigraha - (sense control)
2. Shaucha - (internal and external purity)
3. Dhi - (intelligent discrimination)
4. Vidya - (applied knowledge)

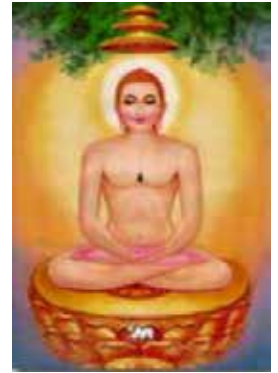
External: Dealing with the outside world

5. Dhriti - (perseverance and patience)
6. Kshama - (forgiveness)
7. Satya - (the truth), Asteya - (honesty)
8. Akrodha - (absence of anger)

Session 1

Damah- Control over Mind and Desires

- It is not possible to overcome wickedness with thoughtless, vengeful approach
- A person with “damah” quality remains attuned to the noble urges of his self and protects it from ignoble thoughts and rogue desires.
- An example of damah is illustrated through Mahavir Swami’s vigorous penance and deep meditation
- Self Control
- Only one who is confident, has inner strength, conviction and is totally aware of his/her identity can have self control
- When you know who you are and where you are headed, you can control your perceptions, actions and thoughts.



Shaucha- Cleanliness and Purity

- The body of a person whose mind and prana are pure remains healthy
- Shauca keeps a person free of mental and physical impurities
- An example of Shauca is through Ramanujacharya
- External: body, environment we live in
- Internal: thought, speech and action



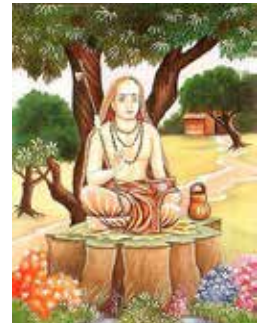
Dhi- Intellect

- A wise person is never daunted by the gravity of any difficulty.
- Dhi makes a person fearless and engages him in righteous deeds.
- A well known leader Swami Vivekananda strongly demonstrates Dhi- Intellect
- Intellect and Discrimination Vidya- Knowledge



Vidya- Knowledge

- Refers to not only school knowledge but also practical knowledge of life gained by experience.
- In absence of knowledge, a person becomes arrogant.
- An ideal example of knowledge is learnt through Adi Shankaracharya
- Learning and Understanding



Session 2

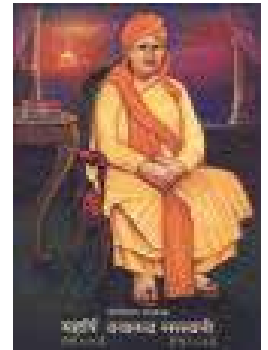
Dhriti- Patience

- The development of an individual, the maintenance of family, social service, etc. is dependent upon action.
- Man cannot live without activity
- Ideal example of Dhriti is Shri Ram
- Root “Dhri”
- Finish what you start – unwavering commitment to the goal/cause; undaunted, focused, clarity; FORTITUDE
- Sustaining Power: ONLY Vishnu can sustain; Maintenance (house) requires resources to enhance, preserve and protect (Saraswati, Lakshmi and Shakti)
- Strength --- only the resourceful can sustain!



Kshama – Forgiveness

- A person who forgives others creates no enemies and adversaries.
- Sign of stable mind, peaceful heart, and awakened soul.
- An ideal example of forgiveness is Swami Dayanand.
- Only the strong can forgive “meaningfully”
- Only the one who is focused on the larger good, a larger goal, who is unmoved by small disturbances can forget and forgive
- Kshama implies strength, resourcefulness and commitment to a larger cause
- Only those who do not feel violated, who have plenty (abundance), have wisdom and vision can see the bigger picture (Vyas, Vishnu & Bhrgu ...)



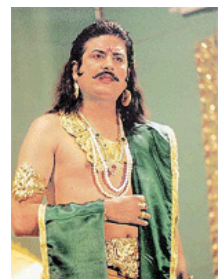
Akrodha- Non Anger

- Akrodha means refusing to be provoked by anger under all circumstances.
- Anger can push a person towards self destruction.
- An ideal example of Akrodha is demonstrated through the ideal understandings of Lord Krishna.
- Non-anger
- Calmness of the mind
- **Only when the mind is free from all agitations can one realize the Truth; fulfillment of our goals cannot happen as long as we are burdened with anger**



Satya- Truth

- Truth means absence of falsehood
- The one who seeks truth does not get influenced by the masquerade of any person or object.
- The speech of the seeker of truth is straightforward and his deeds are honest.
- An example of Satya is shown through Raja Harishchandra.
- **Truth = Primary attribute of Brahman**
- **Truthfulness → Fearlessness**



Yoga - Asana



The third part or limb of the Ashtanga (A-sh-tanga) Yoga is Asana (*pronounced AA SUN*). Closest English translation of **ASANA** is **Comfortable Posture**.

Asana is preceded by *yama* and *niyama*, the moral restraints and spiritual observances. Asana is a Sanskrit word for posture or seat.

***Yogasana* is a posture in harmony with one's inner consciousness.** It helps us in balancing and harmonizing the basic structure of the human body. Various postures of *Yogasana*, which include standing and sitting *asanas*, help us to keep body healthy and mind tension free.

The main point in *asana* is that we let go of all effort. We perform a comfortable posture, happily and with pleasure. We achieve steadiness and ease of posture through slight persistent effort and concentration of our mind upon our awareness and *Ishwara*. We feel the body and let go of all the efforts. We control our breathing; breathe in and out in rhythmic manner, while doing the pose as per the asana rules. The comfortable posture of *Asana* turns our attention inwards and spiritualizes our mind. When we do the *asanas* with all awareness, we feel freed up and spaced out. This is the experience of uniting one self with *Ishwar*.

Well done *asana* clears out all our conflicts and dualities. Anytime we are confused and our mind is in conflict, we can do *asanas*. We can sit in an *asana* and we see the clarity that comes right away. The conflicts which use to bother no longer trouble us. Praise or insult, which would throw us out of balance, will no longer bother us.

We get more self-discipline when we do *asanas* daily. Our daily activities are regulated and we build a good habit pattern for better meditation. We control our awareness more. We become masters of our nervous system and our senses. Our bodies function optimally. As we keep doing our daily *yogasanas*, our bodies become healthy, glow with vigor and our immune system gets boosted.

No matter how many times we have practiced a certain *asana*, when it is practiced, it should be absolutely new. This way we can make the practice of *asana* a living and artistic creation that has never existed before and will never exist again, just as every moment is fresh. When we practice *asana* we have a chance to become present in this very moment and bring our attention to here and now- to the sensations and awareness we are feeling. We can observe our reactions, both positive and negative, to the pose, and we can observe the sensations of ease and difficulty that arise as we stretch and bend.

Whether we do *Padma Asana*, or any other Asana, **our willpower strengthens and protects us from sadness.** Every *Asana* fills us with a new perception and creative intelligence through its cosmic effect on body, mind, and breath. *Asanas* also prepare us for Rishi Patanjali's next step which is control of breathing, or *Pranayama*.



Gita teaches us....

Let not the fruits of actions be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction. 2/47

Yoga is skill in action 2/50

When, like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs on all sides, one withdraws his/her senses from the sense-objects, then his/her wisdom becomes steady. 2/58

He should be known as a perpetual Sannyasin who neither hates nor desires; free from the pairs of opposites. 5/3

The Yogi who is satisfied with the knowledge and the wisdom (of the Self), who has conquered the senses, and to whom a clod of earth, a piece of stone and gold are the same. 6/8

Whatsoever a great man does, that other men also do; whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world follows. 3/21

From anger comes delusion; from delusion the loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from the destruction of discrimination he perishes. 2/63

Having restrained all the senses, even-minded everywhere, intent on the welfare of all beings—verily they also come unto Me. 12/4

He by whom the world is not agitated and who cannot be agitated by the world, and who is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety—he is dear to Me. 12/15

The one who is engaged in the welfare of all beings— is very dear to me. 12/4.

That gift which is given to one who does nothing in return, knowing it to be a duty to give in a fit place and time to a worthy person, that gift is held to be Sattwic. 17/20

Hindu Heritage Family Camp 2013

(Hindu Temple of Central Indiana)

Theme:

Celebrating Swami Vivekananda's 150th birth anniversary

"Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life."

“

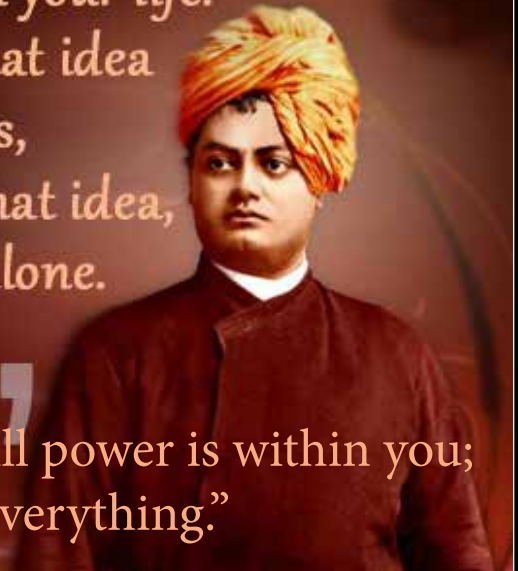
Take up one idea, make that one idea your life.

*Think of it, dream of it, Live on that idea
let the brain, muscles, nerves,
every part of your body be full of that idea,
and just leave every other idea alone.*

This is the way to success.

”

*“Strength is life, Weakness is Death. All power is within you;
you can do anything and everything.”*



August 23- 25, 2013

Versailles State Park

Organized by: Hindu Temple of Central Indiana (HTCI)

THEME of 2013:

“Take up one idea, make that your life”

Swami Vivekananda

Session 1: Childhood days and stories of Swami Vivekananda

Narendra Nath Datta or Swami Vivekananda was an influential figure who spread Hindu philosophies such as Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world. Swami Vivekananda was born into a cultured family in 1863 in Calcutta during the time of British rule. His father, Vishwanath Datta, was an attorney of Calcutta's High Court.

Energetic Child

From a young age, Swami Vivekananda was influenced by spirituality and was often seen meditating or praying. Though he was often interested in ascetics and becoming a monk, he was very naughty when he was younger. His mother would often say, "I prayed to Shiva for a son and he has sent me one of his demons." Besides his naughty and playful nature, Swami Vivekananda was a very scholarly boy. His early education started at home but later on, he was admitted to the Metropolitan Institution of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in 1871 at eight years old. His education ranged from social studies, arts, and literature.

Character Building

His vast knowledge on scriptural texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagvad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Puraanas were what made him decide to become a monk. He took an active interest in physical exercise, sports, and other activities when he was young. He also had a great interest in classical music, both vocal and instrumental. He often would question the validity of superstitious customs and discrimination based on caste and religion.

Parents' Role

Swami Vivekananda's father had a progressive rational approach and his mother's religious temperament helped shape his thinking and personality. His parents encouraged higher education along with inner wealth and peace. Narendra Nath Datta's mother and father were his main influences and inspired him to become a monk in his early teens. Without their strong encouragement and support, he never would have become a Hindu monk and the chief disciple of the nineteenth-century saint Ramakrishna.

Session 2: Swami Vivekananda as youth and his message to modern youth

Growing up

While growing up, Swami Vivekananda knew he wanted to make a difference in society. His mother and father, who were strong influences on his decisions, supported his opinions and points of view on matters that were important to him. Narendra was a spiritual boy while growing up. He



would often meditate or pray to Bhagwan.

Education

Till 1877, Swami Vivekananda went to school in Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's metropolitan institute. He continued his studies there until he moved to Rajpur with his family. Two years later, he was admitted to the Presidency College. Due to his vast interest in Western philosophy and logic, Swami Vivekananda studied at the General Assembly's Institution where he passed the Fine Arts examinations and then later on completed his Bachelor of the Arts degree.

Message to modern youth

Swami Vivekananda wanted Hindu youth to realize that the first goal should always be maintaining Hindu values and Hindu pride within oneself. As he traveled across India, Vivekananda saw Hindu pride slowly deteriorating within the people. He knew the only way to preserve Sanskriti was to strengthen the youth from within. One must remove the laziness, meanness, and hypocrisy that have covered the entire country and replace it with strength and confidence. He stated, "Brave, bold people, these are what we want. What we want is vigor in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles, and Nerves of steel, not softening namby- pamby ideas. Avoid all this. Avoid all mystery. There is no mystery in religion." Rather than indulging one's entire life in oneself and living a life of inactivity, one must rouse the power of Atman, strengthen himself from within, and then help it rouse in others.

Session 3:

Swami Vivekananda's world travel and spiritual message to the world.

Travel in India

Before Swami Vivekananda left India to share his spiritual message, he traveled around India spreading his message in multiple cities. After the death of Ramakrishna, disciples, including Swami Vivekananda, had nowhere to go and live because Ramakrishna's devotees and admirers had stopped funding. Swami Vivekananda established a math (monastery) for the remaining disciples. He traveled extensively throughout India visiting centers for learning and acquainting himself with the diverse religious traditions and different patterns of social life. He saw all the poverty and suffering in the country and resolved to uplift the nation. In July 1890 he traveled to the Himalayas. His travels to the Himalayas constitute the first leg of his journey to the West.

Travel Outside India

He conducted hundreds of public lectures to disseminate philosophies of Hinduism in many places including the United States, China, Japan, England, and other parts of Europe. He also made stops in China and Canada on his way to the United States. He was attending the Parliament of World Religions where he was a representative delegate of India in 1893. One of his most remarkable speeches at this parliament is the speech that began with the words, "Sisters and Brothers of America." These words stirred the 7000-person crowd to a standing ovation lasting two minutes. His speech drew a lot of attention to him and what he said about Hinduism. The New York Critique wrote, "He is an orator by divine right." He propagated the Vedic religion

in the light of Ramakrishna's life and teaching, established fellowship among the followers of different religions, and served suffering humanity without making any distinction of caste, creed, or community.

Message

Swami Vivekananda was inclined to spirituality from a young age. His guru was a man named Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda's guru taught him that all living things are an embodiment of the divine self, so service to God would have to first be achieved by service to mankind. He also wanted to spread the philosophies of Hinduism to the Western world.

Session 4: Swami Vivekananda and his Seva (charity) work and message

Seva (Charity) work in India

The Sanskrit word Seva means selfless service or an act of kindness without expecting or asking for a gift or award back. Swami Vivekananda would often do Seva work for many Indians during his travels throughout India. Guru Ramakrishna was one of his main influences. Swamiji founded the philanthropic volunteer organization called the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math.

Seva (Charity) works outside India

He played a key role in introducing Hindu philosophies of the Vedanta, meditation, and yoga to the Western world, especially the Americas and Western Europe. He also preached to others about doing Seva for others without asking for some kind of repayment or award. His teachings were spread throughout the world and are often still taught to others.

Message

Swami Vivekananda worked to spread his message around the world. He once said, "The more we come out and do good to others, the more our hearts will be purified, and God will be in them." He mainly focused on informing Hindus about charity work or Seva. Swamiji would often say that to live a successful lifestyle, people must build their own character and determine what is wrong versus right.

Also, Swamiji travelled the world giving speeches and encouraging others to perform good deeds without asking for a favor in return. He was a major influence on others; for example, Jamsetji Tata established one of the most prestigious schools, the Indian Institute of Science, due to Swamiji's influence. Swami Vivekananda changed people's way of thinking for the better and was one of the most inspirational philanthropists from India. His legacy lives on and his birthday, January 12th) is now known as National Youth Day.

Hindu Heritage Family Camp 2014

Theme: Matru Devo Bhav

“The Power behind Family and the Strength of Society”



August 22-24, 2014 • Indiana Camp, IN •
Organized by The Hindu Temple of Central
Indiana (HTCI)

Matru Devo Bhava by Vimal Patel

Kuputro jayate kwaichidapi, kumata na bhavati!

Children may do wrong, but a mother can never be hateful in her action!

Every culture has some particulars that are peculiar to a given culture. Ours is a Matru Devobhava Culture and the behavior paradigm in India is different from the West—the western paradigm is more democratic from Roman times, particularly in United States in terms of Human relationships.

In India there is higher-achy paradigm, in that there is a clear distinction between junior and senior, between older brother and younger brother, between father and son, between student and teacher, between Guru and Sishya, etc. And this behavior pattern of people, often we link, our behavior paradigm with our culture. We have to realize that and adjust according to culture in which we live. Knowing this we can adopt the behavior pattern that does not harm others and me. In other words we should try to build bridges between cultures.

For Matru Devobhava/Mother is the God Culture of India the motherhood or divine mother pervades every fabric of Indian culture, religions, festivals, and commerce.

For many Hindus remembering Mother divine begins with rising from the bed in the form of prayer looking at palm and reciting prayer remembering Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Govinda—Karagre vasti lakshmihi karmule saraswati, karmadhiya tu govindaha prabhate kar darshanam and then as we begin walking, we offer salutation to mother Earth and ask for her forgiveness for stepping on her, followed by honoring mother-father by touching their feet or their photographs (whenever possible).

Creative and worshipful/Devo/divine presentation of Motherhood is not just Indian phenomenon, however, but it is one of the oldest forms of worship known to humanity. In pre-historic time God was worshipped as the Divine Mother all over the world. Evidence of worship has been discovered in different parts of the world; in Europe, in Americas, Africa, and Asia but over the time, the Mother worship, kind of remain as rudimentary form in many parts of the world—much like Mother's Day celebration that we observe in this country in month of May.

But in India the Mother worship went deeper and in many parts of the country it is a living religion supported by fully developed theology, scriptures, rites, rituals, customs, and festivals. These festivals are followed by millions of people even today. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa use to say that looking upon God as Mother is the purest and highest form of spiritual practice.

Now why did he say that? Because among the different kind of love that we are familiar with, the Mother's love is considered as most unselfish and most unconditional form of human love. For a child mother is all sufficient, apart from giving birth, mother provides everything the child needs—nourishment, protection, warmth, comforts, training and education. All of our early education, before we go to school, is at home and most often it is from our mothers and family.

So, in this opening remark we will share how our Matru devo bhava culture has idealized motherhood in sustaining peaceful and stable society.

Session 1: The Grandeur of the Hindu Mother / Women

Nowhere in the world are woman more exalted than in Bharat, the land known as India. She is worshipped as Devi, revered as mother, loved as wife, and respected as sister. In all these forms, she is an embodiment of love and caring. She is the head of the household.

The most honorable role she has is that of a mother – called by many names like Janani, Mata, Maa, or Amma. In fact, the word Maa has its origin in the Sanskrit word Matru, which simply means shower of love, or expression of oneness. Anything that gives birth, nurtures, and sustains life is given the title Mata. Thus the land is called 'Dharati Mata', river is called 'Ganga Mata', plant is called 'Tulsi Mata', cow is called 'Gau Mata', Gayatri is called 'Ved Mata' and the country is called 'Bharat Mata'.



Societies go through ups and downs, progress technologically, and reform socially. But one thing remains untouched and consistent- the love and care of a mother. Time and again she has proved the saying that God can't be everywhere, so he created a mother.

During the Indian freedom movement Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose used to enroll young boys as freedom fighters. He enforced a rule that the boy joining should not be the only child of his parents. One young boy was rejected due to this condition. When he went home dejected his mother Prabhavati noticed his sadness, and upon inquiring she found that he was upset as he was turned away by Netaji because he was her only child. After a few days, the boy again went back for recruitment into the Azad Hind Sena of Netaji. The same question was asked of him and he said, "When my mother learned of the condition she gave up her life, leaving a note saying that I can now serve Bharat Mata (Mother India) freely." There are numerous examples in the history of Hindustan where mothers have made ultimate sacrifices for sanskriti and samaj.



"Mother initiates fearlessness in her children." We can all relate to and understand this statement from the Shaastras through our personal experiences with our mothers.

Session 2: Why Mother is Important to children

Our Shaastra says “Matra Devo Bhav” - Adore Mother as Bhagwan. The beauty of life is in the lap and under the shade of mother’s love, care and sacrifice.

Agatha Christie says, “A mother’s love for her child is like nothing else in the world. It knows no law, no pity.” Mother has a special place in her children’s lives because of the natural bond that starts from pregnancy and develops through childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Mother’s role in a Typical Hindu Family?

The role of the mother in the typical Hindu family is to bring unity and structure to the family unit within the traditional boundaries of our ancient culture. Especially in America she has to maintain a balance between two cultures.

Teacher and trainer

She teaches children everything from how to eat healthy and dress, how to react to any situation. She teaches little things like how to tie shoes and to be polite and respectful to the others. She tells stories and lessons from Ramayan, Mahabharat, and other good books. Her day starts before sunrise and before everyone else gets up in the family. Her day ends after all the inside and outside activities (meal, homework, sports, dance etc.) of children end.

Security blanket

She is a security blanket. No matter how bad of a day she had, she will always be there with a shoulder to cry on and a sympathetic ear for kids. Even if she has been screamed at all day, she will still be eager to hear drama-filled gossip of kids. Mom is a personal miracle and guard.

Good Listener

Kids can talk to her about everything — even things that aren’t always easy to talk about, anything personal. She puts up with kids’ mood swings, constant chatter and continuous requests — and still manages to keep home, and everyone in order.

Counselor

Whenever something becomes too much for kids, she is there to calm them down, giving a hug and telling it’s going to be OK. She can even prevent them from hyperventilating by finding a

“lost” textbook. Whatever be the scenario, she always makes kids feel better by counseling. And she does this all with a smile, even when kids forget to say thank you.

Unconditional lover

Her love is unconditional and she is always forgiving. God has created her in a way that she does not believe in give and take business, she only knows one way - Give, give and give.

Soul and center of the family

We need to recognize the indivisible strong link that exists between the mothers and the welfare of the whole family including the father and children. Everything is well if the mother is well. She is the bridge between the chaos of outside world and peace inside the home.

Session 3: Some great mothers from the History

Kunti – A determined mother of the valiant Pandavas

Kunti was the daughter of Yadav King Shursen. Her childhood name was Pratha and her brother was Vasudev, the father of Shri Krishna. She was given name of Kunti as she was adopted by Kuntibhoja, a childless cousin of Shursen. In the history of Hindus, Kunti has earned a special place as the mother of the great Pandava brothers and beloved aunt (bua) and a devotee of Shri Krishna. She chose the Kuru Prince Pandu as her husband in a Swayamvar. After the accidental death of Pandu, Kunti raised all five sons in Hastinapur under the guidance of Bheeshma.



Marred by the jealousy of the Kaurava cousins (Dhrithrashtra's sons), Kunti's five sons and her humiliated daughter-in-law Draupadi had to leave the kingdom. War was the only option left for the Pandavas to regain their share in the ancestral kingdom. Kunti was not blinded by revenge, but rather motivated by the need to reestablish Dharma. For this purpose only, she agreed to the war and said to her sons, "The loss of the kingdom does not distress me; but the dragging of Draupadi into the assembly against her will and her humiliation by the Kaurav brothers grieved me the most."

As a mother, Kunti was firm in teaching her sons about rights and justice. She also possessed a great devotion (Bhakti) for Shri Krishna as the incarnation of Bhagwan. She always encouraged her sons to seek Krishna's blessings and advice.

After the Mahabharat war, a grieving Dhritharashtra and Gandhari decided to spend the rest of their lives in the forest. Kunti chose to accompany them. Her sons were surprised at her decision. Yudhishtira said, "After guiding us on for the war and victory, it is improper for you to go away like this now. After advising us to stand by the duties of the kshatriyas, why are you now abandoning them?" Determinedly Kunti answered, "It is true, son, that I encouraged you to fight for your rights. But, I did not do that for my enjoyment. I am sad to be a part of this unwanted war and I lament the loss of our relatives. Penance is the only option for me now."

After some time, in the forest, a wildfire consumed her mortal body. That was the end of 'Pragnyaavati' a woman of wisdom, as Shri Krishna and Bheeshma, the legendary characters of Mahabharata, used to call her.

Jijabai – A brave mother of Shivaji the Great

Jijabai, popularly known as the mother of the great Hindu King Shivaji, was born in 1598 in Buldhana district of Maharashtra. She was wedded to Shahaji Bhosale, who was well known for his military and leadership skills. After a military defeat in Karnataka area, Shahaji sent his wife Jijabai and their younger son Shivaji to manage his jagir (small kingdom) in Pune. After some time in an unfortunate battle, both, Jijabai's husband and elder son died.

As a single mother she raised her son Shivaji as a great warrior and hero, while simultaneously covering state affairs of Pune. When she moved to Pune, it was a small village. This village was completely destroyed by the attacks of the Nizams and Mughals. Temples and murtis were shattered by force. Under the leadership of Jijabai, Pune was rebuilt and many temples were reconstructed and established.

Jijabai was Shivaji's primary source of education. He grew up listening to the selected stories from Hindu history books, namely the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagwat, from his dear mother. As he listened to the heroic deeds of Shri Rama, Hanuman, Shri Krishna, Abhimanyu, Arjun, and many other brave protectors of the land, images of maces, bows, and chakras flew before his eyes. It was Jijabai's strong wish that her son should become a great hero and serve the people. She wanted him to put an end to the shameless life of the Marathas at the hands of Mughals, and begin a new chapter of liberty and self-respect.

As time passed, Shivaji fulfilled his mother's dream of establishing an independent Maratha empire based on Hindu principles and philosophies. Shivaji was crowned as the king of the Marathas in a traditional Hindu ceremony at Raigad on June 6, 1674. Jijabai was the guide who shaped Shivaji's mind in his early years, influencing him to become a great King and a proud leader of people. Shivaji's character inspired many during the independence movement of the 18th century. People derive inspiration from Jijamata and Shivaji's pair even in current times. Shivaji is an icon of self-respect for Hindus. Soon after the coronation of Shivaji, Jijamata, the architect of liberty and self-respect, left her mortal body as if she was waiting for her work to be finished.



Kaushalya – Mother of Shri Ram

Shri Ram's mother Kaushalya was a very patient and contented lady. Shri Ram's great character was the result of her intimate love and teachings. When Ram was ordered by Kaikeyi to go to forest for fourteen years, Kaushalya said to Ram, "My son, go ahead and fulfill your father's promise. The forest will be like 100 Avadh (kingdom of king Dashrath which Ram was supposed to inherit). How fortunate is the forest where you will dwell and how unfortunate is the Avadh who will miss you." It was Kaushalya's childhood teachings to Ram, of obeying elders and helping others that inspired Ram all his life. It was mata Kaushalya's personal sacrifice of high order (to let her son give up the throne) that has become a milestone in the glorious history of Raghuvansh (Shri Ram's ancestry) and Bharat (India). Had Kaushalya become obstinate like Kaikeyi on the day when Kaikeyi asked for Ram's exile, Hindus would not be enjoying and taking pride in Ramayan in the modern time. Through her actions she showed that mothers play a pivotal role and bind the entire family.



Sumitra – Mother of Lakshman

Lakshman's mother Sumitra was always eager to act for other's benefit and serve others. Her ideals and teachings resulted in Lakshman's strong character. When Lakshman decided to accompany Shri Ram to the forest, Shri Ram asked Lakshman to go and seek permission of mata Sumitra. Lakshman went to mata Sumitra and told her about his decision to accompany Shri Ram and Sita to the forest for fourteen years.

Hearing the whole episode mata Sumitra was shocked. Controlling her emotions and realizing Lakshman's love for Shri Ram, she said, "Dear Son, from now Sita is your mother and Shri Ram is your father. For you Ayodhya exists only where they live (even in the forest). If they are going to the forest then there is no duty left for you in Ayodhya. Blessed is the mother in this world whose son is a devotee and sevak of Shri Ram, the embodiment of Dharma (values). Never be inattentive while serving your brother in the forest." These encouraging words of mother Sumitra kept Lakshman inspired while serving Shri Ram and Sita during the exile.



Session 4: Great women from the History in various roles

Janaki – A gifted daughter of King Janak

Janaki was the daughter of Janak, King of Mithila. The Mithila region covered current day's Bihar and Nepal border. She is more commonly known as Sita, wife of Shri Ram. Janaki has always been a symbol of purity and sacrifice for thousands of years in Hindu history. She has been adored and idolized for her role as a daughter, wife, and mother.



King Janak was well known for his spiritual knowledge (Atma Gyan) and valor. These characteristics were imparted to Janaki during her upbringing in Mithila. Realizing Janaki's potent character and gifted qualities, Janak and Sunayana decided to arrange a Swayamvar where she could choose her husband. The one worthy would be able to lift Bhagwan Shiva's dhanush (bow), which was impossible for anyone unless they possessed immense physical and spiritual strength. As the story goes, Shri Ram not only lifted, but broke the bow and Sita chose Ram as her husband.

When Shri Ram was leaving for the forest (vanavas) for 14 years, Sita decided to accompany him. Sita's parents King Janak and Sunayana came to meet their daughter. Witnessing her in the outfit of a vanavasi (the one who lives in forest) instead of a queen, and seeing her determination to accompany Ram for a tough journey, Janak said, "The daughter who brings happiness to both the families (hers and her in-laws) is a source of glory to her and her parents."

Sita later gave birth to two boys, Luv and Kush, and brought them up under the guidance of Rishi Valmiki. Nurtured by motherly love and care they learned both Shaastra (spiritual texts) and Shastra (warrior traits).

Sita lived and raised the bar of woman character so high that in Hindu culture when elders bless ladies they say, "Be like a Sita." Even in modern times, a strong foundation of the ideal society lies in the footprints of Sita.

Subhadra – A loving sister of Shri Krishna

Subhadra was the younger sister of Shri Krishna and Balaram. Subhadra is one of the most unique characters of the Mahabharat time. She is worshipped along with Shri Krishna and Balaram in the famous Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha.



Subhadra spent the beginning of her life in Dwarka with her brothers. When she reached a young age, her beauty and talent attracted many princely youths, who proposed marriage to her. One of them was Duryodhan, who was known for his notorious character. He was a disciple of Balaram and convinced him for this proposal. When Subhadra came to know of this she talked with her brother Krishna about her choice of Arjun as her would be husband. Krishna played a trick and arranged her departure from Dwarka with Arjun without the knowledge of elder brother Balaram. When Balaram came to know of this he was very angry

at Arjun, labeling this act as abduction (Subhadra Haran). He wanted Arjun to be punished. But Krishna pleaded and convinced his brother to excuse Arjun. Following this, Subhadra was duly wedded with Arjun.

Subhadra and Arjun's only child was Abhimanyu, who was known for his gallantry and knowledge. She was proud of her son's sacrifice and bravery, but his early age death in Mahabharata war saddened her. Later, her brother Krishna brought some solace to her by saving her grandchild Parikshit from the killing intentions of Ashwatthama.

After the departure of Shri Krishna from this earth, Arjun brought Shri Krishna's family members and his great grandson Vajranath with him from Dwarka to Hastinapur. The aging Pandava brothers decided to hand over the kingdom to the next generation and leave for the forest for the remainder of their lives. Yudhishtira called upon Subhadra and requested, "Subhadra, I want to hand over the kingdom of Hastinapur to Parikshit and the kingdom of Indraprastha to Vajranath before leaving for Himalayas with my brothers. They will remain in your guidance and care." With the help of guru Kripacharya and Yuyutsu she nurtured Parikshit and Vajranath as established kings. When she fulfilled her promise to Yudhishtira, she left her mortal body like a Yogini, similar to her brother the great Yogiraj Shri Krishna. Though Subhadra's name did not get the same level of recognition as many others in Mahabharat, she was the one who made sure that the lineage of her brother Krishna and husband Arjun continued. Her departure brought an end to the greatest generation in the Hindu history, the generation of Krishna, Arjun, Bheeshma, Yudhishtira, and Karna.

Sharada Devi – A Guru Maa

Sharada Devi, the spiritual companion and wife of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, was born in 1853 to an ordinary, spiritual family in a village in West Bengal. As a child, Sharada was devoted to Ishwar and spent most of her time helping her mother in various household chores. She had no formal schooling, but managed to learn the Bengali alphabet. Around the age of six, she was wedded to Shri Ramakrishna, in accordance to some regional customs prevalent in India in those days. At the age of eighteen she joined her husband Shri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. At that time Shri Ramakrishna was intensely involved in Kali Sadhana (Worship of Goddess in her manifestation as Kali). Shri Ramakrishna asked her whether she had come to pull him down again in to a worldly life. She humbly said, "No, I am here to help you realize your chosen ideal and path." And she did that for the rest of her life.



Shri Ramakrishna always respected Sharada Devi as a special manifestation of the Divine Mother of the universe. After Shri Ramakrishna's passing away in 1886, Sharada Devi spent some months in a pilgrimage, after which she returned to Kolkata to look after Shri Ramakrishna's unfinished work. This period was a turning point in her life. As a compassionate Guru Maa she started guiding many spiritual seekers as her disciples. She whole-heartedly supported and encouraged Swami Vivekananda in his plans for transformation of India into a spiritual land and the upliftment of the masses.

As a mother of all who visited her, she used to say, "I tell you one thing my child, if you want peace, do not find fault with others. Rather, see your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child, the whole world is your own."

She left her mortal body in 1920. Sharada Devi proved that motherly love, forbearance,

compassion, and spiritual elevation does not depend upon formal education. It is the company of people like Shri Ramakrishna that makes the difference. Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, sums up Sharada Dev's life in a few words, "Her life was one long stillness of prayer." India is blessed to have Guru Maa like her.

Kasturba – A silent force of the Mahatma

Kasturba, popularly known as Ba, or the wife of Mahatma Gandhi, was born in 1869 in Porbandar, Gujarat. She was married to Mohandas Gandhi at the age of 13. Though Kasturba did not have the opportunity to obtain a formal education in her life, her practice and understanding of Hindu values and traditions was profound. Her life was full of challenges and continual changes. Soon after the birth of her first son, Harilal, Gandhi ji proceeded to London for law school. Kastur, with a little boy, had to carry the burden of a large joint family in Rajkot. She barely even had time to perform her son's daily chores. In 1897 she moved to South Africa to join Gandhi ji. In South Africa, Kasturba adjusted to a new lifestyle with some difficulties. During this period, a majority of Gandhi ji's time was consumed in public service, popularly known as Satyagrah.



A turning point came in her life in 1913; encouraged and challenged by Gandhi ji, she led a group of Satyagrahi women in Transvaal. She was jailed for a criminal offense, as the government refused to recognize Hindu marriages in South Africa.

In 1915 they returned to India. When Gandhi ji set up the Satyagrah Ashram in Sabarmati, Ba was his chief supporter in running the ashram and activities. She was Ba (mother) to all the youth (freedom fighters) in the Ashram. She gave leadership to the women in the Satyagraha movement and was jailed many times during her service to the freedom movement.

Another challenging incidence in her life came when her estranged eldest son Harilal started leading a low life of a drunk and ignorantly embraced Islam. Harilal was publicly denouncing his father. Gandhi ji tried to bring him back to a normal life, but was unsuccessful. Kasturba was a heartbroken mother in the midst of all this. Her beloved son was moving away from her. She expressed a mother's pain through a public letter to the Muslims who celebrated his conversion and taunted his past, "The powerless voice of a wounded mother will surely stir someone's heart...what you are doing would not be reasonable in the eyes of God."

On February 22, 1944, 'Ba', the great lady who was the closest companion of the Mahatma, breathed her last on the lap of Mahatma who was her beloved friend, mentor, and husband. In her journey of 62 years with Gandhi ji, she sacrificed her home, children, and private time with her husband. Ba set a towering example of personal sacrifices for the sake of a higher goal, sacrifices that were encapsulated in womanly love and patience.

Hindu Heritage Family Camp 2015

Theme

“Upanishad (Vedanta) – The grandeur of Hindu teaching”



August 7-9, 2015 • Indiana Camp, IN •
Organized by The Hindu Temple of Central
Indiana(HTCI)

Upanishads- The Elixir of Vedas

Vimal Patel

Upanishad's Message in Nutshell

Upanishad's Message in a Nutshell

On 20th August 1969 when a first man, Neil Armstrong, ever to place feet on the surface of our moon the words flowed from his mouth were, “a small step for a man, a giant leap for mankind”. What a profound statement for humanity! Such statement can flow only from highly evolved individual who can identify one's psyche with entire humanity.

When the ancient sages of India sat in yogic meditation with their mind completely empty for contemplating on search of truth of existence of the cosmos—they discovered and show oneness of their consciousness with the entire cosmos. This vision they blurted out as: Pragnam Brahman—Brahman is consciousness, Aham Brahma Asmi or I am this all-pervading consciousness, Tat Tvam Asi—you are that consciousness, Ayam Atma Brahman—This Self is consciousness, and Upanishads contain many such utterances but the above four utterances are well known Upanishadic Mahavakyas (great sayings).

In essence they discovered that all that exist, seen and unseen is nothing but indivisible, immutable, infinite/all pervading, all-knowing consciousness without space-time limitation.

This most ancient discovery of Vedic Sages of oneness of consciousness has been expressed in Hindu Culture as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam that is entire cosmos is one family and every human being is part and partial of the whole of cosmos, both animate and inanimate.

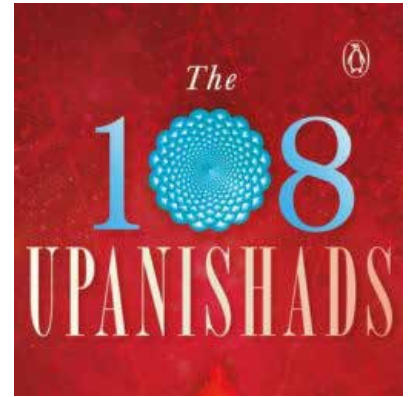
In Hinduism this is not a theoretical concept but is an understanding that has been incorporated in every aspect of Hindu Culture - its scriptures, philosophy, sciences, arts, music, lifestyle, ceremonies, festivals, and temple architectures. That is why the Hindu way of living is known as Santana Dharma—Universal Humanity based living.

In fact, it is this Upanishadic or non-dualistic, that is all that is there in the cosmos is Brahman and this pragmatic spiritual undercurrent that Indian Sages established and maintained by all the Acharyas / Teachers who followed the spiritual lineage has been at the center of harmony and stability of the Indian society. In other words the stability of Indian society has been and continues to be spiritual sway or humanity Dharma based and not the particular theology or political sway. Thus Hinduism is a Vedic religion based on the eternality of Vedas known as Shruti or revelation of truth of existence. Upanishads are part of Vedas.

Vedas are Without End

The word Veda is derived from the root 'Vid' meaning to know or knowledge or to instruct knowledge. Madhavacharya define Veda as 1) Estaprapti meaning get what you desire, 2) Anista Nivarnyho meaning avoid what you do not want, and 3) Alaukikam meaning that which is not within the preview of two methods of knowledge, namely direct perception and inference. Veda is beyond the objectifiable knowledge which science seeks. Veda is the guiding light for the science of subject 'I' or self.

Hindus with great shraddhaa (committed fervor) understand that the Vedas are endless. The whole of



creation and all that is before and beyond creation is involved in vibration and this vibratory resonance/ primordial sound or breath of Brahman or Paramaatma is intrinsically and eternally conserved. And creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the cosmos continue in cyclical rhythms, laws, and processes with the power of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva sequentially.

The primordial sound/vibration has no decay or death. Every Brahma who comes after the Pralaya /great dissolution undertakes creation with the help of these vibrations of Veda Mantras or primordial sound. The mantras origin is vibratory movement. This movement was captured by Brahma as Vedas and, on chanting them, creation became manifest. Brahma, the first born meditate on what is supreme and discovers that the primordial vibration is Para Brahman or Brahman, understood as Satyam, jnanam, Anantam that is absolute truth, absolute knowledge, and absolute infinite. In other words Brahman is Veda and the life-force of the cosmos.

Our Rishis/sages in their contemplative meditation captured some of these limitless vibrations or Veda mantras for us. These are sufficient for our happiness and liberation here and hereinafter as well as for the universal welfare. These mantras have been passed on to next generation with oral tradition of error-free chanting method of Guru-Shisya parampara (teacher-disciple tradition) since Vyasacharya's codification of randomly discovered Veda mantras into four Vedas.

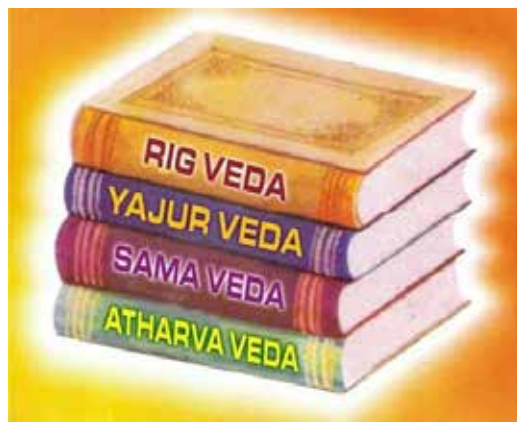
A person who delves deep, with a single-minded purpose, into any field, is bound to discover the truth. This is called the flesh of understanding or intuition. It is said that Einstein did not arrive at the theory of relativity by any thought process but the equation flesh through his mind. If we can accept this as a fact, certainly the fact that the Rishis with highly developed and disciplined minds and spiritually attuned became conscious of the mantras deep down in their hearts cannot be disputed and has to be accepted as correct.

The Classification of Vedas

Although we refer to the Vedas as four in number, there are different versions and differing methods of recitation of these four. These are called Paataantharam or way of recitation. Each school of recitation or recension is called a "Saakha" meaning branch and there are main and subsidiary branches. These various branches have been grouped and classified as belonging to Rig, Yajur, Saama, and Atharva which are called Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Saam Veda, and Atharva Veda because of their importance as a group. While modern research assigns to Rig Veda a date earlier than the Yajur Veda, according to our Sastras, and our understanding, they are all without beginning in time. In fact Rig Veda itself contains references to Yajus and Saam Veda in many places.

Further, in each of these Vedas, there are three portions called Samhita, Braahmana, and Aaranyaka. The Samhita is a mantra portions and deals in praising and extolling different Devatas/deities. Brahmana portions deals with what the Vedic Karmas, the rituals to be performed are and explain how they should be performed.

Upanishads are the end part of Vedas known as Vedanta and are part of Aaranyaka portions of Vedas. It is meant to explain the inner meaning, the doctrine or philosophy contained in the Samhitas as mantras and in the Brahmana's as Karmas or rituals. According to Aaranyakas, it is important to understand the reasons why Yajnas are required to be done and not merely their performance. The Upanishads of Aaranyakas of the Vedas are the result of meditation of sages who sought the solitude of the forests.



The entire Vedic corpus has been divided into two kinds—

1) Karmakanda teaches us what is the lifestyle we must pursue, what is the value and how to know this lifestyle, the lifestyle with purity of mind, body, speech and action.

2) Jnanakanda the knowledge portion or the Upanishads which sum up the entire Vedic corpus in one Rig Veda statement, “Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuddha Vadanti” meaning there is only one reality wise call it by different name. Instruction for realizing this reality in one’s life-time is the goal of Vedas.

How to Cultivate the Upanishadic Lifestyle

Our ancient sages not only cognized the Ayam Atma Brahman—This Self is consciousness or Ekam sat Vipra Bahuddha vadanti concept but also developed the infrastructure of nurturing the nature, presented as the development-stage appropriate rites and rituals across the life span—from thought of conception to end of life to recognize and realize this reality. It is this scientific infrastructure developed by the Vedic Sages that helped sustain Hindu civilization for all these millenniums, making it the oldest living civilization. Hindu culture being basically spiritual whole life of a Hindu is one of yoga. Yoga is a means of accomplishing what is to be accomplished in life, that helps you gain what is not yet accomplished and to be accomplished. So, you may ask what is to be accomplished.

First and foremost is Dharma in life without sacrificing Artha and Kama that is all forms of securities and all forms of satisfaction and pleasures of life. Dharma, that is ethical and moral lifestyle, being prime value, it is never compromise in the pursuit of Artha and Kama. Therefore, my whole life of Artha Kama is committed to achieve Dharma and having achieved Dharma, I have something more to achieve right in this life, called Moksha—total freedom from being small or insignificant because that happen to be my nature.

I cannot be insignificant because I can see what is insignificant, I can appreciate insignificant. I am the one beyond what is insignificant and significant; this is a matter to be discovered in one’s life. For which one has to be a complete person—spontaneously living the life of Dharma called Yoga. Because Moksha is always in view and the goal of life then living a life of Dharma become easy.

Therefore, whole life being Yoga in our original culture, what I do is not that important but how I do it, my attitude as to how I do it is very important. My commitment is very important and therefore every stage is an Ashrama-psychosocial development-stage to progress to another stage and not just remain there and I grow as a student and spiritually—my capacity to live life of Dharma is my spiritual strength. Therefore I grow stage by stage.

As student life is Brahamcharya—the life of Yoga’s Yama that is Ahimsa, Satya, non-stealing, Brahamcharya—discipline to engage in thought of Brahman, and non-greediness; and Niyama that is external and internal or body-mind cleanliness, Contentment/Santosh/Shanti, Tapasya—vow to achieve something with total commitment, Swadhyaya-- study of scripture under guidance of a Guru to know oneself with clarity of the purpose, and Ishwara Pranidhana—surrendering to God consciousness.

In other words Yamas and Niyamas are guidelines for us and our relationship with the world, respectively. And once the student life is over then I have the life of marriage. Therefore marriage is looked upon as Yoga. It is very important Ashrama.

In this Ashrama one grows because of the commitment it takes two egos to fuse. Without fusion of egos the egos really do not open up—simply love, etc. does not work—it is important that there is a situation where one can grow working with another—two egos are necessary to fuse or unite. To grow you need commitment / goal in life. If I don’t agree with the other, then I go my way and you go your way. However, if there is a sacrament of commitment then I have agreed to work with the other.

And thereby whenever I find disagreement there is a necessity to yield to the other, to make the other

happy. I grow one notch; I become bigger than I was before. To hold on to my ideas and not caring for other is childish. When I work with another, the another's happiness become my happiness in the process. I yield to the others wish in order to make other happy, the other does the same thing to make me happy. Therefore in the process both grow. This is the life of commitment. Therefore, for us the marriage is Yoga. Two pilgrims meet at one point of time and the pilgrimage towards Dharma and Moksha. Therefore marriage in itself is not an end, it is a means to an end.

This ashram is the foundation of all the Ashrams- one's psychosocial development that fulfills life's pleasures, procreation and preparing next generation for societal responsibility and to uplift the future generations. And also preparing one to move into Vanaprastha stage or contemplative life of retirement that gives back to society from which one has taken and freeing oneself from likes and dislikes. This stage of contemplation is followed by a Sanyas Ashrama, the stage for detaching from body-consciousness to Atmanishtha/Brahmanishtha-consciousness. In other words gain complete freedom from fear of death to leave the body of matter with smile on face.

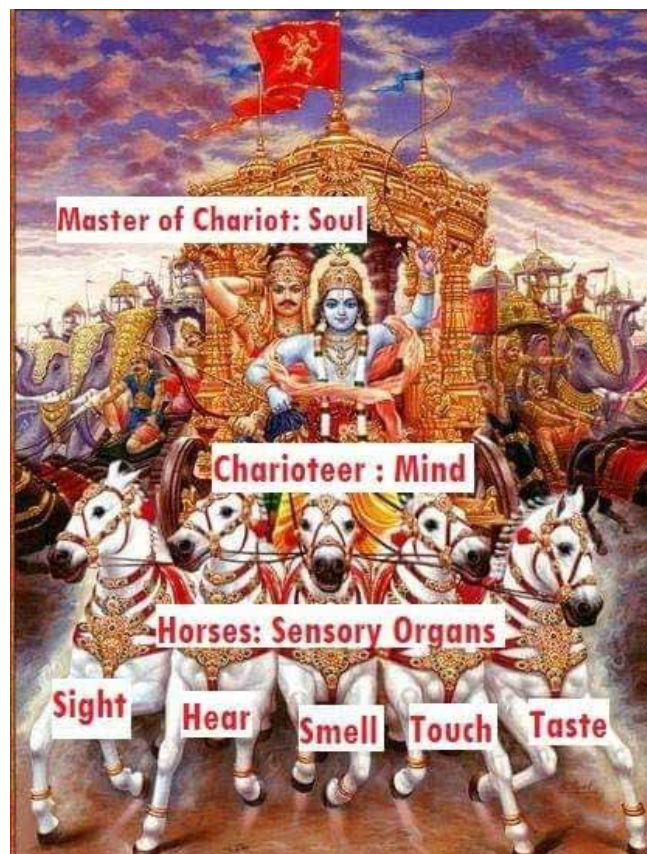
This realization of Atmanishtha/Brahmanishtha-consciousness is the Upanishadic message of our sages for us to achieve—it is a journey into abiding in the knowledge that "Aham Brahma Asmi" or I am this all-pervading consciousness.

Acknowledgement

Sadasiva samarambham Sankracharya madhyamam

Asmadacharya paryantam vande guru paramparam

This is to acknowledge that what I have articulated in this article has little to do with me. I owed to the knowledge given by our past and present teachers, in particular, Sree Aswathji of Columbus, Ohio, my present teacher and to Swami Parmarthananda of Chennai.



Session 1: Upanishad (Vedanta) –

The Grandeur of Ancient Teaching of the Rishis of Hindusthan

Thousands of years ago, a civilization living in the lush valleys of the Himalayas encountered a peaceful period. They needed nothing. They were well fed, well protected, and were surrounded by the beautiful scenery of the Himalayan mountains.

Having their basic needs met, they started to think about the deeper questions of life. They asked, “Who are we?” “Why are we here?” “Did someone or something create this universe? And if so, what is the nature of that creator, and what is the nature of our relationship?” Many people came up with many answers to these questions, and they were all recorded in what is now known as the Veda.

These answers and their associated hypotheses and experiments form the basis of the six systems of Vedic philosophy: one of them is Vedanta or Upanishad. These divine thoughts are flowing from ages to ages through Guru-Shishya parampara (unique Guru-Disciple tradition of Bharat) like the great ever pure Ganga. Various scholars believe that Upanishads were compiled more than 3000 years or before. However, for a Sadhak or spiritual seeker, **it is the teachings and not the age of Upanishad that matters.**

Two concepts around which all the teachings of Upanishad revolve: Brahman/Ishwar or Bhagwan and Atman (Self). The Upanishads point out the unity of Atman and Brahman. Two aims that Upanishad teachings want us to realize are: Anand or Shanti (unbroken happiness or peace of mind) and Swatantrata or Abhaya (freedom from ignorance or fearlessness). There are more than 100 Upanishads, but ten are principally read.

Isha Upanishad

The Isha Upanishad or Ishopanishad is associated with Yajurveda. It begins with the mantra ‘Isha vasyam idam...’, so titled Isha Upanishad.

Everything in this world is subject to change. The subject of inquiry into this Upanishad is about the one who is change less. The change less one who covers or sustains (vasyam) everything in this world is called ‘Brahman’ or ‘Ishwar’ or ‘Paramatma’ or ‘Bhagwan’. Our 16 Rishis guide us to act and enjoy without craving whatever is offered to us as our legitimate share by the Ishwar. By stating “...*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*” Upanishad says, “Enjoy (bhunjithah) life, but do not form attachment.”

Isha Upanishad gives four important teachings:

- Ishwar, the Creator pervades the whole of creation.
- Everyone is to do one’s duty.
- “*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*”: Enjoy (bhunjithah) life, but do not form attachment/craving/greed.

There once was a king who could not perform his duties with peace of mind as there was so much to handle and resolve. He went to his Guru and expressed his intentions of renouncing everything out of frustration and leaving the kingdom for seclusion or to seek any other advice from the Guru. The Guru said, “before renouncing the world, do me a favor. Transfer all your wealth in my name and be my employee for some time.” The king did so. The Guru sat on the throne and ordered the king (now Guru’s

employee) to perform the same duties as he used to perform while on throne. The king was performing better now with no burden and frustration. The Guru called him one day and inquired about the state of King's mind now. The King realized what the Guru wanted to teach. It was the attachment, fear of loss and gain, mine and I (ego) driven raaga (thoughts) that was the problem. "*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*" Guru said with a smile and replaced the King on the throne again.

Session 2

Kath Upanishad

The Kath Upanishad or Kathopanishad is associated with Yajurveda. There was once a Rishi named Vajasravas. He performed a grand Yagna one time, which ended with a donation of all his cows. His son Nachiketa was standing next to him and observing his father gifting away old cows past the age of bearing and giving milk. Nachiketa felt that by giving these cows his father would not get the desired result of the Yagna. Thinking that his father wants to donate what is dear to him, Nachiketa asked his father, "Father, to whom you are going to give me?" Vajasravas did not pay attention to Nachiketa's question. Nachiketa repeated the question. Losing patience Vajasravas said, "I will give you to Yama, the controller of death."

Nachiketa decided to go to Yama. Nachiketa had to wait for three days before Yama received him. Pleased with the patience of the young Nachiketa, Yama offered three boons to Nachiketa.

Nachiketa wished for the following boons:

1. His father's anger to be quenched when he returns to him.
2. Instructions to properly perform Vedic fire ritual to gain immortality.
3. What happens to Self (Atman) after the death i.e. what is the nature of Atman?

Yama grants the first two wishes immediately. For the third wish Yama said, "In the past as well, noted scholars have asked this question. This is not an easy matter to understand. I can offer you all sorts of wealth instead. But Nachiketa insists on getting the answer to his third question,

Finding Nachiketa eligible for the answer, Yama said, "You (Individual Self - Atman) are not the changing body. You are not born, nor do you die. The body is like a chariot, driven by sense like horses. The mind is like the reins. Intellect (buddhi) is the chariot driver. The Individual Self (charioteer) rides the chariot. The path is the world of objects. If rein (mind) is not restraint, the senses, like loose horses will get out of control. The Self (rider) will tread the wrong path, miss the goal and suffer. The one whose body, mind and intellect are in harmony does not suffer, rather enjoy the life. This harmony does not come just from learning. It is gained by practicing teachings of the learned ones. Yama said, - *Uttishthat jagrat praapya varannibodhat....* Arise, awake, be enlightened by sitting at the feet of wise people."

Taittiriya Upanishad

The Taittiriya Upanishad is associated with Yajurveda. It has three sections (vallis). The teacher gives a valedictory address to his disciples. The contents and the moral of the valedictory message highlight the system of education of ancient India which has produced numerous cultured and prudent personalities in that sacred land.

The Guru instructs, - *Satyam vada Dharmam chara, Swaadhyayan ma pramadah.*" - Speak the truth, do your duty (Dharma), and never deviate from the studies.

Matrudevo bhava, Pitru devo bhava, Acharyadevo bhava, Atithidevo bhava.” - Honor your mother as Bhagwan. Honor your father as Bhagwan. Honor your teacher as Bhagwan. Honor your guest as Bhagwan.

If your mind is troubled with any doubt as to what is right or wrong, follow the footsteps of the wise and elderly around you, in your family or neighborhood. This is the rule and this is the teaching.

The food should be regarded as Brahman, as from food are born all beings. We should not condemn food, should not abandon food. We should produce plenty of food, so no one goes without food. That is the Vrat / vow.

The above teachings are time tested guiding principles for character building.

Session 3: Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is not explicitly associated with any of the Veda as other 108 Upanishads are. Nevertheless our Gurus have considered Gita as an Upanishad due to its subject matter.

It is a part of Mahabharat which is a compilation of Maharishi Vyas. At the end of each Gita chapter Vyas ji says, “This concludes the chapter in the Upanishad of Gita which is the text of Brahma Vidya and Yoga as a dialogue between Shri Krishna and Arjun.”

Bhagavad Gita consists of eighteen chapters and 700 Shloka. It is an ocean of knowledge which talks about the following prominent topics.

- Ishwar Swaroop (Nature of Ishwar/Brahman/Bhagwan) – The nature, function and glory of Bhagwan is described – in both Saguna (manifest) and Nirguna (un-manifest).
- Jeevatma Swaroop (Nature of the individual) – The essential nature of the individual is not the body or the mind. It is the Chaitanya (consciousness principle).
- Karma Yoga (Discipline of action and duty) - Doing right action with the right attitude.
- Gyan Yoga (Discipline of knowledge) – Enquiry into the real nature of the Atman (individual self) and Brahman (universal Self) - they are essentially the same.
- Bhakti Yoga (Ishwar’s anugraha / Grace) – Ishwar’s grace is needed even to study the Upanishad. The grace is ever flowing. We need to learn how to tap it.
- Sat Guna (Importance of values) – A noble mind and behavior is necessary to absorb the teachings of Vedanta / Upanishad.

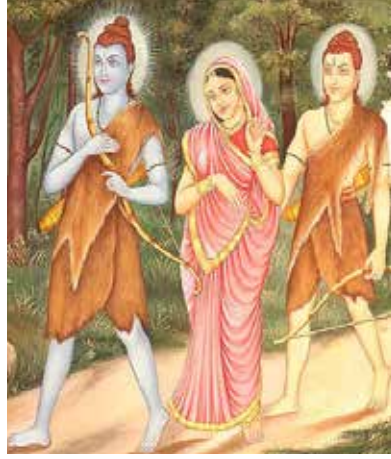
The message of Bhagvad Gita can be summarized in the following Shloka (Chap. 12/12)

“Shreyo hi Gyanam Aabhyaasaat Gyanaad Dhyaanam Vishishyate;
Dhyaanaat Karmaphalatyaagas Tyaagaat Shaantih Anantaram.”

Knowledge is better than Practice without knowledge; Meditation (on Bhagwan) is better than Knowledge; Renunciation of the attachment/greed to the fruits of actions is better than Meditation as “unbroken peace (Anand)” immediately follows renunciation / generosity (opposite of greed).

HTCI HINDU HERITAGE CAMP 2016

Camp Theme - रामायणम् - Rāmāyaṇa



राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहँ बिश्राम।

rām kāju kīnheṃ binu mohi kaham biśrām।

There is no rest for me till I finish my duty as the Sevak of Shri. Rama,
the embodiment of the truth.

Aug 5-7, 2016 - Bradford Woods

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Intellectual Sessions 1

Rāmāyaṇa – The journey of Shri Rama, an embodiment of Satya (Truth) and Dharma (Morality)

Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata are the two history books of Hindus. These two books cover events of history that took place in different time frames thousands of years ago. These books are not just about kings' accession and ejection, wage of wars and supremacy of power. They cover events of human evolution, cultural and spiritual upliftment, social reforms, perpetual progression, sustenance of human values, adventures of heroic people and grandeur of our ancestors (dharma, sanskriti and samaj).

Rishi Valmiki who was a contemporary of Shri Rama compiled Rāmāyaṇa. The word Rāmāyaṇa comprises of two words 'Rama' and 'Ayan'. In Sanskrit 'Rama' means the one who pleases and 'Ayan' means Journey. So, Rāmāyaṇa literally means Rama's Journey. It contains 24,000 Sanskrit Shlokas spanning over 7 Kand (Sections). As Rāmāyaṇa is a journey of Ram, all the Kand/Sections (Bal-kand, Ayodhya-kand, Aranya-kand, Kishkindha-kand, Sundar-kand, Lanka-kand and Uttar-kand) are named based on Rama's journey to certain places and major events/stages of his life.

Inspired by the work of Rishi Valmiki, Sant Tulsidas recompiled Rāmāyaṇa in the colloquial language of 'Avadhi' and titled it 'Ramcharitmaanas'. Since he was an ardent Rama bhakta (devotee), he kept his focus on Rama and reduced the size from 24,000 Sanskrit Shlokas to approximately 6,000 couplets and verses (called Doha & Chaupai) in Avadhi language.

Ram-charit-maanas means "The lake of Rama's deeds". 'Charit' means Deeds and 'Maanas' means Lake. Another meaning scholars derive of Ramcharitmanas is "Keep remembering the character (Charit) of Shri Rama in your mind (Maanas)".

Rāmāyaṇa not only depicts Rama as an ideal character, but deals with subjects of roles and responsibilities of administrators, family relations, guru-shishya (disciple) tradition, economical divisions of the society, public relations, and warfare and techniques. The authors have narrated these topics colorfully through the life sketches of different characters. Even today the characters of Rāmāyaṇa touch the hearts and minds of people of all ages, Hindus and many non-Hindus all over the world.

वेद-वेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे।
वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत्साक्षात् रामायणात्मना।।

veda-vedye pare puṁsi jāte
daśarathātmaje।
vedaḥ prācetasādasītsākṣāt
rāmāyaṇātmanā।।

Veda Vedye is the one who has to be known by the Vedas. Who is he? The Supreme Being, who had to be known through the Vedas, took birth in this world. When he came in the form of Rama, Dashratha's son, the Vedas took the form of Rāmāyaṇa – the child of Valmiki.

Ideal Son – Rama

Rama was born to king Dasharatha and Kaushalya in the sacred city of Ayodhya. Some scholars believe that Shri Rama was born more than 7000 years ago. Some other scholars believe he was born at a different time period, whatever account we may take, it is certain that he lived thousands of years before now. Still, his name is as fresh as a flower in every Hindu home. Later on in his life he became one of the greatest rulers of the Bharat varsha (Indian subcontinent). His kingdom was known as 'Rama Rajya' where every citizen had equal rights.

At a young age Shri Rama learned various skills (sciences, arts, and literature) from Guru Vashishtha and Rishi Vishwamitra. He was an Ideal Son. He gave up his right to be a king of Ayodhya to fulfill the vow that his father gave to queen Kaikeyi. As an Ideal brother his sharing and caring nature created a strong bond among his siblings. While in exile, he built strong relationships with various tribal and underprivileged people giving them a sense of belonging to a united community.



On the request of Hanuman-ji, he accepted Sugriva as a friend and promised to save him.

He shot an arrow at Bali to protect Sugriva. Before dying Bali asked Shri Rama why he killed him from behind, as this is an act of Adharma (unrighteous). With no hesitation Shri Rama said, "There is no adharma in killing the one who threatens the sanctity of women (Bali abducted his younger brother's wife)."

When the war in Sri Lanka was over, and Ravana was killed, Lakshman asked Shri Rama about the future of the rich and prosperous land of Sri Lanka. According to the laws of that time the winner of war gets the custody of the kingdom. Keeping in mind the commitment he had to his ancestral land, Shri Rama said to Lakshman, "Lakshman, Lanka does not lure me though made up of gold, because mother and motherland (Ayodhya) are greater than heaven." Then, he handed over Lanka to Ravana's younger brother Vibhishana.

Shri Rama is a role model who stood up for social principles and Dharma, who was polite and compassionate to gentle people, but severe to unjust people. He made the best of even the most difficult situations; he always put others before himself. Due to his virtuous character he was beloved by each of his family members and associates. Shri Rama's virtues of Truth, Dharma, Strength and Humility are and will always remain the hallmark of Hindu History.

माता पुनी बोली, सो मति डोली, तजहु तात यह रुपा,
कीजे सिसुलीला, अति प्रिय सीला, यह सुख पराम अनूपा
॥

Maata puni boli so mati doli tajahu taat
yah roopa,

Keeje sisuleelaa ati priyaseela yah sukha
param anoopaa. (Bal-kand/192)

Mother Kaushlya said, "O son, appear
before me in the dearest form of a child,
which gives ultimate delight to a mother."

Intellectual Sessions 2

Ideal Daughter – Sītā

Sītā, daughter of King Janaka and wife of Shri Rama, has been a symbol of sanctity and sacrifice for thousands of years in the history of Hindus. When she was very young, she could with ease move Bhagawan Shiva's strong dhanush (bow) which Janaka inherited from his forefathers. This surprised Janaka, as he knew that to move such a strong bow one needs divine strength. Realizing Sītā's potent character and attributes, Janaka decided to arrange a Swayamvara where Sītā can choose her husband of the ones who will lift Bhagawan Shiva's dhanush. As the story goes, Shri Rama not only lifted but broke the bow and Sītā chose Rama as her husband.

Sītā, as an ideal wife, has been a highly respectful household name in Hindu families. When Shri Rama was leaving for forest for 14 years, Sītā decided to accompany him. When Rama requested her to stay back in Ayodhya and said that life in forest will be very dangerous and painful, Sītā said, "All the difficulties of forest will be like a splinter as compared to separation from you. A rabbit cannot harm a lioness, similarly no one can harm me in your presence in the forest."

Bound by certain traditions and policies when Rama had to send pregnant Sītā to stay in Rishi Valmiki's ashram, she accepted the separation from her husband and the kingdom with full understanding of the duty of Rama as a king not just as her husband.

She gave birth to twin boys Luv and Kush and brought them up under the teacher-ship of Rishi Valmiki. Under her love and care they learned both Shaastra (spiritual texts) and Shastra (warrior trait).

Throughout the Rāmāyaṇa, Sītā played roles of daughter, wife, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, and mother. In all the roles she showed her perseverance and sacrifices keeping duty and love over her rights. Even all powerful Ravana had to bend before Sītā's perseverance and sanctity.



पुत्रि पवित्र किए कुल दोऊ ।
सुजस धवल जगु कह सबु कोऊ ॥

Putri pabitra kiye kul dou, Sujas dhaval
jagu kah saboo kou. (Ayodhya-kand/287)

The daughter who brings happiness to both the families (hers and her in-laws) is praised by all.

Ideal Brothers – Bharata, Lakshmana, Shatrughna

Bharata, Lakshmana, and Shatrughna were Rama's younger brothers. Right from childhood days to the end of life, their brotherly love remained unchanged. They followed the path of their eldest brother Rama in all walks of life.

Bharata was an embodiment of love and respect. In some people's life it happens that they are blamed for something they did not even do. Bharata was one such person. All the people of Ayodhya were cursing and blaming Bharata for Rama's denial of throne and exile by his mother Kaikeyi. Despite the accusations Bharata kept his faith and respect for Rama and went to Chitrakoot (Rama's initial halt during exile) to request him to come back and take over the throne.

When Rama refused to come back, Bharata took his sandals and kept them on throne while he himself lived in a hut (in a place called Nandigram in the outskirts of Ayodhya), Ideal Brothers – Bharata, Lakshmana, Shatrughna

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When Rama refused to come back, Bharata took his sandals and kept them on throne while he himself lived in a hut (in a place called Nandigram in the outskirts of Ayodhya), He stayed there till Shri Rama came back to Ayodhya after fourteen years. Bharata was so happy and excited on Rama's return to Ayodhya after 14 years that he took the role of his charioteer.

Lakshmana was an embodiment of determination, seva (service), and simplicity. When Shri Rama and Sītā were leaving for the forest, Lakshman said that he wanted to join them as his existence is meaningless without Shri Rama. Shri Rama asked Lakshmana to obtain permission from his mother Sumitra. Lakshmana's desire to go with Rama and Sītā was endorsed when mata Sumitra said to Lakshman that you are born to serve Shri Rama. In the forest he sacrificed his sleep and acted as a guard all night when Rama/and Sītā retired during the night.

Shatrughna, second son of queen Sumitra, was the youngest of four brothers. Realizing and respecting his elder brothers' commitments he accepted the responsibilities of the protection of kingdom, mothers, and other family members while Rama and Lakshman were in exile and Bharata was in Nandigram. Shatrughan carried out all the aspects of administration of Ayodhya.

The brothers' love and sacrifices for each other and the support from their wives (Sītā, Mandavi, Urmila and Shrutkeerti) kept the family together in most difficult times. The affection of Shri Rama and his brothers has become an ideal and a source of inspiration for siblings even today.

सुत बित नारि भवन परिवारा ।
होहिं जाहिं जग बारहिं बारा ॥

अस बिचारि जागहु ताता ।
मिलइ न जगत सहोदर भ्राता ॥

One can get children and property again and again, but one cannot get a brother like you again and again (Shri Rama to Lakshman when he was severely wounded.)

Intellectual Sessions 3

Ideal Sevak (resolute volunteer) – Hanuman

Hanuman, son of Kesari and Anjana, is popularly known for his devotion to Shri Rama. Hanuman-ji and Shri Rama have become inseparable names. Any image of Shri Rama and Sītā without Hanuman-ji looks incomplete. All his heroic deeds and attributes culminated in the service of Shri Rama.

When Hanuman-ji found the whereabouts of Sītā in Lanka and gave the details to Shri Rama upon his return. Rama was overjoyed and said, “Hanuman, you are an excellent messenger, you have accomplished impossible task”. Humbly, Hanuman-ji touched Shri Rama’s feet and said, “It is all because of your blessings and glory I could do such an act.” Hanuman-ji was such a humble champion.

Out of love, devotees of Hanuman-ji call him by various names: Anjaneya, Rama-Doot, Bajrang Bali, Kapeesh, Pavan Sut, Sankat Mochan, Mahaveer, Maruti, Kesari Nandan, Shankara Suvan, and many more.

Tulsidas ji, the author of Ramcharitmanas, used to talk to Hanuman-ji in his meditation. One day, he told to Hanuman-ji that I am writing your glories in the form of a poetry titled ‘Hanuman Chalisa’. Respectfully, Hanuman-ji said, “There is nothing about me to write; whatever I am today is all due to the blessings of Shri Rama and my parents. I am known because of them.” In the very beginning of Hanuman Chalisa Tulsidas ji introduces Hanuman-ji as, “Ram duta atulita bal dhaama, Anjani putra pavan suta naama” He is the ambassador of Shri Ram and son of Anjani.

When Shri Rama decided to depart from this earth, he told Hanuman-ji to remain on earth in some form. It is believed and experienced by some pure hearted devotees that Hanuman-ji is present wherever Rāmāyaṇa is read and recited.

Hanuman-ji’s character is so striking and offers so much encouragement, peace, and happiness that people of all ages worldwide chant his name. He is known for his bravery and selfless service



राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहँ बिश्राम।

ram kaju kīnheṃ binu mohi kaham
biśrām। (Sundar-kand/1)

There is no rest for me till I finish my duty
as the sevak (volunteer) of Shri Ram.

Ideal friends – Sumantra, Sugriva, Vibhishana

Sumantra was a childhood friend, prime minister and advisor of King Dashrath. He was never treated by Dashrath as just an employee in his administration. He played a key role in many of Dashrath's important decisions. Sumantra tried to convince Kaikeyi to revert her decision of sending Rama to exile. Dashrath chose him to accompany Rama, Sītā and Lakshmana to the forest and then convince them to come back to Ayodhya. Later again he accompanied Bharata to Chitrakoot to meet Shri Rama. Shri Rama and his brothers paid him due respect as a father.

Sugriva, the king of Kishkindha, became Shri Rama's friend on the advice of Hanuman-ji. Hanuman-ji was his secretary. When Shri Rama found him troubled by his powerful and jealous brother Bali, he promised to punish Bali and reclaim his kingdom. Later Sugriva helped Shri Rama in the searching of Sītā by offering his entire army of vanaras (his tribal clan).

Vibhishana was the younger brother of Ravana, the king of Sri Lanka. He sought Shri Rama's shelter and protection. Though he was a brother of Ravana and lived in his kingdom, Vibhishana was an ardent devotee of Shri Rama. The demonic tendencies of Ravana never affected Vibhishana. Hanuman-ji advised him to seek Shri Rama's camaraderie and shelter. Shri Rama received Vibhishana as a friend. Vibhishana helped Shri Rama's army in developing strategies to win the battle with Ravana. He was the one who advised Shri Rama to kill Ravana that he has to shoot an arrow into the belly button of Ravana, as he had amrit (nectar) in that area. Though Ravana was his brother, for the protection of Dharma and justice in the society, he revealed the secret of Ravana's immortality. Characters of Sumantra, Sugriva, and Vibhishana illustrate that friendship means seeking the company of truth (Shri Rama). Rāmāyaṇa tells that a true friendship means helping a friend to realize his/her good qualities and overcome negative qualities..



कुपथ निवारि सुपंथ चलावा।
गुन प्रगटै अवगुनहि दुरावा ॥

Kupath nivaari supanth chalaava, Gun
pragate avagunanhi duraavaa.
(Kishkindha-kand/7)

A friend's duty is to stop his/her friend
from going the wrong way and
appreciating friend's good qualities.

Intellectual Sessions 4

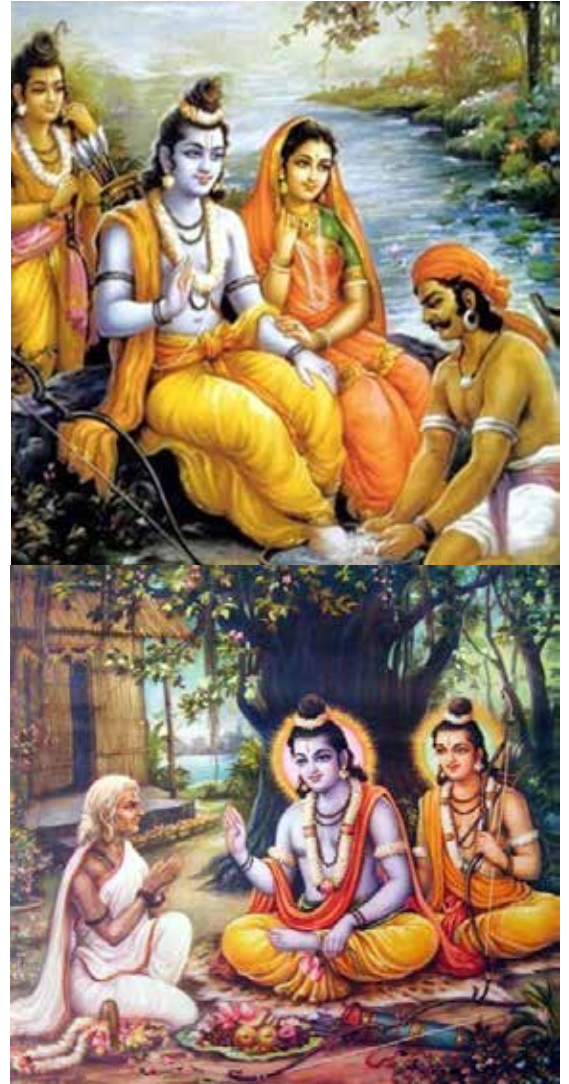
Devotee (Bhakta) – Kevat, Shabari

Kevat was the sailor who helped Shri Rama, Lakshmana and Sītā cross the river Ganga on their very first leg of exile. When Kevat came to know that Rama is an avatar of Bhagawan he wanted to touch and wash his feet. He put a condition before Shri Rama that he can take him across the river in his boat if he is allowed to clean Shri Ram's feet. The deliberate purpose of putting this condition was a desire to touch the feet of Bhagawan who has appeared in human form, a rarest of the opportunity any devotee may get in his lifetime.

Shabari, an ordinary tribal lady, was a bhakta (devotee) of Shri Ram. Her guru told her that someday Bhagawan will come to her house (hut) and grace her with his presence. She eagerly waited for that day.

During their exile, when Shri Rama and Lakshmana reached her ashram, she became very excited and humbled. She offered (half eaten) berries to Shri Ram. She wanted to make sure that berries offered to Bhagawan are all good from inside, so she tasted each berry before offering them to Shri Ram. After seeing Shabari's bhakti (devotion), Shri Rama explained to her the concepts of Navadha bhakti (nine types of devotion).

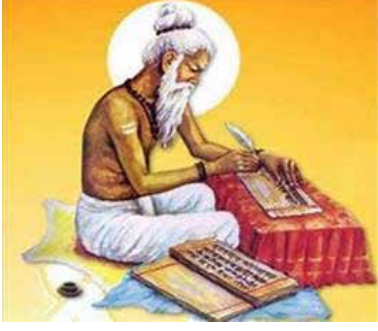
Through the relationship with these two underprivileged devotees, Bhagawan conveys the message that it is the devotion that matters to him, not the social status and types of offering. Though both Kevat and Shabari had a very short-lived association with Shri Rama, they have become immortal symbols of bhakti (devotion) towards Bhagawan.



कहे रघुपति सुन भामिनी बाता ।
मानहु एक भगति कर नाता ॥

Kah raghupati sunu bhaaminee bhaataa,
maanaoo ek bhagati kar naataa.
(Aranya-kand/35)

Shri Rama to Shabari, "I know only one relation and that is of Bhakti (devotion)."



Compiler/Narrator of Rāmāyaṇa - Valmiki, Tulsi

Rishi Valmiki, the author of Rāmāyaṇa, was born in a tribal (bheel) family. His original name was Valya bheel. He was also known as Ratnakar. He earned a living for his family by robbing people. One day Narada Muni was passing by his area and he ran into Ratnakar. Meeting with Narada Muni was a turning point in the life of Ratnakar. After receiving spiritual instructions from Narada

Muni, Valya gave up the life of a dacoit and started spending time chanting Bhagawan's name in an ashram. His severe bhakti towards Bhagawan and tapas (penance) earned him the title of Brahma-Rishi Valmiki.

One day Valmiki was going to the river Ganga for his daily bath. Suddenly, hit by an arrow of a hunter, a male bird fell from a tree and died on the spot. Filled by sorrow its mate also died of shock. Valmiki was heartbroken and angry at this pitiful sight. He saw the hunter who did that inhuman act and uttered few emotional words in Sanskrit to curse the hunter. Spontaneously emerged words from his emotional grief, became the first shloka of Sanskrit literature. Incidence of cursing the hunter kept Valmiki in dejected state of mind for a long time. Recognizing Valmiki's repentance, Brahmaji came to him and said, "Oh, Brahma-rishi, words (Sanskrit shloka) sprang from your mouth at Bhagawan's wish alone. In the same language and style you shall narrate the legends of Rama, the virtuous one. That will give you the peace of mind." Later Valmiki composed the entire Rāmāyaṇa in the same meter as the shloka sprang from his mouth to curse the hunter. Thus, Rāmāyaṇa became the first Sanskrit literature text in story form and Valmiki is revered as the first poet, or Adi Kavi.

Tulsidas-ji is the author of the popular Ramcharitmanas (a translation of Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa), which is written, in a local language called Awadhi (close to Hindi). He was born in the year of 1554CE in Rajapur (near Chitrakoot) on the banks of the Yamuna River in Uttar Pradesh. His childhood name was Rambola. At the age of five, his guru Narharidas, who gave him his new name, initiated him in spiritual tradition: Tulsidas.

Tulsidas-ji hints during several places in his works, that he had darshan (sight) of Hanuman-ji and Shri Rama. In the year of 1575, he started composition of the Ramcharitmanas in Ayodhya on Ramnavami day (birthday of Rama). Tulsidas-ji completed the composition in two years and seven months.

The major differences between these two great authors are that Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama, and to Tulsidas-ji Shri Rama was Bhagawan.

To Valmiki, Rama was the son of king Dashratha and a person with superlative divine qualities. Whereas for Tulsidas-ji, who was born in modern time period (500 years ago), Shri Rama was Bhagawan and his Ishta-dev (personal or chosen deity). Though he kept the main theme of Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa unaltered, he took the liberty of expressing his bhakti (devotion) towards Shri Rama and Hanuman-ji by translating some texts in his own way. The eloquent translation of Sanskrit (Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa) into the poetic Avadhi language demonstrates Tulsidas-ji's comprehension of Sanskrit, Avadhi, and poetry. •••

Hindu Dharma is More than Religion & Does God Exists?

Dr. Vimal Patel

Prologue

It should be noted that Hinduism is not a set of beliefs like the Abrahamic religions of Book(s), coming into existence in specific space and time and therefore its understanding with the word *ism/Religion* is inaccurate and wrong. For Hindus it is known as *Sanatana Dharma*, the eternal or perennial wisdom of universalized living. That is, the way of living with respect for all living and nonliving forms of the cosmos. This way of living recognizes the humanity's interconnectedness and interdependence with whole of cosmos.

The Sanskrit word *Dharma* denote the natural order of cosmic evolution, sustenance, and involution or dissolution in cyclical manner for eternity. This Natural order/law in Sanskrit is called *Ritam* and referred to as *Brahman*. In other words the cosmic evolution, sustenance, and dissolution take place in *Brahman* with the process of *Ritam* or cosmic Natural law.

For ease of understanding for most people the natural law of the process of evolution, sustenance, and dissolution has been deified as *Brahma*—God for creation, *Vishnu*—God for sustenance, and *Siva*— God for dissolution. In fact all the natural processes of cosmic evolution have been deified in various gods and goddesses for understanding of common masses to reflect the indwelling Godly-field from atom to unicellular amoeba to multicellular humans. Thus Hindu Dharma is a dynamic evolutionary process that reflects the alignment with the Natural law of the cosmos and therefore it is called *Sanatana Dharma*. This is the basis of Creation Metaphysics of Hindus and development of Hindu scriptures and Dharma.

In the Vedic cosmology at the time of dissolution the whole cosmic manifestation is resolved in the *Avyakta* /unmanifested *Brahman* or *Consciousness Principle*. This infinite-potential is space-timelessness and beyond logic and description. It is from this state the cosmic manifestation begins with the process called *Ritam* or eternal natural laws. The process begins with both the manifestation of *Purusha* , the primordial consciousness and *Prakriti* , the primordial energy. And with the interaction of *Prakriti* /the material cause with attributes and attribute-less *Purusha* /consciousness cause, the cosmic evolution begins and evolves to a state as we know it and eventually once again it will resolved into *Brahman* and the cycle will continue infinitely. The Vedic time scale of Hindu cosmology is similar to scientific cosmological time.

Origin of Hindu Scripture and the Development of Hindu Dharma

Imagine! On 20th August 1969 when a first man, Neil Armstrong, ever to place feet on the surface of our moon the words flowed from his mouth were, “a small step for a man, a giant leap for mankind”. What a profound statement for humanity! Such statement can flow only from highly evolved individual who can identify one's psyche with entire humanity.

When the ancient sages of India sat in yogic meditation with their mind completely empty for contemplating on search of truth of existence of the cosmos—they discovered and show oneness of their consciousness with the entire cosmos. This vision they blurted out as: *Pragnam Brahman* —*Brahman* is consciousness, *Aham Brahma Asmi* or I am this all pervading consciousness, *Tat Tvam Asi* —you are that consciousness, *Ayam Atma Brahman* —This Self is consciousness, and *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman*—that is all that exists is verily the *Brahman* and *Brahman* means Existence - Knowledge - Bliss - Absolute. Vedas contain many such utterances. In fact it is this vision of unity of cosmos in consciousness of these sages of India that is the subject matter of the Vedic Scriptures. Every aspect of Hindu culture vibrate with this unity of consciousness.

The Sanskrit word *Veda* comes from root 'Vid' meaning to know/knowledge, knower, and process of knowing, called *Sruti* or revelation of truth of existence. In Hindu culture the Vedas have been passed on from generation to generation for several millenniums with error-proof oral tradition of *Guru-Shishya*/

teacher-disciple tradition and the same tradition still continue at present time. Thus Hindu Dharma is a body of teachings which originates from Vedas along with many secondary scriptures -Puranas, Smritis, Itihasa—Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata (noteworthy historical account of role models of Dharma of people of Indus/Sarasvati Valley Civilization), Bhagavad Gita, Brahma Sutra, Yoga Sutra, and so on—very vast literature design to serve the need of humanity at different stage of spiritual development and understanding. The aim of these scriptures is to guide and help human beings in living a meaningful, purposeful, peaceful, and satisfying life.

It offers to guide us if we are willing to take it, no compulsion is given, just like a manual that comes with a gadget - read the instructions first, otherwise you may not get the benefit from the gadget, and not reading may also lead to some damage. Similarly the scriptures give us a manual regarding how to use our body, mind, intellect, and resources we have around us. So, the guidance is primary Hindu teaching. It is culture with totally open architecture as embodied in Rig Vedic statement:

|| Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah ||

“Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions”

In short the ancient Vedic scriptures serves as instruction manual of purposeful life for human beings and as expressed by learned Hindus “The Hindu tradition is focused on similarities and shared traits rather than differences and exclusions. This makes its identity almost indefinable yet definite in its features. This means that despite its universalism there is plethora of beliefs and practices that can uniquely identified with Hinduism. Without doctrinal rigidity the Hindu mind has engaged itself with question that beleaguers the entire mankind rather than issues limited to Hindus.

Understanding the Hindu Prophecy and its Relevance for Present Time

If we are to condense the the vast corpus of Vedic Scriptures into one book with respect to prophecies and fulfillment-proof of the existence of God, it would be Bhagvad Gita. This unique scripture provide a dogma-free and space-time limitation-free philosophical and practical solutions for joyful, meaningful, purposeful, and peaceful life-manual for all human societies to co-exist in peace.

Bhagavad Gita, the elixir of Vedic thoughts, is a dialog between Godly Incarnation/Avatar principle of Vishnu, the Lord Krishna and the friend and a disciple named Arjuna, representing humanity, who is confused as to his duty as warrior prince in the battle field. In this dialog Lord Krishna narrates to Arjuna that:

Whenever there is a decline of Dharma and rise of Adharma/unsustainable wickedness, O’ Arjuna I incarnate myself in human form for the protection of the good and destruction of wicked ones and for the establishment of Dharma. Thus whenever the world is overpowered by demonic tendencies and good comes to grief the Purusha /Lord promises that he will take birth in human form on this planet earth to destroy the evildoers and protect the righteous to re-establish the sway of Dharma.

In Hindu Mythology it is understood that Lord Vishnu has ten main incarnations—the theory of incarnation of God that encompasses both organic evolution up to man with free will and then psycho-social evolution of man continue till Self-realization—that I am not the body but the very divine consciousness principle Brahman. The Self-realization awareness is endowed with universalizing faith and individual acquire a taste and feel for transcendent moral and ethical actuality—devotion to universalizing truth, fearlessness, compassion, love and enlarged vision of cosmic community. This transformation occurs through process of repeated incarnations in various life forms according to Law of Karma—An unerring principle of ‘as you sow

so shall you reap’.

However, it should also be noted that in Vedic thought 10, 100, 1000, and 1 followed by any number of zeros is to be understood as continuum or infinitude. In that sense 10 indicate the continuum of incarnation process of organic evolution up to human and beyond indicating that it is a concept of human psycho-social evolutionary process till Self-realization—the ultimate goal of human life.

The 1st incarnation/Avatar of Vishnu is Fish suggesting that the life arose in water. The first stage is followed by 2nd stage evolution as Tortoise, an amphibian, which can exist both in water and land and then 3rd stage is exemplified as Boar representing mammalian stage. The 4th stage of evolution is represented by Bipedal with animal-like features and that is followed by 5th incarnation of Vishnu as pygmy human followed by the 6th incarnation as Parasurama—modern man with weapons and propensity towards violence, revenge, anger, envy, greed, etc. This is followed by the 7th stage of highly cultured and spiritually evolved perfect human, the role model to establish Sanatana Dharma—Vishnu incarnated as Rama on earth. After a lapse of long-time the Dharma declined and unsustainable wickedness arose and Vishnu incarnated as Krishna on this planet to restore Dharma once again and gave us Bhagavad Gita, the manual of living and spiritual evolution for humanity for all time to come. This 8th stage incarnation of Vishnu is embodiment of truth, fearlessness, love, compassion, respect, and justice. It is the representation of the fact that holistic human development and evolution of expansive human attitude and behavior is best achieved through role models of other evolved humans—the Guru-disciple teaching tradition of Hindus.

The Lord Krishna’s Bhagavad Gita is source of both knowledge and method of Integrated Yoga. This includes yoga of action—work as worship, yoga of devotion—unconditional surrender to Personal God, yoga of knowledge—freeing from passions with discriminating intellect leading to understanding of absolute reality/ Brahman, and yoga of contemplation—Self-realization with meditation and discriminating reflections to achieve perfection. The principles of these yoga have been experimented by many great personalities in different cultures and have helped to bring about new pathways to bring harmony in the world.

Nearly 2600 years ago Prince Siddhartha enlightened himself to Buddha-hood representing the 9th incarnation of Vishnu who set in motion Ahimsa/non-violence as a means of bringing peace and harmony in the world. Buddha’s contemporary Mahavira also advocated the message of nonviolence for harmony and peace. Same truth was also set in motion by Jesus Christ some 2000 years ago, followed by Mohandas Gandhi in 20th century who also inspired Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi, Dalai Lama and many other evolved human beings who are contributing toward peace and harmony in the world through nonviolence means. The 10th incarnation of Vishnu is known as Kalki is yet to come in future. It is, as suggested in the beginning represent the continuum of process of evolution toward perfection and is available to every human being!

Also it is interesting to note that up to the 5th stage of evolution the Hindu thought is similar to scientific theory of Darwinian organic evolution. The further stages (stage 7th to stage 10th) of evolution of man representing psycho-social development is unique to Vedic scriptures. These ten incarnations of Vishnu makes up one of the most important Hindu scriptures written in style of parable called Shrimad Bhagavata Purana. The stories narrated in this Purana are filled with amazing glory of God Vishnu and noble values for humanity to emulate. Thus for Hindus—

The fact that we exist is the proof that God exist, that is to say very existence is God/ Brahman.

शुभमस्तु।

2017 Hindu Heritage Family Camp, Indianapolis
Theme: Sampradaya-Spiritual Tradition of Bharat



Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana

Friday-Sunday, August 9-11, 2017

THEME of 2017:
Sampradaya-Spiritual Tradition of Bharat

Theme: Sampradaya- Spiritual Traditions of Bharat

Session 1.1: Spiritual Traditions of Bharat

A PROMINENT HINDU SCHOLAR WAS ONCE ASKED: “HOW DO YOU DEFINE HINDUSTAN/BHARAT?” HE REPLIED, “BHARAT/INDIA IS NOTHING BUT A FEW NAMES LIKE RAM, KRISHNA, BUDDHA, MAHAVIR, ADI SHANKARA, NANAK, KABIR, AND CHAITANYA. IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A FEW BOOKS LIKE RAMAYANA, MAHABHARATA, BHAGAVAD GITA, GRANTH SAHIB, AND UPANISHADS.”

Apart from some great personalities, literature, and historical landmarks, one more thing that reveals the richness of Bharat is its spiritual traditions. The Sanskrit word for tradition is Sampradaya. The age of these Sampradayas varies from ancient times to as young as 500 years ago. These traditions, though filled with distinct flavors, are rooted in one common thought; ‘Ekam Sat’ which means ‘Truth is One’.

Sampradaya is a Sanskrit word that means ‘an established tradition transmitted from one Guru to another in a lineage for the betterment of individuals and the society’. Sampradaya has become misinterpreted over time as ‘rigid rules of certain beliefs. In a much more real sense, Sampradayas that have originated in Bharat can be visualized as different flowers of the same garland.

Each Sampradaya has its ways of worship, place of worship, gurus, and text. A famous scholar once said, “India’s assimilating power is so high that for millennia it has sustained diverse thoughts with mutual respect and co-existence, and each one has dynamically grown over time.”

When people of Indian origin migrated to different parts of the world, they carried their professional skills, commercial skills, and their Sampradayas. Now these traditions are well established and thriving in the adopted land of Hindu immigrants. Newer and younger generations of Hindus, along with people of foreign ancestry, are enjoying these traditions due to the life-changing values that these traditions are built on and offer.

A few commonly practiced traditions that are originated in Bharat are: Vedic, Jain, Buddha, Shaiva, Shakta, Vaishnava, Sikh, and Kabir.

One common goal of all sampradayas is to help liberate humans from the miseries of life, live in harmony with others, and attain Moksha or Nirvana (unbroken peace) by realizing the true nature of self, which is Satya (truth). The Rigveda states, “एकं सत् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति - Ekam Sat Vipra bahudha vadanti - Truth (God) is one, but the wise call it by different names.”

“Mother initiates fearlessness in her children.” We can all relate to and understand this statement from the Shastras through our personal experiences with our mothers.

Session 1.2: Vedic

The origin of Vedic tradition is undated. According to world scholars, it is the oldest tradition that is being practiced by any civilized society. This tradition is based on the teachings of the texts called the Vedas'. 'The Vedas' are said to be the words of Bhagwan himself. Vedic tradition is also called the tradition of 'Shruti', which means 'that which is heard'. There are four Vedas; Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. The teachings of these Vedas were transmitted from the Guru to the Shishya (disciple) through speaking and hearing tradition. By reading and understanding the Vedas, anyone can acquire the knowledge to fulfill the two goals of human life; Joy and Peace.

Spiritual Vedic practices consist of the chanting of Mantras in the praise of Vedic deities and performing a ceremony. The rhythm, tone, and fluctuations of mantras is set for the maximum benefit of the people participating in the Yagna. All Vedic practices can be summed up as the amalgamation of Gyan (knowledge), Karma (purified action), and Upasana (worship).

The Vedas are also called 'Apaurusheya', which means 'not created by humans.' Though the Vedas are not authored by human beings, certain Rishis are associated with the mantras they compiled. Some commonly known rishis are Vishwamitra, Vamdev, Atri, Bhardwaj, Vasishtha, Angiras, and Atharvan. These Rishis are said to have heard the Vedic Mantras while deep in meditation.

Some major deities of the Vedic tradition are Indra, Surya, Agni, Vayu, Varuna, Sarasvati, Prithvi, and Rudra. Two of the fundamental pillars of Vedic traditions are; Dev or Devata and Yagna. Both pillars deliver the message of selfless service (Sat Karma or purified action) for universal harmony.

Vedic tradition and teachings are focused on harmony and unity. The Vedas address issues ranging from family bonds, social law and order, character building, political and state matters, and spiritual growth. There are Mantras given for the explanations and implementation of these aspects of human living.

Core teachings of the Vedas can be summarized in the following two Mantras:

“केवलाघो भवति केवलादी”

Kevalaagho bhavati kevalaadi - Rig Veda 10.117.6

The one who consumes alone without sharing with others in need, earns immoralities.

“ॐ समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः । समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति”

Samaani va akutih samaana hridayani vah. Samanamastu vo mano yatha vah susahaasati. - Rigveda 10.191.4

Common be your intention, common be (the wishes of) your hearts, common be your thoughts, so that there may be thorough co-operation of the highest order.

Session 2.1: Jain

The Jain tradition of Bharat is as ancient as the Vedic tradition, going back thousands of years before recorded history. It is based on the teachings of 24 Tirthankaras, the realized masters. The spiritual lineage of these Tirthankaras started with Rishabhdeva (Adinath) and concluded with Mahavir Swami. The word "Jain" is derived from the Sanskrit word Jina, meaning conqueror. The one who has conquered all inner cravings such as attachment, anger, pride, greed, etc. is called Jina. The followers of the path practiced and preached by the Jinas are known as Jains. There are references to Jain tirthankaras found in various ancient Vedic texts. Around 557 BCE, Mahavir (the great hero) who was the 24th and last Tirthankara, shaped the present form of Jain tradition. Bhagwan Mahavir was a contemporary of Buddha. The fundamental tenet of Jain tradition is that all phenomena are linked in a universal chain of cause and effect- Karma. The goal of life is to be free from the bondage of all Karma to attain Moksha or Nirvana.

Jain spiritual practices consist of pilgrimages to sacred sites, introspection performed in the morning for the remorse (pratikramana), practice of equanimity (samayika), performing temple pujas, panch kalyanak puja, fasting and prayer/meditation (paryushana or daslakshana), respect for the tirthankars and observe holy days (major festivals).

Apart from 24 tirthankars, there are many great spiritual masters who have inspired countless followers through the ages by revival from time to time. Realized Ones are also called: Siddha – one with special yogic capabilities, Arihant – one who has realized God, Acharya – teachers, Upadhyaya – highly qualified, and Sadhu – one who has renunciated.

Five fundamental principles of this tradition are:

1. Ahimsa (non-violence)

Non-violence is the supreme religion.

2. Parasparopagraho Jivanam (interdependence)

All lives are bound together by mutual support and interdependence.

3. Anekantavada (the doctrine of manifold aspects)

Consider and respect the viewpoints of others.

4. Samyaktva (equanimity)

Equanimity towards both jiva (animate beings) and ajiva (inanimate substances and objects).

5. Jiva-daya (compassion, empathy, and charity)

Caring for and sharing with all living beings and serving them.

Session 2.2: Bauddha

The Bauddha tradition is relatively newer than the Vedic and Jain traditions of Bharat. It is based on the teachings of its founder, Buddha. Though originated in Bharat around 2,500 years ago, it is currently practiced widely outside of Bharat, especially in Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Korea, Tibet, and now many Western countries. The word Buddha comes from 'Bodhi', which means 'awakening' or 'enlightenment'.

Buddha's childhood name was Siddhartha Gautam who was born into a royal family in Shakya kingdom in the Himalayan foothills, now located in Nepal. He is called Buddha after this achievement of Enlightenment.

In this tradition, emphasis is given to 'mindfulness' and 'compassion' rather than rituals. Buddhist spiritual practices consist of pilgrimages to sacred sites, chanting of mantras, stuti (praise) of Buddha, making of symbolic hand gestures (mudras), special pujas, and meditation. Lamp, incense, flowers, food, and water are used in some rituals.

The major texts of this tradition are Sutra Pitaka - Foundations of mindfulness, Vinaya Pitaka - Rules for monks, Abhidharma Pitaka - The psychology and philosophy of the Buddha's teachings, Dhammapada - a collection of Buddha's discourses on various occasions. Most of these texts are written in an ancient Indian language called Pali which was close to Sanskrit.

After the departure (Nirvana) of Buddha, there have been many great spiritual masters who have inspired countless followers throughout the world to practice the Bauddha tradition. These masters are called Bhikshu, Saamanera, Anagarika, Bhante, and Lama.

The major Buddhist festivals are Vesak (Buddha Purnima) to celebrate the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha, Asalha puja aka 'Dharma Day' to celebrate Buddha's first sermon and Ullambana an observance of retribution.

Five fundamental principles of Buddhist tradition are:

1. Not Killing - Compassion
2. Not Stealing - Integrity
3. No Misconduct - Mutual Respect
4. No False Speech - Truthfulness
5. No Intoxication - Mindfulness

The Four Noble Truths are:

1. There is suffering in the form of birth, sickness, old age, death and it is common to all.
2. There is a cause of Suffering: ignorance and greed.
3. To end suffering, one must cut off ignorance and greed.
4. The path to end suffering is known as the Noble Eightfold Path (middle way).

The Noble Eightfold Path:

- 1) Right View. 2) Right Thought. 3) Right Speech. 4) Right Action. 5) Right Livelihood. 6) Right Effort. 7) Right Mindfulness. 8) Right Concentration.

Session 2.3: Sikh

The Sikh tradition is one of the newest traditions of Bharat. This tradition was established around 1500 CE. It is based on the teachings of its founder Guru Nanak Dev, who was born in 1469 in the Punjab region. The tenth and the last Guru of the tradition was Guru Gobind Singh. The followers of the teachings of Guru Nanak and subsequent Gurus are called Sikhs. It is believed that the term "Sikh" has its origin in the Sanskrit term Shishya, meaning "disciple or learner". Apart from Bharat, Sikh tradition is now being practiced by many in the USA, Canada, UK, and many other countries. Sikhs may be small in population but their resolution and adherence to the practices are remarkable.

This tradition evolved and rose when Indian people at that time were going through the atrocities of the Moghul invaders. Its teachings and Gurus inspired the Hindus and the followers of other traditions to unite against the invaders. Guru Nanak's teachings and the Bhakti movement of Sanatan Dharma shared many similarities. The Sikh Gurus believed that one can achieve blissful Mukti (liberation from miseries) while alive and do not have to wait till death. This concept is like the Vedic concept of Jeevan Mukti.

In this tradition, emphasis is given to devotion and remembrance of God all the time rather than many rituals. Sikh spiritual practices consist of visits to sacred sites (Gurdwaras, Takhts), keertan (singing the glory of God), meditation, and daily prayers.

Sikhs keep their hair uncut, or natural, as a sign of living in harmony with God. Men and some women cover their hair with turbans as a mark of their faith.

The major texts of this tradition are Sri Guru Granth Sahib - it is a collection of devotional hymns and poetry that emphasizes meditation on the true Guru (God), Japji Sahib - a Hymn by Guru Nanak, which is the key to Guru Granth Sahib, Ardas - Common prayers, Kirtan Sohila - the bedtime prayer. The Guru Granth Sahib is composed of Gurmukhi, Punjabi, Hindi, Sanskrit, and some regional languages.

The major Sikh festivals are Lohri - the Winter harvest festival, Baisakhi - the Celebration of the birth of Khalsa, or Sikh tradition, Diwali/Bandi Chod Divas - To celebrate the release of Guru Hargobind Singh from the Mughal king's prison, Guru Nanak Jayanti - Birthday of Guru Nanak.

The worship place of this tradition is called Gurdwara, meaning the gateway through which the Guru could be reached. This is where the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib is kept, though copies are also found in Sikh homes. Kirtan (singing of hymns), Katha (reading of the Guru Granth Sahib), and the Langar (free community kitchen) are regularly organized in the Gurdwara.

Hindu Heritage Family Camp 2018



Dharma: 10 Attributes

Dhriti (perseverance), Kshama (forgiveness),
Damah (self restraint),

Asteya (not to take possessions of others without permission),
Shauch (internal and external purification),
Indriya-nigraha (control of senses),
Dhi (wisdom intellect),
Vidya (acquisition of accurate knowledge),
Satyam (truth), Akrodh (abstaining from anger).

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Theme: Dharma Attributes



What is Dharma – धर्म?

The word Dharma is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘dhri’ which means to sustain or uphold. It is a guiding principle for an individual in the journey of life and for the society to uphold the well-being of all its members. Every action, thought, or speech that sustains universal growth and promotes harmony is an element of Dharma. Often, it is loosely and imperfectly translated as religion or righteousness. The guiding principles and practices based on the teachings of the Vedas are titled as Sanatana Dharma or Vedic Dharma or Hindu Dharma. Although definition of Dharma has evolved over time but the central meaning has remained the same.

1. Vedic period (undated):

Rishis said:

"Dhaarnaat iti Dharmam - - धारणात इति धर्म" – That which sustains everything (humans, animals, nature, etc.) in the universe is Dharma.

2. Manu Maharaj defined in Manu-Smriti (Hindu book of ethical conduct – Over 5000 years ago):

Ten attributes of Dharma are:

“धृति, क्षमा दमो, अस्तेयं शौचं इन्द्रियनिग्रह, धी, विद्या, सत्यम अक्रोधो दशकं धर्म लक्षणम्.”

*“Dhriti Kshama Damah Asteyam Shoucham Indriyanigrhah,
Dhi Vidya Satyam Akrodho dashakam dharma lakshanam.”*

Dhriti - (perseverance, patience), Kshama - (forgiveness), Damah - (self-control),
Asteya - (integrity), Shaucha - (internal/external purity), Indriya Nigraha - (sense control)
Dhi - (intellect), Vidya - (learning), Satya - (truth), Akrodha - (absence of anger)

3. Sant Tulsidas ji wrote in the Ramayana (500 years ago)

"Parahit saris Dharma nahi bhai" - Welfare of others (all living beings) is Dharma.

4. Pramukh Swami maharaj of Swaminarayan institute said (20th century):

"Paraspar preeti prasarave aija Dharma" (Gujarati) - That which strengthens the bonds of love among people is Dharma.

If we analyze the above four explanations, we find that the central meaning remains the same: “Dharma is that which holds, integrates and sustains. It elevates the inner personality and inner beauty to bring about: harmony, happiness, morality, good conduct, fearlessness, selfless love, honesty....”

Any action or deed of ours that results in enhancing the inner beauty of the self and brings harmony in the universe at a particular time is our Dharma, all actions or deeds that do not are Adharma.

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Theme: Dharma and Its Attributes



Kshama – क्षमा

Kshama means forgiveness or the ability to forgive. Forgiveness is not a virtue of the weak-minded. It is embodied in a spiritually strong, composed and broadminded person. People who are slaves of their own emotions and mood swings can never exhibit such an attribute and are often unable to forgive even the small mistakes done by their loved ones.

Kshama is a sign of stable mind, peaceful heart, and awakened individual. Only a person who is focused on the larger good, a larger goal, who is unmoved by small disturbances can forget and forgive. Not to forgive is to be imprisoned by the past and grievances that prevent life to proceed in new direction.

An ideal example of forgiveness is Swami Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj which was instituted to spread the message of Vedic or Sanatan Dharma. During one of his travels, as usual Swamiji drank milk and went to bed. At about midnight he felt a severe pain in the stomach. When he woke up he realized that poison had entered his stomach. His disciples and the king of the place became concerned about Swamiji's health. Upon seeing Swami Dayananda's suffering, the cook who mixed poison in Swamiji's milk was overwhelmed with guilt and confessed his crime which he committed under pressure from a traitor. Swamiji's health worsened. On his deathbed, Swamiji secretly called the guilty cook, forgave him, and gave him a bag of money, telling him to leave the kingdom before he was found and executed by the King's men. Swamiji's last words to cook who poisoned him, "It was my fate. How are you to blame?" Before the last breath Swamiji chanted 'Om'. Swami Dayanand was an embodiment of Kshama - stable mind, peaceful heart, and awakened individual.

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Theme: Dharma and Its Attributes



Damah - दमः

Damah means self-control or mastery over the mind. Since self-awareness is the driving force behind Damah, it should not be treated as repression or coercion. A person with “Damah” quality remains naturally attuned to the noble urges but is protected from the illegitimate thoughts and rogue desires arising in mind.

Mastery over thoughts does not come as restraint to a person excelling in Discipline. It comes to the person naturally and effortlessly. To a master of music, reproduction of notes or beats comes naturally and effortlessly.

In the beginning one must make conscious attempt to be alert and deliberate. This requires constant attention to one’s thoughts, feelings, reactions and habitual patterns of thinking. With mastery of mind comes controlled alignment of thoughts and actions. A person whose thoughts and actions are not aligned loses the focus on goal.

An example of Damah is illustrated through Mahavir (childhood name was Vardhaman) Swami’s vigorous penance and deep meditation.

From the early age Vardhaman was indifferent to the material world and its possessions. When Vardhaman was 28, his parents passed away. Vardhaman requested his elder brother to allow him to renounce the worldly life. His brother tried to dissuade him from his resolve but Vardhaman was determined and continued his penance at home. At last, he could convince his brother and at the age of 30 finally abandoned his home and embraced the life of a monk.

Vardhaman spent the twelve years pursuing a life of hard penance. He practiced complete silence, slept for only few hours a day, and observed fast for days and months. During this period, he travelled throughout India to spread the teachings of Jain spiritual tradition. In many places he faced great hardships, hostile treatment by people and attacks by animals. He endured these challenges. Through severe penance (self-control) he acquired high endurance and earned the title of Mahavira or 'great hero'. Later, he was adored as Bhagwan Mahavir.

In Bhagwan Mahavir’s words, “It is better to win over the self than to win over a million enemies.” Victory or mastery over the self (mind) is the utmost Damah.

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Theme: Dharma and Its Attributes



Asteya - अस्तेय

The word *Asteya* translates to integrity or honesty. Integrity demands self-control, a strong will and a high degree of acceptance. These traits are represented through one's thoughts and actions; by being the same person either in solitude or surrounded by people.

A person of integrity is a firm believer of morality; "yes" means yes and "no" means no. He/She stands up for what is right and not what is popular. This person demonstrates *Asteya* by acting fairly, adhering to rules and laws, and respecting others regardless of personal beliefs. A person of integrity earns respect even from those who are not in his/her favor.

An ideal example of Asteya can be described through Acharya Chanakya's character.

Once, a traveler came to meet Chanakya. It was dusk and the darkness had just begun to set in. Chanakya was busy doing work but welcomed his guest and asked him to sit. After entering Chanakya's room, the traveler saw that Chanakya was busy writing some important papers under the light of an oil lamp. He quickly completed the work and focused his attention to the traveler.

Chanakya extinguished the oil lamp under which he was writing and lit another lamp. The traveler was surprised to see this. He asked Chanakya, "Why did you extinguish one lamp and lit another one?" Chanakya replied, "When you entered, I was completing official paperwork pertaining to my state job. The oil filled in that lamp has been bought using money from the National treasury. Now, I am talking to you. This is a personal and friendly conversation, unrelated to my state job. So, I cannot use that lamp now as it will lead to misappropriation of the money from the national treasury."

Integrity is making responsible choices.

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Theme: Dharma and Its Attributes
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Shauch - शौच

The word *Shauch* translates to internal and external cleanliness or purity. The purity of the body and environment falls under external *Shauch*. The purity of thoughts, speech and actions falls under internal purity.

Purity helps in spiritual progress. When the mind is pure, divine thoughts and understanding automatically pour in. When the audio receiver is well-tuned, the music comes without any static, similarly a clean or uncluttered mind can easily comprehend the teachings of Shaastra and Gurus.

Just as during one's daily activities one picks up external impurities like dirt, smoke etc., the mind gathers internal impurities in the form of undesirable thoughts and feelings (anger, greed, depression etc.) arising out of like and dislikes. One way to deal with internal impurities is to develop an awareness of these undesirable thoughts and feelings from within. And a prescribed time-tested method to develop awareness is the daily prayer and keeping mind focused on Bhagwan 24x7.

Ramanujacharya was going to the Temple for morning darshan. He met a cleaning lady on his way. Ramanujacharya said, "O unholy woman, I just took the bath and you have come in my way. What will happen to my purity?" She politely replied, "You are right Acharya that I am impure, but Bhagwan's purity is everywhere. Please tell me where should I go with my impure body?" This innocent response and question from an ordinary cleaning lady stunned Ramanujacharya, as if lightning struck him. He said, "You find Bhagwan's purity everywhere, who I am to judge a pure person like you? You have taught me the true meaning of purity." He fell at her feet.

Later, Ramanujacharya brought many social reforms in the society and stood for equality.

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Indriya-nigraha - इन्द्रियनिग्रह

Indriya-nigraha means control of senses. It is the control over the organs of perception and action: what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and say.

Nature has given us sense organs to interact with worldly objects to operate the instrument called body. The power behind the senses and their behavior is the mind and its desires (vaasana). For example, the tongue and mouth are the organs provided for taste. They do not eat; it is the mind which makes them indulge in overeating, drinking or smoking. By practice of sense control Shaastra means optimum, judicious and restraint in use of senses with the help of a controlled mind. For that reason, the mind is also considered as one of the senses.

In the Bhagvad Gita, Shri Krishna gives an example of a tortoise. The tortoise can, at any time, withdraw its limbs for protection and then exhibit/expand them again for certain purposes. Similarly, the senses of conscious/stable mind are used only for necessary purpose, and are withdrawn otherwise.

Mahatma Gandhi had very few possessions; one of them was a statue of the three wise monkeys. The three monkeys have their origin in the writings of Chinese/Japanese traditions. The three monkeys demonstrate three different actions; See no evil; hear no evil; and speak no evil. (Indriya nigraha of sight, sound and tongue)

A woman came to a Saint with her son. Woman said, “Mahatmaji, my son is indulged in sweets. It is ruining his health. He will listen to you. Please tell him to stop eating sugar.” Mahatma looked at the boy and said. “Come back to me in two weeks’ time.” Two weeks later the woman returned with her child. Mahatma put his hands on the boy’s shoulders and pulled him close and said, firmly, “Please don’t eat sugar”, then released him.

“That’s it?” said the mother. “That’s all you’re going to say?” She was amazed. “Why didn’t you just tell him two weeks ago?”

“Because,” replied Mahatma, “Two weeks ago I was indulged in eating sugar myself.”

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Dhi - धी

Dhi means intellect, wisdom, intuition or faculty of discrimination (Vivek). This is an attribute which helps a person make the right choice, discriminate between right and wrong. Mind is a continuous flow of thoughts while intellect is the faculty of mind which decides which thoughts are to be executed and which are to be discarded.

A person of wisdom is never daunted by the gravity of any difficulty. Dhi makes a person fearless and engages him/her in righteous deeds.

Many of us are confused between what is right or wrong. This is because the mind is not free from contamination. It is filled with selfishness or narrowness. Under the veil of selfishness, a person cannot discriminate between right and wrong. Wisdom comes from continuously sharpening and churning the mind. Wise people have said, “Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. Wisdom does not automatically come with old age, wrinkles may.”

A well-known icon of Dhi was Swami Vivekananda. He intensely demonstrated that all his acts were guided by the intellect. He influenced many people in a positive manner across the world through his wisdom. He repeatedly professed that the power of human intelligence can be used to make the world a better place.

Once, all the animals in the jungle assembled to discuss why humans should be considered superior to animals. The dog said, “I am a symbol of gratitude and have great sense of smell.” Cow said, “I nourish them with my milk.” Peacock said, “My feathers are so beautiful that even Shri Krishna has them tucked in his crown.” Elephant said, “I have an enormous body with which I do wonders for humans.” They all went to Bhagwan and said, “We all have various qualities which human does not have, yet human is superior to us. Enlighten us as to why?” The Bhagwan said, “All that you possess and said is true. But nature has endowed Human with a sixth sense, the eye of discrimination aka Dhi. You are governed by instinct only. Human can attain intuition (Dhi) and through intuition human can control instinct. And if he does not, he is of course worse than a beast!”

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Vidya - विद्या

Vidya means knowledge or learning. In the Bhagvad Gita, Bhagwan said, “There is no purifier which is as great as knowledge.” It is the greatest wealth, because it cannot be stolen by thief, the ruler cannot take it away, it does not get fragmented and it grows when shared with others.

Vidya helps one balance the reactions to the circumstances of life. It helps one secure pleasure and welfare.

On the spiritual ground, Brahman is Knowledge. The Vedas advise a way of living that will prepare us for self-knowledge (Atma-Gyan). In fact, they do not even ask, ‘do you want self-knowledge?’ Just like a mother who decides what is good for children, the Vedas have decided that we must prepare the mind to acquire *Vidya*.

Adi Shankaracharya was one of the greatest philosophers of India. He was an icon and invaluable treasure of Vidya. He translated many Vedic texts to the level of an ordinary aspirant’s understanding.

*Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta in 1861. He was the youngest of his siblings. Due to mother's sickness and father's business travel, young Rabindranath did not get much attention as a child. He loved going to school. Once, one of his teachers angrily discouraged from attending the school. Perhaps this unhappy encounter with his teacher caused him to drop from school. But, he continued to quench his thirst of leaning (*Vidya*) by opening an imaginary school of his own, where the wooden bars of the railing were his students and he was the teacher. Young Rabindranath had the blessings of Devi Saraswati to continue his learning and writings.*

In 1913, he received the Noble Prize for Literature, primarily because of his book "Gitanjali". He was the first person from Asia to receive this honor. Being a great patriot, he composed hundreds of songs. The Indian National Anthem “Jana Gana Mana” is one of them. Out of respect, people called him Gurudev.

Will without Vidya (knowledge) is blunt cutter.

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Akrodh - अक्रोध्

Akrodh means non-anger, calmness, or refusing to be provoked by anger under all circumstances.

In the Bhagvad Gita, Bhagwan explains the origin of anger to Arjun, “Due to association with objects of the world, the desire to acquire and possess them is born. When this desire is obstructed and not fulfilled, anger is born.” Therefore, anger is a different version of desire. The intensity of anger is directly proportional to the intensity of desire.

Anger can push a person to the level of self-destruction. Whether spiritual or social, the fulfillment of goal cannot happen if one is burdened with anger or agitation.

There are several methods to manage and overcome anger. One of the methods is to comprehend that anger is a form of emotional pain. Then, be cognizant about illegitimate desires, the source of pain. Then, keep the mind engaged in positive thinking and spiritual activities (Satsang).

Bhagwan Krishna was an embodiment of calmness (Akrodh). During all his virtuous and heroic acts, he never lost his calmness.

After the Mahabharata war, Shri Krishna was invited as a guest honor to crown Yudhishtira as the king. After learning this news, Duryodhan's mother Gandhari came to the crowning ceremony. She said that Krishna should not be given the honor to crown Yudhishtira. Dhritarashtra, Vidur and many other senior members said that Krishna is the only one who deserves this honor. Despite others recognition of Krishna as the positive role player in the war, Gandhari kept blaming him as the person responsible for her sons' unfair death. She called herself an ascetic and yogi and then cursed Krishna that he will see the destruction of his Yadav clan in front of his eyes. Dhritarashtra, Pandavas and others were shocked on hearing her curse. Krishna didn't say a word, just smiled at her and sought her blessings while others are still in shock. After the ceremony Shri Krishna left Hastinapur in usual tranquil style with nothing against Gandhari in mind.

Wise people have said, “They are exalted who can dissipate anger through analysis as it arises (in the mind), just as one extinguishes glowing fire by water.”

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Satya - सत्य

Satya means truthfulness, avoidance of untruth or values which don't change over time or vary from person to person.

Adi Shankara defined *Satya* as, “*Satya* is speech that is free from hurt and falsehood and is in keeping with what is.” There is no substitution for *Satya*. It is like a resting point of a physical balance/scale. An imitation of the truth, no matter how minor, tips the scale in opposite direction and becomes the beginning of a lie.

The Shaastras (spiritual texts) say that Bhagwan himself is the Truth, so he can only be realized by imbibing the truth in all walks of life.

Ancient King Harishchandra was an embodiment of *Satya*. He was popularly known as ‘Satyavadi (the one speaks *Satya* and only *Satya*)’ Harishchandra. During his school days, Gandhiji watched a drama on Harishchandra's life. He learned how much Harishchandra had to suffer to be truthful. This had a long-lasting effect on Gandhiji. Soon, truth became his way of life. In fact, when he was requested by the people to write his biography, he titled it ‘My experiments with the Truth.’

Shri Vallabhdas was a young boy of 18 years when India got its freedom in 1947 from British rule. Like many other youths of that time he was also influenced by the truthfulness, integrity, service and sacrifices of freedom movement leaders like Tilak, Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Rajagopalachari and Kriplani. Realizing education as an effective tool for social reform, he decided to pursue career as a teacher, earned his PhD and became a professor at the college. Adherence to the truthfulness and social values remained part of his academic quest. Once, he was travelling in train from his hometown to another town. His two young sons were accompanying him. On Arrival at their destination, they got off and walked to the train station exit door. Before exiting, the travelers were supposed to show their train tickets to the ticket collector (TC) at the duty. Shri Vallabhdas searched his pocket and found that tickets were lost. TC asked them to stand aside till he checks other travelers. When TC got free he again asked for the tickets. Shri Vallabhdas politely repeated that he lost the tickets somewhere in the train. Sloppily, TC said that people tell such lies all the time to save money. That statement of TC hit ever truthful Shri Vallabhdas like an arrow. He looked in the eyes of TC and said, “I am a teacher, my duty is to teach values (truth) to children, I just cannot tell a lie.” TC saw the radiance of honesty and truthfulness in the eyes and voice of Shri Vallabhdas. He was stunned, with folded hands he said, “Sir, I trust you, you may please exit.” Shri Vallabhdas’ 13 and 15 years old sons watched the whole episode. The lifelong lesson on Satya they learned that day from their father cannot be taught by any book or university; they saw the embodiment and power of Satya.

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The Essence – सारांश

Once a disciple asked his Guru, “Can you define Dharma in one word.” The Guru replied, “If I define it, it will become two. Dharma is enough.” Sanskrit is a very powerful language with a robust vocabulary. Each word has its root, its own connotation, a special nuance and a message to deliver. At times, to import the meaning of a word, its lakshanaarth (attributes) is used. Rishis have defined attributes of Dharma to elucidate its meaning for teaching purposes. The ten attributes of Dharma can be clubbed into two pragmatic words; Goodness (at psychological level) and Duty (at social level). So, for the ease of understanding, we may roughly infer Dharma as Duty or Goodness.

Many people have misunderstood and translated Dharma as religion, traditions, practices or rituals pertaining to a specific time, place or community. Defining Dharma as a religion or practice is mistaking part for the whole. We must keep in mind that the extinction of few traditions or practices will not affect Dharma. But, if Dharma is extinct then all of humanity will be in discontent and misery. It is the responsibility of educated people to comprehend the true essence of Dharma, integrate it in personal life and protect it.

Rishis have said, “धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः - Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah - The one who protects Dharma is protected by Dharma.”

*Hari Om,
Compilation: Sanjay Mehta*

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2019 HTCI Hindu Heritage Camp

@ Bradford Woods (5040 State Road 67 N., Martinsville IN 46151)

Aug 2nd (7:30 pm) - Aug 4th (noon) 2019

प्राप्य वरान् निबोधत
Learn From Our Ancestors



Organized by: Hindu Temple of Central Indiana, Indianapolis

In Association with: World Hindu Council (VHPA) & Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS)

Session 1:

In **kaṭhōpaniṣada** Yama Dharma Acharya reveals to Nachiketa the learning which has been inspiring young and old for ages, “**उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत - uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata**” Arise, awake, be enlightened (acquire Brahma/Atma Vidya) by sitting at the feet of wise people.

King Vajashrawas, father of Nachiketa, performed special yagna according to Veda, some offering to be given away to Ruthwiks (Pandits) who performs such yagna. Vajashrawas, offered some old useless cows which he had. His son Nachiketa, aged 8, who has undergone Vedic study, felt that his father gifting old cows and will lose the benefit of Yagna. Being a responsible and scholarly son, Nachiketa tried to put forth his point through a question, “Father! I am the most valuable possession as per you. To whom you will give me?”

Vajashrawas being very busy, did not pay attention to his son. But when Nachiketa insisted repeatedly, he got annoyed and in a fit of anger, he declared that he will offer him to Yam Dharma Acharya as “Dakshina (offering)”.

Later when Vajashrawas was free, saw his son starting with a small baggage, asked him, “Where are you going?” Nachiketa replied that he is fulfilling the offer of Dakshina committed by his father and hence going to Yam Dharma Acharya. Shocked father tried to pursue Nachiketa to drop this idea since he blurted out in anger. But scholarly Nachiketa insisted that such commitments have to be fulfilled as per Vedic teachings to maintain the tradition of his noble family.

Nachiketa reached Yam Dharma Acharya’s place. He was out of town, so Nachiketa waited for 3 days until his return.

On return, Yam Acharya, felt extreme guilt of making a vedic student wait outside for 3 days without food and water. After knowing the details from Nachiketa, Yam Acharya offered 3 boons to Nachiketa and strongly pleaded to him to ask anything against the boons.

Nachiketa’s response on the boons:

Towards the first boon, Nachiketa asked that his father should be free from guilt and should accept him as his son as before, if Yam Acharya decides to return him to his father. (Welfare of the family).

Towards his second boon, Nachiketa, asked to teach him an effective ritual that can give enough water, food grains and other material benefits (prosperity) so that he can pass on this knowledge to the people on earth for their comfortable living. (Welfare of the society).

Session 2:

Towards 3rd boon Nachiketa asked Yama Acharya to teach him the knowledge by knowing which no more knowledge is required to attain fulfilment. This is Brahavidya or Atma Gyan.

Though Yama Acharya agreed readily to fulfill first two boons, he was hesitant to fulfill the 3rd boon. Since Brahavidya is very tough and difficult to acquire even by Devatas, Yama Acharya wanted to test Nachiketa for his readiness to receive the teaching. Hence, he made very tempting offers to Nachiketa such as, all the wealth and glory on earth, next a permanent place in Swarga. But Nachiketa rejected all and insisted upon the teaching of Atma or Brahavidya.

Essence of Atmavidya taught by Yama Acharya to Nachiketa:

What is Atma?

1. Consciousness (Atma) principle due to which we are conscious of everything.
2. Consciousness is not part or product of the body but pervades and enliven the body.
3. Consciousness is not limited by the boundary of the body and continue to exist even after the body is gone.
4. Atma is beyond time and space.
5. Atma the consciousness manifests and appears as this universe with Nama/Rupa. In its absence nothing remains.
6. Bodies may be different but Atma is one.
7. Atma is indivisible and does not get contaminated or become part of pervading Sarira (body).

Sadhanas (Spiritual Practices) for Atma Enquiry:

1. One should learn to turn the mind inward through Sadhana/Meditation.
2. Qualified mind (Sattvic mind) disciplined through Bhakti and Karma yoga is required to understand Atma.
3. Shravanam (Intent listening), Mananam (contemplation to clear doubts) and Nidhidhyasanam (assimilation of the teaching) of Shastras is the real way.

Benefit of Atma Gyan (Knowledge of Atma)

1. Sense of insecurity (Basic fear) will vanish.
2. Understanding to detach from the world without hating it.
3. Attaining Permanent fulfillment and peace.
4. Understanding and accepting the world as it is.
5. Destroys Ahankara (I) and Mamakara (Mine) which are the cause for miseries.

Human Beings and its Journey



Yama Acharya also explained to Nachiketa, Atma Vidya through Ratha (Chariot) image. Life is like a journey. Bhagwan has given us all necessary instruments for the journey. Imagine a Ratha which consists of the wooden frame, the 5 horses, reins, the master and the owner. The Ratha represents the body. The horses represent the senses, the reins represent the mind, the master represents the intellect and the owner represents the consciousness / Paramatma. The path or roadway represents the goal or destination. For a successful and intelligent journey the individual has to select the right path or goal and take care of all the essential instruments used for the journey as follows:

1. Your body has to be strong and healthy (physical health)
2. Your our senses should be in your control (sense control).
3. Your mind should be calm (mental health).
4. Your intellect should be sharp (intellectual health).

If one has a clear goal of life and the instruments are in good condition, the journey will be pleasant and successful. For this successful journey of life one should go to a teacher and learn by listening, contemplating and internalizing the Vedic knowledge given by our Rishis/ Acharyas through spiritual texts (Vedas and Upanishads).



Hindu Temple of Central Indiana

21st Hindu Heritage Family Camp

Virtual Event 10:00am - 3:00pm

Saturday, September 12, 2020

THEME

Rishte: Affectionate Bonds with the World



Google Meet

- Group Discussions
 - Youth Speeches
 - Yoga and Meditation
 - Games (Kahoot), Jeopardy
- Bhajan, Geet, and Cultural Program
- Keynote Speaker - Swami Tattvavidananda

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In Association with World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)

Rishte – Affectionate Bonds with the World

Any relationship, either positive or negative, has a profound effect on human emotions. Since it is an aspect of worldly life, it is better to understand and appreciate all aspects of a relationship.

A relationship blossoms and sustains itself based on various factors including commonality in traits, sources, family, heritage, goals, dependency and transactions of mutual interest or taste. In practical life, many create and break a relationship. Relationship is like a sculpture created by a great sculptor through his imagination and his skills, by simply removing unwanted portions from the total material. Thus in any relationship, everyone should know what the unwanted portions are.

Humans by their nature are social animals that have the natural skill of developing, sustaining, and cherishing relationships. The humans have the skill to tune the relationship to suit various requirements, be it an individual need, family purpose, community harmony, or national interest.

The Sanatana Dharma guides people logically to develop a relationship with the entire Universe. Only Sanatana Dharma declares all “Jeevas” to be part of one single family, that is, “VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM”.

Humans cannot survive without a relationship. Every human relates to three aspects of life. They are: the world, the self and the Bhagwan. The very survival of the human is based in transactions, and hence relationships with the world cannot be avoided.

Lessons learned through transactions the world urges individuals to relate these life experiences to do some course correction within them. Some people go beyond and learn from noble scriptures and saints to observe, correct, and evolve themselves to seek higher goals and ultimate liberation. This transaction and relationship with the self is natural.

Relation with Bhagwan is part of human life. Those who believe in Bhagwan transact with him as per their conviction and even those who do not believe in Bhagwan relate with him in trying to prove his absence.

While the scientific advancement in the world has given an easy way of living, it has also created too many distractions to corrupt the human intellectually. The human race is increasingly involved in activities based on dry intellect, hence losing fine aspects of human emotions. This may be a cause for the humans to disregard many beautiful relationships which they could have cherished. The quality of relating to nature, native country or village, family and other fellow humans are considerably getting dampened due to the involvement of humans in material attractions and electronic gadgets. This is an uncomfortable trend that dries up the human emotions to become a “Robo” of activities with no humanity left inside.

This is why we have selected the topic “RISHTE” (Relationship) as a topic of discussion for the camp (2020) to highlight the beauty, sensitivity, and inherent happiness involved.

There are many types of relationships. Certain relationships reflect high moral and ethical values. Some relationships involve very fine and subtle emotions. Other relationships reflect a strong commitment and nobility.

For discussion in this camp, we have selected a few examples of very fine relationships from the “Itihasa and Puranas”. The examples of relationships that have been selected will be relevant to all ages to understand and appreciate.

SESSION 1

Friendship:

Among the various relationships, friendship is the one relationship that anyone will cherish. True friendship is beyond any barrier and sustains throughout the whole life with the same intensity.

Here are two well-known examples: the friendship between Sri Ram Bhagwan and Sugriva, and the other is between Sri Krishna and Sudama.

Comparing Sri Ram and Sugriva they shared some things in common. Sri Ram was denied his rightful kingdom and destined to be in the forest and the same situation was with Sugriva. Both of their wives were abducted. In both cases there was no justice for such a situation.

Though these common issues might have brought them together, there were also other subtle reasons. Sugriva pleaded for Ram's help to get back to his kingdom. Sri Ram is the son of a king who wanted to do his duty of establishing justice by punishing Bali. At the same time, Sri Ram needed an army to face mighty Ravana in a battle, making this a mutually beneficial situation. Moreover, it is the wisdom of Hanumanji which brought Ram and Sugriva into a strong meaningful friendship.

There are many values in this example. The difference between race (Human and Vanara) did not matter. Though the qualities (Virtues) of Sugriva are no comparison with those of Rama, it is the compassion of Sri Ram towards fellow beings that brought this friendship closer. Further, it is the strong desire and devotion of Hanuman to Sri Ram, and recognition and appreciation of Hanuman's wisdom by Sri Ram that reinforced this friendship. Sri Ram and Sugriva friendship indicate that if you have Dharma on your side Bhagwan will help you in any form.

Another nice example of friendship is between Sri Krishna and Sudama. The beauty of this friendship is the absence of a glaring difference between a handsome, wealthy king and a poverty-stricken commoner. While Bhagwan Krishna never forgot the closeness based on their “Gurukula” friendship, Sudama did not show the traces of temptation to exploit the friendship by asking favors. When they met after several years of parting, both of them could bring back the same intensity of their earlier friendship with no issues between them. Sudama's small gift of two handfuls of puffed rice was accepted by Krishna, who was ecstatic at the sight of the gift even though more lavish gifts were right outside the palace door. The strong feeling of friendship made Krishna give a lot of wealth to Sudama, who only enjoyed the friendship with no desire to ask such a favor. If there is a noble friendship like Krishna and Sudama, their lives merge and everything is understandably shared without the need for asking.

SESSION 2 and SESSION 3

Bhakti:

The next fine relationship is between Bhagwan and Bhakta. The classic examples of such relationship are from the lives of Prahlad and Shabari.

Prahlad is the young son of the most powerful Asura King Hiranyakashyap ruling the wealthiest kingdom, whereas Shabari is an elderly poor woman belonging to a tribal community. But both of them had one thing in common. Both shared the commonality of their intensity and the depth of devotion to Bhagwan. Their relationship with Bhagwan (Vishnu) was without any personal need or requirement. Prahlad was subjected to death traps many times by his own father, Hiranyakashyap, who hated Bhagwan Vishnu and hence Prahlad was always thinking of Bhagavan Vishnu. The very survival of Shabari was a challenge due to poverty and hurdles of forest life but she was expecting with a great hope every day and every moment of arrival of Bhagwan Ram. Both of them were never bothered about any hurdles. If someone has an intense desire, respect and can relate with the Bhagwan, then knowledge, wealth, power, or any life challenges never come on the way to achieve this glorious relationship. Bhagwan appeared as Narsimha to Prahlad and Ram to Shabari and fulfilled their wishes.

Guru and Sishya

There is one other relationship that is useful to understand is between Guru and Sishya. In our culture, Guru has been given a very prominent position since he brings enlightenment in the life of a student. Everyone is born as an ignorant person but student gets a second meaningful birth by joining Gurukulam.

For this meaningful relationship between Guru and Sishya, both should have certain qualifications. Guru should possess the skill to teach effectively with patience and compassion. Sishya in his or her part should have “Sharaddha” (total commitment and respect) to learn in the environment he or she is in. Finally, both Guru and Sishya have the responsibility to see that the knowledge is well utilized to protect Dharma.

Here are two fine examples of the Guru/Sishya relationships:

Krishna/Arjun and Ramakrishna/Vivekananda

Krishna was a close friend of Arjuna. He became a Guru by teaching Arjuna the ultimate goals of life for protecting Dharma. Krishna had all the deserving qualifications of a Guru. He not only had “Gyana” (knowledge) but also he was a living Gyani. He had all the capabilities to teach and committed to protect Dharma. Arjuna is a great warrior and engaged in an epic battle of Mahabharat became occupied by emotions and delusions and became helpless at a critical moment of starting the Dharmik war for which he waited for very long painful years. In this situation, the glorious king and Krishna’s friend Arjuna surrendered to become a Sishya under Krishna who became a Guru. This relationship between Guru and Sishya blossomed successfully since the Sishya totally surrendered with full faith in his friend and Krishna deservingly became a Guru since he had knowledge and capabilities. Both Arjuna and Krishna were **Grihasthas**, and both had many duties (Karmas) to be performed. The teachings of Krishna to Arjuna became “Bhagavad Gita” which has become the guiding light for all **Grihasthas** (Samsara) to understand and successfully deal with all emotional problems. He also gives a voice to our devotion and our willingness to learn, grow, and transform.

The **relationship between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda** (Narendranath) began in November 1881 when they met at the house of Surendra Nath Mitra. Ramakrishna asked Narendranath (the pre-monastic name of Vivekananda) to sing. Impressed by his singing talent, he invited him to Dakshineswar. Narendra accepted the invitation and went to Dakshinewsar to meet Ramakrishna. The meeting proved to be a turning point in the life of Narendranath. Initially Narendra did not accept Ramakrishna as his master and found him "mono maniac", but eventually he became one of closest people in his life. Ramakrishna reportedly shaped the personality of Narendranath and prepared him to dedicate his life to serve the humanity. After the death of Ramakrishna, Narendra and his other monastic disciples established their first monastery at Baranagar. Vivekananda delivered two lectures in New York and England in 1901 on Ramakrishna, which were later compiled into a book — *My Master*. Vivekananda said — "All that I am, all that the world itself will someday be, is owing to my Master, Shri Ramakrishna."

Conclusion:

Relationship is a very important aspect of humanity. The only human can develop or ruin a relationship as per their wish. Creating a value-added relationship and avoiding evil relationships show the wisdom of a person. We have our own examples of fine and noble relationships, where morality, commitment, selflessness, sincerity, and fine emotions have been involved. From these relationships, we can learn the beauty and art of developing noble relationships.

Rishta means relationship between people. They can be 2 people or a group of people. Parents have parental rishta/relationship with their children. Brother Sister has a relationship. Teacher student have a relationship. Husband wife have a relationship. God and Devotee have a relationship. Rishte is a feel of truthfulness came from heart...it feels that it's something true with full of feelings inside.

These Invisible elements of human bonds (rishte) are the glue called *Prem* or *Sneha* or unconditional love ***Sambandh***.



Importance of Relationships in Life

What Are Relationships?

Relationships are of two types:

Blood Relationships: These include mother, father, brother, sister, grandparents, etc. These relationships are connected to us from birth.

Emotion-Based Relationships: These are the relationships we build in our lives, like friendships, colleagues, and other connections.

Importance of Relationships

Sometimes, emotional relationships can be more important than blood relationships. Any relationship is based on love and trust. With good behavior, we can make even an unknown person our friend and strengthen our relationships. Conversely, rude behavior can spoil even our blood relationships. If there is a crack or disagreement in any relationship, it should be resolved through communication. It is better to talk and compromise rather than create distances.



Feelings in Relationships

Feelings are very important in any relationship. It is the feeling that binds two strangers in a relationship and helps them build a life together. Before marriage, two people are strangers, but after marriage, it is the feeling that keeps them together like a thread. This bond of feeling keeps them connected for a lifetime.

Sense of Belonging in Relationships

A sense of belonging is essential in relationships. It is important to support each other in both happiness and sorrow. The significance of relationships is known by who stands with us in difficult times and who leaves us. An ideal relationship is one where partners support each other in every joy and sorrow.

Understanding in Relationships

Understanding is crucial in relationships. It's important to understand and explain each other well so that relationships last a lifetime. Whether it is between husband and wife, father and son, or brother and sister, understanding each other's emotions like pain, sorrow, joy, and sadness is necessary. Only then can relationships be healthy.

Conclusion

Some relationships are made by God, and some are made by us. Regardless of the type, we should cherish and uphold our relationships wholeheartedly. Maintaining healthy relationships by considering every aspect of them is very beneficial for our mental well-being.

Relationships are the foundation of our lives, and their importance is felt in every situation, big or small. Therefore, we should value and nurture our relationships.



2021 Hindu Heritage Family Camp, Indianapolis

In association with VHP of America

DAY CAMP AT HINDU TEMPLE OF CENTRAL INDIANA

Saturday, August 7, 2021

3350 N. German Church Road, Indianapolis, IN 46235



Theme: The Bhagavad Gita - A Handbook of Life

Introduction: The Bhagavad Gita - A handbook of life

Why has Gita been chosen as a topic for this year?

In the last two years, humanity has faced the great challenge of a pandemic. Many have lost their loved ones, their income, and even some properties, experiencing a multitude of miseries. This unavoidable situation has left the entire humanity struggling to recover, with no clear path forward. Consequently, people have been overwhelmed by all sorts of negative emotions.

Surprisingly, Arjuna, the greatest warrior and the most popular among the Pandavas, found himself in a similar situation. He, too, lost his kingdom and was driven to the forest. The Kauravas, like a relentless pandemic, were relentlessly pursuing his family. His family believed that waging a war against the Kauravas would provide immediate relief, much like the vaccination in our current context. However, when the decisive moment for war arrived, Arjuna was afflicted with wrong emotions and indecision, much like a patient in the ICU. It was at this critical juncture that the super-specialist, Shri Krishna, came to his aid with the proper treatment, using the medical kit called "The Bhagavad Gita."

Fortunately, all the remedies Krishna suggested have been systematically compiled in the Bhagavad Gita and are available to us. Since we are all emotionally shattered like Arjuna in the present situation, it is wise to turn to the Gita for the strength to face our challenges.

Thus, we have chosen the Bhagavad Gita as the topic for this year's camp, considering it an appropriate subject for discussion.

Why has the Gita been given great importance?

The great Acharyas, such as Shankara, have identified three spiritual texts as the most essential for study: the Brahmasutra, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. These are collectively known as the Prasthanatrayi, or the three foundational texts of spiritual wisdom. Among these, the Brahmasutra and the Upanishads focus on specific philosophical areas, whereas the Gita offers a practical approach to living a life of high moral values and achieving spiritual goals.

The Bhagavad Gita is a renowned Hindu spiritual text that is universally revered, not only for its sanctity but also as a practical guide for daily life—a true "handbook of life." Its messages, such as "inaction in action and action in inaction," are timeless and applicable to seekers of all ages. The Gita encompasses Brahma Vidya (knowledge of the ultimate reality) and Yoga Shastra (science of yoga) presented in a dialogue between Shri Krishna and Arjuna.

The Bhagavad Gita consists of eighteen chapters and 700 shlokas, forming an ocean of knowledge that addresses several prominent topics:

- **Ishwar Swaroop (Nature of Ishwar/Brahman/Bhagwan):** It describes the nature, function, and glory of Bhagwan in both Saguna (manifest) and Nirguna (unmanifest) forms.
- **Jeevatma Swaroop (Nature of the individual):** It emphasizes that the essential nature of the individual is not the body or the mind, but the Chaitanya (consciousness principle).

- **Karma Yoga (Discipline of action and duty):** It teaches the importance of performing the right actions with the right attitude.
- **Gyan Yoga (Discipline of knowledge):** It involves the inquiry into the true nature of the Atman (individual self) and Brahman (universal Self), revealing their essential unity.
- **Bhakti Yoga (Ishwar's Anugraha / Grace):** It underscores the necessity of Ishwar's grace for spiritual study and progress and the ways to tap into this ever-flowing grace.
- **Jeeva Ishwar Swaroop Oneness:** It highlights the essential oneness of the individual and Ishwar.
- **Sat Guna (Importance of values):** It stresses the importance of noble values and behavior for absorbing the teachings of Vedanta and the Upanishads.

Given its comprehensive and practical approach to spirituality, the Bhagavad Gita has been given great importance as a guide for leading a life enriched with wisdom, morality, and spiritual fulfillment.



How to Study the Gita?

Studying the Bhagavad Gita, like any Vedic spiritual text, is most effective under the guidance of a Guru. The learning process typically involves three stages:

1. Shravanam (Listening)

This stage involves attentive listening to the teachings of the Guru. It requires full concentration and an open mind to absorb the wisdom being imparted.

While listening, it is natural for questions to arise. However, it is advisable to note these questions for later contemplation rather than interrupting the flow of the teaching.

2. Mananam (Contemplation)

- In this stage, the student reflects on the teachings heard during Shravanam. This involves deep contemplation and repeated thinking about the lessons to internalize the knowledge.

- Many doubts and questions that arose during Shravanam are resolved during this period of contemplation. For any remaining doubts, the student should seek clarification from the Guru to ensure a clear understanding of the teachings.

3. Nididhyasana (Assimilation)

- This is the final stage, where the student integrates the teachings into daily life. It involves living the knowledge and embodying the principles learned through Shravanam and Mananam.
- At this stage, the knowledge becomes a natural part of the student's being. It is not just theoretical understanding but is reflected in actions, behavior, and lifestyle.

By following these stages—Shravanam, Mananam, and Nididhyasana—a student can deeply understand and embody the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, leading to a life enriched with spiritual wisdom and practical guidance.

Gita Dhyana shloka:

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारतम् ।
अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीम्- अष्टादशाध्यायिनीम् अम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्- गीते भवद्वेषिणीम् ॥ १॥

Om pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam
vyāseṇa grathitām purāṇa-muninā madhye mahābhārata
advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm
amba tvām anusandadhāmi bhagavad-gīte bhava-dveṣiṇīm

The Bhagavad Gita was taught to Arjuna by Lord Krishna, who is considered an incarnation of Bhagwan Narayana (Vishnu). This sacred dialogue took place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, just before the commencement of the great war of the Mahabharata. It was written by the sage Ved Vyasa. The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita provide profound spiritual guidance and philosophical insights. It addresses the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by Arjuna and, by extension, all individuals. The Gita offers practical advice on how to live a righteous life, fulfill one's duties (dharma), and attain spiritual enlightenment.



The Bhagavad Gita's timeless wisdom continues to inspire and guide individuals in their spiritual and daily lives, making it one of the most revered texts in Hinduism.

Session 1: Stithpragya (Steady Wisdom) attributes (Chapter 2)

One of the hallmarks of the Bhagavad Gita's teachings is the attributes of "Stithpragya" (Steady wisdom or state of mind). When our mind is unstable, it experiences frustration, agitation, stress, nervousness, etc. Arjun was in such a state of mind just before the great battle of Mahabharata. He was confused, disillusioned, and deviated from his goal. Through his discourse, Bhagwan Krishna helped Arjun regain his wisdom, confidence, and commitment to his duty (Swa-Dharma).

We all must perform actions (Karma) at various stages and roles in our lives, as a student, sportsmen, professionals, and as a householder. Our goal is to perform these actions with perfection. The foremost requirement of 'perfection in action' is to have a steady mind/wisdom'.

Bhagwan then teaches Arjun how to become a person of steady wisdom and what happens after that:

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन्। आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति॥ (भगवद्गीता २.६४)

Raagadwesha viyuktaistu vishayaanindriyaishcharan;
Aatmavashyair vidheyaatmaa prasaadamadhigacchati. (2.64)

One who is free from attachment and aversion, and controls the senses through a disciplined self, attains the grace of the Lord.

- Have self-control while living with all materialistic objects. – Atma-vashyaih
- Remain free from attraction and repulsion (pair of opposites). – Raag-Dvesha viyukta
- Such a person attains peace and happiness because his mind/wisdom is steady. - Prasaadam

Session 2: Daivi Sampada – Divine Values (Chapter 16)

This chapter defines divine and not divine qualities. Divine qualities help adopt a way of life which in turn helps achieve the goal of life: shifting focus from what I am to who I am or shifting focus from perishable (Anatma - अनात्मा) to imperishable (Atma - आत्मा).

Divine qualities help adopt a way of life (do's and don'ts). Bhagwan enumerates 26 divine qualities from Abhayam – अभयं (absence of fear) to Natimanita – नातिमानिता (humility). Cultivation of these qualities within is a path to being a complete human being /Sadhak /vaishnavjan:

1. Fearlessness (Abhayam)
2. Purity of heart (Satvasamsuddhih)
3. Steadfastness in Knowledge and Yoga (Jnanayogavyavasthithi)
4. Charity (Dana)
5. Control of the senses (Dama)
6. Sacrifice (Yajna)
7. Study of shastra (Svadyaya)
8. Austerity (Tapas)
9. Straightforwardness (Arjavam)
10. Harmlessness (Ahimsa)
11. Truthfulness (Satyam)
12. Absence of anger (Akrodha)
13. Renunciation (Tyagah)
14. Peacefulness (Santi)
15. Absence of fault finding (Apaisunam)
16. Compassion towards beings (Daya)
17. Freedom from covetousness (Aloluptvam)

18. Gentleness (Mardavam).
19. Modesty (Hrih)
20. Absence of fickleness (Achapalam)
21. Vigour (Tejas)
22. Forgiveness (Kshama)
23. Fortitude (Dhrti)
24. Purity (Saucham)
25. Absence of hatred (Adroha)
26. Humility (Natimanita)

Take home Shlokas

(Our Sankalp should be that each camper goes home with these two shlokas memorized.)

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः।

ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः॥ (भगवद्गीता १२.४)

Sanniyamyendriya-grāmam sarvatra sama-buddhayah;

Te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhuta-hite ratāh. (12-4)

Those who have restrained their senses, are balanced in all circumstances and are dedicated to the welfare of all beings, they alone attain Me.

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः। कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत्॥ (भगवद्गीता १६.२१)

Tri-vidham narakasyedam dvāram nāshanam ātmanah;

Kāmah krodhah tathā lobhah tasmād etat trayam tyajet. (16-21)

Desire, anger, and greed are three gates to hell - the cause of one's destruction. Therefore, one should give up these three.



Highlights of Gita (Chapter wise)

by N. Chandramouli

Chapter 1: Arjuna Vishada Yoga

All five brothers of the Pandava family were deeply hurt due to various injustices done to them by Duryodhana. All efforts to avoid war failed as Duryodhana refused to listen to wise elders, including Lord Krishna, on their Dharmic reasoning. Thus, the war became inevitable. While the Pandavas viewed the war as revenge for the insults they had suffered, Krishna saw the war as essential to establish Dharma against Adharma.

At Arjuna's request, Krishna agreed to become his charioteer. Arjuna was initially enthusiastic about the war, especially with Krishna by his side. However, when he saw his loved ones such as Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and close relatives on the battlefield, he forgot his duties and his emotions overwhelmed him. His strong attachment (Raga) led to extreme grief (Shoka) and delusion (Moha). Under the grip of these negative emotions, the great warrior became weak and helpless. Ultimately, he surrendered to his friend Krishna for guidance, leading to the birth of the Bhagavad Gita.

The combination of Shoka and Moha is called Vishada. Hence, this chapter is named Arjuna Vishada Yoga.

Highlights:

1. *Even a great warrior like Arjuna becomes weak when emotions take over.*
2. *Krishna's avatar was to establish Dharma, and perhaps Arjuna's emotional turmoil was part of Krishna's divine play (Leela) to teach the Bhagavad Gita.*
3. *Arjuna's unique emotional struggle necessitated Krishna's explanation of Karma Yoga, emphasizing detachment from the results of actions.*

Chapter 2: Sankhya Yoga

This chapter covers four important parts:

1. Arjuna Sharanagati (Arjuna's surrender to Krishna)
2. Gnana Yoga (The Yoga of Knowledge)
3. Karma Yoga (The Yoga of Action)
4. Sthitaprajna (The Person of Steady Wisdom)

Arjuna, gripped by uncontrolled emotions and delusion, acts as a typical Samsari (one entangled in worldly conflicts, confusion, and misery). Prepared for war for years, he starts arguing against fighting, showing his frustration at the injustice done by his relatives. In his confused state, Arjuna finds no alternative but to surrender to his friend, philosopher, and guide Krishna.

Transmission of knowledge is possible only if the disciple surrenders to the guru in good faith. Thus, Arjuna becomes the disciple (Shishya) and Krishna the guru. To bring Arjuna out of his severe psychosomatic condition, Krishna shocks him by declaring that he is not just the body or mind but the Atman (soul), which only experiences actions. This jerks Arjuna out of his misery, making him attentive to Krishna's teachings. Krishna uses Gnana Yoga to explain this.

Once Arjuna attains a reasonable mental calmness, Krishna explains Karma Yoga, insisting that one cannot avoid action (Karma) until death. However, doing Karma without attachment is essential, which is Karma Yoga.

Krishna also touches on the topic of the mentally equanimous person (Sthitaprajna). He describes the wise person who maintains mental equanimity despite life's ups and downs, calling this person a Gnani (one with true knowledge). The ultimate goal of a human is to become a Gnani. Krishna emphasizes mind and sense control and deep contemplation of the true self.

Highlights:

- *Arjuna Sharanagati: Even a noble and learned warrior like Arjuna can be trapped in Samsaric illusions. Surrendering to a wise person for advice requires shedding the ego.*
- *Krishna tactfully gives Arjuna the essence of Gnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, and the qualities of a Gnani, emphasizing that human life is more than just reacting to situations.*

Chapter 3: Karma Yoga

This chapter covers three topics:

1. Karma Yoga
2. Loka Sangraha (Protection of Humanity)
3. Necessary Sadhanas (Spiritual Practices)

Karma Yoga: Humans cannot avoid Karma until death. Instead of indulging in immoral or purposeless Karmas for sense pleasures or material accumulation, one should dedicate life to useful Karmas. Krishna emphasizes doing one's Swadharma (individual responsibilities towards family and society) with full commitment and enjoyment without personal expectations or ego. Karmas should be undertaken with Prasada Buddhi (dedicating every Karma to God and accepting any result as Prasada).

Krishna explains that even a Gnani (realized person) performs Karmas without ego for the benefit of humanity. Normal people should learn to do Karma as Karma Yoga and understand that Karmas performed by Gnanis are for the welfare of others.

Sadhana: Krishna suggests practicing self-control of pleasure-seeking senses and the aimless wandering mind. One should deeply contemplate the realities of life and avoid excess.

Highlights:

- *Avoiding activity (Karma) is not possible. Every Karma brings an effect, and the culmination of these effects causes the birth and death cycle. To opt out of this cycle, one should convert inevitable Karmas into Karma Yoga.*
- *Gnanis perform Karmas for the welfare of others.*
- *The Sadhanas suggested in this chapter are essential to improve individual personality to understand and implement Karma Yoga.*

Chapter 4: Gnana Karma Sanyasa Yoga

This chapter deals with two major topics:

1. God taking "Avatara" (Incarnation)
2. Gnana Karma Sanyasa (Renunciation through Knowledge)

Avatara: God incarnates as an Avatara whenever Dharma is severely challenged by Adharma. Krishna declares that to protect Dharma from extinction, he will come as an Avatara periodically. Avatara cannot be compared with ordinary beings; they are not bound by worldly miseries (Samsara).

Gnana Karma Sanyasi: This term defines a Gnani who has renounced worldly desires and may perform Karmas for the benefit of society without being bound by them or affected by pleasure and pain.

Sadhanas: Krishna emphasizes the importance of Shraddha (faith), Tatparyam (firm commitment), and purity of mind. He glorifies the importance of knowledge of the true self (Gnana).

Highlights:

- *God appears as an Avatara to protect humanity and restore the balance of Dharma and Adharma.*
- *Gnanis may work for the betterment of the community without selfish motives.*
- *Purity of mind and extreme commitment to Shraddha are essential to achieve liberation (Moksha).*

Chapter 5: Karma Sanyasa Yoga

This chapter covers three topics:

1. Nishtadwayam (Two Types of Lifestyles)
2. Vidwat Sanyasa (Renunciation of the Wise)
3. Sadhanas

Nishtadwayam: Arjuna asks whether Sanyasa (renunciation of all Karma) or Yoga (Karma) is better. Krishna replies that activities without attachment purify the mind. Thus, a person who understands Karma Yoga can attain the stage of Sanyasa. A householder (Grihastha) can also attain the qualities of a Sanyasi through Karma Yoga.

Vidwat Sanyasa: Krishna talks about a Sanyasi who has realized Brahman. Such Gnanis consider every happening, including pain and pleasure, as acceptable and are unaffected by them. They treat all beings with compassion and equality.

Sadhanas: Krishna emphasizes controlling Kama (desire) and Krodha (anger), the basic causes of life's problems. He explains the terms Jeevan Mukta (liberated while alive) and Videha Mukta (liberated after death).

Highlights:

- *Spiritual growth and ultimate liberation do not require becoming a Sanyasi. A householder practicing Karma Yoga can achieve the same.*
- *Kama and Krodha are the root causes of negative emotions and should be controlled.*

Chapter 6: Dhyana Yoga

This chapter covers two main topics:

1. All Aspects of Dhyana (Meditation)
2. Yogabhrashta (One Who Falls from Yoga)

Dhyana:

- **Bahiranga Sadhanas:** Practices adopted in daily life, such as moderation in food, speech, and activities.
- **Antaranga Sadhanas:** Practices for meditation, including Pranayama (breath control), sitting posture, and withdrawing senses inward.
- **Meditative Condition:** Focusing on a personal God and realizing one's true nature.
- **Dhyana Phalam:** Repeated meditation leads to abiding in one's true nature.
- **Obstacles:** The wandering nature of the mind.
- **Overcoming Obstacles:** Regular meditation practice with Shraddha and detachment.

Yogabhrashta: Krishna assures Arjuna that spiritual practice started in any birth will continue in subsequent births from where it left off. Such a person is called Yogabhrashta.

Highlights:

- *Meditation is essential for spiritual growth. To calm the mind, practices like Yama/Niyama (ethical guidelines) and Pranayama are necessary.*
- *Spiritual practices are never wasted and will continue in future births.*
- *Reducing worldly transactions and converting them into Karma Yoga prepares the mind for meditation.*

Chapter 7: Gnana Vignana Yoga

This chapter discusses two main topics:

1. Ishwara Swarupam (Nature of God)
2. Bhakti (Devotion)

Ishwara Swarupam: Krishna explains that Ishwara has two components: Chaitanya Tatvam (consciousness) and Jata Tatvam (matter), also known as Purusha and Prakriti. Ishwara is responsible for creation, sustenance, and dissolution. The world (Jagat) is Mithya (an illusion) and cannot exist without Ishwara. Only a mind with a deep thirst for God realization can understand Ishwara Tatvam.

Bhakti: Devotees are classified into four types: Arta (seeking relief from suffering), Artharthi (seeking material gains), Jignyasu (seeking knowledge), and Gnani (seeking liberation). While Ishwara responds to the first three types of Bhaktas, he is more aligned with the Gnani Bhakta.

Highlights:

- *The universe and beings are created by and within Ishwara.*
- *True Bhakti arises from understanding Ishwara's omnipresence.*
- *Different types of devotees have different motivations for seeking God.*

Chapter 8: Akshara Brahma Yoga

This chapter answers Arjuna's questions about important concepts:

1. Akshara Brahma (Imperishable Supreme)
2. Adiyagna (Presiding Deity of Sacrifices)
3. Adhibhuta (Material World)
4. Adhidaiva (Celestial World)
5. Adhyatma (Self)
6. Antakala Vidya (Knowledge at the Time of Death)

Antakala Vidya: Krishna teaches the importance of maintaining a clear mind at the time of death. Thoughts focused on material possessions will lead to future births. By practicing meditative control and contemplation of Ishwara, a person can reach Ishwara.

Highlights:

- *The mind's state at death is crucial for liberation.*
- *Deep contemplation of Ishwara can lead to liberation.*

Chapter 9: Raja Vidya Raja Guhya Yoga

This chapter covers four main topics:

1. Ishwara Tatvam
2. Bhakti
3. Ishwara's Indifference to Devotee's Wealth and Caste
4. Parabhakti (Supreme Devotion)

Ishwara Tatvam: Krishna emphasizes that all beings and creation are within him. The creation process continues due to his will. The universe is an extension of Ishwara's power.

Bhakti: Bhakti is a crucial element of spiritual progress. Ishwara accepts any form of sincere worship and devotion, regardless of the devotee's wealth or caste.

Parabhakti: Devotion to God should be unconditional and without desires.

Highlights:

- *Ishwara is the creator and sustainer of the universe.*
- *Devotion is the key to connecting with Ishwara.*
- *Sincere devotion is accepted by Ishwara regardless of external factors.*

Chapter 10: Vibhuti Yoga

This chapter describes the various manifestations (Vibhutis) of Ishwara:

1. Ishwara's Splendour
2. Understanding Ishwara through Vibhutis

Vibhutis: Krishna lists his manifestations, such as being the essence of water, the light of the sun and moon, and the intelligence of the wise. These manifestations help devotees understand Ishwara's omnipresence.

Highlights:

- *Recognizing Ishwara's manifestations in the world helps devotees connect with him.*
- *Vibhutis are reminders of Ishwara's omnipresence and power.*

Chapter 11: Vishwarupa Darshana Yoga

This chapter covers:

1. Arjuna's Request to See Krishna's Universal Form
2. Krishna's Vishwarupa (Universal Form)
3. Arjuna's Realization and Request for Krishna's Normal Form

Vishwarupa: Krishna reveals his universal form, displaying his infinite aspects and powers. This vision overwhelms Arjuna, making him realize the true nature of Ishwara.

Highlights:

- *The universal form of Krishna represents the vastness and omnipotence of Ishwara.*
- *Understanding the true nature of Ishwara brings a deeper sense of devotion and reverence.*

Chapter 12: Bhakti Yoga

This chapter focuses on:

1. Different Forms of Worship
2. Characteristics of a True Devotee
3. Path of Devotion

Worship: Krishna explains that both forms and formless worship are valid. However, worship with form is easier for most devotees.

True Devotee: A true devotee is characterized by unwavering faith, non-attachment, humility, and self-control.

Highlights:

- *Both forms and formless worship lead to spiritual growth.*
- *True devotion involves deep faith and detachment from material desires.*

Chapter 13: Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga

This chapter covers:

1. Kshetra (Field) and Kshetrajna (Knower of the Field)
2. Nature of the Self

Kshetra and Kshetrajna: Krishna explains the difference between the body (Kshetra) and the self (Kshetrajna). Understanding this distinction is crucial for self-realization.

Highlights:

- *The body is temporary, while the self is eternal.*
- *Realizing the true nature of the self leads to liberation.*

Chapter 14: Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga

This chapter discusses:

1. Three Gunas (Qualities)
2. Overcoming the Gunas

Three Gunas: Krishna describes the three gunas (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas) and their influence on human behavior and consciousness.

Overcoming the Gunas: By understanding and transcending the Gunas, one can achieve liberation.

Highlights:

- *The three gunas influence human behavior and consciousness.*
- *Transcending the gunas leads to spiritual liberation.*

Chapter 15: Purushottama Yoga

This chapter covers:

1. The Supreme Person (Purushottama)
2. The Eternal Tree of Life

Purushottama: Krishna describes himself as the Supreme Person, beyond the material and spiritual worlds.

Tree of Life: The eternal tree symbolizes the material world, and understanding its nature helps in detachment and liberation.

Highlights:

- *Krishna is the Supreme Person, transcending both material and spiritual realms.*
- *Understanding the Tree of life aids in detachment and liberation.*

Chapter 16: Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga

This chapter discusses:

1. Divine and Demonic Qualities
2. Importance of Divine Qualities

Divine and Demoniatic Qualities: Krishna describes the qualities that lead to liberation (divine) and bondage (demoniac).

Importance of Divine Qualities: Cultivating divine qualities is essential for spiritual progress.

Highlights:

- *Divine qualities lead to liberation, while demoniac qualities cause bondage.*
- *Cultivating divine qualities is crucial for spiritual growth.*

Chapter 17: Shraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga

This chapter covers:

1. Three Types of Faith
2. Impact of Faith on Actions

Three Types of Faith: Krishna explains the three types of faith (Sattvic, Rajasic, and Tamasic) and their influence on human behavior.

Impact of Faith: The type of faith one possesses influences their actions and spiritual progress.

Highlights:

- *Faith influences actions and spiritual growth.*
- *Cultivating Sattvic faith leads to spiritual progress.*

Chapter 18: Moksha Sanyasa Yoga

This chapter discusses:

1. Renunciation and Liberation
2. Summary of the Bhagavad Gita

Renunciation and Liberation: Krishna explains the importance of renunciation (Sanyasa) and the path to liberation (Moksha).

Summary: The chapter summarizes the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, emphasizing the importance of Karma Yoga, Bhakti, and Gnana.

Highlights:

- *Renunciation is essential for liberation.*
- *The Bhagavad Gita's teachings encompass Karma Yoga, Bhakti, and Gnana for spiritual growth and liberation.*

The Bhagavad Gita, through its 18 chapters, provides a comprehensive guide for living a life of righteousness, devotion, and wisdom. It emphasizes the importance of understanding one's true nature, performing one's duties without attachment, and cultivating devotion and knowledge for spiritual liberation.

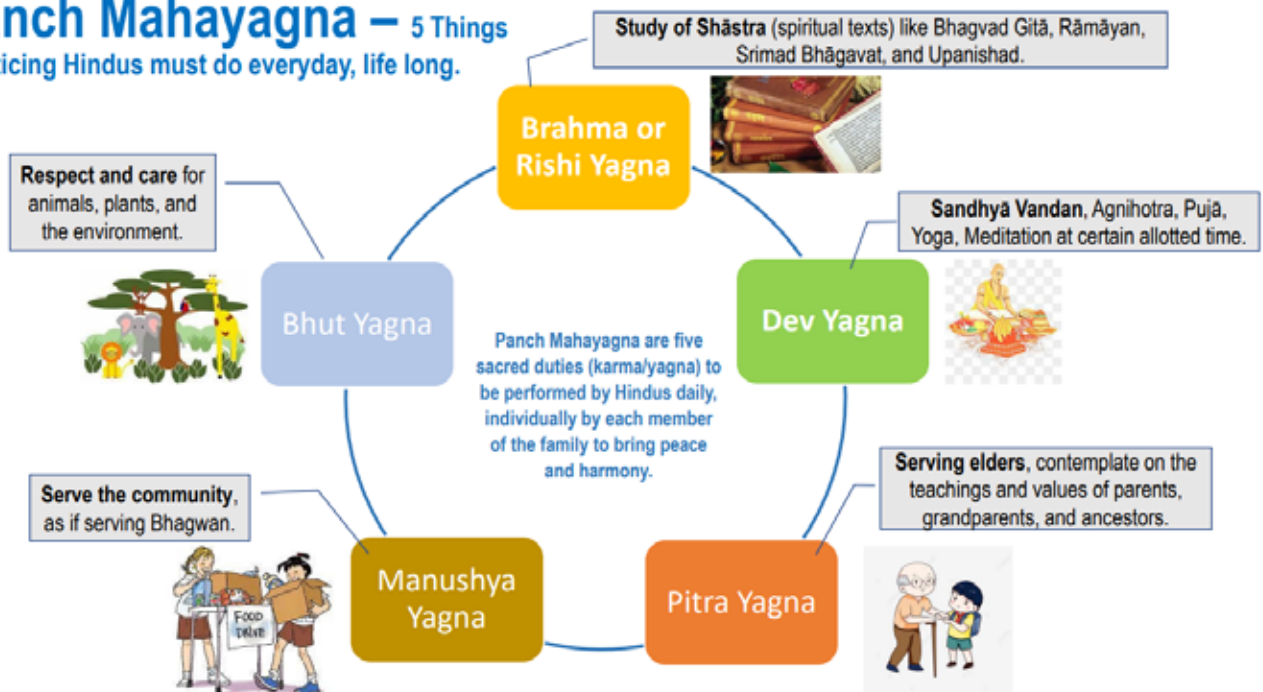


Panch Mahayagna

Panch Mahayagna are five sacred duties (karma/yagna) to be performed on daily basis individually by each and every member of the family for the harmonious living.

1. **Brahma or Rishi Yagna:** Study of shāstra (spiritual texts) like Bhagvad Gitā, Rāmāyan, Srimad Bhāgavat, and Upanishad.
2. **Dev Yagna:** Sandhyā Vandan, Agnihotra, Pujā, Meditation at certain allotted time.
3. **Pitra Yagna:** Serving elders, contemplate on the teachings and values of parents, grandparents, and ancestors.
4. **Manushya Yagna:** Serve the humanity, as if serving Bhagwan.
5. **Bhūt Yagna:** Respect and care for animals, plants, and the environment.

Panch Mahayagna – 5 Things practicing Hindus must do everyday, life long.





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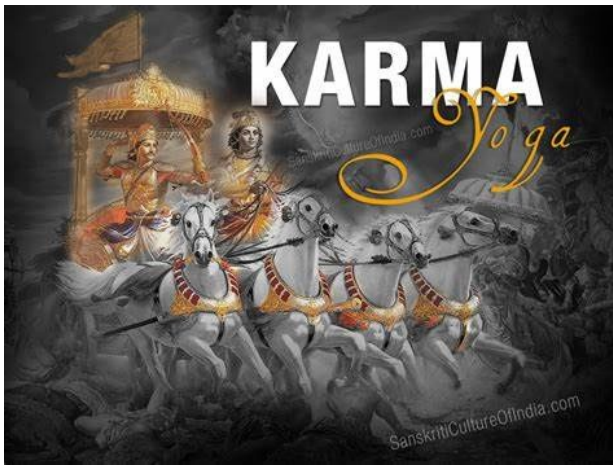
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Theme:

The Gem of Bhagavad Gita – Karma Yoga



Karma Yoga

Karma is Inevitable

Karma is an inevitable aspect of human life, encompassing both good and bad actions. Every action initiated by a human being has two effects: the direct result of the action and the cosmic effect governed by universal laws. Good actions lead to favorable results known as *Punya*, while bad actions lead to unfavorable results known as *Papam*. While the direct result of an action may occur immediately, the cosmic result may manifest at a later time, determined by a higher power *Bhagwan*. This accumulation of cosmic results is referred to as "*Sanchita Karma*." In each life, we carry a portion of this vast storage of *Sanchita Karma*, known as *Prarabdha*, which influences the quality of our current life. Understanding and embracing this karmic law is essential for successfully adopting and implementing Karma Yoga.

The Cycle of Birth and Death

In each birth, we not only exhaust our past karma (*Prarabdha*) but also generate further cosmic effects through our continuous actions, necessitating multiple births to fully exhaust them. This perpetual cycle of birth and death continues until we attain liberation. Many individuals may be unaware or disbelieving of the "*Law of Karma*," leading them to perpetuate the cycle of birth and death, experiencing both miseries and temporary pleasures.

The Concept of Pleasure and Misery

Pleasures in life are often intertwined with miseries and stress. For instance, the pursuit of wealth and material possessions may bring temporary pleasure, but it also entails the effort and stress of acquiring and safeguarding those resources. It is crucial to recognize that the pleasures and miseries we encounter in life are governed by cosmic laws, which determine their outcomes.

The Emergence of Karma Yoga

In light of the challenges posed by the cycle of birth and death, ancient Rishis contemplated these existential issues through deep meditation (*Tapas*) and established communication with the divine, resulting in the revelation of the Vedas. These sacred scriptures, including the *Bhagavad Gita*, provide profound wisdom and guidance on various aspects of human life and the universe. *Bhagavan Krishna*, in the

Bhagavad Gita, declares that the only way to transcend the ocean of Samsara (the cycle of birth and death) is through the practice of three Sadhanas, namely Karma Yoga, Upasana Yoga, and Jnana Yoga.

Understanding Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga does not apply to every action occurring in the universe. It specifically pertains to actions performed by sentient beings that have an impact on the doer and are governed by cosmic laws. Actions such as the rotation of the earth or working for a salary do not fall under the purview of Karma Yoga. To determine if an action can be considered Karma Yoga, the following criteria must be met:

- The action must be performed by a living being.
- The consequences of the action should affect the doer.
- The doer should have the willpower to engage in or discontinue the action.
- The action should align with cosmic laws, resulting in both positive and negative effects.
- The action should be noble and righteous (Dharmic).

By applying these principles, it becomes evident that only human beings fall under the category of actions suitable for Karma Yoga. This belief is rooted in Sanatana Dharma, which holds that individuals may traverse various realms but must return to the earthly realm (Bhu Loka or Karma Bhoomi) to fulfill their karmas as Karma Yogis and progress spiritually towards liberation.

The Essence of Karma Yoga

Karma, in its essence, refers to all activities performed by an individual, encompassing physical, mental, and verbal actions. These actions are subject to cosmic laws, which generate consequences known as "Papa" (negative) and "Punya" (positive). The term "Yoga" denotes the merging of higher principles. In the context of Karma Yoga, it can be understood as the correct attitude or aptitude required to transform ordinary actions into Karma Yoga. This attitude can be summarized as follows:

- Recognizing that no action can be solely attributed to one's ownership, as external factors also play a significant role.
- Accepting the outcomes of actions without negative reactions, understanding that results may not always align with personal expectations.

Bhagavan Krishna reiterates this perspective in the Bhagavad Gita, emphasizing that individuals have the right to perform actions but should relinquish ownership and expectations of specific results.

The Development of Karma Yoga Aptitude

Developing the aptitude for Karma Yoga is a challenging endeavor. It requires cultivating devotion towards the divine and surrendering one's actions to a higher power. By surrendering the ownership of actions to Bhagwan and accepting the results as divine gifts (Prasada), individuals can begin their journey towards Karma Yoga. However, developing this aptitude is a gradual process that demands sincere effort and practice.

The Timing of Embarking on Karma Yoga

Every human being has four goals in life, known as "Purusharthas." These goals include seeking security and basic needs (Artha), fulfilling desires and ambitions (Kama), giving back to society and the world (Dharma), and ultimately turning inward to attain self-realization and liberation (Moksha). The principles of Karma Yoga align harmoniously with the pursuit of Dharma, as individuals reduce their worldly desires and engage in activities such as service, worship, and helping others. These actions are known as the five noble sacrifices (Pancha Maha Yagna), which include Deva Yagna (service and worship to the divine), Pitru Yagna (service to parents and ancestors), Brahma Yagna (propagation of Vedic scriptures), Manushya Yagna (helping fellow humans), and Bhoot Yagna (living in harmony with all creations of the universe). Embracing these sacrifices facilitates the aptitude of relinquishing ownership and not seeking personal benefits, thereby embodying the true essence of Karma Yoga.

Qualities of a Karma Yogi

A Karma Yogi possesses several qualities that distinguish them on their spiritual path. These qualities include:

- Viewing work as an act of worship.
- Recognizing the equality of all types of work, without considering any task as inferior or superior.
- Maintaining focus on the steps involved in the work, without being overly concerned about the outcome.
- Reflecting inner peace and equanimity in every action.
- Willingly accepting responsibility for one's actions.
- Striving for maximum precision and excellence in every endeavor.
- Adapting to any environment or circumstance, prioritizing the work itself.
- Remaining unaffected by the success or failure of worldly affairs, while upholding moral values.
- Considering service not as a sacrifice but as a way of life.

These qualities collectively contribute to the development of a perfect Karma Yogi.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Karma Yoga is a profound spiritual practice that involves performing actions with the correct attitude and aptitude. By understanding the principles of Karma Yoga, individuals can purify their minds, cultivate inner peace, and progress on the path of spiritual realization. It is through the practice of Karma Yoga that one can ultimately transcend the cycle of birth and death, attaining liberation (Moksha).

Finally, the Karma Yoga = Proper Action + Proper Attitude





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Gita Chapter 6

Atma Samyam Yoga

The Yoga of Meditation



Session 1: Unsteady mind is difficult to restrain

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम् । तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥ 6-34॥

chanchalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛiḍham
tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye vāyor iva su-duṣhkaram

The mind changes its point of concentration from one object to another, so it is always restless. It is not only restless but also turbulent and obstinate. It produces agitation in the body and the senses. That is why the mind is even more difficult to control than to control the wind.

Session 2: Moderation makes the Dhyān/meditation effective.

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु । युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ 6-17॥

yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-cheṣṭasya karmasu
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā

For the one who is moderate in eating and recreation, who is moderate and balanced in actions, who is moderate in sleep and wakefulness, Yoga (Dhyān/meditation) becomes the remover of restlessness and sorrow.

Session 3: Practice meditation with an integrated mind

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः । मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः ॥ 6-14॥

prāśāntātmā vigata-bhīr brahmachāri-vrate sthitaḥ
manaḥ sanyamya mach-chitto yukta āsīta mat-parah

Remaining in the thought of Brahman/Bhagwan with a calm and restrained mind one should remain seated with the mind fixed on Bhagwan as the absolute goal.

Lesson learned: One should uplift oneself by oneself (You are your own friend)

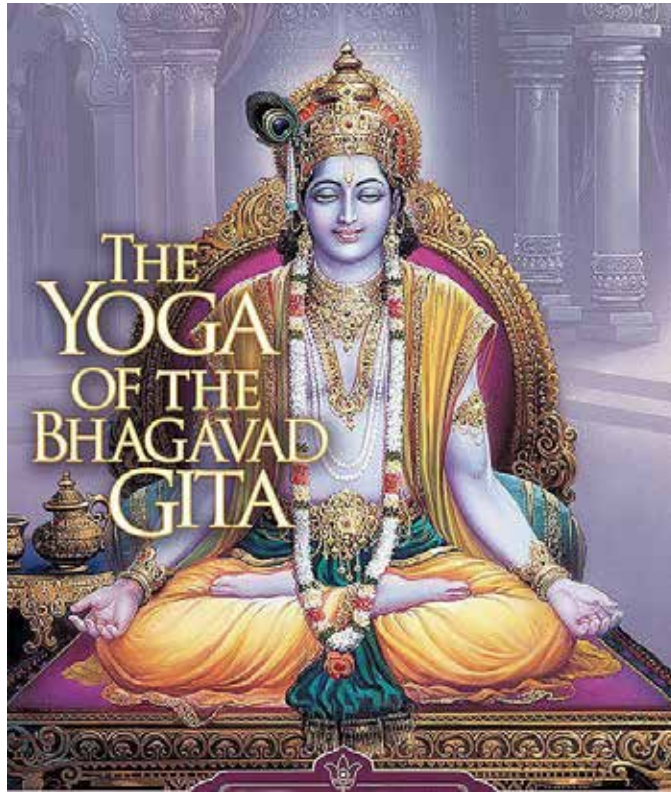
उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् । आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ 5॥

uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanah

One should uplift oneself by oneself. One should not lower oneself. For, the self alone is the friend of oneself; the self alone is the enemy of oneself.

Essence of Atma Samyam Yoga (The Yoga of Meditation)

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 6



Here is the summary of the Atma Samyam Yoga (Yoga of Meditation) from the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 6. This chapter delves into the disciplines and practices essential for successful meditation and spiritual progress. Here's a concise version of the essence of Atma Samyam Yoga:

Types of Meditation:

1. **Upasanam (Saguna Upasana Dhyanam):** Meditation before studying Vedanta.
2. **Nididhyasanam (Atma Dhyanam):** Vedic meditation after studying Vedanta (Upanishads).

General Disciplines (Bahirariga Sadhanani) – Verses 1-9, 16, and 17:

Discipline 1: Practicing Karma Yoga

- **Principle:** Perform actions without attachment to results, viewing them as offerings to God (Prasad).
- **Benefits:** Avoids violent reactions, disappointments, and mental tension, facilitating a calm mind for meditation.

- **Key Verse (6.1):**

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

अनाश्रितः कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः ।

स संन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्निर्न चाक्रियः ॥ १॥

*śhrī bhagavān uvācha
anāśhritaḥ karma-phalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ
sa sannyāsī cha yogī cha na niragnir na chākriyaḥ*

The Lord said, he who performs the action to be done without expecting the result of action, is a real sannyasi, and not a renouncer of rituals. Moreover, he is a Yogi and not a renouncer of activities.

Inward Disciplines (Antarariga Sadhanani) – Verses 10-15:

Discipline 2: Self-Esteem and Willpower

- **Principle:** Have confidence and employ willpower, attracting divine grace.

Discipline 3: Maintain and Utilize Instruments (Body and Mind)

- **Principle:** Keep the body and mind healthy and capable for spiritual and material success.

Discipline 4: Moderation

- **Principle:** Maintain moderation in food, work, sleep, pleasures, and relationships.
- **Key Verse (6.17):**

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ १७॥

*yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-cheṣṭasya karmasu
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā*

Dhyana-yoga becomes the destroyer of sorrow for one who is moderate in eating and recreation, who is moderate in sleeping and waking, (and) who is moderately engaged in actions.

Preparation for Meditation (Upasana):

- **Environment:** Choose a clean, pleasant place.
- **Timing:** Early morning or evening when the mind is calm.
- **Posture:** Sit comfortably with a straight spine.
- **Mind Preparation:** Reduce external thoughts and focus inward.
- **Breathing:** Smooth, slow, and regular to calm the mind.
- **Single Thought Focus:** Prevent the mind from roaming.

Process of Meditation (Dhyana-Svarupam) – Verses 18-32:

- **Dharana:** Focus on a single value or object, preferably a personal deity.
- **Dhyana:** Immerse the mind in the chosen object.
- **Samadhi:** Achieve a state where one is unaware of surroundings and body, akin to a steady lamp flame in a windless place.

Benefits of Meditation (Dhyana-Phalam):

- **Mental Liberation:** Release from attachment, strong likes, and dislikes.
- **Inner Peace:** The mind becomes less dependent on external conditions for happiness, maintaining calmness in all situations.

Obstacles and Remedies (Dhyana-Pratibhanda Parihara) – Verses 33-36:

- **Main Obstacle:** Wandering mind (Vikshepa) caused by strong likes and dislikes.

Yoga Bhrashta:

- **Assurance:** Those who start spiritual pursuits but do not achieve liberation in this lifetime will be born in favorable conditions to continue their journey in future births. Such individuals are called "Yoga Bhrashta."

With this profound assurance from Bhagavan Krishna, we are encouraged to diligently and confidently continue our spiritual practices, knowing that every effort contributes to our ultimate liberation.

Hari Om!



Glimpse of Daily Sandhya Vandanam and Dhyān

To maintain a high proportion of Sattva Guna (a joyful, awakened, clear state of mind)
(There are various resources available elsewhere to learn & practice actual Vedic Sandhya)

Prescribed Frequency:

Three times a day, preferably around Sandhya time (when the sun completes its transitions – sunrise, noon, and sunset). It takes approximately 5 minutes to complete the Puja / Sandhya.

How Do We Transact with the Outside World?

Five Gross Elements	Senses	Mode of Transaction
Prithvi – Earth	Nose	Smell
Jal – Water	Tongue	Taste
Agni – Fire	Eye	Vision
Vayu – Air	Skin	Touch
Aakash - Space	Ear	Sound

Who Am I?

Sharīra (Deha)	Body
Manas	Mind
Buddhi	Intellect
Chitta	Mind stuff (thoughts, memory store)
Ahamkāra	Ego (I-ness)
Atma	Self/consciousness principle

Sandhya / Dhyān / Daily Puja Steps

(As described in the Bhagavad Gita and other Yoga darshan texts)

1. **Sit in a stable place.**
2. **Balance the body, spine, and head by sitting with your back straight.**
3. **Close your eyes and try to avoid all external thoughts.**
4. **Chant Aum 6 times to prepare the mind for the journey inward.**
5. **Offer adoration to Guru:**

सदाशिव समारम्भाम् शंकराचार्य मध्यमाम्
अस्मद् आचार्य पर्यन्ताम् वंदे गुरु परम्पराम्

Sadashiva Samarambham Shankaracharya Madhyamam
Asmad Acharya Paryantam Vande Guru Paramparam

I pranam to the entire tradition of Gurus starting with Bhagwan Sadāshiva, Adi Shankaracharya, and all present-day Acharyas.

6. **Maintain slow and shallow breathing through the duration of Dhyān.**
7. **Focus your mind on the five gross elements (Table 1) as follows:**

- a. Keep your eyes gently closed (stay focused on each element for a few seconds)
 - i. Focus your gaze at the tip of your nose – contemplate on Prithvi.
 - ii. Then shift focus to the tip of the tongue - contemplate on Jal.
 - iii. Then shift focus to eyes - contemplate on Agni.
 - iv. Then shift focus to skin - contemplate on Vayu.
 - v. Then shift focus to ear - contemplate on Akasha.
8. **Silently contemplate: What is my nature? Who am I?**
 मनोबुद्ध्यहङ्कार चित्तानि नाहं
 न च श्रोत्रजिह्वे न च घ्राणनेत्रे ।
 न च व्योम भूमिर्न तेजो न वायुः
 चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहम् शिवोऽहम् ॥१॥
mano buddhi ahankara chittani naaham
na cha shrotravjihve na cha ghraana netre
na cha vyoma bhumir na tejo na vaayuhu
chidananda rupah shivo'ham shivo'ham
 Contemplate: I am not Deha (five elemental body), nor the senses, nor the intellect, nor the ego. I am Atma, the self, the reality. The one who is Sākshi (witness), Vibhu (all-pervading), Poorna (complete), Mukta (free), Asanga (unattached), and Shānt (peaceful). - Chidananda rupah shivo'ham shivo'ham
9. **Chant (one or more times) Gayatri Mantra – Focus on the meaning of the mantra.**
10. **Focus your thoughts on Brahman/Image of Bhagwan/Om.**
11. **Remain in this state (mind fixed on Bhagwan's image or Om) as long as possible, at least for one minute.**
12. **It is suggested to remain in this position/state (Mind is slowly being uplifted to the state of Shanti) as long as possible.**
 Acharyas have called this state 'quiet time', 'dhyān', 'nididhyāsanam', or 'mindfulness'. If the mind wanders, then observe the breath for a few moments and go back to step 9, and continue. At some point in this state, all divisions are dropped. The meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation become one – and the only thing that remains is the Atmā, the self–Shanti or Ananda.
13. **Slowly open your eyes while chanting Aum.**
14. **After completing these steps, you can do the Aarti, Archana, chant Hanuman Chalisa, sing bhajan, or any other regular spiritual practice. You will be able to enjoy them in a significantly heightened and blissful way.**

Essence: A Student's Story

A student of meditation went to his Guru and asked, "How will I reach Shanti or Ananda after dhyān/meditation?" The Guru took him to the edge of a cliff and asked, "If you jump from here, what efforts do you need to apply to reach the ground?" The student said, "All I have to do is jump and the rest will be done by gravity." The Guru smiled and said, "Similarly, you just **clean, unclutter, and focus your mind** and the rest will be done by the Divinity itself!"

Compilation: Sanjay Mehta, mehtass@hotmail.com

HINDU TEMPLE OF CENTRAL INDIANA

PRESENTS



24th HTCI HERITAGE OVERNIGHT FAMILY CAMP

**THEME: GYANA YOGA
(THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE)**

Nothing purifies more than knowledge.

July 20-21, 2024, 9:30am
at Hindu Temple of Central Indiana



2024 Hindu Heritage Family Camp

July 20, 2024, HTCI, Indianapolis, IN

Organized in association with VHP of America

Theme

The Gem of Bhagavad Gita: Gyan Yoga (The Path of Knowledge)

AGENDA

Saturday, July 20th, 9:00am - 9:55am: Breakfast, Registration/Check in

10:00am – 10:50am	Opening - All groups together Welcome address Prayer Youth address Gita shloka chanting/ Kids Gita Presentation Keynote Address
11:00am – 11:50am	Session 1 (Bauddhik) - Gyan Yoga #1 Parents Group Youth Group (Grade 8-12) Kids Group (Grade 4-7) Kids Group (Grade KG-3)
12:00pm – 12:50pm	Session 2 (Bauddhik) - Gyan Yoga #2 Parents Group Youth Group (Grade 8-12) Kids Group (Grade 4-7) Arts & Crafts Kids Group (Grade KG-3)
12:50pm – 1:15pm	Closing Take-Home Message
1:15pm – 2:15pm	Lunch
2:15pm – 3:00pm	Jeopardy/Skit
3:00pm – 4:00pm	Free Time, Games
4:00pm – 6:00pm	Gala Program: Tea/Coffee/Snacks
6:30pm – 8:30pm	Dinner and Outdoor Activities
8:30pm	Campfire

Sunday, July 21, 8:00am - 10:00am: Yoga, Breakfast, Departure

Gyan Yoga

Session 1 (Bauddhik) - Gyan Yoga #1

Prelude:

The Bhagavad Gita, revered as the most sacred spiritual text (shastra) of Sanatana Dharma, encapsulates the essence of all Upanishads. Its beauty lies in its ability to offer guidance to everyone through easily understandable and practical expressions. Shri Krishna addresses all aspects of life necessary for undertaking the spiritual sadhana of "Gyan Yoga." Over the past three years, we have introduced Gita to all participants of the Heritage camp, offering "Karma Yoga" and "Upasana Yoga" in the previous two years. This year, we embark on "Gyan Yoga," hoping to inspire participants to delve deeper into the Gita and reap its immense benefits.

What is Gyan Yoga?

Gyan means knowledge. Generally, our knowledge is categorized into two types: material (worldly) knowledge and spiritual knowledge.

- **Material Knowledge:** This includes subjects like science, health, art, and music, enhancing human skills in respective fields. This knowledge (Gyan Shakti) generates desires (Icha Shakti) to create or perform skill-oriented activities involving material, money, and human endeavors. While the use of this knowledge brings a sense of achievement and derived pleasure, it is subject to limitations and continuous improvement. The enjoyment of material knowledge does not provide permanent fulfillment or joy, as it depends on external objects and circumstances.
- **Spiritual Knowledge:** This is permanent, beyond time and space, and does not require further additions or modifications. It is total knowledge, the understanding of which brings ultimate fulfillment. The pursuit of spiritual knowledge addresses the human desire for permanent joy or fulfillment, as opposed to the temporary happiness derived from the ever-changing external world. Spiritual knowledge leads to lasting fulfillment and joy from the true self within, independent of external situations.

The "Gyan" referred to in the Bhagavad Gita is this spiritual knowledge, also known as "Brahma Vidya." Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the only way to escape the miseries of "Samsara" caused by "Raga" (attachment), "Shoka" (worries), and "Moha" (delusion), collectively known as "Karpanya Dosha" (emotional setbacks), is through attaining spiritual Gyan.

Gyan Yoga:

"Yoga" means merging. In Gyan Yoga, "Gyan" is integrated into day-to-day life, essentially "living the knowledge." Lord Krishna says in the Gita:

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति 4.38

Which means, there is nothing as purifying as Gyan. By practicing yoga, one matures over time and attains Gyan within oneself.

Krishna refers to purifying the mind of "ignorance" (Avidya) regarding one's true nature, which binds a person to the ever-changing and perishable body, mind, and external objects. This ignorance leads to never-

ending desires and worldly transactions that bring both happiness and unexpected miseries. Attaining Gyan is the only way to remove this inherent ignorance.

Shri Krishna suggests that to attain this knowledge, one must first purify the mind and attain maturity through the practice of "Yoga." Just as a dirty vessel must be cleaned before being filled with pure milk, the contaminated mind must be purified to accept subtle spiritual knowledge (Gyan).

Contaminants of the Mind:

- Emotional outbursts
- Preconceived notions of the intellect
- Ego-based attitudes of "I and mine"

These contaminants hinder the mind from focusing and assimilating scriptural knowledge.

The Role of Shraddha and Yoga:

Shraddha (faith) is essential to motivate and accept spiritual texts. Sanatana Dharma provides various methods to suit different human natures, lifestyles, and circumstances, requiring time to understand and assimilate. Shri Krishna advises having faith (Shraddha) and patience over time ("Kalena").

With the guidance of a Guru, one must select a suitable path and follow it with total dedication and faith. Developing an ever-doubting attitude before understanding the scriptures must be controlled through immense faith and patience.

The Meaning of Yoga:

In this context, Yoga indicates an unselfish attitude in practicing sadhana and dedicating it to the true nature of one's being. In the Gita, Shri Krishna mentions three types of Yoga:

- **Karma Yoga:** The path of selfless action
- **Upasana Yoga:** The path of devotion and worship
- **Gyan Yoga:** The path of knowledge

These practices discipline the mind, sharpen the intellect, and ultimately lead to mental equanimity and liberation from the miseries of "Samsara."

The Time Factor:

Attaining spiritual knowledge requires a complete transformation of personality. It involves keenly observing and gradually dismantling one's Ego, which is composed of recorded memories from several lifetimes (Vasanas). Therefore, erasing the Ego image requires time.

Knowledge from Within:

Shri Krishna emphasizes that Gyan is attained "within oneself." This does not negate the importance of studying shastra under a Guru. It is essential to listen attentively (Shravanam) to the teachings of shastra from a Guru. However, the knowledge must be assimilated (Nidhidhyasan) to be lived. This assimilation brings out one's true nature of total bliss from within. The process of converting Gyan into Gyan Yoga involves overcoming the resisting Ego to reveal the true self.

Session 2 (Bauddhik) - Gyan Yoga #2

In the same 4th chapter, the next verse (4.39) emphasizes the essential preparation needed to receive Gyan from a Guru and adopt "Gyan Yoga":

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः। ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परांशान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति॥4.39॥

Which means, the person who has control over the temptations of "Indriyas" (senses) and is motivated by faith (Shraddha) to attain "Gyan" will attain it immediately.

Spiritual Study:

The spiritual study in Sanatana Dharma differs from academic subjects. While earnest effort in academic subjects can lead to mastery, spiritual study requires a change in personality and a disciplined life. Shri Krishna stresses the need for controlling temptations, which involves regular sadhana, including Upasana Yoga.

The Role of Shraddha:

Shraddha is a firm commitment to Gyan. Focus and patience are essential, as doubting every step or frequently changing Gurus or paths will not lead to progress. A "rolling stone gathers no moss."

Benefits of Gyan Yoga:

- **Physical and Mental Discipline:** Developing Viveka (discrimination), Vairagya (dispassion), and other preliminary sadhanas bring physical and mental discipline, such as control over senses, understanding impermanence, patience, and maturity. This helps maintain mental calmness (Sattvic) in worldly transactions.
- **Transformation of Gunas:** There is an opportunity to transform Rajasic (restless) or Tamasic (lazy) tendencies to Sattvic (calm and poised) qualities.
- **Inner Peace and Joy:** Deriving peace and joy within oneself, independent of external environment and happenings.

Practical Constraints:

- **Understanding and Ego:** Difficulty in understanding spiritual concepts and overcoming one's Ego.
- **Intellectual Doubts:** Persistent doubts about shastra and the Guru's teachings.
- **Disciplining the Mind and Body:** Denying worldly temptations while practicing sadhana.
- **Comparison and Self-Evaluation:** The urge to compare and evaluate spiritual progress against imagined goals.

Conclusion:

The purpose of human life is to learn, perform, contribute, and achieve liberation. Misery arises when one tries to create a permanent bond with the temporary world.





25th HTCI HINDU HERITAGE FAMILY CAMP

**THEME: Dhyān (Meditation) Yoga:
A way to discover peace and
contentment within oneself**

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते।

तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति॥

na hi jñānena sadṛśam
pavitram iha vidyate
tat svayaṁ yoga-saṁsiddhaḥ
kālenātmani vindati

Nothing purifies more than knowledge.

DHYANA YOGA



**Location: Versailles State Park
1387 U.S. 50 East
Versailles, IN 47042**

August 1st, 5pm -

August 3rd Noon 2025



Srimad Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12 – Shloka 12

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।

ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम्॥

Shreyo hi gyānam abhyāsāt gyānāt dhyānam vishiṣhyate |
dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgaḥ tyāgāt Shānti anantaram ||

Shri Krishna outlines practical steps for Adhyatmic Sadhana (spiritual discipline):

1. Abhyās – regular spiritual practice
2. Gyān – understanding of teachings
3. Dhyān – meditation
4. Karma Phal Tyāg – renunciation of attachment to the fruits of Karma

The climax of this Sadhana (discipline) is direct and endless Shanti—a calm and steady mind.



2025 Hindu Heritage Family Camp

Location: Versailles State Park, 1387 U.S. 50 East, Versailles, IN 47042

Friday, August 1st, 5pm – Sunday, August 3rd Noon 2025

Theme:

Dhyān (Meditation) Yoga:

A way to discover peace and contentment within oneself

Organized in association with Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America

AGENDA

Friday, Aug 1, 6pm-9pm Check-in (Registration, Dinner, Introduction). Priyesh Kheradia, Neil Shah	
Saturday, Aug 2: Emcee: Uma Kallupurambil, Atharva Sahu	
7:30am-8:30am: Yoga, Games, Breakfast... Uma Vashistha, Priyesh K, Neil & Ruchi Shah	
9:30am-10:00am: Assembly	
10:00am – 10:50am	Opening/ Welcome - All groups together Priyesh Kheradia, Kumar Dave HTCI, Board/Executive /Youth speaker Gita Shloka by Anil Vashistha Keynote Address: Sanjay Mehta
11:00am – 11:50am	Session 1 (Bauddhik): Qualification and preparation for Dhyān Group: Parents - Natraj Chandramouli Group: Youth (Grade 8-12) - Sanjay Mehta Group: Kids Grade KG-3 rd - Hansa Dave, Sneha Vashistha Group: Kids Grade 4-7 -Smitha Kalluparambil, Deepali Songirkar, Pooja Singal
12.00pm – 12.45pm	Session 2 (Bauddhik): Process of Dhyān and Benefits of Dhyān Group: Parents - Sanjay Mehta Group: Youth(Grade 8-12) - Priyesh Kheradia, Uma Vashistha Group: Kids Grade 4-7 – Uma Kalluparambil, Ravi Kheradia Group: Kids Grade KG-3 rd - Arts & Crafts - Priyam Yadav, Deepali Songirkar
12.45pm – 2.45pm 2:45pm -3:00 pm	Lunch and Free time Tea
3:00 – 4:30	Session 3 All groups together Expert Panel on Lifestyle for better Mental and Physical Well-being By Dr. Chandra Reddy, Dr. Vimal Patel, Dr. Vidya Karthik Dr. Pooja Singal Work shop for kids Closing remarks and take home message Q & A
4:30pm-6:30pm 6:30 pm 7:30 pm	Games/Freetime Dinner Jeopardy/Cultural Program and Campfire

Sunday, Aug 3, 8:00 am -9:00 am: Yoga/Breakfast/Departure. Priyesh Kheradia, Uma Vashistha, Neil Shah

HTCI Balgokulam Heritage Camp, Session 1:

Qualification and Preparation for Meditation

(Based on Gita Chapter 6: Shloka 8, 16, 17, 18)

What is Dhyana Yoga:

Dhyana Yoga, also called meditation, is a helpful way to look deeply inside ourselves and improve our thinking. It helps us understand how we truly feel and think. During meditation, we face different parts of our ego, the part of us that is proud or selfish. Slowly, we learn to let go of these ego-based thoughts and become more peaceful and balanced in our mind.

Different approaches: The “Dhyana Yoga”, otherwise called Meditation, is traditionally employed in different ways for achieving spiritual fulfillment. Yogi's approach is based on controlling the flow of “Prana” by employing breath techniques to awaken various “Chakras” in the astral body, which is known as “Kundalini Yoga or Raja Yoga”. Buddhists employ the technique of “Vipasana Yoga (also a meditation) to calm the mind free of any thoughts which they call as “Presence or Mindfulness”. Vedantic approach is to start with the deep focus on a personal God as “Dhyana Yoga” and gradually progress to focus on “Nirguna Ishwara or Brahman or Atma” through “Nididhyasana”.

One common feature of all these approaches is employing the process of “Yoga Shastra” of Patanjali Rishi, known as “Ashtanga Yoga”. In this, “Ashtanga” means eight steps, namely, 1. Yama 2. Niyama, 3. Asana, 4. Pranayama, 5. Pratyahara 6. Dharana, 7. Dhyana, 8. Samadhi.

In this year's camp, we have taken the subject of “Dhyana Yoga” as explained by Bhagvan Sri, Krishna to Arjuna. In Chapter 6 of “Bhagavad Gita” Krishna has done a detailed discussion as explained below:

Ch,6. Shloka8: ज्ञानन वज्ञानतप्तात्मा कटस्थो विजतिन्यः

यक्त इत्यच्यत योगी समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ॥

6.8

jñānavijñānatṛptātmā kūṭastho vijitendriyaḥ

yukta ityucyate yogī samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ

“One whose mind is satisfied through jñāna and vijñāna, who is steady, who has mastered the sense organs, is called a yōgi, A yōgi, is one for whom a lump of earth, stone and gold are the same.”

In this shloka, Krishna is describing the quality of a “Yogi” (Gyani) Most people are not aware of their true nature (self). They identify themselves with the body and the mind, believing that to be their true existence. There are also few who accept that there is Atma inside apart from the body. But their EGO centric mind does not allow them to realize Atma and abide by it. Krishna refers to such individuals as Gyanis, those who have intellectual knowledge of the *Atma* but are not Self-realized.

There is a very rare group of people whom Krishna calls Yogis. These people understand their true self (Atma) by thinking deeply and controlling their senses. They stay calm and are not affected by desires. These Yogis, who have true knowledge, see everything in the world—like soil, stone, or gold—as different forms of the same thing: Brahman or Atma. To them, all things are equal because they come from the same source.

Ch.6.Shloka 16: नात्यश्रतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्रतः ।
 न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥
6.16 nātyaśnatastu yōgō'sti na caikāntamanaśnataḥ
 na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna

“Dhyāna-yōga is not possible neither for one who eats too much nor for one who does not eat at all; neither for one who sleeps too much nor for one who is ever awake, Oh! Arjuna”.

In this shloka, Krishna highlights the need of maintaining a balanced approach to the body care. The body requires nutrition for good health, but yielding to the temptation of taste and overeating can harm it. Similarly, excessive fasting or under nourishment can also damage the body. The same applies to rest; too much or too little sleep can disturb the natural rhythm of the body.

Any physical discomfort or imbalance makes it difficult for a person to sit comfortably and meditate. Krishna's advice is especially relevant today, as many people have the habit of overeating, driven by the desire to satisfy the taste buds.

In the same way, many people sacrifice their sleep, either by overworking in the office or by engaging excessively in entertainment, such as watching TV or using mobile phones.

Ch.6. Shloka 17: यक्ताहारवहारस्य यक्तचष्टस्य कमस ।
 यक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवत दुःखहा ॥
6.17 yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu
 yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yōgō bhavati duḥkhahā

“Dhyāna-yōga becomes the destroyer of sorrow for one who is moderate in eating and recreation, who is moderate in sleeping and waking, (and) who is moderately engaged in actions”.

Here, in this shloka, Krishna advises maintaining overall balance in all aspects of life. In this shloka, Krishna specifically adds the phrase “moderate actions”, indicating the importance of avoiding indulgence in unnecessary external activities and worldly transactions. Why is this so? Because every human being is a manifested form of Brahman (Atma), functioning in association with Maya. Without “Maya”, creation cannot take place. Brahman alone, like energy, is inactive by itself, just as male and female is required to produce, Brahman and Maya together are required for creation.

All human beings, by nature of creation, are born with two Shaktis (natural tendencies): Vikṣhepa Shakti, the tendency to get distracted and involved in various actions, whether necessary or not

and the other is Avaraṇa Shakti, the power of ignorance that veils our true nature as Atma. The entire spiritual journey is about overcoming these two Shaktis to attain liberation.

To reach a successful meditative state, one must gradually overcome Vikṣhepa Shakti, the tendency to engage in too many transactions and external distractions. In sloka 17, Krishna emphasizes the need for a balanced lifestyle, which is absolutely essential for deep meditation (Dhyana). For true introspection, the mind must withdraw from all external thoughts. Otherwise, it becomes restless and unable to sit calmly even for a few moments. The reason behind this flood of thoughts is our excessive and unnecessary involvement in worldly affairs; this is the effect of Vikṣhepa, the distracting power of Maya.

Thus, Krishna explains how both body and mind are affected by our day-to-day habits, and how they interfere with the practice of meditation when not kept in balance. Krishna assures that Dhyana, when practiced by those who maintain balance in all aspects of life, becomes deep, steady, and capable of destroying all unwanted thoughts and worries.

Ch.6.Shloka 18: यदा वनयतं चित्तमात्मन्यवावतष्ठत ।
नःस्पृहः सर्वकामभ्यो यक्त इत्युच्यत तदा ॥
6.18 yadā viniyataṁ cittamātmanyēvāvatiṣṭhatē
niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmēbhyō yukta ityucyate tadā

“When the restrained mind abides in the Atma itself, then, the meditator, who is detached from all sense-objects, is called a yogi.”

For a successful Dhyana (meditation), Krishna recommends that a Sādhaka (the practitioner) should cultivate a regular habit of adopting both Bahiranga Sadhanas (external disciplines) and Antaranga Sadhanas (internal mental disciplines).

Inculcating the understanding of Nitya and Anitya (the permanent and the ephemeral), managing sensory temptations (Indriya control), living a balanced life, and developing necessary detachment, these are all part of Bahiranga Sadhana (external practices).

Antaranga Sadhana refers to specific disciplines to be followed just before meditation, such as Prāṇayama, which help prepare the mind to turn inward.

Through these Sadhanas, one should gradually calm the mind, so that it becomes free from the interference of external thoughts during meditation. When Krishna speaks of Samadhi as the calming of the mind, it does not mean transcending the mind or achieving a completely thoughtless state. In fact, it is not possible to have a mind without any thoughts. The true idea is to focus the mind on one uplifting thought, rather than letting it scatter across many unnecessary ones. The meaning of Dhyana Yoga is this: First comes Dharana – focusing the mind on one’s personal Iswara (chosen deity), then Dhyana – continuous retention of that focus, finally, Samadhi – total absorption, where the mind merges completely with the object of meditation. A Gyani (knower of the Self) attains this state of Samadhi, merging the mind in the Atma. As a result, he becomes totally detached from the influence of the sense organs. Krishna calls such a person a Yogi.

HTCI Balgokulam Heritage Camp, Session 2:

Meditators of State of Mind and Benefits of Meditation

(Based on Gita chapter 6: Shloka 19, 20, 21)

Ch,6. Shloka 19: यथा दीपो नवातस्थो नङ्गत सोपमा स्मता ।
योगनो यतचत्तस्य यञ्गतो योगमात्मनः
॥ 6.19 yathā dīpō nivātaśthō nēṅgatē sōpamā smṛtā
yōginō yatacittasya yuñjatō yōgamātmanah

The following simile is mentioned for the restrained mind of a yogi who is practicing Dhyana Yoga of the Atma, it is like a lamp in a windless spot, which does not flicker. In the previous session, we saw the principles behind Dhyana Yoga and the Sadhanas required to be practiced. In this session, let us see what Krishna says further on Dhyana Yoga. Before getting into the further discussion on the Shlokas, it may be helpful to understand a little more about general meditation. As mentioned earlier, in this camp we are not discussing yogic meditation called Raja Yoga. Krishna's discussion in the Gita is based on Dhyana Yoga, which follows the Vedantic approach.

There are also general types of meditation, for relaxation of the body and mind, for correcting behavioral patterns, transcendental meditation, etc., but these are not discussed here. Krishna further says that when a person meditates, the focus on the *Iṣṭa Devatā* (personal God) must be fixed like a steady, open flame that does not flicker. Why does Krishna use the example of a lamp's flame? The flame of a lamp can flicker even with the slightest breeze. To keep the flame steady, there must be absolutely no wind. This is an excellent and precise example.

In the same way, during meditation, even one or two small thoughts can drag the attention into a vortex of many other thoughts. This quickly pulls the Sadhaka out of the meditative state. All the *antaranga sādhanāni* and *bahiranga sādhanāni* discussed in the previous session are meant to transform a person into one who is calm and detached, so that worldly thoughts do not arise during meditation.

Ch,6. Shloka 20 यत्रोपरमत चत्त नरुद्ध योगसवया ।
यत्र चवात्मनात्मान पश्यन्नात्मन तष्यत ॥
6.20 yatrōparamatē cittam niruddham yōgasēvayā
yatra caivātmanātmānam paśyannātmani tuṣyati

One should understand Samadhi as the state in which the mind, restrained through the practice of meditation, becomes quiet and still. In that state, the seeker perceives the Atma with a purified mind and rejoices in the experience of the Self

In this shloka, Krishna directly touches the Vedantic meditation on Atma. If so, what about "Dhyana" meditation discussed previously? This question will come. In order to meditate on Atma one has to study Vedanta and have the knowledge of Atma. Without any understanding of the Self, how can one meditate upon it?" If so, can the people who have not studied Vedanta be totally denied of meditation? Not at all, Our Sanatana Dharma is a way of life and Bhagavad Gita is a life

manual for all. So, Krishna has told in the same Gita that “Arjuna! You always think of me in your mind and I will take care of your “Yogakshemam” (welfare)

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम्॥
**Ananyāś chintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate,
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yogakṣemaṁ vahāmy aham.**

This means: *"Those who always think of Me with single-pointed devotion, I take care of their welfare and needs."*

This means meditate upon God and practice your mind to get occupied by my presence everywhere. This is nothing but “Dhyana Yoga”. Coming back to our topic, till we get an opportunity to understand Vedanta, one can very well meditate upon the personal God (Ishta Devata) Once the practice of focusing and Dhyan on a deity is established, then the deity (Guna Ishwara) can be gradually replaced by Atma, the eternal self. This is possible by studying Vedanta under a Guru and attaining “Gyan” of Atma. This process is recommended by Vedanta also since Bhakti is easy to develop and to surrender to God.

Ch,6. shloka 6.21 सखमात्यन्तिक यत्तद्बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्दियम् ।
वत्त यत्र न चवाय िस्थितश्चलत तत्त्वतः ॥
6.21 sukhamātyantikam yattad-buddhigrāhyamatīndriyam
vētti yatra na caivāyam sthitaścalati tattvataḥ

One should understand Samadhi to be the state in which one appreciates that limitless Ananda (bliss), which is beyond the sense organs and is grasped only by the intellect. In this state, one remains firmly rooted in the self and does not slip from one’s true nature. This is a slightly tricky shloka, as Krishna introduces certain technical terms that need to be understood clearly to grasp the concept behind his Upadesha (teaching). Here, Samadhi does not mean transcending the mind or becoming thoughtless. Rather, it means bringing the mind to a state where it is fully absorbed, either in Guṇa Ishvara (personal God) or in Nirguṇa Brahman (the formless self or Atma). Krishna also states that the limitless Ananda, which is the nature of the Atma, is beyond the reach of the sense organs. This is because the sense organs function only in relation to the external world. In meditation, if the goal is to reach Samadhi, it becomes necessary to disconnect from the external world, rendering the sense organs irrelevant in that state. In this shloka, Krishna further says that Atma-Ananda is grasped only by the intellect.

As you all know, the mind operates primarily through emotions, while the intellect is responsible for discrimination and decision-making. It is this intellect that often creates and sustains our ego-centric self-image. Therefore, despite performing all kinds of religious Sadhana, it takes great effort and inner maturity for the intellect to break free from this ego identity and accept the Atma as the true self. This shift requires long and consistent practice of meditation (Dhyana) and a life of discipline (tapas). But the time and effort are well worth it, because through this journey, we move closer to the kingdom of eternal peace and happiness, which is our original and permanent nature, regardless of the challenges we face in the external world.

Hari Om



Daily or Nitya Puja – Meditation (A Glimpse of Trikāl Sandhya Vandanam)

(various resources are available to help practice exhaustive Vedic Sandhya, if one wants to)

Suggested frequency:

Three times a day, preferably around Sandhya time (transition time of Sun – around sunrise, at noon and sunset).

The following table shows how we perceive and transact with the world:

Table 1 (Pancha Mahabhoota or Five Gross elements)

Element	Sense	How we experience/ transact
Prithvi – Earth	Nose	Smell
Jal – Water	Tongue	Taste
Agni – Fire	Eye	Vision
Vāyu – Air	Skin	Touch
Akāsh - Space	Ear	Sound

Who am I?

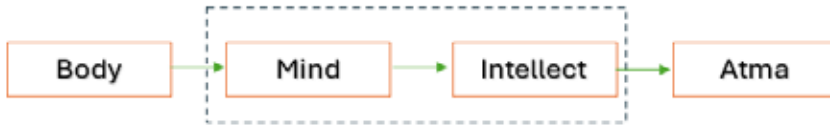


Table 2 (Five sense organs)

Shareera (Deha)	Body
Manas (pronounced as Mun like Sun)	Mind
Buddhi	Intellect
Chitta	Mind-stuff (thoughts, memory store)
Ahamkāra	Ego (I-ness)
Atma	Self / Awareness /Consciousness Principle

Sandhya / Daily Puja – Meditation Steps:

(as described in the Bhagvad Gita and other Yoga darshan texts)

1. Sthir āsane upaviśya: Sit in a stable place and assume steady posture.
2. Samam kāya shiro greevam: Keep spine, head, and neck straight in a single line.
3. Chakshuh bhruvoh antare: Close eyes gently.
4. Take a deep **belly breath** (inhale) and exhale **slowly** with the chant of Om - ॐ. Repeat for 1-2 min.

5. **Adoration to Guru:** Chant the below shloka and/or play the meaning in mind.

Sadāshiva samārambhām, Sankarācārya madhyamām.
asmadācārya paryantām, vande guru paramparām.

सदाशिव समारम्भाम् शंकराचार्य मध्यमाम्
अस्मद् आचार्य पर्यन्ताम् वंदे गुरु परम्पराम्

Beginning with Bhagwan Sadashiva, Adi Shankaracharya in the middle and up to my own acharya - I bow to the entire tradition of Gurus.

6. Prāna Apanau samo kritva: Now maintain slow and shallow breath.

7. **Start focusing** on five gross elements (*refer Table 1*).

With eyes gently closed:

- Nasikagram samprekshya: Gaze at the tip of your nose – contemplate on Prithvi (earth). *Bring image of mountain, forest, land etc. in mind.*
- Now shift focus to the tip of the tongue - contemplate on Jal (water)
- Shift focus to eyes - contemplate on Agni (fire)
- Shift focus to skin - contemplate on Vāyu (air)
- Shift focus to ears - contemplate on Akāsh (space)

8. **Self-inquiry:** Who am I? What is my nature? (*refer Table 2*)

Chant the below shloka and/or play the meaning in mind.

Mano buddhi ahankara chittaninaham, Na cha shrotravjihve na cha ghraana netre
Na cha vyoma bhumir na tejo na vayuhu, Chidananda rupah shivo'ham shivo'ham

मनोबुद्ध्यहङ्कार चित्तानि नाहं न च श्रोत्रजिह्वे न च घ्राणनेत्रे ।

न च व्योम भूमिर्न तेजो न वायुः चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहम् शिवोऽहम् ॥

*I am not deha (five elemental body). I am not the senses, intellect, ego. I am **Atma, Sakshi Chaitanya, Anand, Awareness, the self.***

9. **Mind Observation:** Simply observe (witness) the mind. Let thoughts come and go without judgment. Allow the stream of thoughts to quiet down into stillness. Keep observing the mind. In due course mind will be quietened - thoughts will dissolve. Allow the thoughts to dissolve into silence within you, the same way a fountain of water comes to a steady close.
10. Machchitto yukta āsīta mat-parah: मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः - Bhagwan says, “Remain in this state (mind fixed on me) with me (my thought) alone as the supreme goal.”
11. Remain in this stillness and peace as long as comfortable. If the mind wanders, return to Step 7 and begin again.
12. Gently open eyes with the chant of Om.
13. Now you may perform Aarti, Hanuman Chalisa, Bhajan - you will enjoy them in much more fulfilling way.
14. Observe a few minutes of complete silence before returning to worldly activities.



ॐ

Srimad Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12 – Shloka 12

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम्॥

Shreyo hi gyānam abhyāsāt gyānāt dhyānam vishiṣhyate|
dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgaḥ tyāgāt Shānti anantaram||

In this verse, Krishna tells us the best way to grow spiritually. First, just doing something again and again (practice) is good. But it's even better to understand why you're doing it (knowledge). Then, focusing your mind deeply on God (meditation) is better than just knowing. But the best of all is doing your duty without expecting any rewards (giving up the results). When we stop worrying about what we will get from our actions and do our work sincerely, we feel calm and peaceful inside.

HINDU TEMPLE OF CENTRAL INDIANA

3350 N. German Church Rd., Indianapolis IN 46235 • (317) 891-9199 • seva@htci.org
Weekday: 9:00-11:30 AM & 6:00-8:30 PM • Weekend: 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Camp Geet: Ish Hame Deta Hai Sabkuch

इश हमे देता है सबकुछ हम भी तो कुछ देना सीखे
सूरज हमे रोशनी देता हवा नया जीवन देती है
भूख मिटाने को हम सब की धरती पर होती खेती है
औरों का भी हित हो जिसमे हम ऐसा कुछ करना सीखे ॥१॥

गरमी की तपती दुपहर मे पेड सदा देते है छाया
सुमन सुगन्ध सदा देते है हम सबको फूलों की माला
त्यागी तरुओं के जीवन से हम परहित कुछ करना सीखे ॥२॥

जो अनपढ़ है उन्हे पढ़ाये जो चुप है उनको वाणी दे
पिछड़ गये जो उन्हे बढ़ाये समरसता का भाव जगा दे
हम मेहनत के दीप जलाकर नया उजाला करना सीखे ॥३॥

isā hame detā hai sabakucha hama bhī to kucha denā sīkhe

sūraja hame rośanī detā havā nayā jīvana detī hai
bhūkha miṭāne ko hama saba kī dharatī para hotī khetī hai
aurom kā bhī hita ho jisame hama aisā kucha karanā sīkhe || 1 ||

garamī kī tapatī dupahara me peḍa sadā dete hai chāyā
sumana sugandha sadā dete hai hama sabako phūlom kī mālā
tyāgī taruom ke jīvana se hama parahita kucha karanā sīkhe || 2 ||

jo anapaḍha hai unhe paḍhāye jo cupa hai unako vāṇī de
pichaḍa gaye jo unhe baḍhāye samarasatā kā bhāva jagā de
hama mehanata ke dīpa jalākara nayā ujālā karanā sīkhe || 3 ||

Meaning

God gives us everything; let us also learn to give something.

Sun gives us light; air gives us fresh life and earth provides us food. Let us also learn to do something that will benefit others.

The trees give us shade in the scorching Sun, the beautiful maalaa gives us the fragrance of the flowers. Let us learn to sacrifice for others like the benevolent tree.

Let us educate the uneducated. Let us give voice to the oppressed. Let us give a helping hand to those who have fallen back and spread the message of compassion and equality. Let us light the lamps of efforts and illuminate the world.



BALAGOKULAM and CHETANA CLASSES AT HINDU TEMPLE OF CENTRAL INDIANA

"EVERY CHILD HAS THAT SPARK OF DIVINITY WITHIN." –SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Balagokulam is a program designed for children to discover and manifest that divinity within themselves. It helps Hindu children in the United States develop a positive Hindu-American identity, appreciate their cultural roots, and learn Hindu values. This essential development is achieved through a variety of activities including games, yoga, stories, bhajans, shlokas, arts, and crafts. Balagokulam and Chetana (Youth) programs are 90 minutes long and include activities that cater to physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs.

The program is taught by a dedicated team of teachers, many of whom either had their children go through the same program or currently have their children enrolled. With the blessings of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the curriculum follows the Purna Vidya (Vedic Heritage Teaching Program).

Admission

Balagokulam and Chetana is an HTCI sponsored program. The child needs to be registered for Balagokulam. The parent(s) of Balagokulam students must be members of HTCI.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Balgokulam Classes Every Sunday

10:30 - 11:00 AM: Assembly, Exercises, Surya Namaskar

11:00 AM - Noon: Individual classes - based upon course material for each class

Chetana Classes Every 2nd and 4th Sunday

10:30 - 11:00 AM - Assembly, Exercises, Surya Namaskar, 11:00 - Noon - Chetana course material

Kids are welcome to attend Gita Mandal every 2nd Sunday from 10:00-10:30 AM and then go to classes

Registration

Classes starts in August each year, following regular school curriculum.

To register, download the Registration Form from website, print, complete and submit to the Temple Office or email to

Priya Menon (priyamenon1us@gmail.com) 317-459-8066 or

Hansa Dave (hansadave28@gmail.com) 317-490-4910.

HTCI yearly family membership (\$100) (Required)

Balagokulam registration fee (\$85) per child for Books and other resources.

Contact temple (317) 891-9199 - seva@htci.org,

OUR TEACHERS

DHRUV - KG - Poornima Kini, Smitha Kalluparambil, Pooja Singal

EKLAVYA - GRADE 1 - Priyam Yadav, Deepali Songikar

PRAHALAD - GRADE 2 - Puja Pandya, Chetan Dave, Snehal Patil

ARJUN - GRADE 3 - Hansa Dave, Rajnish Chauhan, Nina Xavier

KRISHNA - GRADE 4 - Anita Gupta, Vrinda Doshi

RAM - GRADE 5 - Uma Vashistha, Vishal Singal

BRAMHA - GRADE 6 - Priya Menon, Varun Goyal

SHIVA - GRADE 7 & 8 - Kumar Dave, Sanjay Kalluparambil

CHETANA - HIGH SCHOOL - Priyesh Kheradia, Amar Patel, Preya Dave

YOUTH COORDINATORS - Ravi Kheradia, Uma Kalluparambil, Ridhima Tomar, Dev singh

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Weekday: 9:00 AM-11:30 AM & 6:00 PM-9:00 PM
Weekend: 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM

MEMBERSHIP

Consider Joining the Hundreds of Members whether you just need service or would like to get involved in the temple activities.

Membership is optional but highly encouraged. Your membership payment supports religious, educational and cultural programs of the temple and promotes the same spirit of community giving with which the temple was founded.

Annual Individual Membership (\$50 per year)

Annual Student Membership (\$15 per year)

Annual Family Membership (\$100 per year)

Lifetime Membership
(\$1500 or Total Lifetime Contribution of \$10,000)

SELF GUIDED TOUR

Hindu Temple of Central Indiana is a monument of exquisite architecture symbolizing Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) in Central Indiana. **Self-guided tours** of the Hindu Temple of Central Indiana are available.

DURATION: Approximately 1 hour

TOPICS COVERED:

Some essentials about Hinduism and how the spaces and symbols of the temple help the spiritual journey

DRESS CODE:

Shoes must be left in the lobby; clean, modest clothing (such as you would wear to church) is preferred

COST: \$5 per person

TO ARRANGE A GROUP TOUR (More than 10 people): Please email tours@htci.org, listing 3 alternative dates/times for your tour. A volunteer will respond to your email to confirm a time for the tour.

Weekday morning tours can be arranged for school groups or other organizations but since our volunteer guides work fulltime outside the Temple, availability for weekday morning tours is limited. If it is possible for your group to come on an evening or weekend, we would appreciate it.