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6th November, 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Saprem Namaskar,

Gita Jayanti which is celebrated on Margashirsh Shuddha Ekadashi this year comes on 28th November 2009. Since last year we have decided that on this occasion we should have family get together. Last year those branch centres who organized family get together on this day found it was welcomed by one and all. In today's atmosphere of individualism and materialism, contemplation on the higher purpose of families based on Ekadasha Darshan was welcomed by all families. The dissatisfaction in families or even disintegration of families is increasing due to the atmosphere of crass materialism. Therefore the integrating principles of Bhagavad Gita are the need of the hour.

Bhagavad Gita is not a book to be studied at the fag end of life or to be worshiped in the pooja room. Bhagavad Gita gives philosophy for life. It is in the families that the future generation really acquires the vision and purpose of life. Therefore Gita needs to be taken to the families. The study of Gita should become the regular feature (nitya karma) in families.

There are certain laws of existence; if we live life against those laws then we are bound to suffer. For example, certain food is not good for the stomach. If some one says that 'I do not believe in it' and goes on eating such foods beyond limit, then after sometime it is going to affect him. Even if one knows or does not know the law of gravitation if he slips from the height he would fall down and not go up. Whether one goes against the laws of existence deliberately or due to ignorance, he is bound to get affected by its effect.

There are certain eternal laws of existence too. If we go against those laws then it would affect our lives. Today we see many problems are afflicting human being. Though the economical well-being has improved, the index of contentment is almost nil. Though the comforts are more the man is not at peace. Though the channels of communication for coming together have tremendously improved the collectives like family, locality, society seem to be falling apart. Scepticism and purposelessness has created a hollow in human heart that refuses to get filled.

Disintegration and destruction of the man, of the families, of the communities, of the nations, of the nature has created a need for such philosophy that can integrate these units. That is how Yogic practices and Yoga way of life is becoming popular all over. Even the staunch Christians who do not like to follow anything of the other religions are inventing Christian Yoga etc. The point is, the efficacy of the Yoga is accepted by all. Gita explains the Yoga way of life very lucidly synthesizing the needs of all type of people. The world over Gita is being viewed as the panacea for the ills of modernity. Therefore, on Gita Jayanti we should make all the efforts to take the Gita to the families.

Bhagavad Gita gives us the eternal laws of existence. If one has to learn to follow these laws, one has to be harmonious part of the Samashti and lead life. Samashti is the extended form of an individual. If the Samashti is not in proper state then its part –its smaller units cannot be expected to be in better shape. Family is the most natural and basic expression of Samashti. It is easier to learn the lessons of harmonious living in the family if

that family is functioning based on the eternal laws of existence. It does not mean that one has to do any different activities or rituals. It is the attitudinal change that Gita brings in.

What are these laws of existence?

1. This whole existence is the expression of One. Thus one cannot lead life as an individual or even worse by hurting or exploiting the 'other' as it would hurt the doer. There is no 'other' in ultimate sense. Everything is the expression of the one. In a family no one can insist that 'what I say should happen.' Such attitudes would strain the relationships and then in the prevailing atmosphere of materialism and individualism would ultimately break the family. Gita says we should have 'Atmavat Sarvabhuteshu' attitude. It means the attitude of oneness. In a family it is easier to have this attitude. Selfish attitude of 'I and my' gets dropped naturally. Enlightened self interest gets nurtured with this vision of oneness by understanding that all are expression of me.

2. Yagna attitude – Yagna means offering and nurturing the larger collective by sacrificing the lesser or narrower interest of smaller units. Thus an individual gives himself/herself to nurture the family. Family shares with the community. The community works to maintain the peace in society. Society functions as the harmonious expression of the one Brahman/Atmatatva that pervades every where. If Yagna is going on at all levels then the Brahman is experienced. Sri Krishna says, 'Tasmat Sarvagatam Brahma Nityam Yagne Pratishthitam' Therefore, the pervasive Brahman is always experienced by Yagna. But this Yagna attitude of sharing with Samashti is inculcated only in family. Parents should share with society and inculcate that habit in children too. If parents are calculative the children get trained to be calculative and later they calculate the cost of maintaining their parents too.

Swami Chinmayananda defines Yagna as, "Yajna here means only "any self – sacrificing work, undertaken in a spirit of Self – degrading and, therefore, it is self – liberating." He says the stanzas in Gita will become "more clear, and universally appropriate in their meaning, only when we understand Yajna as "any social, communal, national, or personal activity into which the individual is ready to pour himself forth entirely in a spirit of service and dedication". If children see such examples in front of them in their elders, they too imbibe it.

3. Attitude of contentment – Today the terrible curse of 'I want more' is consuming family ties, community bonds, social commitments, national duties and human considerations. Gita tells us to seek satisfaction in our own inner worth but not in what we possess. If we go for desires of possessions then these desires devour us. This attitude of contentment children acquire by observing their elders too. If they see parents engaged in rat race and even if the parents win the race they are viewed and valued by the children as nothing less than rats! At the most may be winner rats but rats are all the same. They, too, then become the part of the rat race as they feel that that is what is worth doing.

4. As a corollary to this attitude of contentment is attitude towards one's growth. The real growth is inner growth. Inner growth takes place only when the body and mind are controlled, disciplined and are made as vehicles of expression of the Divine within. Samyama is essential. All the time while growing, one needs care and control. For example if a river in its initial stages has no banks, it would dry up by getting scattered its water. A tree needs protection when it is a sapling. The age of 16 and 25 is very important as at that time all the good seeds received in childhood start germinating. At that time self control is

essential. In a family where parents have brought up children with all care, love and higher values their children automatically follow their parents. They do not go against the wish of their parents. Self control is essential for growth. Enriching life is acquired by children if family follows the laws of existence as told in Bhagavad Gita. Self-control comes by doing one's own duty to the best of one's capacity. A work to be done should not be depending on whether I like it or not. It should be Karyam Karma Samachar – doing properly what needs to be done and it should be Aragadweshtah Kritam – without likes and dislikes.

Self-control is required for developing the inner being. For self-control a firm daily routine, certain 'has- to- be –done' activities in family are essential. The family traditions properly tested on the vision of Gita need to be inculcated. In today's complex situation, crumbling scenario what keeps man going is such affirmations, convictions and daily routines. Dana Zohar and Ian Marshall – the psychologists who are writing many best-sellers in new age spirituality say in their book on SQ, *"The more extreme the conflicts, the more exotic fantasies and dreams the more it helps to be in some aspect of daily reality – a relationship, a family, a routine, a discipline. Jung (the famous psychologist of West) credited his family and his busy practice of patients with keeping him moderately sane during his seven year journey into near madness."*

Today in West, too, this realisation of importance of family having higher values is being increasingly realized. A child may acquire good IQ by going to good school but an IQ does not take a human being very far. The real happiness and meaning in life is possible with EQ (emotional intelligence) and SQ (spiritual intelligence). For higher SQ the family atmosphere, the cultural traditions which make child part of a larger whole are essential. The same psychologists mentioned above say, *"As infants we begin life's journey in a state of fused wholeness with our environment. As family systems psychologists and psychotherapists argue, the human infant and young child forms its world and its self in relation especially to its mother and the family environment. This environment is the infant's framework. He has spiritual intelligence, a need to seek larger context, but at this stage he has nothing against which to test any given situation that might provide such a context. If the mother is a fragmented person, or if the family is a fragmented system, the child grows into this state of fragmentation. His own spontaneity ('innocence') works against him and against his original wholeness as it works to adapt him to the fragmented family. A young child with a violent and sadistic father will identify violent sadism as love. He will seek it out in later life, and probably abuse his own children. A child with a cold and rejecting mother will identify these qualities as love and, again, will seek to reinforce them in his relationships in adult life."*

Family is a very important unit in a society to teach the child the lessons of Samashti living. That is why in our Shastras it was told that if situation deteriorates in the society first concentrate on the Grihasthashrama. If Grihasthashrama is right then all other three ashramas Brahmacharyashrama, Vanaprasthashrama, Sanyasashrama would get corrected. It is Grihasthashrama which sustains all the three Ashrmas. If Grihasthashrama is made purposeful then the spiritual energy of the individual is released for the good of all. Swami Chinmayanand said, "Only when people come forward to act in a spirit of co-operation and self –dedication, can the community get itself freed from its shackles of poverty and sorrow. This is a fact endorsed by history. And such activities can be undertaken in a spirit of Divine loyalty, only when the worker has no attachment."

What the Western Civilisation is realizing today, Bhagawan Srikrishna and Vedic Rishis have given us that wisdom in much more clear and convincing terms. The vision and

principle of Gita should become part of family life. What really motivates the family for higher living is cultural traditions and love for nation. Families should see from this point of view only such books and magazines should come to house The festivals and rituals are to be celebrated so meaningfully using these as occasions for the informal education of the children in the family. Once children are grown and if grown in wrong direction nothing can be done to set right the situation.

Thus let us celebrate Gita Jayanti by taking the relevance of Gita to the families. If Gita is studied and lived in families it would nurture our culture and nation too. Last year some branches had organized full one day programe with games, lectures, discussions etc. Some discussion sessions were separate for women, men and children. In some all were together. The families enjoyed it immensely. There is a need felt in the society today for such family sammelans we only have to fulfil it by purposeful and sustained effort. Gita Jayanti is the right occasion for that.

Below the list of action points given last year is repeated with some modification.

For ideal and healthy family -

- Regular worship of Kuldevata
- Regular Snan, Dhyan and Vyayam by all in the family
- Once in a week oil bath by all members as well as Bhajan, Naam and some reading of good books together for sometime that relaxes and brings relaxed atmosphere. The stories and good anecdotes of the ancestors also to be told. All these nourish the family physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- Once in 15 days to skip one meal, It is better to do on the traditional days like Ekadasi or Poornima and Amavasya etc It could be also linked to the schemes like Amrut Surabhi – keeping aside handful of rice/aata for the poor.
- Celebrate all the cultural festivals meaningfully and relating to the needs of time – thus making them relevant
- Once in a year the children should go with parents, grandparents – whole family - should go out to live in some better atmosphere like Tirtha-sthan, some Ashrama etc
- Family should get associated with good work in the society; children should have the experience of working with others in the society for the good of the society.
- Awaken the Bhava (Formation of attitude and feelings) too and not just information and rituals in bringing up children. Make them aware of the present scenario and challenges. Thus the literature – books and magazines in our house should be carefully chosen without falling into the trap of 'prestige'. The stories of Ramayana, Mahabharat, Bhagavata etc young children should be told repeatedly. The TV should not dominate our life or eat away our time of quality interaction with each other in family. Generally it is the evening time.
- To have good photos or paintings of great persons, gods or goddesses in the house, this would inculcate good samskaras on the children.

Wishing you all the best and with prayers.

Yours Sincerely,
(B. Nivedita)
Vice -President