

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Saprem Namaskar.

This year Gita Jayanti i.e. Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi, Yugabda 5112 is on 17 December 2010. Since few years it is decided that Gita Jayanti should be celebrated by organizing Kutumba Sammelans. Kutumba sammelans could be for 3-4 hours in a day. In which the lecture cum group discussion on message of Gita, some games related to the topics and children dressed as Sri Krishna could chant the shlokas of Gita or give the message of Gita. Wherever, in last few years, these Kutumba sammelans were conducted, they were found immensely useful.

A question can come to the mind that what is the connection of the Bhagawad Gita to family? The Gita was told by Srikrishna to Arjuna in the battlefield and thus how could that message be relevant for the families? The Gita was told not for a warrior Arjuna but it was told to a person who was confused about what was his duty in a critical situation? He was deluded by the thoughts of 'me and mine' and thus was hesitant to perform his duty. How a duty gets decided in a given situation? This is a question which troubles many in a family too. When children ask for many things then what to give and what not to give – is very difficult to decide. Many times the parents come to the conclusion that, 'Anyway we could not get all these things and we are their parents, so why not to give them whatever they want when, we can very well afford it?' But whether that will help the healthy growth of a child, what is the duty of the parents in the atmosphere of crass materialism and consumerism? Why a wife and husband should accept and adjust with each other when each is educated, earning and has his or her own individual rights? Why the old parents should be taken care of? Why the parents should not be insisting on how their son and daughter-in-law should run the family? Why a busy family man should also offer his money and time for the good of the society without any expectation in return? How all such questions are to be resolved? This conflict afflicts our families today and when left unresolved, it estranges and breaks families. Gita gives us the vision of life and philosophy for life by which we can resolve and clear confusion that affects us. Like the quick-fix solutions it does not prescribe solutions for every questions but it gives us the light and direction in which we can chart the course of life at every step of dilemma and darkness.

The world is not unconnected but it is interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. Individual is not an unconnected unit but its expanded forms are various collectives. Each collective is the bigger expression of the earlier collective. The individual is the expanded form of a family, the expanded form of family is community, the expanded form of community is society, the expanded form of society is nation, the expanded form of nation is the whole creation. How should one collective have its relationship with the other collective? All this is given in the Gita. The basic and most natural unit in all collectives is family. Thus family is the basic unit in which individuals imbibe the life based on this eternal truth of interconnectedness, interrelatedness and interdependence of the existence. This vision is given by Gita, therefore study of Gita should become the integral part of nurturing practice in a family.

The celebration of Gita Jayanti is also a very important festival for the workers of Vivekananda Kendra. We are the workers of a spiritually oriented service mission. We are working for the rebuilding of this nation so that it can contribute towards the spiritual progress of man. Every celebration has a purpose behind it. The celebration of Gita Jayanti is meant to root ourselves in the soil of our ancient culture and tradition. Thus this festival is mainly for Shakti Samvardhana- for nurturing and increasing our inner strength.

Gita not only reflects our ancient tradition but is also the source of philosophy, which can guide the modern man. After the collapse of Communism the world over and evident failure of capitalism, man is in the search of a philosophy that reflects the reality of the interconnected and interdependent universe as proved by science. Man does not live by bread alone. He needs ideals in the life to strive for, to bring out the best in oneself and also to relate oneself to the expanding world – family, society, nation, humanity and the whole universe – around. The failure and collapse of Communism made man acutely aware of the need for a holistic approach to life. The man is in search for roots from which he can draw his sustenance in complex scenario of present time. It is this search, which is reflected today in many ways like alternative medicines, different kinds of meditations and yoga practices, spiritual movements or the revival of religious movements or even religious fundamentalism. A philosophy that can synthesis all these and is in tune with nature and science, which is inclusive and yet satisfying the various individual needs is surely needed. Gita meets precisely this urgent and all-important need. It has only to be taken to the people in the modern language and with apt interpretations. In our shastras, this is called as Rishi Yagna. The Rishis had perceived the reality and have passed on that knowledge to future generations so that they would evolve higher and higher. The vision of our Rishis was the vision of an ideal society based on Dharma – Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah.

But, as time changes, the same eternal values once enunciated by our Rishis are to be understood and interpreted in the new context and challenges in an insightful manner. The vision and knowledge of the Rishis should be passed on to the future generations, renewed and restated. Only then will our Rishi Yagna be complete and the debt to the Rishis – the Rishi (rina) is discharged. Thus Rishi Yagna has three stages. Understand the vision of the Rishis, practice it in our lives and then interpret it in the light of the complexities of life and pass it on to the next generation in terms and language they understand. Gita Jayanti is thus the festival to perform Rishi-yagna in all its solemnity and sanctity.

On the eve of Gita Jayanti, we can arrange lectures on Gita for our workers, and also take the message of Gita to the youth and to the children. That can form an important part of celebration of Gita Jayanti. Gita chanting is important but equally important is understanding the message of Gita and practicing it in our life. Possible topics that can be taken for the celebration of Gita Jayanti are, “Your destiny is in your own hands – Uddharet Atmanatmanam”, “Gita and Management”, “Gita for emotional intelligence”, “Gita for strength, manliness -Klaibyam ma sma gamah Partha”, “the greatest good can be achieved respecting the law of interdependence, by taking care of bigger collectives - Parasparam Bhavayantah Shreyah Paramavapsyath”, “How to acquire knowledge of Oneness - Jnanam” etc. Slokas related to these can be referred to from the book “Gita for Daily life.” Sankalpa can be taken by each one or all together in a family to read one shloka along with the commentary every day. That will help assimilation of the Gita and gradually bring about individual and collective transformation.

The concluding shloka in Gita summarizes the efficacy and the vision of Gita. It says wherever there is Yogeshwar Krishna and bow wielding Arjuna, there is always Sri, Vijay,

Bhuti and Dhruva neeti. It is a very significant statement. What does it indicate? Yogeshwar Krishna signifies the all-pervading Reality. "Wherever there is Krishna" means wherever there is yogic vision of Oneness. "Bow-wielding Arjuna" means the matching action performed by Arjuna with manliness, which is established in that vision of Oneness. 'Sri' is not just wealth or affluence: it is the wealth earned and utilized in such a way that it brings deep satisfaction. 'Vijay' is not just an ordinary victory but it is 'visheshena Jaya' – a victory which is the outcome of hard work for great cause, or a victory in which no one is destroyed. 'Bhuti' is an all-round welfare of all the beings. 'Dhruva Neeti' is the eternal law based on Dharma which is followed always in any circumstances thus it strengthens the man. When such Dharmic law prevails, no one in the land is hurt, everyone is taken proper care of. There is affluence coupled with all the divine qualities; there is success to those who work for some great cause. In short, this shloka beautifully describes an Ideal Social Order. All four 'Sri, Vijay, Bhuti and Dhruva Neeti' together constitute an Ideal Social Order. In order to have such an Ideal society, all the four should simultaneously co-exist. How all four can exist together? When there is Yogeshwar Krishna and Dhanurdhari Arjuna means where manly efforts are done to fulfill one's duty in the light of Oneness.

To be ready to work for an ideal society, we should have first manliness to do the work that is before us. For that we should not be afraid of anything. Swami Vivekananda while writing about Gita had said, "If you, my sons, can proclaim this message to the world." *Klaibyam ma sma gam Partha Naitatvayupapadyate*", then all this disease, grief, sin and sorrow will vanish from the face of the earth in three days. All these ideas of weakness will be nowhere. Now, it is everywhere this current of the vibration of fear. Reverse the current; bring in the opposite vibration, and behold the magical transformation! You are omnipotent-go, go to the mouth of the cannon, fear not.... If one reads this one shloka, "*Klaibyam ma sma gama Partha Naitatvayupapadyate, Kshudram hridaydaurbalyam tyaktotishtha Parantap.*" – he gets all the merits of reading the entire Gita; for in this message lies embedded the whole message of Gita."

The ultimate service that Vivekananda Kendra wants is to work towards the formation of such an Ideal Social Order. The study of Gita has a deep relevance for the entire work of Kendra and for the development of workers and all the collectives like family, society, nation and the whole creation. That is why Gita Jayanti is one of the five important festivals of Vivekananda Kendra. The message of Krishna is the message for Ideal Social Order. It is to achieve this ultimate goal that we should study and contemplate on Gita.

Let the Yogeshwara Krishna awaken the Dhanurdhari Arjuna in us!

With all prayers and best wishes

Yours Sincerely
B Nivedita