

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Saprem Namaskar

Gita Jayanti is approaching. Generally, we celebrate Gita Jayanti with family get-together. Gita is not a book to be studied at the fag end of life but it is to be studied for knowing clearly the purpose of life and to practice it in life. For that reason since childhood, it is to be studied. There cannot be a better place than family for learning this. Gita is gist of Upanishads and the most elevating thoughts of Gita form the Kendra Prarthana. We know Mananeeya Eknathji started Vivekananda Kendra to take these thoughts to the people and to mould our life based on these principles.

Gita tells a man to understand the total picture and in that whatever be the role, it is to be played as our duty. Gita inspires man to do his duty. It is in the family that child learns from the elders to do its duty sincerely. But, our duties to the family members, to the society, to the nation, to the whole creation can be understood only if our vision about the existence is clear. Bhagavadgita gives us that vision. Gita says – “*Atmaupamyena sarvatra samam pashyati yoarjuna..*”(VI.32). Look at everything as the expression of the Self. With vision of Oneness man is to view family, society, nation and creation as his extended forms and thus at times when there is a dilemma of what to do and what not to do, he has to decide it in the favour of his expanded form and that is what our Kendra Prarthana says in the beginning ‘*Jaya Jaya Paramatman...; victory to Ishwara i.e. victory to the higher self, the expanded self and not the puny I*’.

‘Prajapati created the mankind and along with that Yagna so that man could prosper and all the desires of the man would be fulfilled (III.10). Then, he told that, “With this Yagna you nourish the Gods and may those Gods nourish you; thus nourishing one another, you shall, attain the Highest Good.” (III.11) What does Yagna mean? Yagna is any self-sacrificing work, undertaken in the spirit of self-dedication for the blessing of all. Yagna is any action for oneself, family, community, society, nation, creation into which individual is ready to pour himself forth entirely in the spirit of service and dedication. Yagna is nurturing, strengthening the expanding layers of existence of self like family, community, society, nation and the whole creation.

Yagna- the spirit of self-dedicated activities, the linkage with the Virat is seen everywhere: the Sun shines, the moon appears, the sea throbs, the earth bears, trees flower and bear fruits – all in a spirit of sacrifice and self-dedicated motherly love with never even a trace of attachment or any kind of self-arrogating motives. The whole world of cosmic powers and nature’s phenomena function instinctively in the service of all. Even when life is developed and multiplied at all levels; we can easily recognize different degrees of Yagna-activities, which keep up the harmonious growth of existence. Thus, Yagna implies that any achievement is possible if a person knows how to act in the discipline of co-operation with larger collectivities; when he has love in his heart for others and is ready to serve and sacrifice. In Kendra prayer, that is why we say ‘*iha jagati sada nah tyagasevaatmabodhai...*’

Individual gets nurtured in family; hence, his expansion of consciousness is possible primarily in the family. Family is an expanded and organic existence of an individual. Similarly, the expanded form of family is community and so family works in harmony with the community. Expanded form of community is society therefore, community works to nurture the society. The enlarged form of society is nation and

therefore the purpose of society is to re-build and develop the nation. The purpose of existence of the nation is to contribute for the advancement of whole creation, because nation is the part of the world. The whole creation is the expression of the Self or Paramatman. Therefore, the real development and expansion of an individual is realizing one's real nature as Paramatman. That realizing is possible mainly by doing our duty with all excellence without any other expectation. The motive for performance of any duty is nothing else. No name, no fame, but realization of Paramatman – the Inner Being, and harmony of the collectives like family, society, nation and creation. Thus, we say in our Prarthana – *Nijaparamahitartham Karmayogaiknishtha*.

Thus, the goal of human life is to be one with the Atmatatva which has expressed in all these collectivities and which is beyond all this. Living a life and striving to be one with this all-pervading divinity is Yoga. The way to do it is Yagna. A person with vision of Oneness can appreciate the Oneness underlying all the diversities and therefore cherish the diversities and do not denounce it. Similarly, the Yagna way or Yoga way of life alone can add to the harmony and prosperity of the existence. Gita teaches us this and therefore Gita is considered very important in life. India has to give to the world this message of Oneness of the existence and prosperity by sharing and nurturing the larger expressions of one's own self – like family, community, society, nation and whole creation. Today we see that India is facing many dangers from outside and from within. Unfortunately, we as a nation are unwilling to face it or even acknowledge it. The 'national will' needs to be strengthened in facing these difficulties. The awareness about the purpose of our country and the problems that we are facing needs to be taught through the families.

In families, the education and career of the children is very well taken care of. But need is also to inculcate in them the vision of Oneness, to tell the children that you are the children of immortality, all the power is within you and you are born to do work of Ishwara – *vayam suputra amritasya noonam tav eva karyartham iha upajatha*. If these thoughts are inculcated in the children, we can see what a tremendous positive transformation it would bring in our attitudes. In life, what matters is attitude.

The family is not just the collection of individuals but it is a single unit, the basic unit of the society with three objectives.

1. The purpose of family is striving for Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha
2. Family is meant for the propagation of Sanatana Dharma
3. Family is for Prajanana. Prajanana means Prakarshana Janana means bringing out a generation, which is physically, mentally, intellectually, culturally and spiritually better than the earlier generation. In short, family is a basic unit where man-making and nation-building is possible.

The Grihasthashrama is a stage of life where man exerts to achieve the above three objectives. If we focus on our families in right sense, then we can very easily face the cultural invasion. Old age homes, destitute homes, orphanages are a sign of selfish families, failed society and of ungrateful generation.

We can say that the Ideal family should be five dimensional (5-S) –

1. Sukhi – happy, contented

2. Swastha – healthy
3. Sampanna- not lacking economically but with needs fulfilled
4. Samskarksham – able to mould children with proper values in life
5. Samaj Dharana – working with national consciousness.

We cannot say that we would have only some dimensions like Sukhi and Sampannata and not others. All are interlinked with each other. If a family ignores national security, the happiness, health and wealth of the family gets affected. We would have to focus on all these dimensions in our programme on Gita Jayanti. In most of the families pooja is regular but we have to also worship the living God, as Swami Vivekananda said and the same our Prarthana says '*Nishkamabuddhyarta Vipanna seva Vibho tav aaradhanam asmat iyam*'. As it is for individual, similarly, it is for the family that it should take from society for its nourishment but it should give back much more than that – *Jeevane yavadadanam syat pradanam tatodhikam....* Some of the action points for the ideal family could be as below.

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 some time which relaxes and brings relaxed atmosphere. The stories and good anecdotes of the ancestors also to be told. All these nourish family physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- Once in 15 days to skip one meal, It could be linked to 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 - to live in some spiritual 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'.

Thus, in our program of family get-together on the eve of Gita Jayanti, we can have the lectures, discussions, games, competitions based on Shlokas and thoughts of Gita etc. If the focus of the family is shifted to the nation then the problems within the family also fall in their own places and do not lead to disintegration. If we could organize the program for nurturing of families of all the acquaintances of Kendra (in Vargas or Utsavas or well-wishers), imbue them with social, cultural and national consciousness. It would be great step in man-making and nation-building. This would help in developing

the society where the diversities with all their distinctness and richness unite with one another with the grand vision of Oneness. The vision of Swami Vivekananda, "I do not see into the future; nor do I care to see. But one vision I see clear as life before me that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on Her throne-rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction," - could be actualized.

With warm regards