



Chinmaya

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Issue 20: **Krishna**
Janmashtami
Special

Listen... just listen.
The eternal flute plays
non-stop to those who
know how to listen.

You can. Try. **;**

-Swami Chinmayananda



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Out of India...

WHEN YOU READ THIS ISSUE, AND INDEED CHINMAYAMS THAT HAVE TRAVELLED TO YOU BEFORE, IF EVEN ONE OF THE ARTICLES MAKES YOU STOP, THINK, REFLECT AND PERHAPS REACT, THEN IT HAS SERVED ITS PURPOSE.

Have you sometimes felt when attending a talk, or reading an article that the Master is talking to you personally, addressing your innermost thoughts, whilst still communicating with the public at large?

I know I have – and it is this feeling of intense oneness that the editorial team try to infuse into every issue of Chinmayam. The words of the Masters, directly addressed to you, peppered with the experiences of the Swamis, Vanaprasthis, CHYKS, children and teenagers.

With that dear reader, let me take you on a personal journey, a journey that probably started out of India.

Going back a generation or two generations with you or your parents or grandparents when they first came here from India or Africa. Imagine how it felt, landing in a strange country with hardly any baggage - a mixture of fear, anticipation and ambition. Holding on to the one certainty - their values, beliefs and cultural identity, sharing a common bond. Celebrations and festivals played a pivotal role in strengthening these bonds and retaining a sense of community and belonging. A much needed anchor, a sanctuary even at times.

A generation later, we are all much more comfortably entrenched, part and parcel of a multicultural society and have forged a new identity - a blend of that inherited from our ancestors and one that we have moulded as our own. The journey continues, as we try to pass on our belief system to our children. One thing never changes - we always want our children - the next generation, to have more, to know more, to achieve more, and underpinning it all, the sense of oneness that keeps us rooted – our Dharma.

So at this stage in our journey, I ask you to stop and take stock. Imagine that once again, like our forefathers we stand at the start of a new journey. Gathered together, ready to move on – the next generation. We speak different languages, live and dress in a spectrum of styles and carry different baggage (considerably more!). The sense of fear, anxiety, as well as ambition and optimism carries overtones from the past, but we still rely on the one absolute

certainty to carry us through to greater success; our value system. This is what really defines who we are. Where we came from and where we will eventually end this part of the journey (in many cases, back to India!).

Just as crucial, is the need to make the celebrations and festivals that symbolised these value systems a central part of our lives.

And as they have always done, the Master's voice through the scriptures contain not just the philosophy behind these festivals, but also explanations, descriptions, techniques, in fact the complete science of our religion in ways that can be applied by everyone and for all ages and generations.

For many if not most of the next generation, the only connection with our religion and customs are these festivals.

Janmashtami is one of the most important days in our calendar. Quite probably for some, the only day that they perform any sort of ritual. In keeping with the significance of this date in our calendars and indeed our lives – I invite you on to the next stage of our journey with a very special birthday celebration – KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI.

Along the way, take with you this JANMASHTAMI issue of the Chinmayam packed with articles, stories and explanations. I would like to thank all the members of the editorial team, our sponsors and contributors for all their efforts in compiling this special issue.

But that's not all. With this issue we launch a series of Janmashtami events from the entire range of the Mission's activities culminating in a grand Janmashtami celebration led and guided by none other than the Head of the Chinmaya Mission Worldwide – Swami Tejomayananda.

Welcome aboard - Good luck and God speed!

Hari Om
Rupin Vadera
President, Chinmaya Mission UK



Online with the Master

A Glimpse of Krishna's Divinity
Based on the teachings of Swami Chinmayananda

Why is Lord Krishna a source of inspiration?

Why has He been the subject of such reverence by devotees across the globe for centuries, the famous Hero of the Puranas (mystical stories) and the epic Mahabharata, and the giver of Knowledge in the Geeta? We have all heard of Him and His names. But what do they represent? Who is this blue flute player?

Krishna Janmashtami is a celebration of the birth of Lord Krishna. The story goes that Krishna was born in a prison. Kamsa, Krishna's maternal uncle and Chanura, Kamsa's minister, imprisoned Krishna's father and usurped the throne of Mathura. Their tyrannical rule caused confusion and chaos everywhere. Krishna came to destroy the tyrants and restore peace and order in the land.

Just as Krishna was born in a prison, so also it often seems that the infinite, all-pervading Truth, when it takes on the finite form of a human being, gives the impression that Truth is limited. Kamsa and Chanura represent two negative forces which exist in us, namely the ego and egocentric desires. These cause us agitations, worries and anxieties. When these two forces are conquered by one's higher nature, the original glory and splendour of the Self is restored.

Every aspect of Krishna and His deeds is pregnant with deep mystical symbolism, indicating the highest Truth. His many names come both from his beautiful physical form, as 'KRISHNA' which means the all-attractive one, as well as from His famed life and actions. Krishna's every limb and adornment is not only bewitchingly beautiful but also immeasurably deep in its philosophical import, thus captivating both the emotional and

intellectual aspects of our personalities. His names are thus an inspiration because they restrain the outward flow of the mind towards the world of things and happenings, enticed by their magical promises of happiness. They redirect the mind towards the source of all this magic. The mind is therefore given the most enchanting form to meditate upon and the most heroic stories to revel in.

No picture of Krishna, the beloved boy of Vrindavan, is complete without Him amid the dancing gopis. Their limbs were ceaselessly engaged in activity of their obligatory duties while their minds remained attuned to the Lord. This is in essence one of the greatest spiritual practices, known as karma yoga - the dedication of one's actions to a higher altar while working without egocentric desires. Krishna Himself pictured amid the dancing gopis represents the Consciousness within all of us, which vitalises our thoughts (represented by the gopis) but remains unperturbed and unaffected by them. Hence he is known as 'GOPINATH', Lord of the Gopis.

The most beautiful and most beloved of all gopis was Radha. The love of Radha and Krishna is symbolic of the eternal love affair between the devoted mortal and the Divine. And thus, Krishna has also come to be known as 'RADHESH', the Lord of Radha. Radha's yearning for union with her beloved Krishna is the soul's longing for spiritual awakening. This long forgotten pain of separation is the root cause of all suffering. To rediscover our Oneness is the source of all happiness and fulfillment. When a devotee turns her entire attention towards the Higher she experiences the Immortal, the Infinite, as intimately as we experience the world and its changes. Radha represents this state of devotion and the consequent merging with the Lord.

A major part of the story of Krishna is his role as Arjuna's charioteer, friend and spiritual guide in the epic Mahabharata. Arjuna falls victim to conflict at the beginning of the war of Kurukshetra when he considers it a sin to fight against his own preceptors and relatives. What he required was not additional men or weapons but the guidance of one who was truly righteous and wise. It is during this conflict that Arjuna faced, that Krishna elucidates the priceless teachings of the Geeta, the divine song of the Lord. Thus He leads Arjuna's chariot of consciousness through the maze of war to victory through Dharma (or righteousness) alone. In the end, it is always only the moral force, the spiritual strength that wins and brings peace to the world. Thus one of Krishna's names is also 'DHARMADHYAKSHA', the Lord of Dharma.

Arjuna represents you and I. His conflict is but a reflection of the internal conflict we face every day. Every human being is constantly seeking a share of peace and happiness, and since one does not know the real source of these, one seeks them in the midst of the world of objects, leading to a life of limitation and weakness in the face of conflict. It is at such times that the guidance of Lord Krishna trains us in treading the steep and thorny path that leads to peace. These divine lessons of the Infinite Truth are relevant to all everywhere. For the path is one, though it has many names, and all souls seek the same goal, though they may not realise their unity.

It is this Infinite Truth which, being the same everywhere, rules our own world. It is this Truth that pervaded the world of Vrindavan through the Beloved Blue Flute Player, this same Truth, which lives in the teachings of the Geeta as the Charioteer of our Lives, and again the same Truth, which pervades the entire universe as the Supreme Teacher of the World. And thus we come to our final great name of Krishna: 'VASUDEVA', the all-pervading Lord.

"In and through the clamour of the lower beastly gruntings in our bosom, we surely hear very often the enchanting notes of a warbling music of Truth and peace."

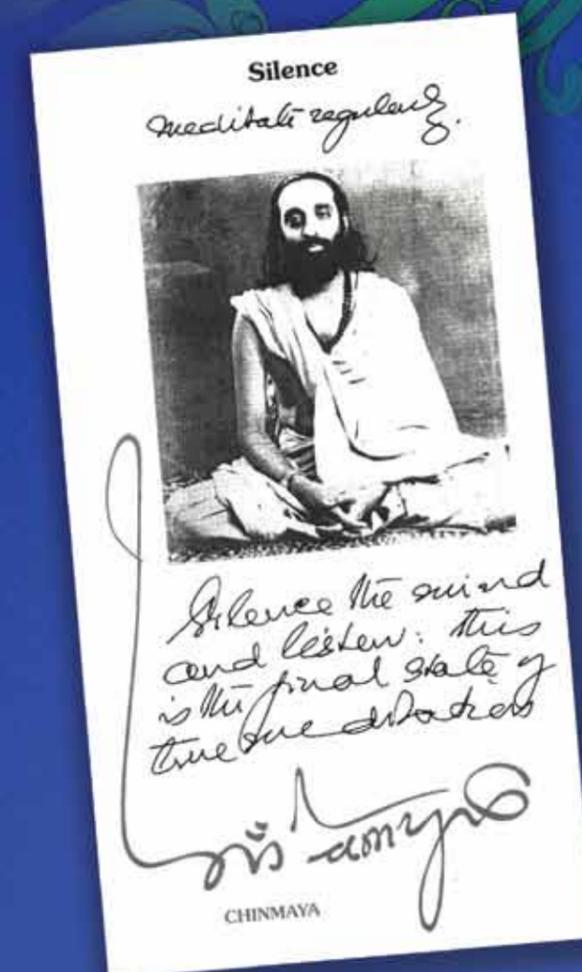
The divine flute player is never far away from our bosom. To be alert to catch His melody, in and through the boisterous wooing of the baser in us, is to live the life of devotion and spiritual seeking. To all those who sit thus in vigil, Krishna is born again and again.

Krishna is not merely a historical figure; He is the perpetual Truth. He does not belong to the past. He is of the ever-present immediate moment. On this Krishnashtami day, I expect every one of you to sit in vigil waiting for His birth within the iron doors of our self-made penitentiary.

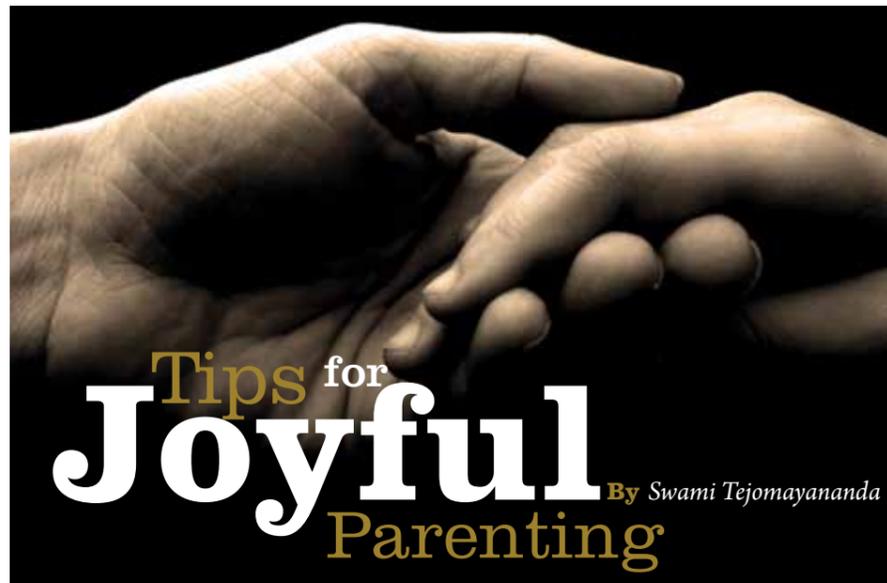
WHEN YOU MEET HIM THERE,
I SHALL NOT BE FAR AWAY FROM HIM."

With Prem and Om,
Thy Own Self,
Swami Chinmayananda

'Sri Krishna is not merely a historical person; the Bhagavad Geeta is not written by a historian. The birth of Krishna is a fact repeated every moment in everybody's life.'



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Tips for Joyful Parenting

By Swami Tejomayananda

AT SOME POINT IN OUR LIVES, MOST OF US HAVE BEEN OR WILL BE PARENTS. This is the most important job we will have and often we spend the least time preparing for it. Being a parent is not always easy. Raising a child, and guiding them on their life path to empower them to fulfil their own potential is a subtle art, there can be many trials along the way. However, the rewards of successful parenting are immeasurable, both to you and society. Over the years, many have approached Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda for advice on parenting. Here are some of his tips:

Set an example

If we want our children to be nice, intelligent, well behaved, cultured and obedient, we will have to start by developing the same qualities in ourselves. Often parents who want their children to be cultured send them to our Bal Vihar cultural classes for children. The parents say, "You go to BV - we will watch TV!" So they want culture only for their children, and not for themselves. There is the famous saying, 'a family that prays together stays together'. When parents and children share the same vision and values, they live together harmoniously.

Fulfilling your dreams through your children

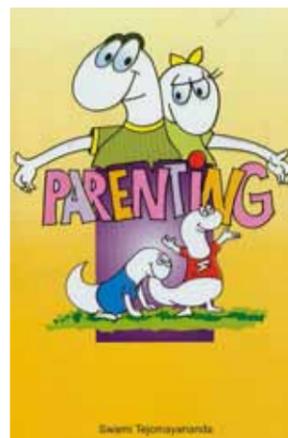
There is generally a tendency in every human being to impose his or her ideas on others. We think we know, we are right and therefore want to impose our ideas on the other person. Sometimes, if we have failed to achieve something in our life, we want to experience and enjoy that achievement through our children. We have to be very careful to see if we are trying to fulfil our selfish dreams and ambitions through our children.

The problem is of 'I-ness' and 'my-ness'

When you say 'the children', are you really worried about all children, or only your children? If you think

a little more deeply, you will find that all your worries are not because all children in general are misbehaving. You are worried because your children are misbehaving. All this worry or anxiety is not for 'the child', but actually for 'my child'. So where does the problem lie? Not in the child but in that possessiveness of 'my-ness'. Please be very careful because here we are thinking from the highest spiritual standpoint.

'When we try to analyse how to remould and recast our future, we see that it is certainly through the children of today who are going to be the leaders of tomorrow. We must supply them with a vision and teach them to have the courage and heroism to live up to their convictions.' - Swami Chinmayananda



Available to purchase at www.chinmayabooks.com

Take an interest in their interest

Whenever we want another person to take an interest in what we are doing or what we want them to do, we first have to take an interest in their interest. Try and understand what they think, what they like and so on. Then slowly a rapport is built up.

Establish a rapport

It is extremely important for parents to establish a rapport with their children. In their heart, there has to be love and total confidence in you. They must be able to confide in you. When this kind of rapport is built up, everything else becomes very easy. The child must have so much confidence

in you that even if he were to commit a serious crime he should be able to tell you that he has done so. Children should not want to or have to hide anything from their parents.

The Modern Spirit

Compiled by Preet Majithia
Based on teachings by Swamini Umananda



The world we live in today is filled with a myriad of challenges. The human worldview has undergone a dramatic change over the last two hundred years. A cynicism has developed about the positive spiritual message of Vedanta in a world of violence, war and terrorism, all resulting in a fear of what tomorrow may bring. This 'Modern Spirit' can be regarded as having three distinct aspects:

I. Rationalism Our thought processes have become limited to the frame of reasoning and deduction, and work only on the basis of tangible, perceived data. Reason is considered the final authority.

This can be seen in the theories of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, who argued that no one has any duty to anyone else but themselves, and that everyone should seek to satisfy their own best interests.

This rationalism gives rise to a range of consequences:

- Gradual reduction in our ability to comprehend a higher, invisible, transcendental reality.
- Depreciation of the higher function of the intellect and increase in emotionalism.
- Priority is given to materialism.
- The tendency to organise society in a very rational way, which results in the excess of bureaucracy and 'Big Brother' culture that we see today.

From a spiritual perspective we must realise that reason has to be given its proper place. We must develop discrimination, which is the ability to analyse and understand any situation fully, to see the subtler realities beyond mere appearances. To develop this discrimination we must control and quieten our minds, which can be achieved through spiritual practices.

II. Individualism A new scale of values has evolved, in which the rights, freedom and needs of the individual are seen as paramount. There are positive aspects to this, with the universal recognition of human rights and equality to people of all races and cultures.

However it also means that man exists for himself, no more to serve God, or as part of a natural order that transcends him. So man does not feel the need to be in harmony with this cosmic order, and is instead convinced that he can do better than God through the achievements of science and

technology. This change in man's relationship with the world has led to a variety of issues we see in the world today, from the depletion of our natural resources and destruction of wildlife, to the lack of love, forgiveness and understanding that leads to terrible misunderstandings and broken families.

It also leads to a strengthening of desires for instant sensual gratification, and the belief that happiness lies in doing whatever you want, often without any restriction or thought to the consequences.

Faith in reason gives all rights, even the right to kill. True faith in God gives duties.

From a spiritual perspective, each individual must find his or her place, or role in the universe. The concept and framework of Dharma gives us the means to achieve this. Dharma is the eternal cosmic law sustaining the universe. By following the values that are a reflection of this law in society, and by acting with an attitude of cooperation, each one of us will feel connected to the world around us. By acting with such harmony not only do we move towards lasting happiness for ourselves, but as more individuals begin to act this way, society as a whole improves.

III. Knowledge valued as the highest We value most highly the knowledge that provides us with a greater understanding of the material universe; in particular, scientific knowledge.

Undoubtedly science has changed and improved our lives.

However, scientific progress has not been the panacea that many hoped it would be. For example, while technological advances have increased our standard of living, many of these same advances are wreaking havoc upon the eco-system of the planet. Poverty has not been eradicated, and as one medical breakthrough is made, another disease takes over. At an intellectual level, science rejects whatever it cannot prove, and progresses by destroying the theories of others.

We have lost the connection that science previously had with the higher unifying principle. Scientists used to see how the Divine was reflected harmoniously in nature. Science was another path to approach the Divine Reality. We must refresh our perspective to restore this connection.

We must ask ourselves how to live and act with inner balance and harmony in our modern societies dominated by rationalism, materialism and secularism? How can we contribute in a positive way to our world?

We must have the boldness to: • Live our values and convictions, regardless of our environment • Act with a larger perspective, in a spirit of cooperation, and serve our ideals with enthusiasm • Develop our capacity to connect with our inner selves, in search of the deeper dimension of our being

Let us learn to live in this modern world, with a full understanding, without blindly accepting all modern tendencies. Let us combine the best of modernity with the wealth of immemorial tradition.

Work:

A Source of Inspiration

Written by Milan Samani

Based on teachings by Swamini Umananda

Vedanta states that the happiness we are all seeking is not in the world of objects but is in fact our true nature. While we can appreciate this intellectually, to come to **believe** it requires directed, self-effort known as 'Yoga'.

Of the 4 Yogas, Karma Yoga seeks to change the way we act.

Normally we act out of the desire to **seek** happiness. Karma Yoga acknowledges that every act we do is in the pursuit of happiness, but changes the nature of our actions so that **the action itself transforms our belief patterns about where happiness lies.**

Currently our belief patterns tell us that happiness is outside, that I need <insert desire here> to be happy. **These belief patterns (Vasanas) were created by repeated and emotive thought and action.** If I repeatedly think, feel and act as though I am incomplete and will only be happy once I get <insert desire here> then that is what I come to believe.

Through changing the way we act and think about our actions, Karma Yoga re-educates these erroneous belief patterns so that we discover happiness in and through our actions. So no matter what we do (pleasant or unpleasant), we experience joy.

SWAMINI UMANANDA EXPLAINS KARMA YOGA AS HAVING FOUR ELEMENTS:

1. When working, act faithfully, giving all of yourself to the task.

When we love what we do, our work becomes inspired. Inspired work is filled with dynamism. But the converse is also true. When we approach our work with dynamism, we discover a joy in the task itself. How many times have we put off something we didn't want to do only to discover a sense of fulfilment when we finally stopped dithering and got on with the job at hand?

When we act in this manner, our likes and dislikes become less powerful. Likes and dislikes are reinforced through repetition – if when confronted with a task I don't want to do, I repeat the thought 'I wish I didn't have to do this, I really hate it' a thousand times in my mind, then that belief pattern (Vasana) is reinforced.

However, when we habituate ourselves to just getting on with whatever task comes our way rather than complaining or reluctantly doing a half-hearted job, the belief pattern that forms is 'no matter what comes to me, I get on with it'.

A mind with such belief patterns is less concerned when it has to do things it does not like doing – consequently it is happier more of the time.

2. When working, work with the highest possible perspective.

All work is service of some kind. In the office, I serve my clients; at home I serve my family. However, many of us don't see our work as service: we see it as a means to earn money so we can fulfil our desires. Work seen as a means for desire gratification becomes arduous and difficult. Work seen as service fills our mind with noble intent, which in turn helps to make it calm and peaceful.

And ultimately, if we can see our work as service to the Lord (*which is the highest possible perspective*) our heart fills with devotion and all work becomes an expression of joy.

This ultimate expression of service can feel unattainable to many of us. Swaminiji explains that our service can be developed in steps: *i. Act in such a way that we do not cause harm to others ii. Act in a way that takes the needs and welfare of others into consideration iii. Come to act in a spirit of co-operation with others and the world around us iv. Come to serve the people around us through a cause or an ideal v. Working thus, our service to the world becomes infused with the ideal that through this service, we serve God, the Lord, the Divine.*

3. Invest all energy into the present task at hand and dissipate none in anxiety over the result or regret over the past. The vast majority of our energy is wasted on mental agitation. Think about how many thoughts you have had today. They just don't stop – constantly remembering the past or imagining the future. It is exhausting. And when we have a task to do, what proportion of our time do we spend actually doing the task compared with the time we spend thinking about what we would rather be doing or how we wished we didn't have to do it or what we will do once the task is completed. Such mental palpitation is draining, inefficient and perpetuates the belief that I will only be happy at some time other than the Here and Now. If instead, we bring our minds where our hands are, we discover a mental poise that is both efficient and calming, and our actions become fulfilling and brilliant.

4. If you have worked in the spirit of the above 3 principles, whatever the result, accept it.

You win some, you lose some. If our work is half-hearted, then we have brought failure upon ourselves. If we worked with the first three principles in mind and still failed, then the desired result was not to be. Accepting this instantly takes the sting out of any failure and can lead us to experience happiness regardless of the result.

Collectively living these 4 principles of Karma Yoga makes us happier in the present moment as well as, over time, shifting our belief patterns away from *'I need <insert desire here> to be happy' to 'I am happy regardless of what the world presents to me'*.

A mind that has such reduced levels of likes and dislikes is calmer, happier, intuitive and discriminative; such a mind is then able to deeply and directly apprehend the Truth that the scriptures declare: I am the happiness that I seek.

One who knows this, acts not to seek joy but as an expression of joy. His actions are guided by the Divine will and every word he speaks and task he carries out, from the sublime to the mundane, shines with divine brilliance and invokes wonder from generations of seekers who walk in his footsteps and aspire for the Truth.



'This Supreme Essence born as a mass of Beauty, Music and Joy, dazzling in Wisdom, noisy with Laughter, ever a Master of Circumstances, a King of Events, frisking about in life's melancholy contentions, meeting challenges with daring and confidence, at once a Hero and a Child all rolled in one - this is the perfect God-Man, the Eternal Child of Vrindavan.'

- Swami Chinmayananda

Krishna

Demystified By Bhavit Mehta

Lotus (kamala) is the symbol of purity & transcendence, resting on muddy water, which does not touch it.

Flute (murali) represents much more than just the enchanting music that attracts His devotees to Him. Each of its seven openings represents our various faculties: five senses, mind and intellect. When we surrender our personality to Him, the music that flows out through us is the divine melody of Krishna, bearing the touch of His glories and perfections.

His Peacock feather (mora-pankha) is a symbol of beauty and knowledge.

The blue body (shyama-varna) corresponds to the sky and the ocean, one depicting universal vastness and the other universal depth, and both conjointly reflecting the infinite.

His yellow garment (peelu-pitambara) covers only part of Krishna's body. It corresponds to light, that covers only the lower regions of the cosmos. Beyond it is a region of abysmal darkness, with no light but its own galaxy of colours and its own sounds and echoes.

He is Gopal, the protector and the keeper of cows. Krishna takes cows to graze and protects them from everything. The cow also stands for the earth as she has earth like forbearance and the capacity to feed mankind. Allegorically, Krishna protects the earth from evils and sustains it. The word 'go' also means 'senses' - Krishna is the protector of our five senses.

Clarifying our Vision:

Reflections from the Bhagavad Geeta

By Milen Shah

'When we enquire deeper, we discover that our own problems are merely miscommunications or misunderstandings coloured by the play of our personal likes and dislikes' - Swami Chinmayananda

Life is a series of experiences, and at every moment we are required to make a choice - an inner decision, which often later manifests as an external action. Any given situation can be viewed as a worrying problem to some individuals, and to others, taken as an opportunity to learn or a necessary challenge to overcome. Our viewpoint is determined by our 'vision' of life - formed by the clarity of our own thought - patterns, our degree of emotional stability and depths of inner maturity.

Our sense organs constantly provide our inner mind with external stimuli of the world - such as the passing words of a colleague, the temperature of the train compartment, the taste of a meal or the sight of a clouded sky. Based upon inner preferences, likes and dislikes, our mood at the time, we react to the external and seem to often regret our responses, wishing we had done things differently!



A remedy is the practice of titiksha - forbearance, by enduring potential minor discomforts, cheerfully accepting them as a play of nature and understanding such pinpricks in life to be impermanent ('even this will pass away'), thus broadening one's

vision. Our aim should be to regain inner equipoise, such that the superficial chattering of our mind becomes silent and our viewpoint is guided by values of a clear intellect manifesting with positive emotions: 'To weep is folly, to smile is wisdom, keep smiling!' laughs Swami Chinmayananda.

Changing one's viewpoint is a recurring theme in the Bhagavad Geeta - a dialogue on the battlefield between the warrior prince Arjuna and his revered friend Sri Krishna. The incarnation of the Supreme Lord Himself lovingly broadens the vision of a despondent Arjuna who is unsettled by his inner doubts in facing his teachers and relations in war. These teachings, later formulated into 18 chapters of 700 verses, allow Arjuna to ultimately act with clarity and emerge victorious.



Our own identity is challenged early on by Sri Krishna who states we are 'spiritual beings having a human experience' rather than 'human beings having a spiritual experience'. He teaches that our essential nature is in fact that of pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss - the One Supreme Self - the very substratum of the world we see around us. We see separateness and division because of our limited vision and identification with a particular set of thoughts, our body, and the current situation we face in our lives. Through a variety of spiritual practices we can come to the direct knowledge and experience of our true Divine nature and feel a sense of Oneness with all. This includes purifying our minds through selfless service, devotion to a Higher Ideal, and methods of concentration.

As our vision thus broadens, we are less likely to be overcome by grief - a natural emotion of the mind when something dear to us is lost such as a person, an object, an occupation or one's health for example. It is natural to grieve, but if grief persists, we can become dejected and our further progress is hampered. Only an inner change can cure this disease. Sri Krishna teaches, 'Do not grieve over the past, nor fear the future, but deal calmly and effectively with the present.' We are taught to let our likes and dislikes become mere preferences at most and fulfil our duties fearlessly with this clearer Vision of Life.

'Weapons cleave It not, fire cannot burn It, water cannot drown It, and wind cannot dry It. This Self cannot be cut, or burnt, or drowned, or dried. It is eternal, all pervading, stable, unmoving and ancient. This Self is said to be unmanifest, unthinkable, unchangeable. Therefore knowing this to be so, you should not grieve.' - (II:23-25) Bhagavad Geeta



The Mahabharata and the Art of Warfare

By Vijay Sodhi

ALL THAT WAS, IS, AND EVER SHALL BE IS CONTAINED IN THE MAHABHARATA.

'Seeing the Kaurava forces ranged in battle array, Yudhisthira gave the orders to Arjuna;

"The enemy force is very large. Our army being much smaller our tactics should be concentration rather than deployment, which will only weaken us. Array our forces, therefore in needle formation."

Men, horses, elephants and chariots crashed and wheeled. The larger enemy bore down upon the Pandavas, like an anvil crashing on a nail. The force would be felt at the tip and should it hold, then the energy is dissipated upon its flanks. Archers from deep inside the Pandavas' lines loosed off volleys of arrows into the enemy ranks. The needle is swift and agile, and when manipulated efficiently it holds its strength well. It can easily puncture the thickest of skins when used by a skilled leader.

Some 1000 years later, Alexander the Great, used the same formation to cut through the numerically superior Persian army of Darius. With the two armies facing each other, Alexander moved with his cavalry out to the right of his lines. The Persians, seeing this manoeuvre also moved their horses along their lines, mirroring Alexander's movements. Now with Persians spread more thinly, Alexander suddenly wheeled his men, and shot forth into the enemy lines in a narrow file. With Alexander leading the charge, the Greeks found the weakest point in Darius's lines and threaded their army through the opening.

In 1992, 8 men of the SAS special forces regiment, were on a mission to cut Iraqi supply lines in North-Western Iraq, when they were surprised by a platoon

of 40 enemy soldiers. Most traditional soldiers would hold their ground and fortify their positions. The SAS advanced upon the Iraqi positions, in a swift and coordinated formation. Within 10 minutes of the first bullet being fired, the action was over; the SAS needle had punctured and decimated the Iraqi lines.

All that was, is, and ever shall be is contained in the Mahabharata. Arjuna and Yudhisthira's needle formation has been repeated in conflicts across various theatres of war ever since. For the needle to be successful, it requires the tip to be whetted and sharp. The anvil would only flatten a dull and lifeless tip. Often our teachers remind us that our mind must be sharp, for a dull instrument would be quite useless when it comes to dissecting this world's apparent overwhelming forces. In addition to being sharp, the needle requires its core to be strong, an unbending rod of steel. Were it not strong, the overwhelming pressure would bend the needle at its weakest point, only to give way completely after a sustained period of time. A man that walks with a straight back and upright spine, tends to live a healthier life, staving off disease and ill health. All that was, is, and ever shall be is contained in the Mahabharata.

On the third day Yudhisthira lined his army into the crescent formation. At the tip of each horn leading their respective divisions, were Arjuna and Bhima. The twin tips of the crescent meet the force of the enemy first, funnelling the enemy into the centre, where the densest mass of troops and elephants wait for them. The Kaurava army was forced into this confined space, where they faced two immediate problems. The first was the enemy encircled them from both the side and the front. The second was even more deadly. With their own men and elephants pouring in from the rear, the men at the front were trapped, and with nowhere to go, not even backwards,

they were pushed by their own forces on to the Pandavas' swords and spears; trapped between a rock and a hard place.

In 216 BC Hannibal Barca lead his small army into Italy to fight the mighty Roman Imperial power. At the Battle of Cannae, he aligned his strongest forces on the flanks and engaged the enemy, who were superior in number. The Romans, who were strongest at the centre, quickly pushed it back. But in doing so created a pocket similar to that in the Mahabharata. Hannibal's strongest troops had been placed towards the sides, where they contained the pocket's integrity that sucked in the Romans, crushing their comrades at the front.

On the plains of 18th Century Southern Africa, the young king, Shaka Zulu, focused his eyes on the impending clash of two armies. He had trained his Impis (warriors) for many months, rehearsing his battle formation that would surely defeat any and all of his enemies. His strategy was known as mpondo zekomo, or buffalo horns. As the two armies approached, the dust of the plains rose in the air partially obscuring the view of the impending battle. The decimation of the enemy was rapid. They had never encountered such a formation, and did not know how to counter it. Shaka Zulu was famed for an ingenious strategy that placed him alongside the ranks of great battlefield tacticians.

All that was, is, and ever shall be is contained in the Mahabharata.

The epic Mahabharata allocates almost a quarter of itself to the war of Kurukshetra. It speaks of valiant acts of heroism, brothers and comrades rushing to the aid and support of those that had fallen or were outnumbered. But it also speaks much on the atrocity of war, of the thousands that lay dead at the end of each day of the battle. There has not been a generation of man that has not in some way experienced a war or conflict. War and violence has plagued our species since our inception. The Mahabharata recognised this, and hence has spoken so much about it.

Most of us will fortunately never have direct exposure to war, one of the most traumatic experiences one can undergo. Even more fortunately, we will never be



faced with the tremendous moral dilemma of having to fight our beloved teachers, or our own brothers and neighbours. The Mahabharata deals with this directly; Arjuna's reluctance to fight the grandsire Bhishma is illustrated at several times during the course of the battle. But through Lord Krishna's instruction on Dharma, Arjuna eventually fells the Grandsire, a most noble and honourable warrior. In doing so there was no hatred, anger or venom involved in the action, which is usually required when it comes to taking another's life. Instead it was with great reluctance and humility that Arjuna fired the fatal shots. As the most skilled of warriors, he was aware of the far-reaching implications of such violence.

In Japan, the samurai of old were famed not just as fearless warriors but also as men and women with a heightened appreciation for the value of life. Facing

death their entire lives, they took the very essence of the what they experienced on the battlefield and that same essence was transmuted into the way of the sword, the tea ceremony, calligraphy and other arts. So the same mindset of dispatching the enemy with a strike of the sword was used to paint the most complete strokes with brush. The clarity of wielding a spear against multiple opponents became the practice of Zazen, or continuing mind. The same mental clarity that the Samurai had in battle can be found in the Mahabharata and its famed warriors.

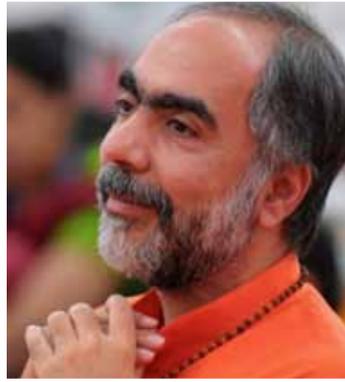
All that was, is, and ever shall be is contained in the Mahabharata. The folly of man and his transgressions against Dharma are found within this mighty epic, so too are his heroic and inspiring actions and adherence to Dharma. The strategies employed and characteristics required of a disciplined warrior can be

found in this great classic. We can employ those same values used in battle in our daily lives to the same effect. Discipline, to calm an anxious mind, courage, to face our internal enemies, humility to realise our place in the broader vision of life, and steadfastness and determination to hold on, when faced with overwhelming odds. *All that was, is and ever shall be is contained in the Mahabharata.*



The one who steals... our Hearts

Compiled by Trishna Gulrajani based on teachings by Swami Swaroopananda



When we talk of Krishna stories, what often comes to mind is how Krishna stole butter from the gopis. And there is a definite element of shock that the Lord of the Universe would ever steal anything! Swami Swaroopananda unveils the beauty and symbolism behind the story...

What is stealing? Stealing is when you take something from someone without the wish of that person. By that definition, Krishna never stole butter! The Bhagavath speaks of how much the gopis loved Krishna. They made butter for Krishna and Krishna alone. While they milked the cows, they would think of only Him, and while they would churn the butter, they would think only of Him. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna! They used to hang it in pots so that Krishna would come into their houses.

Krishna was the only son of Nandbaba, a chieftain who had thousands of cows. His mother Yashoda *maiyya* would spend the whole day making gallons of butter. Then why would He need to go and steal butter from somebody else's house?

LOVE. It was the love that the gopis put in the butter that made the Lord of the universe become a butter thief. For love, Krishna would happily be called a thief!

take the form of soft, pure, sweet, white butter. These actions are dear to the Lord of the universe and He comes and steals the devotee's heart. That is the butter that Krishna stole. That kind of stealing cannot be bad! If He can steal away your bondage, if He

can steal away your Vasanas, if He can steal away the fruits of your actions and if He can steal away your sorrows, how can that type of stealing be bad?

We all chant Hare Krishna.

Hara in Sanskrit means to steal, so it actually means that we're asking Krishna to take from us. That's what we're praying for. Come Krishna, steal away our hearts, steal away our sorrows, steal away our imperfections, and steal away our ignorance. If the Lord were to steal your heart, there is no loss, only gain. The Lord is the greatest thief and he has no shame about it!



The Thousand Names of Lord Vishnu (Vishnu Sahasranama)

Sri Veda Vyasa, the author of the Puranas, composed the Vishnu Sahasranama and we meet this great chant in his classical work, the Mahabharata. Prince Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, at the end of the war approached Bhishma Pitaamaha, when the mighty grandsire of the Kuru family was lying on a bed of arrows, unconquered and unconquerable, awaiting the sacred hour of his departure to the feet of the Lord.

Who is the greatest Lord in the world? Who is the one refuge for all? By glorifying whom can man reach the Auspiciousness (*peace and prosperity*)? By worshipping whom can man reach the Auspiciousness? What is in thy opinion the Greatest Dharma? By doing japa (*contemplation*) of what can we go beyond the bonds of samsara (*cycle of birth and death*)? These are the six questions asked by the righteous Yudhishthira to Bhishma, the constant devotee of Krishna and gigantic Man of Action. This is how we find the Vishnu Sahasranama, the Thousand Names of Lord Vishnu, introduced in the immortal classic, the Mahabharata.

The Infinite is one. It can only be one. Its manifestation is the world of plurality with its endless varieties of names and forms. Just as all forms that have been created from gold are also gold, so too the world of forms can only be His own manifestations. In fact, the effects have no existence apart from the cause.

The finite alone can readily be comprehended by the sense organs and the mind and intellect of man at his present 'state' of consciousness. The attempt of the spiritual student is to transcend his present instruments of perception and awaken to the Higher in him, from where he can experience the one 'objectless-Awareness'. Though the Reality behind the universe was intimately experienced by

the great Rishis (seers), they were helpless in directly defining, explaining or demonstrating it to their students through finite tools. All such indications pointing out the Infinite, through the world of manifested finite objects, are His Glory only. Each one of them is a 'Glory' of the Lord, which is considered in religion as a 'sacred name' of the Lord.

These Thousand Names of Vishnu provide us with a thousand clear arrow-marks rising from the known, indicating the unknown. Contemplation upon these can deepen our faith in, broaden our devotion to and steel our understanding of the All-Pervading Reality (Vishnu).

The Sahasranama gives both devotionally inclined seekers and contemplative philosophers a thousand props: each phrase has its appeal to the devotee, and each one of them also has a suggestion to rocket the contemplative intellect to sublime heights of understanding.

Vishnu, the Supreme, cannot be defined. He is beyond both the 'Known' and the 'Unknown'. He is the very illuminating principle of Consciousness that illuminates all experiences. And yet He has many manifestations, and therefore infinite names. Definitions should directly describe the object defined. Here we have a thousand indirect definitions with which the Real, the Infinite, is being indicated in terms of the unreal and the finite. These thousand names of the Lord have been coined and given out by the Rishis. They were collected and strung together into a joyous hymn to Vishnu, a garland of devotion and reverence, by the poet-seer Vyasa.



Ghee: the Golden Oil of Ayurveda

By Zia Rawji

Ghee has been given the cherished title of 'Rasayana' in Ayurveda, a name given to herbs and foods that promote overall health, wellbeing and longevity. Ghee, clarified butter, has been used as a cooking medium in India for thousands of years.

It is a time-honoured alternative to hydrogenated oils. Ghee is made by the clarification of butter by a process that removes almost all of its natural water content. This allows the milk solids to separate out, leaving behind a lighter lactose-free golden oil highly resistant to spoilage. In this way too, butter, a *tamasic**, heavy food is converted into a highly *sattvic** product, which is more easily digested and has wonderful cooling and healing properties.

Ayurvedically, the older the ghee the better its healing properties. Such ghee was always kept in temples in large vats and families passed on aged ghee to the next generations to be used as medicine. A hundred-year-old ghee is highly prized, and is said to be able to cure all diseases.

How to make Ghee: Place 1lb of unsalted, organic, churned butter in a stainless steel saucepan over a low heat. Allow to melt completely, and then raise the heat to medium. When butter starts to boil, giving off its water content, lower the heat again and cook slowly. The ghee is ready when all the moisture stops bubbling off and milk solids at the bottom of the pan turn a light, golden brown. It will have a nutty aroma. Remove from heat; cool, strain and preserve in an airtight jar. This will keep for many weeks at room temperature if care is taken to avoid introduction of moisture and other impurities.

In traditional Indian culture, ghee was made from the cream of cow's milk. This was first cultured with yoghurt and after 5-6 hours the whole mixture was hand-churned using a rolling back and forth motion. (Nowadays most industrially produced butter is not made by churning, and if churns are used, they have only a one-way motion.) The subtlety of this whole process gives ghee its highly healing *sattvic* qualities.

Benefits of Ghee: • Ghee has supreme penetrating properties and is used for transporting herbs and other ayurvedic preparations deep into the tissues to promote healing. • Ghee is considered to be 'the single most ojas-producing food on earth'. Ojas is the underlying basis of all immunity and the essence of all bodily tissues. • Ghee builds up 'Rasa', the internal, nourishing juices of the body, and increases the aura. • Ghee is known to nourish brain and nervous tissue; it increases intelligence, refines the intellect and improves memory. • Ghee is prized for its ability to increase agni, the digestive power of the body without increasing pitta.* • Ghee is cooling for pitta and is used in the management of fevers and other pitta-induced conditions

such as inflammation and ulcers. • Ghee softens the skin. It is used in beauty products and also as a topical remedy for burns and blisters. • Ghee balances all three doshas, vata, pitta and kapha;* and though kapha types generally need to avoid too much oil, ghee is best for them too. • Ghee is one of the five ingredients of 'Panchamrit', roughly translated as ambrosia of five nectars: sugar, honey, cow's milk, yoghurt and ghee. Panchamrit is used in many pujas (worship); a few drops are given to new mothers daily for several days after their delivery, for the health and welfare of both mother and child. • Cow ghee is highly revered in Indian culture and considered as food for the devas (gods); as such it is used generously in homas and yagnas (religious ceremonies). It is also used in lamps in temples and pujas all over India. It is said that the light of a ghee lamp is brilliant and beautiful, and helps to ward off negativities and evil influences. • Of all foods, cow ghee is most like a mother. It is nourishing and healing. It is steady and dependable and always supportive of life and living. Ghee always brings an excess of goodness wherever and whenever it is appreciated and used.

SO CHERISH AND ENJOY THIS WONDERFUL NECTAR AS DID KRISHNA.



*Sattva, Rajas and Tamas – the 3 gunas or qualities. They are sattva (knowledge, purity), rajas (action, passion) and tamas (inertia, ignorance).

*Vata, Pitta and Kapha – These are the 3 biological energies in Ayurveda. Vata (space, air), pitta (fire, water) and kapha (water, earth).



Why God helps us Himself...

Tell me a Story...

One day King Akbar asked Birbal, "Why is it that Hindu Gods behave so strangely?"

Birbal thought, "Our king respects Hinduism and Islam equally. He must be trying to tease me by asking such a question."

King Akbar continued, "Lord Krishna is a fine example of that. Doesn't your Lord Krishna have any servants? Each time a devotee calls for help, the Lord runs himself to see the devotee's needs. Surely he can employ others to do such work?"

"Oh yes, surely he can," Birbal replied, but he already had a plan to explain the facts to the King.

Birbal knew King Akbar loved his grandson, Khurram, very much. Birbal asked a statue-maker to make a wax idol of Prince Khurram in his exact image. When the idol was ready, he called Khurram's guardian and said, "Take this idol and dress him up in the Prince's clothes and jewels. Go to the lake in the royal garden with the idol in your hand. At my signal act as if you have slipped, then let the idol fall into water."

The Prince's guardian agreed. Birbal came into the garden with King Akbar. At Birbal's signal, the guardian dropped the wax idol into the deep lake. As soon as King Akbar saw this, he jumped into the lake's cold water to rescue his grandson. He realised later that it was just a wax idol.

As King Akbar was helped out of the lake by the guardians, Birbal commented, "Your Majesty, why did you jump into the cold lake to rescue the young Prince when you have so many guards and servants at your beck and call?"

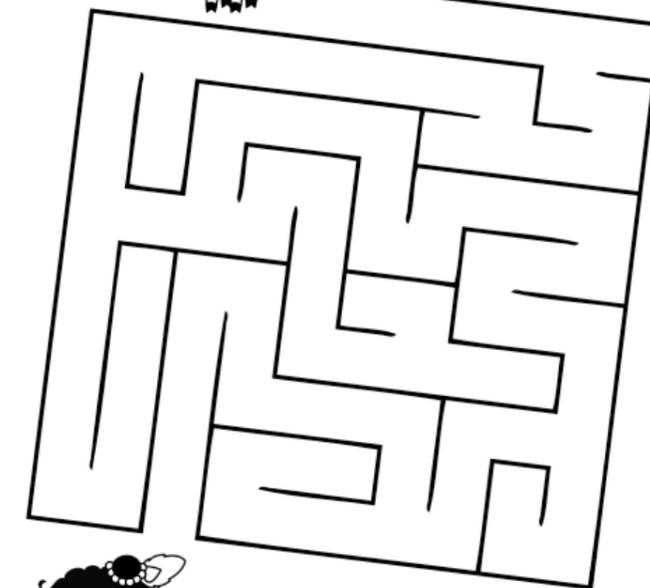
"Oh, I have hundreds of them but my grandson is my precious one, so I couldn't stop myself."

"Now, you see, your Majesty, that's why Lord Krishna, who loves each of his devotees, comes to their help Himself."

"As always, I agree with you, Birbal," smiled King Akbar as he walked away.



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& perfection**

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