

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ FOR TEENAGERS

Bhakti Yoga



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Bhakti Yoga

A comprehensive curriculum specially designed for teenagers to develop
a strong connection with Bhagavān and feel His presence in all.

Chinmaya Mission West
An offering for 75 Years of the Chinmaya Mission Movement





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MESSAGE FROM PŪJYA GURUDEV

Expand to realize that “All is the Self.” Try to find accommodation for everyone in your compassion and in your love for the world around you. Recognize that all things are Nārāyaṇa Himself, His various divine forms. As such, they are all moving temples of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord alone exists. Ultimately, when you come to experience that “The Self in me is the Self everywhere,” then alone, there is total liberation from the bondage of the mortal. There is nothing superior to this experience of the Oneness in everything; this is the highest experience. Identification is the measuring rod of love.

God sleeps in stones, breathes in plants, dreams in animals, and is awake in man.

Seek Him in the smile of your friends, in the glow of angry eyes, in the throb of love, in the storms of passion. Everywhere it is His glow that is gleaming through different emotions, thoughts, and actions. Seek Him in the thrill of dawn, in the sadness of dusk, in the embrace of rains, in the hustling storms, in the murmuring breeze, in green pastures, in the blue lotus, in the saṅgama (confluence) of the graceful Ganges and the restless Jamuna. He is everywhere — in everything — not with mortal legs and hands, but in His Presence as the divine joy Infinite. You are in Him — you are but He alone.

Final Score: Love All
Teachings by Swami Chinmayananda
pp. 206-207



SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA



19th June 2026

MESSAGE

Hari Om!

It gives me great joy to know that this curriculum on *Bhakti Yoga for Teenagers* has been prepared for our young seekers. I congratulate Brahmacharini Shubhani and the entire team whose dedication and effort have brought this offering to fruition.

Every human heart is searching for something.

Some seek success, some happiness, some recognition, and some love. Yet beneath all these pursuits lies a deeper longing—for something lasting, something complete, something that can truly satisfy the heart. The saints tell us that this longing is, in truth, a longing for Bhagavan.

The moment we recognise this search; the spiritual journey begins. That journey is called Bhakti.

Bhakti is not merely an emotion, a practice, or a ritual. It is a relationship. There is Bhagavan on one side and the Bhakta on the other, and Bhakti is the sacred bridge that unites them. It is the love that draws the Bhakta towards Bhagavan and the grace that draws Bhagavan into the Bhakta's heart.

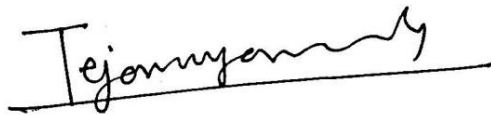
Like every meaningful relationship, devotion unfolds gradually. It may arise through a prayer, a sacred story, the blessings of a Guru, the company of noble souls, or the mysterious touch of God's grace. What begins as admiration gradually deepens into love. In time, God is no longer someone we merely pray to, but someone we long to be with, someone whose presence becomes a constant source of joy in our lives.

The great devotees discovered a simple secret for nurturing this love: remember Bhagavan. Through His Name, His stories, and His glories, keep Him close to your heart.

Bhakti is unique, for it is both the journey and the destination. In worldly pursuits, the means are left behind once the goal is reached. But devotion only deepens with attainment, for the closer one comes to Bhagavan, the greater becomes one's love for Him. As water is the very life of a fish, so Bhagavan is the very life of the devotee.

By Bhagavan's Grace and Pujya Gurudev's Blessings, may this curriculum inspire a lifelong love for Bhagavan. May your devotion grow deep, your faith grow strong, and may Bhagavan remain ever close to your heart.

With Prem & Om,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tejanmay", written over a horizontal line.

Swami Swaroopananda

FOREWORD

The future of any culture rests not merely in the preservation of its traditions, but in its ability to communicate timeless values to the next generation in a meaningful and inspiring way. This responsibility is a privilege and a sacred trust. It is also a deep sādhanā or spiritual practice.

This curriculum on Bhakti yoga, the path of devotion, aims to bring to our teenagers the importance of connecting with Divinity. Bhakti Yoga is often misunderstood as being limited to rituals, prayers, or emotional expression. In truth, it is a profound discipline that transforms the individual by refining emotions, purifying the mind, and establishing a meaningful relationship with the Divine.

This sublime connection with Divinity helps us navigate through the current challenges of constant distraction, endless comparison, and unprecedented access to information. When we develop bhakti, we focus on positivity instead of negativity, we feel rhythm instead of dissonance, and we find silence instead of noise. We feel loved, cared for, protected, and a deep sense of peace—ever resting in the lap of Divinity.

I invoke the Grace and Blessings of Bhagavān and Pūjya Gurudev on all those who have contributed to this curriculum and to all teachers, who have the privilege of reflecting deeply on it. May all of our hearts overflow with devotion, be emptied of our weaknesses, and be filled with Grace.

Love

At His Feet,

Swami Swaroopananda

Global Head, Chinmaya Mission

Chancellor, Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth



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GRATITUDE

We offer gratitude to Bhagavān.

It is That Reality in the form of Bhagavān that does it all.

That thinks through our thoughts, speaks through our words,
and works with our hands.

That manifests as the Guru paramparā, passing on the light of knowledge
and the radiance of devotion.

That expresses as the entire team of thinkers, writers, editors, designers,
proofreaders, and coordinators.

That shines forth as the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā whose words have
come to life, touched our hearts, and awakened our souls.

We, the instruments, are blessed by the Grace of That Divine Power.

May we ever be surrendered unto That.

nimitta mātram bhava

*With body-identity, I am Your servant; with jīva-identity,
I am a part of You; with Self-knowledge, I am You alone.
This is my firm conviction.*

Hanumān jī



*All love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction.
Love is therefore the only law of life. He who loves lives, he who is
selfish is dying. Therefore, love for love's sake, because it is the
law of life, just as you breathe to live.*

Swami Vivekananda



*When bhakti has grown perfect, then, hearing once
(about Reality) is enough, for it confers perfect Knowledge.*

Śrī Ramana Maharishi



*The body, the changing mind, the perishing objects,
the terrifying forest of change of life,
each are like the plantain tree.
Having won over all these perishing changes,
I saw, in the plantain grove, the One who destroys the changes of saṁsāra.
Compassionately saying to me, O Child,
you won over the ocean of changes and have come to Me,
He, Cennamallikārjuna, embraced me
and hid me in the lotus of His own heart!*

Akka Mahādevi

*It cannot be spoken of or spoken to; by no means may it be
comprehended by the intellect.*

Sant Jnaneshwar



*Bhakti embellishes Knowledge and this nectar is
attained at the very end.*

Swami Tejomayananda



*When a person loves the Lord, the whole universe becomes
dear to him, because it is all His.*

Swami Vivekananda



*Don't forget love; it will bring all the madness you need to unfurl
yourself across the universe.*

Sant Mīrābāī



*Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything.
And between the two my life flows.*

Nisargadatta Mahārāja



*To attain God is the end and aim of human life. Therefore, everything
that helps man to reach his goal is “dharma” and whatever hinders
him from reaching it is “adharma.”*

Swami Tapovan Mahārāja



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INTRODUCTION

Transliteration and Pronunciation Guide

In this book, Devanagari characters are transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912. In it one fixed pronunciation value is given to each letter; f, q, w, x and z are not called to use.

Devanagari	Transliteration	Sounds Like	Devanagari	Transliteration	Sounds Like
अ	a	son	ढ	ḍh	ad <u>h</u> esive*
आ	ā	f <u>a</u> ther	ण्	ṇ	u <u>n</u> der*
इ	i	di <u>f</u> ferent	त्	t	t <u>a</u> bla
ई	ī	f <u>ee</u> l	थ्	th	t <u>h</u> umb
उ	u	f <u>u</u> ll	द्	d	t <u>h</u> is
ऊ	ū	b <u>oo</u> t	ध्	dh	Gan <u>d</u> hi
ऋ	r̥	r <u>h</u> ythm*	न्	n	n <u>o</u> se
ॠ	r̄	**	प्	p	p <u>e</u> n
लृ	l̥	**	फ्	ph	p <u>h</u> antom*
ए	e	ev <u>a</u> de	ब्	b	b <u>o</u> il
ऐ	ai	del <u>i</u> ght	भ्	bh	ab <u>h</u> or
ओ	o	c <u>o</u> re	म्	m	m <u>i</u> nd
औ	au	n <u>o</u> w	य्	y	y <u>e</u> s
क्	k	c <u>a</u> lm	र्	r	r <u>i</u> ght
ख्	kh	k <u>h</u> an	ल्	l	l <u>o</u> ve
ग्	g	g <u>a</u> te	व्	v	v <u>e</u> ry
घ्	gh	g <u>h</u> ost	श्	ś	s <u>h</u> ut
ङ्	ṅ	a <u>n</u> kle*	ष्	ṣ	s <u>u</u> gar
च्	c	c <u>h</u> uckle	स्	s	s <u>i</u> mple
छ्	ch	w <u>i</u> tch*	ह्	h	h <u>a</u> ppy
ज्	j	ju <u>s</u> tice	ः	m̐	im <u>p</u> rovis
झ्	jh	J <u>h</u> ansi	:	ḥ	**
ञ्	ñ	ban <u>y</u> an	क्ष्	kṣ	ac <u>t</u> ion
ट्	ṭ	t <u>a</u> nk	त्र्	tr	t <u>h</u> ree*
ठ्	ṭh	**	ज्ञ्	jñ	g <u>n</u> osis
ड्	ḍ	d <u>o</u> g	ऽ	‘	a silent “a”

* These letters don't have an exact English equivalent. An approximation is given here.

** These sounds cannot be approximated in English words.



General Resources

Class Materials

All students should have the following materials with them as they embark on their study of the Bhagavad-gītā.

- Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's *The Holy Geeta* (to be used by the students at home)

[🔗 Chinmaya Publications](#) | [🔗 Kindle](#) | [🔗 Apple Books](#)

- Pocket-sized copy of *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* (to be used by the students in class)

[🔗 CM Publications](#)

- Notebook and pen

All teachers should have:

- Laptop/necessary technology for sharing multimedia
- Whiteboard

Additional Resources

For students and teachers:

- *Vision of the Bhagavad Gītā* by Swami Tejomayananda
- *LEEP* by Swamini Vimalananda
- *Geeta for Yuva* by Swami Mitrananda and the Yuva Veers
- *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā Made Easy for Chanting*
- [🔗 Swami Brahmananda's chanting of the Bhagavad-gītā \(by chapter\)](#)
- [🔗 Swami Brahmananda's chanting of the Bhagavad-gītā \(individual verses\)](#)



Please note the playlist displays only 200 videos at a time. When you click on a later verse, the succeeding verses will appear. This is constantly updated by Central Chinmaya Mission Trust (CCMT).

For teachers only:

- [🔗 Gītā for Me](#) (Bala Vihar Teachers' Handbook)

All of these texts can be purchased at [🔗 chinmayapublications.com](#).

How to Use This Book



Lesson Title and Summary

Each lesson begins with a title and a brief summary that provides a concise overview of the lesson.

Clickable Audio Links

Click on audio icons to hear verses chanted by Swami Brahmananda. For those using the printed copy, you can follow this QR code to the full playlist.



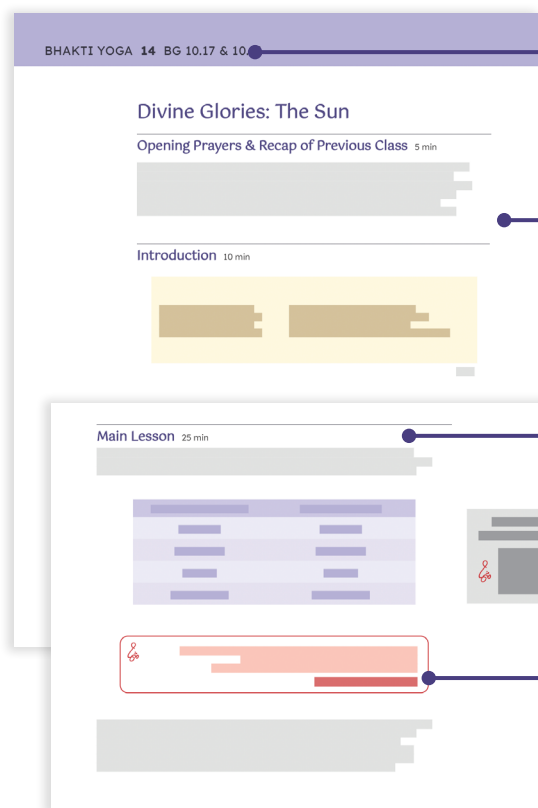
Transliteration and English Translation

The original Saṃskṛtam verses and their meanings. Based on *The Holy Geeta* by Swami Chinmayananda.

Class Resources

Time breakdown and materials are included for lesson planning. References are provided to learn more about lesson content.

🔗 A link icon indicates clickable references.



Navigation

The lesson number and verse number(s) are included on every left-hand page header to simplify navigation. The lesson titles are on right-hand pages.

Recap and Introduction

Seamlessly connects with previous learning and sets the context for the upcoming lesson.

Main Lesson

The detailed explanation of the lesson, including discussion and activity modules. **More content is intentionally provided for the teacher's reflection.** Focus on conveying the core message.

Clickable Media

External links to videos, articles, and resources. QR codes are included for those using a physical copy.

🔗 **Gurudev's Om marks content of Swami Chinmayananda.**

Quotes

Inspiring statements from scriptures, Masters, and notable figures.



Main Activity

Interactive and hands-on opportunities for students to engage with the lesson using practical application.

Conclusion

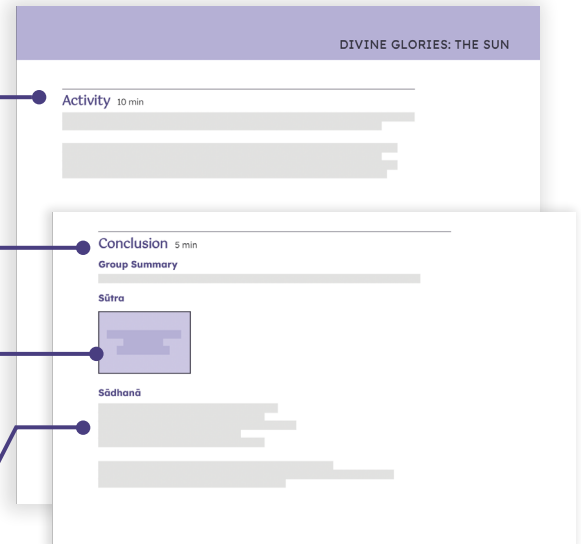
Encourages students to summarize key takeaways from the lesson and prepares them for sādhanā.

Take-home Sūtra

A memorable phrase that can be photographed and shared with students to apply in their daily lives.

Sādhanā

Actionable steps for students to integrate spiritual knowledge into their routines.



Teacher Guidance

Specific instructions and suggestions for teachers to effectively facilitate learning.



Micro Activities

Engaging activities to make lessons interactive and memorable, catering to different learning styles.



Activity

Clickable Links

Highlighted text in the lesson body links to previous lessons or external resources.

Recall lesson 10: “Everything is Worship”

At this point, the teacher can hand each student an Iṣṭa Devatā worksheet.

Modules

Insightful discussions, relatable examples, and further reading for both students and teachers who wish to delve deeper.



Further Reading



Discussion



Example

Prayers

Opening Prayers

om̐ saha nāvavatu,
saha nau bhunaktu,
saha vīryaṁ karavāvahai,
tejasvi-nāvadhītam-astu mā vidviṣāvahai.
om̐ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.

Om! May the Lord protect us both — teacher and student. May we enjoy learning and the fruit of it. May we both put forth effort. May that knowledge become available when we need it. Let there be no misunderstanding between us. Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

vakratuṇḍa mahākāya sūryakoṭi samaprabha,
nirvighnaṁ kuru me deva sarva-kāryeṣu sarvadā.

O Lord with the curved trunk and a mighty body, who has the luster of a million suns, I pray unto you to remove the obstacles from all actions I intend to perform.

sarasvati namastubhyaṁ varade kāmarūpiṇi,
vidyārambhaṁ kariṣyāmi siddhir-bhavatu me sadā.

O Goddess Sarasvatī, my humble prostrations unto you, who are the fulfiller of all wishes. As I begin my studies, please bestow on me the capacity of right understanding always.

gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuḥ gururdevo maheśvaraḥ,
gurureva paraṁ brahma tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ.

The Guru is Brahmā, the Guru is Viṣṇu, the Guru is Maheśvara (Śiva), the Guru is supreme Brahman. Salutations to that revered Guru.

samasta-janakalyāṇe nirataṁ karuṇāmayam,
namāmi cinmayaṁ devaṁ sadguruṁ brahmavidvaram.

Salutations to Sadguru Chinmaya, the best among knowers of Brahman, who is full of compassion and is ever engaged in the welfare of all people.

mūkaṁ karoti vācāraṁ paṇḍuṁ laṅghayate girim,
yatkr̥pā tam ahaṁ vande paramānanda-mādhavam.

I salute that supreme bliss, Mādhava, whose grace renders the mute eloquent and enables the cripple to cross mountains.



Closing Prayers

sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ
 sarve santu nirāmayāḥ,
 sarve bhadraṇi paśyantū
 mā kaścid-duḥkhabhāg-bhavet.

May all be happy! May all be healthy! May all see auspiciousness! May none suffer!

asato mā sadgamaya,
 tamaso mā jyotirgamaya,
 mṛtyormā amṛtaṁ gamaya.

Lead me from untruth to Truth! Lead me from darkness to Light! Lead me from death to Immortality!

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate,
 pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate.
 om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.

That (Reality) is Whole, this (manifestation) is Whole; from That (Reality), this (manifestation) arises. From That (Reality), when this (manifestation) is negated, what remains is again the Whole. Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

brahmārpaṇam brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam,
 brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā.
 hariḥ om śrī gurubhyo namaḥ hariḥ om.

Brahman is the ladle; Brahman is the offering, by Brahman is the offering poured into the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by one who always sees Brahman in all actions.

Salutations unto all the Great Masters! Hariḥ Om!

Watch the following to learn
 the Opening Prayers and
 their significance



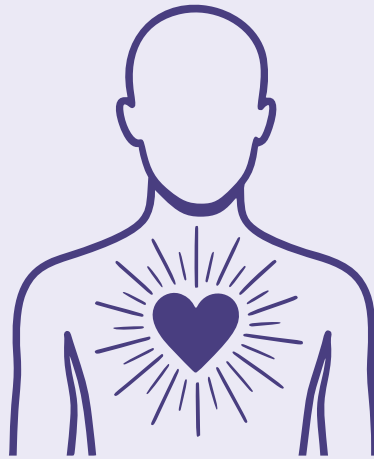
Watch the following to learn
 the Closing Prayers and
 their significance





Intro to Bhagavān and Bhakti

This lesson deals with proving the existence of Bhagavān in a step-by-step logical method. It also introduces the concept of bhakti.



Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Three-dimensional campfire cutout made out of cardboard (can be made or purchased online)

☞ **Hand Clap Skit**

References

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. “The Womb And the Tomb Of All, Is Me!”

Intro to Bhagavān and Bhakti

Opening Prayers 5 min

After the opening prayers, take some time to reconnect with all of the older students and welcome the new students, since this is the first class. Do a check-in question and ask them about their favorite event or activity from this summer.

Introduction 10 min

Ask the entire class to stand in the middle of the room. Then give them the following prompts. You can also make up your own. If they strongly disagree, they should move to the left side of the room. If they strongly agree, they should move to the right side, and if they're neutral, they should stay in the middle of the room. This is a good exercise to gauge what's on their minds.

Prompts:

- Cereal is considered soup.
- It's better to be famous than rich.
- It's better to be liked than respected.
- Social media has more negative effects than positives.
- I have a connection with God.
- I think that coming to Bala Vihar is useful to me.
- I use ChatGPT or AI for my work.
- I'd rather have a high IQ than good looks.
- I believe in God.



Discussion

Now, discuss as a class or in small groups. Ask students to share their honest answer about this question:

How do you think the universe came to be?

After they share their points, debrief as a class.



At this point, the teacher can listen to all of their inputs and know which points to emphasize most as the teacher unfolds the lesson on Īśvara. The teacher should accept wherever the students are, whether they believe or don't believe in God or any other creator.

Throughout this year, hopefully, students will have plenty of opportunities to express their doubts and gently be guided towards the knowledge shared in the Bhagavad-gītā.

Main Lesson 25 min

In the previous Bala Vihar year, we focused on karma yoga: **Īśvara-arpaṇa buddhi** (attitude of dedicating actions to God) and **prasāda buddhi** (attitude of cheerfully accepting results as a gift from God). Who exactly is God, and does God even exist? Let's explore this further.

Existence of God

Many people believe that there is no God because there is no evidence to support the existence of God. There are many books about God and many people who worship God, but is God something that is just made up, or is this real? Here, we're going to explore Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's commentary in Kenopaniṣad. We will go step-by-step to logically prove the existence of God.

Step 1: If there is something created, then there must be a creator.



At this point, the teacher can hold up any object — a phone, water bottle, watch, etc.

If you notice this watch, it has something written on it. What is that called? It's a brand. What does the brand name tell us? The brand name tells us who made it. An object doesn't come into existence by itself. Someone produces the object, and that someone is a sentient being or entity.

Sentient = something that can think, feel, and know on its own, like a human or an animal. A plant may be able to feel as well but is less evolved than animals and humans.

Insentient (or Inert) = something that cannot think, feel, and know on its own, like an object or an atom.

Example



A watch may be made by Swatch, a phone made by Apple, a water bottle made by Yeti, etc.

One may have a question about AI. Is AI sentient or insentient? Though AI can think, feel, and know, **it cannot do this independently on its own**. The original AI models, referred to as foundational models or Large Language Models (LLMs), were all developed collaboratively by several humans. In addition, all of AI's thoughts, emotions, and knowledge are dependent on "human in the loop" (HITL) training and monitoring.

Main Lesson

continued

Step 2: The creator of that particular object should have knowledge of how to create it.

Someone who created a watch had to have knowledge of how to create a watch. Think of anyone who has ever created anything. Think of the times that you've written a paper for school or worked on a project. Did that happen out of the blue, or did you have prior knowledge, or have to do some research, to produce whatever was required? Anything that is created comes out of a sentient being that has knowledge of how to create it. But is that enough?

Step 3: The creator of that particular object should have knowledge AND the ability to create it.

We have witnessed enough times that people have knowledge and great ideas, but nothing ever happens because they don't put it into action! The one who has knowledge of how to create has to also have the ability to create it. Knowing how to produce a Swatch watch isn't going to manifest one. One has to actually produce it.

This is what has been established so far:

1. For every creation, there has to be a creator.
2. The creator has to have knowledge.
3. The creator also has to have ability.

Intro to Step 4: Now, take the students through this discussion.



Discussion

Observe this world. How many different types of trees or plants do you think exist? How many different kinds of humans or species of animals? How many types of landforms and bodies of water exist? Observe the sun, moon, and stars. How would you describe this creation?

Inevitably, they will find that this entire creation is so vast, deep, limitless... **infinite**. Now ask this question: who would have the knowledge and ability to create such an infinite universe?

Explore the possibilities in an interactive discussion. Be sure to hear their points out before you clarify.

1. **Can karma do it?** No, karma (action) cannot think, feel, and know on its own. It is inert. Karma depends on the kartā or doer. For example, running is a karma, but running cannot happen without a runner. Speaking cannot happen without a speaker. Thinking cannot happen without a thinker. There has to be a sentient being behind it.
2. **Can a human being (doer) create this world?** Can humans create the sun, moon, stars, trees, and various species of plants and animals? No, humans have limitations and cannot create such vast possibilities. Also, if an individual human being or group of human beings were the creator, then they would be all-knowing and all-powerful, but we have never heard of such humans. Finally, in any logical framework, a part in and of itself cannot create the whole. Just like a part of a building (ex: a roof) cannot create the whole building.
3. **Can atoms do it?** Can atoms create this world? Atoms can combine to form molecules, cells, rocks, and stars, but they don't decide to arrange themselves in a particular way. The laws of nature guide how atoms interact. **The one responsible for those laws is a sentient being, because insentient things cannot govern themselves.** For example, if chairs are arranged one way today and you find them in a different arrangement tomorrow, it means someone must have rearranged them. The chairs didn't rearrange themselves!

In the same way, there are laws for the formation and breakdown of atoms. Scientists can calculate what happens to atoms when they are formed, combined, split, etc. This means that whatever happens in this world is happening according to a certain calculation. This is why scientists can also calculate at what speed the Earth is moving, how long a day and a night are, how long it takes for the Earth to revolve around the Sun, etc.

Therefore, we will have to accept that there are laws of the universe that govern the functioning of everything. If there are laws, then there must be a sentient entity that governs them. The very fact that we can comprehend the universe with our minds, and describe it with science and mathematics, implies that the source of the universe is imbued with an intelligence or consciousness that is the basis for that cosmic order.

The universe is
a cosmos and
not a chaos.
There exists a
mental affinity, a
scientific law, a
rhythm of mental
relationship in
which the entire
living world is
held together in
one web of love.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

Main Lesson

continued

Further, **can atoms create thoughts?** Can atoms create subjective experiences that we feel every day? They cannot. If atoms created thoughts, then why is it that the same objects trigger different thoughts for different people? For example, the thought of a wintry day can evoke a feeling of joy to someone and at the same time, a feeling of sadness to another. If people say that it is genetic, then why is it that two children from the same household, raised by the same parents, respond differently? These and many more questions are still unresolved and unanswered. However, our scriptures have the explanations for all of these, which we will learn as we study the Gītā.

4. **Can AI do it?** AI can process, regenerate, and structure information, but all of it depends on human input. It has no independent existence. It itself was created by humans, so how can it be the ultimate source?

Now let's revisit the watch example. In Vedāntika terms, the designers and engineers who have knowledge about producing the watch and the materials involved in its production are considered the **cause** of the watch, while the watch itself is called the **effect**. Given that the engineers and the materials are limited by time and space, and since they are subject to change, they are regarded as the **limited** cause of the **limited** effect — the watch.

In contrast to the limited effect, i.e., the watch, the universe appears to be an infinite effect! If the cause isn't any of the above, what might the nature of its cause be?

Step 4: If we are experiencing an infinite effect, there must be an infinite cause behind it.



The Womb And
the Tomb Of
All, Is Me!



The infinite cause of the world, the source from which everything emerges, by which everything is sustained, and into which everything is dissolved, is called **Īśvara**.

Being the source of this infinite universe, Īśvara has infinite knowledge (sarvajña/omniscient) and infinite ability (sarva-śaktimān/omnipotent).

Īśvara is Consciousness with the power of Māyā expressing as the cause of this universe.

Because Īśvara is infinite, Īśvara is also known as Bhagavān (in the masculine form) and Bhagavatī (in the feminine form). The words Bhagavān and Bhagavatī mean the one that has the six bhagas (powers) in infinite measure.

aiśvaryasya samagrasya dharmasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ,
vairāgyasyātha mokṣasya ṣaṇṇām bhaga itīraṇā.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.5.74

The six bhagas are:

- aiśvarya: power
- dharma: righteousness
- yaśa: fame
- śrī: wealth
- vairāgya: dispassion
- mokṣa: freedom

Thus Īśvara expresses as infinite names and forms: Śiva, Durgā, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Sarasvatī, etc. Īśvara is not a man or woman or any gender in particular. When we discuss Īśvara in daily conversation, sometimes we refer to Īśvara as “He” or “She,” but this does not imply that Īśvara is masculine or feminine, as Īśvara is Infinite and expresses as all names and forms. These pronouns are for ease of conversation and understanding.

Īśvara can also manifest as many forms at one time. For example, in the Rāmāyaṇa, Īśvara manifests as Bhagavān Śiva, Bhagavatī Pārvatī, Bhagavān Rāma, Sītā Devī, and Hanumān.

FAQs on Īśvara

The following is the FAQ sheet for Īśvara.



Discussion

If time permits, have the class split into groups of three to four per group. Give each group two of the questions from the following list. Have them discuss and come up with answers to those questions in five minutes. Then one person from each group can share the question and the group’s response. Discuss their answer as a class discussion and redirect the class or supplement with the following answers as needed. Feel free to focus on what the students need most.

Main Lesson

continued

Q: My parents are the ones who made me, but I don't think they know me well. So doesn't that mean it's possible to create something without knowing everything about it? Why does Īśvara have to be all-knowing?

A: You were born through your parents, but ultimately, you are a product of Īśvara, a child of Īśvara. Īśvara knows you fully, what you are and what you can be! He is the all-sentient one who created you!

Q: Science says that there was nothing before the Big Bang, no time, space, or anything else. How do we know Īśvara was there then?

A: Science deals with the study of the perceivable universe, which can be experienced through the mind and senses in the realm of time and space. However, it cannot fathom what lies beneath. Therefore, even the greatest minds in the scientific community are divided about what came before the Big Bang. On the other hand, our ṛṣis were spiritual scientists and studied the source, origin, and Reality of this world. This Truth was revealed to them and realized by them in the depths of their contemplation.

Q: Why did Īśvara create the world? Why are we all here?

A: Īśvara has created this world simply because it is His nature to express His power and ability. Just someone who has the ability to sing can't help but express this talent.

However, Īśvara creates based on our previous vāsanās (prior tendencies) and karmas (results of actions) in order for us to grow through them and then fully evolve.



Example

A grandma's nature is to nourish and express love. When her grandchildren come home during Dipāvalī, she will cook something depending on each grandchild's vāsanās and welfare. She may make pasta for one child, but make it gluten-free, because she knows that child is allergic to gluten. She may make Indian food for another child, but with less oil because she knows that they have high cholesterol. She may make a special dessert, but with less sugar because someone in the family is diabetic. It's the grandma's nature to love and nourish, but she does it according to each one's vāsanās and welfare. In the same way, it's Īśvara's nature to express as the world, but He does so according to everyone's karmas and welfare.

Q: If Īśvara has infinite power, righteousness, fame, etc., why would He make such a sad and troubled world?

A: Īśvara is **the power that enables the world to run**. The world runs according to the law of karma. Whatever we do, we will get the results of those actions inevitably at the right time and place. Those results are not just of this life but of our actions from many previous lifetimes.



Example

Pūjya Gurudev gives an example of fuel to explain this concept. Fuel is required to make a gasoline-powered car run. But if someone gets into an accident, do you blame the fuel? No, it's mostly because of the driver. The fuel is what makes the car run. Without it, no gasoline-powered car can move. But the driver is the one who decides whether to drive carefully or not. In the same way, Īśvara is the power that enables us to move, but we decide how to move.

Fuel/Gasoline: Īśvara

Driver: Jīva

Q: Do we decide the results of our actions, or does Īśvara decide?

A: No, we do not decide the results of our actions because if we did, we would always get what we wanted. For example, if I decided that I'm playing a tennis match today and I'm going to win, then I should be in total control of the result. But it doesn't work that way. The result is not just based on my karma but on the karma of my opponent, teammates, referee, coach, audience, weather, etc.

The cosmic Intelligence that takes total account of everyone's karmas and provides the results at the right place and the right time for everyone is Īśvara.

Q: Are we helpless and have nothing to do whatsoever with the results of our actions?

A: There's a common saying that "God helps those who help themselves." Our self-effort plays a huge role in the results that we get. If we put forth sincere effort, then there's a very high chance that the results will mirror that effort. Prayer and devotion to Īśvara is also part of our self-effort. In fact, devotion to Īśvara is the most sacred action; it is the best utilization of our self-effort. This yields peaceful and purifying results. But it only works when we have fulfilled our dharma. Devotion to Īśvara without fulfilling our dharma is futile.

Main Lesson

continued

Q: It seems like Īśvara likes some people more than others...

A: Īśvara is like the sun. The sun shines on everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc. There are those who open their doors and windows, and therefore receive more sunlight, and those who close their doors and windows, and don't receive sunlight at all. Is it the sun's fault?

Īśvara can also be compared to a Wi-Fi network. The Wi-Fi network may be open to all, but if our phone's signal strength is poor, then we won't be able to access the network or internet. If it is working well, then we have the ability to access everything on the internet.

Q: Why should we even want to know Īśvara?

A: When we open our hearts to Īśvara, all the virtues come alive in our hearts, and we feel a great amount of peace and joy. We also come to realize who we truly are. When we close our hearts to Īśvara, our inner beauty, virtues, radiance, and joy decline, and we lose sight of who we truly are.

Opening our hearts to Īśvara is known as **bhakti yoga**.

Īśvara is also like fire. Imagine a fire in the center of the room. When we walk closer to it, we feel more heat. But when we walk further away from it, we feel less heat. Is it the fire's fault?

Walking closer to Īśvara is called bhakti yoga.

Yoga = something that unites us with the Higher

Bhakti = devotion

Bhakti yoga is the path of devotion, which takes us to the Higher (Īśvara).

When we walk closer to Īśvara, we feel more grace, and when we walk further away, we feel less.

Activity 10 min

Feeling the Warmth of Īśvara

Put the makeshift fire in the center of the room and ask the students to stay around the edges of the room. Ask the students to create two different types of clapping patterns.

Rhythm A: a calm, soothing, and inviting rhythm

Rhythm B: a loud, screeching noise of despair

Use the following video as an inspiration: [Hand Clap Skit — The Original! Can You do This?](#)

Hand Clap Skit



Instructions:

Now, ask all the students to form a circle around the fire, staying close to it. Then, ask each student to do the following exercise as time permits. They should first turn their backs and walk away from the fire, and then walk closer to the fire.

When walking away from the fire, they should share vices that they would like to get rid of. When walking towards the fire, they should share virtues or positive qualities they would like to cultivate. While the assigned student is walking away from the fire, the other students should clap to tune B. While the assigned student is walking closer to the fire, the other students should clap to tune A.

Discussion

1. How did you feel when you were walking towards the fire?
2. How did you feel when you were walking away from the fire?
3. What makes us walk away from the fire?

Debrief: Whenever we walk towards Īśvara and open our hearts to Īśvara, who is the source, sustenance, and dissolution of the entire world, we feel a great sense of peace and joy. When we walk away, we feel disturbed, anxious, worried, and scared. Sometimes we walk away because we don't believe in Īśvara. It's important to think deeply about who Īśvara truly is and keep the faith until it becomes our own direct experience.

If walking towards Īśvara feels challenging, try to remember and focus on all the grace in our lives. This grace expresses as nature, compassionate friends, laughter, good health, etc. Tuning into this gratitude for all that we have is one way to open our hearts to Īśvara!

Conclusion 5 min

Guided Meditation: Do a short guided meditation with the students, visualizing them opening their hearts to Īśvara.

Step 1: Sit straight, keeping the head, neck, and back in one straight line.

Step 2: Take a deep inhale and exhale (do a few rounds).

Step 3: Relax the body from the tips of the feet to the crown of the head.

Go through each part of the body: ankles, feet, legs, knees, thighs, hips, stomach, chest, lower back, upper back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, face, forehead, and crown of the head.

Step 4: Bring your attention to your heart's center and imagine a flower opening up petal by petal, opening up just a little bit, opening up halfway, and then opening fully. Now imagine the light of Īśvara filling the heart with love, peace, and brightness. Just relax and fill yourself with love, peace, and brightness.

Step 5: Stay silent for a few moments.

Step 6: Slowly bring your attention back to the heart's center and bow down to the Lord of your heart.

Step 7: Chant “Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ,” and gently open your eyes.

Sūtra:

Open yourself
to Īśvara

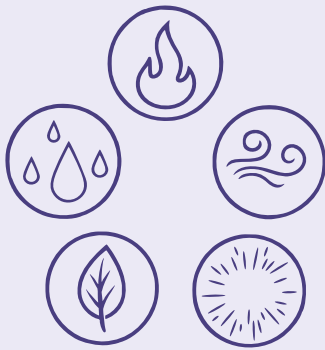
Sādhana: Practice the given meditation for five minutes every day.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Bhagavān's Lower Nature

In this lesson, we look at the various aspects of Bhagavān's prakṛti — the five elements which consist of earth, water, fire, air, and space; the three inner equipments: mind, intellect, and ego — to recognize the expression of Divinity both in the world around us and within ourselves.

7.4 



bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuḥ
khaṁ mano buddhireva ca,
ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me
bhinnā prakṛtir-aṣṭadhā.

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind,
intellect, egoism — these are My
eightfold prakṛti.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

 **BMI chart**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 7.4.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Know Your Equipment - Part 2 - The Lower Nature."

Swami Tejomayananda. *Hinduism - Frequently Asked Questions*.

 Hindu Blog. "How To Show God? - Ramana Maharshi Solves The Puzzle."

Bhagavān's Lower Nature

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Recall the basics of Īśvara. Do this through an interactive quiz. Write these statements on the board with some words missing and ask them to fill in the blanks.

Definition 1:

The infinite cause of the world, the source from which everything emerges, by which everything is sustained, and into which everything is dissolved, is called Īśvara.

Definition 2:

Īśvara is Consciousness with the power of Māyā expressing as the cause of this universe.

What is another name of Īśvara and what does it mean?

Īśvara is also known as Bhagavān (in the masculine form) and Bhagavatī (in the feminine form). The words Bhagavān and Bhagavatī mean the one that has the six bhagas (powers) in infinite measure.

The six bhagas are:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| • aiśvarya: power | • śrī: wealth |
| • dharma: righteousness | • vairāgya: dispassion |
| • yaśa: fame | • mokṣa: freedom |

What is the proof of Īśvara's existence?

- Step 1: If there is something created, then there must be a creator.
- Step 2: The creator of that particular object should have knowledge of how to create it.
- Step 3: The creator must have the ability to create it.
- Step 4: If we are experiencing an infinite effect, there must be an infinite cause behind it. That infinite cause is Īśvara.

Now, ask the students to recall the clapping patterns and what it means to walk closer or away from Īśvara. How was their past week? Which clapping tune dominated?

Introduction 10 min

Now, a question might arise: has anyone seen Īśvara?

In a famous incident, Ramana Maharshi, a great saint from Tamil Nadu who was prominent in the 20th century, demonstrated God's presence to a person.

Story: Ramana Maharshi's Demonstration

Once a person approached Bhagavān Ramana Maharshi and said, "O, Bhagavān, can you show me God?" Ramana Maharshi replied, "I can show you, but I do not know whether you will see Him."

The man felt insulted and said, "If you can show Him to me, why can I not see Him? I have eyes."

The man insisted, "No, you show me and I will see." So Ramana Maharshi sat in front of him.

Then Ramana Maharshi raised just one finger and started moving it from one side to another. Five, ten, fifteen minutes went by. The man was still expecting some vision of God to appear. Finally, the man asked, "I thought you were going to show me God. Where is He?"

Ramana Maharshi said, "I told you I can show you God, but you may not be able to see Him."

The man said, "But you have not shown me anything."

"For twenty minutes I have been showing you God," Ramana Maharshi said.

"How can that be?" asked the confused man.

Then Bhagavān raised his finger and asked, "What is this?"

"A finger."

"But what is it doing?"

"It is moving back and forth," the man replied.

Ramana Maharshi said, "I am showing you God, but you are seeing only a finger. What can I do? That is your problem."

"But," the man protested, "anyone will say it is only a finger!"

Ramana Maharshi replied, "If you cut this finger and put it on the table, does it move?"

Introduction

continued

“No, it does not move.”

“Now, what is it because of which the finger moves?”

“There is life in it,” answered the man.

“You see,” said Ramana Maharshi, “at most you can say there is life in the finger, but that life is only an expression of Consciousness. Therefore, that which is expressing in this body as life, as sentiency, is God. How can you deny its existence?”



Discussion

After hearing this story, how do you now think of God or Divinity? Compare this to what you have understood before.

Debrief: Īśvara is not only the source of the entire creation but is the source of you and me! Īśvara lives in this very body, mind, and intellect. Īśvara’s essence is pure Consciousness — that which makes us think, feel, see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and so much more.

Q: If we don’t see His essence, how do we know it’s there?

A: If you haven’t seen your great-grandfather or great-grandmother, how do you know that they were there? Because you are alive! From the effect, we understand that there has to be a cause. Just because we don’t see Īśvara, it doesn’t mean Īśvara isn’t there. The very fact that we exist and the world exists proves that Īśvara (the infinite cause) is very much there.

Now let’s explore how Īśvara expresses in this world.

Main Lesson 25 min

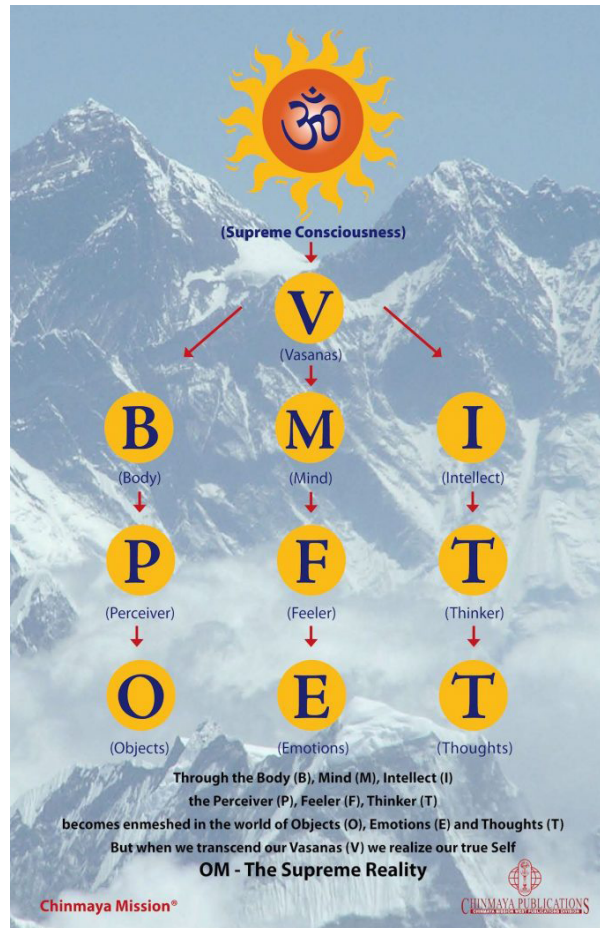
bhūmirāpo’nalo vāyuḥ
khaṁ mano buddhireva ca,
ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me
bhinnā prakṛtir-aṣṭadhā.

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind,
intellect, egoism — these are My
eightfold prakṛti.

7.4



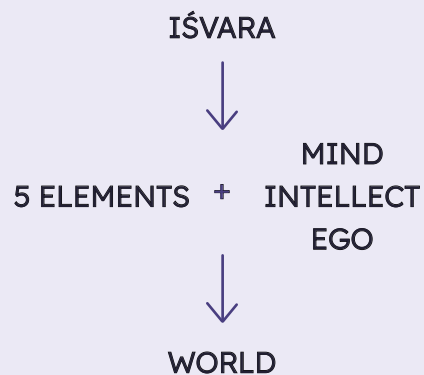
Draw a BMI chart on the board or share the following image of the BMI chart as a slide, depending on what tools you have access to. This chart will be referenced throughout the lesson. The image also has a brief description of the BMI chart for your reference.



BMI Chart



Prakṛti means nature. Īśvara's eightfold nature is the five elements, and the inner thought equipment (mind, intellect, and ego). This is how Īśvara expresses in the world.



Let's see how the five elements make up the entire world!

Main Lesson

continued

The Five Elements in Nature

The physical world is made up of the five great elements (**pañca mahābhūta**) — space, air, fire, water, and earth. We can recognize these elements in the world around us and within us as the gross body.

Note: when we use the term “elements” in the Vedāntika context, it means something slightly different from “elements” in the scientific context. Science recognizes 118+ elements that have different phases (solid, liquid, gas) and different chemical properties. In Sanātana Dharma, elements are characterized by how they are expressed in the world.

- **Earth** (Pṛthvī or Bhūmi): This element is the basis of everything solid, the foundation on which everything is built and supported.
- **Water** (Jala): Water in the form of rivers, oceans, and rain provides sustenance for all beings. The entire water cycle supports life on Earth.
- **Fire** (Agni): As an element, fire is in between air and water. When we think about a flame, it has some more substance than air, but is not quite solid or liquid. In terms of our modern understanding of science, this element can be understood as analogous to chemical reactions that release energy in the form of light or heat.
- **Air** (Vāyu): All around us, at the surface of the planet, is air. Air nourishes us, providing us the oxygen we need and taking away the carbon dioxide we breathe out.
- **Space** (Ākāśa): This is the subtlest of the five elements. All of the other four elements exist in space. For example, consider an empty water bottle. That water bottle takes up a certain amount of space. If you move that bottle around, the space the bottle was in before is not affected. If you collapse that water bottle, the volume the bottle itself takes up is reduced, but nothing happens to the space around it.

The Five Elements in Our Bodies



Knowledge Check: Understanding these five elements, can we identify them within our bodies?

In the body, we have earth, fire, water, air, and also space in different permutations and combinations! One great Mahātmā gives this example: in the body, we have space between and within the physical body parts, and as

we move and run, we feel our breath (air), then our body becomes hot and we generate heat (fire), we sweat (water), and some particles start to form in our skin (earth).

Also, when the body dies, it decomposes back into the five elements. The gas (air), heat (fire), and water start coming out of it, and that's why it emits a smell. Then, a skeleton (earth) alone is left. After some time, that also decomposes, and the space that it used to take up is also given up.

The Five Elements in Our Senses

In addition, the five senses also emerge from the five elements. Thus, Lord Kṛṣṇa indicates that His nature underlies our senses, and therefore, how we experience the world.

- **Space:** sense of hearing: The subtle and expansive nature of space relates to the sense of hearing. Space is the substratum in which sound exists and travels. Although air may be a carrier of sound, it is space that provides the stage on which sound can appear.
- **Air:** sense of touch: Air, as breeze, is directly experienced on our skin. Because of air, we feel sensations like warmth and coolness.
- **Fire:** sense of sight: Fire represents heat and light. Without any source of light, nothing can be seen.
- **Water:** sense of taste: Water is linked to our ability to taste anything, as water is the basis for our bodily fluids, including saliva.
- **Earth:** sense of smell: Earth is the most solid and dense element. Because of that solidity, it has the capacity to carry and release distinct smells (soil after rain, flowers, spices, etc.). Although air can carry smell, it does not produce it; only earth produces it.

Element	Property	Sense Organ	Function
Space	Sound	Ear	Perceives Sound
Air	Touch	Skin	Perceives Touch
Fire	Sight	Eyes	Perceives Form/Color
Water	Taste	Tongue	Perceives Taste
Earth	Smell	Nose	Perceives Smell

Main Lesson

continued

On the BMI chart, these five elements represent the $B \rightarrow P \rightarrow O$. The elements make up the **Body**, represent the senses that **Perceive**, and constitute the **Objects** in the world.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says that these five elements, which constitute the physical world and body, are part of His lower prakṛti, or Divine Nature. Therefore, we should learn to see that Divinity in the physical world.

The five elements are expressed in their subtle forms in the mind, intellect, and ego.

Did you know that permutations and combinations of the five elements in their subtle/nascent form make up our mind, intellect, and ego? The five great elements in their subtle form cannot be perceived by our sense organs.

There's a law: **yathā dravyaṁ tathā jñānam** — knowledge of a thing is possible only because the knower shares the same essence. A simple way to understand this is that an English-speaking person will understand another English-speaking person because they both know the same language. They will not connect or understand each other if they speak two different languages. A more personal example is that only one who has lost someone close to them can comprehend the grief of another who has had someone close pass away. Someone who has been somewhat sad here and there may be able to understand what that sadness is, but only someone who has experienced the loss can truly comprehend it in others.

The mind, intellect, and ego can experience sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell simply because they are also made of the same five elements, though in the subtle form. The mind perceives these as emotions. The intellect perceives these as thoughts of determination, judgment, and decision. The ego perceives these as thoughts of individuality.

Thus, the other two columns in the BMI chart (MFE and ITT), which represent the mind and intellect, are also part of Bhagavān's lower prakṛti. Similarly, the PFT row, which represents the ego, guided by the vāsanās is also part of Bhagavān's prakṛti.

Q: Why does Bhagavān separately specify mind, intellect, and ego in the Bhagavad-gītā verse?

A: This is because the physical body is made up of permutations and combinations of the five elements in grossified form, whereas the mind, intellect, and ego are made up of permutations and combinations of the five elements in subtle form.

- The entire world
- All bodies
- All senses
- All minds, intellects, and egos

These are all Bhagavān's expressions!



Discussion

Now, let's go a little deeper. Sometimes our minds, intellects, and egos are impure, negative, and harmful. How do we recognize Divinity in our mind, intellect, and ego? How is it Bhagavān's expression?

Debrief: Just as the physical world is Bhagavān's prakṛti, so too is the subtle world. When our mind, intellect, and ego are free of selfishness, then Bhagavān is able to express His prakṛti fully. When we cloud our mind, intellect, and ego with selfishness and negativity, then Bhagavān's prakṛti is unable to express fully. Recall the example of the sun in lesson 1.

Because everything in the world is Bhagavān's prakṛti, **we recognize Divinity in everything — even in gross and subtle matter.** When we do, our attitude towards the world changes.

Main Lesson

continued



Activity

Can you think of some practices in Hinduism that show our reverence for the world as an expression of God? Give the students two to three minutes to write their answers down and then share with the class.

Here are some examples for the teacher's reference.

- **Nature:** We do not treat nature as an object, but we see her as “Mother Nature,” because God lives in her.
- **Earth:** Before performing (singing or dancing), or even before getting out of bed, we say a prayer to Earth, whom we revere as Bhū Devī, before stepping on Her.

samudravasane devi
parvata-stana-maṇḍale,
viṣṇupatni namastubhyaṁ
pādasparśaṁ kṣamasva me.

O Mother Earth, who has the ocean as her clothes, mountains and forests as her body, who is the wife of Lord Viṣṇu, I bow to you. Please forgive me as my feet are going to touch you.

- **Water:** We say a prayer recognizing the power and purity of the divine rivers before bathing. The divinity of our rivers is also shown in festivals like the Kumbha Mela.

gaṅge ca yamune caiva
godāvarī sarasvatī,
narmade sindhu kāverī
jale'smin sannidhiṁ kuru.

Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu, Kāverī, please be present in this water and make it holy.

- **Fire:** We perform havans and offer grains to the fire. We also use a flame in āratī to illuminate Bhagavān.

na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra-tāraṁ
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ,
tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaṁ
tasya bhāsā sarvamidam vibhāti.

The sun doesn't shine there, nor does the moon, nor do the stars or lightning. What to talk of this fire? When That shines, everything shines after It. By That light, all else shines.

- **Air:** We do prāṇāyāma to control the breath as a way to control and calm our minds.
- **Space:** We recognize and revere holy places and spaces of pilgrimage (tīrthas) that are spiritually charged.

Activity 10 min

Pañca Mahābhūta Liṅgas

Let us see how this is shown in Bharat.

Research the Pañca Mahābhūta Liṅgas — the five temples venerating Lord Śiva manifesting as each of the five elements. Split the class into five groups. Each group will prepare a presentation on each of the temples by answering the following questions.

1. What is the name and location of the temple and the name of the form of Lord Śiva and Mother Pārvatī?
2. How is the element showcased?
3. What are the special traditions of the temple?
4. Then, reflect on the expression of Bhagavān in that Liṅga form. What aspects of Divine Grace do you see expressed through this element?
5. As a group, draw a representation of this element in Liṅga form to share with the class when you present, such as a Śiva Liṅga in the form of a mountain representing Earth.

The table on the following page with (some) answers is shown for reference.

Each group can share their presentation with the rest of the class.

The key takeaway from this presentation is to get a sense of how Sanātana Dharma demonstrates that Divinity is within the five elements witnessed through these elaborate temples and rituals. These temples vividly illustrate, in a way that devotees can appreciate, the lessons that Lord Kṛṣṇa is sharing in these Bhagavad-gītā verses.

Pañca Mahābhūta Liṅgas

	Temple	Deities	How is the element showcased?	Special Traditions/ Fun Facts
Earth (Bhūmi)	Ekambareswarar Temple in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu	Ekāmbareśvara and Elavarkuzhali	Goddess Pārvatī made a Liṅga out of sand and worshipped it under a mango tree. As the nearby Vegavati River threatened to overflow and destroy the Liṅga, Pārvatī Devī embraced the Liṅga. Touched by her devotion, Lord Śiva came down to Earth and married her at that place. This place then formed the temple that stands today.	There is an ancient mango tree with four different types of mangoes representing the four Vedas.
Water (Jala)	Jambukeswarar temple in Thiruvanaikaval, Tamil Nadu	Jambukeśvara and Akhilāṇḍeśvarī	The sanctum of Jambukeswarar has an underground water stream that is always filled with water. The Liṅga is draped in wet clothes because of this continually flowing stream.	Noon pūjā is performed where the head priest dresses as a woman to represent Devī Akhilāṇḍeśvarī doing Śiva pūjā.
Fire (Agni)	Arunachaleswarar temple in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu	Aruṇācaleśvara and Uṇṇāmulai Devī	To settle a dispute of supremacy between Brahmā and Viṣṇu, Lord Śiva manifested as an endless pillar of light (fire). The mountain is the solidified, cooled form of this divine flame.	Devotees do giri-pradakṣiṇā — circumambulation of the mountain (14 km) while barefoot.
Air (Vāyu)	Kalahastiswara Temple in Srikalahasti, Andhra Pradesh	Kālahastīśvara and Jñānaprasūnāmbikā	The flame of a lamp inside the garbha gr̥ha is said to flicker continuously, despite the absence of any visible draft. This is indicative of the vāyu element.	Devotees do a special Rāhu-Ketu pūjā to ward away the negative astrological effects.
Space (Ākāśa)	Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu	Lord Naṭarāja and Śivagāmī Devī	Lord Naṭarāja, the presiding Deity of the temple, is enshrined in the Holy Sanctum, known as the Chit Sabha. There is a curtain behind the form of Naṭarāja. Behind this curtain, there is mere space which represents Nirguṇa Brahman, devoid of all names and forms. This is the Ākāśa Liṅgam.	The temple walls have the 108 postures from the Bharata Nāṭya Śāstra.

Note: Temples are as they are officially listed (without transliterations).

Conclusion 5 min

Summary: All of the building blocks that make us up — the five elements, mind, intellect, and ego — are the expressions of Divinity. Go around the classroom and ask each student which element makes them feel closest to God and why.

Sūtra:

The Whole
World is God

Sāadhanā: Pick one of the practices in Sanātana Dharma that shows reverence to nature. Do this for the entire week.



Examples

- Seeking the blessings of earth before stepping on the floor when we wake up.
- Reducing pollution in our own homes (recycling and composting).
- Offering intentional gratitude to nature (heat from the sun, water to drink).

Conclude with closing prayers.



Bhagavān's Real Essence

In this class, we move on to Bhagavān's Higher Nature and His Real Essence, which underlies and supports all the names and forms we see in this universe. We explore how to bring our attention to the underlying Essence instead of the appearances.

7.5  7.7 



apareyam itastvanyām
prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām,
jīvabhūtām mahābāho
yayedam dhāryate jagat.

Different from the lower prakṛti is
My “Higher” Prakṛti, the very Life
Element by which this world is upheld.

mattaḥ parataram nānyat
kiñcidasti dhanañjaya,
mayi sarvamidam protam
sūtre maṇigaṇā iva.

There is nothing whatsoever higher
than Me, O Dhanañjaya.
All this is strung in Me, as clusters of
gems on a string.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
20m	Main Lesson
20m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

BMI Chart

One long piece of yarn (at least 18 inches) per student

Bell

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 7.5 and 7.7.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Know Your Equipment - Part 3 - The Higher Nature.”

 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Why do we say Hari Om?”

Alladi Mahadeva Sastri. *The Bhagavad Gita with the Commentary of Sri Sankaracharya*. 7.7.

Bhagavān's Real Essence

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous class, we learned about Īśvara's lower nature. Īśvara's eightfold nature is the five elements and the inner thought equipment (mind, intellect, and ego). This is how Īśvara expresses in the world.

Recall the verse from the Gītā.

bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuḥ
khaṁ mano buddhireva ca,
ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me
bhinnā prakṛtir-aṣṭadhā.

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind,
intellect, egoism — these are My
eightfold prakṛti.

7.4

Ask the class to recollect the five elements and their play in nature, our bodies, our senses, and in our minds, intellects, and egos.



If the students aren't finished with their presentations on the Pañca Mahābhūta Liṅgas, have them share them at the beginning of class.

Introduction 5 min



Activity

Let students share their understanding of God. Write down their ideas on the left side of the whiteboard, leaving space on the right. At the end of class, we will return to this question and add new insights on the right side of the board.

Answers may include ideas such as:

- A divine personality which takes care of us and the world.
- Creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the universe.
- A higher intelligence which guides the universe.
- Everything is God.
- God expresses Himself as the five elements.

Main Lesson 20 min

In addition to the lower prakṛti, Bhagavān also has a Higher Prakṛti.

apareyam itastvanyām
prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām,
jīvabhūtām mahābāho
yayedam dhāryate jagat.

Different from the lower prakṛti is My
“Higher” Prakṛti, the very Life Element
by which this world is upheld.

7.5

As we saw in the last class, Īśvara has two natures: one is the lower nature, which consists of eight things (space, air, fire, water, earth, mind, intellect, and egoism). The Higher Nature of Īśvara is the spiritual factor. It is Consciousness that ties the eightfold prakṛti to the Divine.

Think of electricity. Although we cannot see electricity, when pieces of equipment are connected to it, they manifest power. Think of a laptop computer, television, air conditioner, and light bulb. When they are connected to electricity, they all function according to their own nature. The laptop computer has programs and applications to help us do research, the television provides entertainment, the air conditioner provides cooling, and the light bulb provides illumination. When they aren't connected to electricity, they can't function. In the same way, the five elements, mind, intellect, and ego, are insentient or inert. They cannot function on their own. But when they are “connected” to Consciousness, Bhagavān's Higher Nature, then they are all enlivened.

Let's examine the BMI chart once again. The Om represents Bhagavān's Higher Nature, and the rest of the chart represents His lower nature. Bhagavān's Higher Nature cannot be seen, smelled, heard, touched, or felt, just as we can't see electricity directly. His lower nature can be experienced as this world. Our goal is to recognize His nature in ourselves, in everything, and in everyone.

This is exactly why we say Hari Om.

Hari = Form

Om = God

When we say Hari Om, it means, in your form, I see God!

Know Your Equipment



BMI Chart



Why do we say Hari Om?



Main Lesson

continued

**Activity**

Ask everyone to stand up and fold their hands in front of their hearts in añjali mudrā. The students should form two lines facing each other (like a typical dāṇḍiyā setup). Everyone should have a partner. The students should move around in silence, and when the teacher rings the bell, they should stop and say “Hari Om” to the student in front of them. While doing so, they should strive to connect to something beyond name and form. Remind them that Divinity is akin to the unseen electricity that powers an instrument. They should strive to connect to the unseen Consciousness that enlivens each being. Give them at least two minutes to really connect with each other in silence, and then ring the bell again as a signal for them to keep moving. Repeat this two more times.

Discuss: How did you feel connecting with the “Divinity” in someone else? How did it feel to go beyond the name and form? What did you do to go beyond name and form?

Debrief: For some it might have been a peaceful experience, trying to see beyond the face of another. For some, they might not have understood what it actually means to see “Divinity” in someone else. This is perfectly okay. We just want to establish an understanding that there is a deeper connection we can have with another being.

**Discussion**

As a class, brainstorm some practical ways we can all try to feel the Divinity in others in our day-to-day lives. Some examples may be:

- Before interacting with others, close your eyes and chant Om.
- When interacting with others, try to maintain eye contact. Don’t focus on their outer appearance. This is one way we can remind ourselves that we are not these names and forms!

Let’s now prepare ourselves for a profound message.

mattaḥ paratarāṁ nānyat
kiñcidasti dhanañjaya,
mayi sarvamidam protam
sūtre maṇigaṇā iva.

There is nothing whatsoever higher
than Me, O Dhanañjaya.
All this is strung in Me, as clusters
of gems on a string.

7.7

“Me” here refers to the Higher Nature of God. In the previous verse, we compared the Higher Nature to electricity; in reality, it is actually Consciousness as mentioned here.

Consciousness is simply a changeless awareness that lends
existence to all changing things.

In Vedānta, we use the word Brahman to refer to Consciousness.

Just as the string underlies and holds together various gems on a necklace, Consciousness underlies and holds together all the names and forms we see in this universe. Though there can be many gems on the necklace, perhaps of different colors, sizes, and shapes, the string that holds them together is one. Similarly, though there are innumerable names and forms in this universe, Consciousness which underlies and supports all of them is one. Our eyes typically immediately go to the gems on a necklace, and rarely do we notice the string which connects them. Similarly, we typically only see the changing names and forms, and rarely do we notice the Consciousness which underlies and connects all.

Moreover, there is nothing higher than Consciousness. What does Śrī Kṛṣṇa mean by this? To understand this, we will explore via an activity.

Activity 20 min

In His commentary on the Bhagavad-gīta, Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya adds another metaphor to explain how Consciousness underlies and holds together this entire creation: “As thread in the cloth.” Inspired by this metaphor, we will make our own “thread creations.”

Round 1

1. Give each student a long piece of yarn (at least 18 inches).
2. Students will have ten minutes to come up with their best “thread creation.” They can use any sort of knotting, weaving, etc., but they cannot cut the thread, nor can they use any tools other than their body.

Activity

continued

After everyone is done with their artwork, take a couple minutes to appreciate and enjoy the creations everyone made.

Round 2

For the second round, ask students to form a circle with all of their thread creations together to make one huge bracelet. They don't need to physically connect the bracelets together as they will be tying them to each other at the end.

Reflect on the following questions:

- What does the thread represent?
- What do the knots or various shapes and patterns on the thread represent?
- What is the difference between the thread and the knots?

Debrief: The thread is the Higher Nature of Bhagavān. The various patterns and shapes are the lower nature of Bhagavān. Without the thread, none of these creations would be possible. All of these creations are essentially one thread alone.



Examples

Gold: Think about a bar of gold. This can be heated and molded to form different ornaments such as a bracelet, an earring, and a ring. But essentially, all of them are gold, for without gold, they cannot exist.

Dream: Just think about dreams. At some point, you may have a dream of being on the beach with all of your friends having a really good time. But when you wake up, you realize that the beach, the sand, your friends, the sky, the sun — all were nothing but projections on the mind! The beach, sand, friends, sky, and sun are like different gems, and the mind is like a string.

Similarly, when we wake up to our true Self, we realize that everything that we experience in this world is nothing but Consciousness. The lower nature of God (names and forms) is just a projection on God's Higher Nature (Consciousness). In fact, there is nothing but His Higher Nature. In this sense, there is nothing other than Consciousness. Therefore, the true meaning of God is actually Consciousness.



Discussion

When we start focusing on the “string” or on Consciousness instead of the “gems” or names and forms, our interactions with the world, with beings, and even with ourselves start to change. Let’s explore how.

What changes when we shift our vision to the string rather than the gem? How do we relate to:

- The world • Situations
- People • BMI

For this exercise, the teacher can provide them with the prompts in the first column and then have an open class discussion about the next two columns. The following answers are some examples.

With respect to	When we focus on the “gems”	When we focus on the “string”
World	We look upon each other, nature, and things as different from ourselves and don’t feel innate oneness with the world. Therefore, we take it for granted. We often misuse or overuse natural resources. We grab more food and water than we can eat or drink and pollute rivers and parks with garbage without any concern.	The Divinity present in me is the same Divinity present in all other people, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, etc. When we recognize this Divine Oneness, we approach the world with love, compassion, and respect. We feel that every single element is one with us. We conserve electricity, take only the amount of food and water we need, and are careful not to pollute the environment.
People	We focus more on the differences in physical appearance, personality, body language, habits, status, etc. We distance ourselves from those who appear “different” from us and might even form our own prejudices.	We focus less on the physical appearance of people around us and have less judgment towards others. We interact with openness and acceptance.
Situations	We focus more on situations being “pleasant” or “unpleasant.” We are desperate for “pleasant” situations and cannot bear “unpleasant” ones. When we find ourselves in “pleasant” situations, we may, at times, even feel some temporary peace.	We focus less on situations being “pleasant” or “unpleasant.” We recognize that the same Divinity is present in both. We see all situations as neutral and expressions of Divinity’s grace in our lives and accept them with gratitude.
Body	We focus more on our bodies and feel insecure and obsessive if they are not the size and shape that we want.	We focus less on the appearance of our bodies, understanding that the body is just an instrument of the true Self. We keep our bodies healthy in the best way we can, to do our duties and serve others.

Activity

continued

With respect to	When we focus on the “gems”	When we focus on the “string”
Mind	We focus more on the emotional ups and downs of the mind and get carried away by them. We often get too caught up in our own emotions to care for others.	We focus less on the ups and downs and understand that the mind is also just an instrument of the Self. We nourish our minds with positive things such as listening to uplifting music, reaching out to a trusted friend or adult, or going for a walk in nature to bring comfort to ourselves and others.
Intellect	We focus more on the sharpness or dullness of the intellect and become too proud when we perform well or become too hard on ourselves when we don’t.	We focus less on the sharpness or dullness of the intellect. We just do our best and leave the rest to God.

Recall our **previous lesson** of showing reverence to all the five elements in creation. Notice how in Hinduism, we pray not just for ourselves, but for all:

sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ
sarve santu nirāmayāḥ,
sarve bhadraṇi paśyantū
mā kaścid-duḥkhabhāg-bhavet.

May all be happy. May all be healthy. May all see auspiciousness. May none suffer.

Conclusion 5 min

Summary: Return to the list of ideas generated at the beginning of the class about “What is God?” These ideas should have been written on the left side of the whiteboard. Ask the students to share any new insights and add them to the right side of the whiteboard.

Sūtra:

**Focus on one string
rather than many gems**

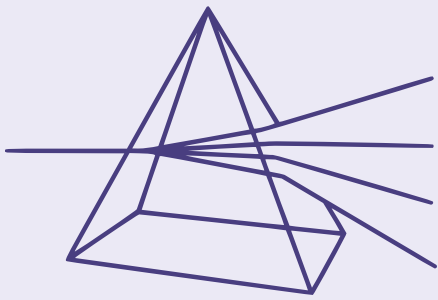
Sādhana: Ask one of your classmates to tie your thread creation on your wrist. Wear your thread creation this week as a reminder to focus on the one thread instead of the many shapes and patterns.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Bhagavān's Māyā

This lesson gives a simple understanding of Māyā and how to dial back to the source which is Brahman. It also explores the three guṇas and the benefits of having a sāttvika mind.

7.14 



daivī hyeṣā guṇa-mayī
mama māyā duratyayā,
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etāṁ taranti te.

Verily, this divine illusion of Mine (Māyā), of the nature of three guṇas (the three qualities), is difficult to cross over. Those who take refuge in Me, they alone cross over this illusion.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

A clear triangular prism and a flashlight containing white LEDs, OR the photo illustration

A tall, clear glass of water

A spoon

[🔗 11 Optical Illusions That Will Trick Your Eyes](#)

[🔗 Bhagavān's Maya — Resources](#)

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 7.14.

[🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. "The Boat To Cross Over Māyā!"](#)

Swami Tejomayananda. *Tattvabodha - Vedanta Book of Definitions*. 9.

Bhagavān's Māyā

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Start the class with the “Hari Om” exercise whereby the students are asked to look at each other going beyond the “name and form” as done in the previous class.

Recall the following:

Īśvara's lower nature: (space, air, fire, water, earth, mind, intellect, and ego). These are aspects of Bhagavān's expression that we can perceive with our senses and mind.

Īśvara's Higher Nature: Consciousness or Brahman. This is Bhagavān's essence which we cannot perceive through our senses and mind. This enlivens each and every being just like electricity enlivens various gadgets.

We have learned so far that actually everything is Īśvara just as “gems on a string” or as “thread in the cloth.” Īśvara's Higher Nature which is one Reality somehow appears as Īśvara's lower nature in various names and forms. What is the power that makes that one Reality appear as many names and forms? That power is called **Māyā**.

Introduction 10 min

Let's first explore these clips and pictures.

Video

Watch the video **11 Optical Illusions That Will Trick Your Eyes**.

In the video:

1. In the first image, some of us might have seen the skull and then noticed that there was a woman looking at her reflection in the mirror or vice versa.
2. In the second image, some of us might have seen a tree, but when we looked closer, we saw the hidden faces. In fact, there were so many hidden faces!

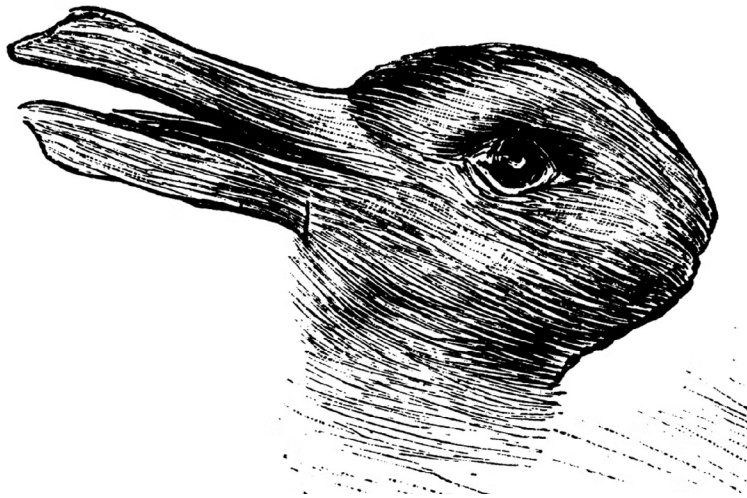
11 Optical Illusions That Will Trick Your Eyes



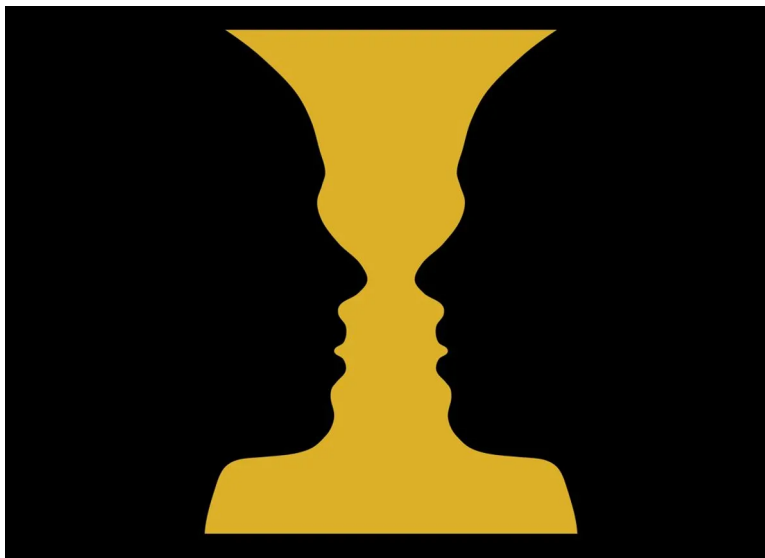
Photos

These are available on the [slide deck](#) for ease of use.

Bhagavān's
Maya —
Resources



In this photo, what do you see? A rabbit? Duck? Or both?



In this photo, what do you see? Two faces? A candlestick? Or both?

Did anyone think that everything is really just colored pixels being shown on the screen/from a projector? Did anyone see the screen itself?

These optical illusions may be specially designed; however, optical illusions exist in real life too!

Introduction

continued



- Firefall in Yosemite National Park: the waterfall looks like fire or lava pouring from the rockface, when in reality it is due to the special angle of the sun refracting through the water.
- Sunrise and sunset: The sun is actually at the center of the solar system, but due to the earth's rotation, it appears to rise and set.
- Blue sky: On a clear day, the sky appears blue, but actually it's due to the scattering of light in the atmosphere.
- Mirage water on the road: Sometimes, when driving on a really hot day, it seems like there's water on the road but it's actually the refraction of light.



Discussion

Do you know of any more optical illusions in the universe?

Live Demo

Now, take a look at this spoon. Is it straight or bent? What about if we put it in a glass of water? How does it look now? It may look bent, but it's actually straight.

Things aren't always what they seem to be. Everything we see is not necessarily true. **Actually, there is only one real Truth in life: all of the names, shapes, and forms we experience are nothing but an expression of that one Reality.** But there is a power that makes us think otherwise. Let's explore that.

Main Lesson 25 min

What is Māyā?

Māyā is the power that makes something appear as it is not.

Let us listen to the words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa describe Māyā.

daivī hyeṣā guṇa-mayī
mama māyā duratyayā,
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etān taranti te.

Verily, this divine illusion of Mine (Māyā), of the nature of three guṇas (the three qualities), is difficult to cross over. Those who take refuge in Me, they alone cross over this illusion.

7.14

Māyā is sometimes referred to as an illusion because it makes something appear as it is not.

For example: It can make something unreal appear real, like a rope appearing as a snake or a post appearing as a ghost.

Story: The Snake

A person walks at night along a dimly lit path. At one point, they see a coiled shape in the middle of the path, barring their way. Concluding it must be a venomous snake, they freeze in place from fear. But as they stand frozen, they realize that the coil is completely still. Taking a step forward and getting a slightly better look, the person realizes that in the darkness, they mistook the coiled object for a snake, when in reality it was a rope. Immediately the fear dissipates inside them and the person feels foolish for thinking it had been a snake. Whistling without fear, the person continues on the path, stepping over the coiled rope. They can no longer return to that place of ignorance, where they thought the rope was a snake.

Q: What's the big deal if we see something appear as what it is not?

A: We don't have any problems with the sun appearing to rise and set, or the sky appearing blue, or mirage water appearing on a hot sunny day. We may have a problem though, if we see a rope and think it's a snake.

In the darkness, the individual accidentally mistook a rope for a snake causing fear and panic in themselves. As soon as they realized what the object actually was, all fear and panic subsided.

Main Lesson

continued



The Boat To
Cross Over
Māyā!



Mind alone is
Māyā at play.

Swami
Chinmayananda



Discussion

Can you think of
some examples
when this
happened?

Māyā has two powers.

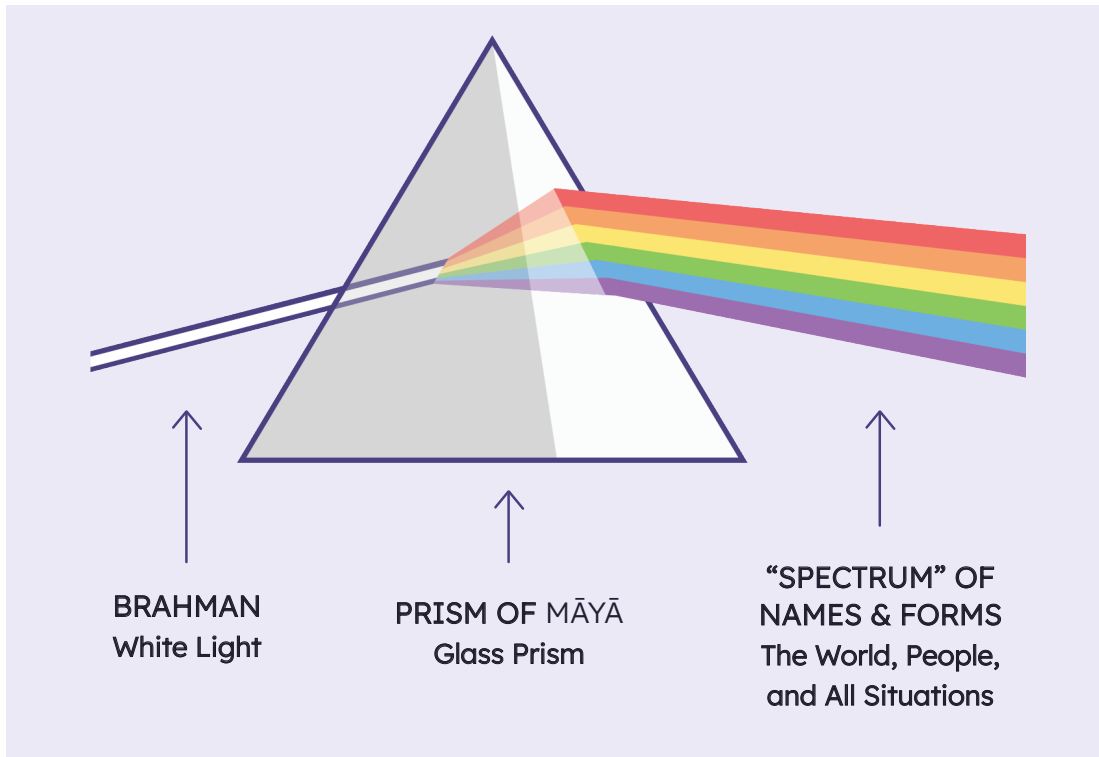
1. **Āvaraṇa śakti** or **Non-apprehension**: not knowing its reality (e.g., not knowing that it is a rope)
2. **Vikṣepa śakti** or **Misapprehension**: thinking that it is something else (e.g., thinking it is a snake)

Because of not seeing clearly along a dimly lit path, the person didn't know that it was a rope and thought it was a snake. Due to **non-apprehension**, **misapprehension** happened and this caused unnecessary fear. We feel the same kind of fear when we mistake a post for a ghost or the whistling wind for a scream. Māyā is actually happening in our own minds!

At a subtler level, this happens all the time in our lives. Have you ever made assumptions and gotten upset with a friend or family member, only to immediately calm down when the situation was clearly explained? For example, we may have thought that people were gossiping about us as they were having a conversation excluding us. But later on, we may find out that they're actually planning a surprise party!

Now, let's try to understand the concept of Māyā by studying this experiment. The following image of a prism refracting white light into the visible spectrum is probably a familiar phenomenon. Interestingly, this is an excellent visualization to understand Māyā.

- The prism which takes in white light and seemingly “converts” it into a whole rainbow is symbolic of Māyā.
- The white light represents Consciousness or Brahman — higher nature of Īśvara.
- The spectrum of colorful light represents all the names and forms that we perceive on a daily basis — lower nature of Īśvara.



Just like the prism takes this single beam of white light and reveals the beauty of a whole spectrum of colors that we enjoy, Īśvara wields the creative power of Māyā to express that one true Brahman in various names and forms we see in the world around us. Therefore, all that we see is actually that one Brahman or Consciousness, but It looks like so many different names and forms when observed through the prism of our mind!

Can you tell the non-apprehension and misapprehension in this diagram?

- **Non-apprehension:** not knowing the one white light
- **Misapprehension:** thinking that the white light is the many different colors

In the example of the rope and the snake, we couldn't tell if the snake was actually a rope because the light was dim, and thus, we couldn't see clearly. From this example, we can't tell that the various names and forms are actually one Consciousness because we are only seeing through our minds (prism).

Q: What's the big deal if we enjoy the many colors and forget about the one white light?

A: Let's tune into this story and find out.

Please keep this prism image available for reference, as it is an excellent visual aid for students during the lesson, and we will return to it later.

Main Lesson

continued

Connecting Back to the Source

Story: Animal Crackers

Once a mother and father brought their young children Sia, Sundar, and Sandhya to a carnival where there were a lot of games and activities. The children enjoyed it thoroughly. After some time, they became hungry, so their mother bought them animal crackers for them to share. Once they opened the package of crackers, they were so excited and started grabbing different pieces.

“I want the horse,” said Sia.

“No, but I want it!” argued Sundar.

Sandhya said to them, “I don’t know why you are fighting over the horse, the cow is the best!”

Then they all started grabbing the package to find the cow animal crackers.

Their mother and father calmed them down. Then the father said, “Wait a minute. Each of you, close your eyes.”

Then he put an animal cracker inside each of their mouths and asked them to chew it and then asked them to open their eyes.

“Well now, what did you taste?” asked the father.

“Ah... something sweet.” Sia responded.

“Yah. It was kinda sweet.” Sandhya agreed.

Sundar was lost in the taste!

“These might seem like different shapes and sizes of animal crackers, but really, inside, it’s all sweetness!” said the mother. “There’s no point in fighting if all of them are just sweetness, is there?”

All the children looked at each other and then started to share their animal crackers without being fussy about which piece they got, but just enjoying their sweetness.

The children had accidentally become caught up in the world of names and forms. They initially wanted a specific “type” of animal cracker. Fortunately, their parents had the clarity of mind to help the children realize that all animal crackers in their essence are identical — they are all sweet!

When we get too caught up in the expression of names and forms of things, we lose out on their essence. When this happens, we get into petty arguments all because we aren't paying attention to the deeper things in life.

So, how do we focus on the essence, Brahman, rather than the expression of Māyā?

The trick is to tune into Brahman by cultivating sāttvika tendencies and qualities in ourselves.

When we cultivate sāttvika tendencies, we learn how to focus on the **essence (Brahman)** instead of the **expression (Māyā)**.

All About Guṇas

Recall from the Bhagavad-gītā verse that Bhagavān describes His Māyā with respect to the three guṇas. The guṇas are qualities that shape every element of creation. All elements of creation are different compositions of these guṇas.

Bhagavān Ādi Śaṅkarācārya defines them for us:

brahma-āśrayā sattva-rajas-tamo-
guṇātmikā māyā asti.

Māyā is of the nature of the 3
qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas.
It exists depending on Brahman.

Tattvabodha

Each of these guṇas (sattva, rajas, and tamas) has its own unique qualities resulting in their own expression.

Guṇa	Definition	Expression
Sattva	The quality of harmony, knowledge, and purity.	Cheerfulness, calmness, sense-control, clarity, alertness.
Rajas	The quality of action arising from desires and attachments. Associated with activity and passion.	Anger, greed, arrogance, jealousy, restlessness.
Tamas	The quality of inertia arising from ignorance, darkness, and delusion.	Laziness, procrastination, forgetfulness.

Main Lesson

continued

We can see these three guṇas expressed in all of creation, including plants and animals too.

Example	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Plants	Tulasī	Sunflower	Cactus
Animals	Cow	Monkey	Buffalo

We can even see the expression of guṇas in inert objects like a stone.

- The inertia aspect (a stone stays where it is unless pushed) is an expression of **tamas**.
- The vibrating atoms in the stone are an expression of **rajas**.
- The symmetry and pattern are expressions of **sattva**.

**Discussion**

Let us try to understand the guṇas better through some examples that apply in our daily lives.

Let this be an interactive section where the students can share their understanding of each category.

Example	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Our daily lives	Contemplative action that is ethical. Seeks to act in service of others. Looks to understand and bring harmony to the world.	Being extremely goal-driven, obsessed with winning, and addicted to achievement.	Avoiding responsibility and numbing one's mind with distractions. Often denying responsibility and reality out of fear.
Our speech	Gentle, pleasant, truthful, beneficial, and measured. Looking to elevate others and uplift.	Argumentative, self-aggrandizing, manipulative speech.	Harsh, deceitful, slanderous. Lots of gossip and meaningless chatter. Talking behind people's backs.

What we eat	Fresh, wholesome, light, nutritious foods. Fruits, grains, vegetables, nuts.	Spicy, sour, salty, and stimulating foods. Coffee, fried foods, meat.	Stale, overripe, processed, or decaying foods. Leftovers, oily fast food, alcohol.
Art and music	Peaceful music, balanced colors. Invokes general harmony and quiet. Like a serene landscape painting.	Loud, energetic, stimulating art. Evokes excitement or desire. A high-tempo action movie or loud electronic music.	Dark, chaotic, degrading. Often unnecessarily violent. Evokes confusion, fear, anxiety, or depression.
Times of day	Early morning — Brahmamuhūrta (4-6 AM). Quiet, clarity, silence. Excellent time for study and meditation.	Daytime from around 9 AM to 12 noon. Filled with activity, ambition, and work.	Right after lunch and nighttime — after 9 PM. Filled with inertia and dullness. Best time for sleeping and giving the body rest.

A mind that is endowed with sattva is called **sāttvika**, one that is endowed with rajas is called **rājasika**, and one that is endowed with tamas is called **tāmasika**.

When we live our lives dominated by rājasika tendencies such as greed, anger, hyperactivity, and jealousy, and tāmasika tendencies, such as procrastination, laziness, and forgetfulness, this takes us away from Īśvara and gets us enmeshed in the world of names and forms (and the cycle of saṁsāra).

When we cultivate sāttvika tendencies such as purity, calmness, and peace, we grow closer to Īśvara, breaking free from this illusion and the cycle of saṁsāra.

Returning to our story, notice how the rājasika tendencies of the children caused their minds to sway so much and get caught up in the web of the world. Whereas the sāttvika clarity of the parents allowed them to realize the true essence of the animal crackers and guide their children to the same realization.

Main Lesson

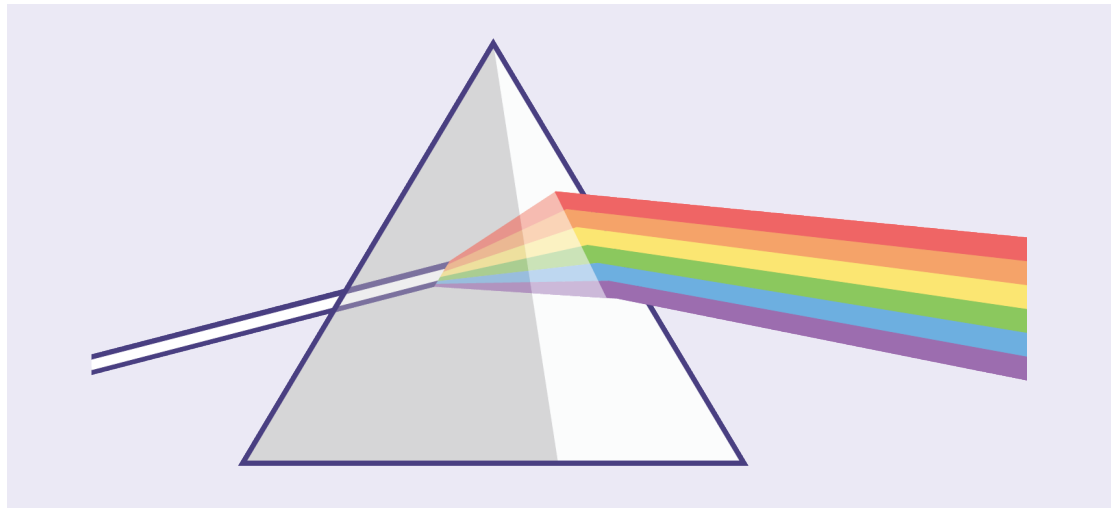
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How does sattva bring us closer to Īśvara and help us break free from the cycle of saṁsāra?

Īśvara’s natural guṇa expression is predominantly sattva. Therefore, when we cultivate sāt̥tvika tendencies in ourselves, we are able to grow closer to Īśvara and gradually tune into His will. Furthermore, when we have a sāt̥tvika mind, our mind is able to recognize the ultimate source and not get lost in the names and forms. A sāt̥tvika mind focuses on the **essence** and not the **expression**.

Putting it All Together

Let us now return to our prism analogy and fill in more details.



White light = Consciousness or Brahman — This is Īśvara’s higher nature which we cannot perceive through our senses and mind. This enlivens each and every being just like electricity enlivens various gadgets.

Glass Prism = Māyā — Māyā is of the nature of the three qualities of sattva, rajas, and tamas. It exists depending on Brahman.

Spectrum of colored lights = World of names and forms — This is the lower nature of Īśvara which consists of space, air, fire, water, earth, mind, intellect, and ego. These are aspects of Bhagavān’s expression that we can perceive with our senses and mind. These are caused by Māyā and are also a combination of the three guṇas.

From this, we understand that Māyā is just a “medium” to make Brahman appear “visible.” The whole world and everything in it is truly only Brahman. Everything doesn’t look like Brahman (white light) to us, because it is “refracted” through the “lens of Māyā” (prism).

The important thing to note is — we don't necessarily have to get rid of all the varied and colorful expressions of Māyā because we physically cannot. We physically cannot rearrange the entire world to our liking or break it down into pieces. That's not the point. The point is to understand that though various colors express themselves, they are only one in essence. Māyā can also be very useful to trace us back to Brahman. In fact, without Māyā, we probably would never know Brahman!

When we learn to dial the “vision” backward and trace Māyā back to her source, then we begin to see that everything is Brahman only. All the colors of the spectrum find their root in the white light. They are all nothing but white light in essence. So too the whole world and all its beings actually find their source in Brahman alone. In essence, we are all that Divinity in different shapes, forms, or colors. A truly sāttvika mind will have the ability to see this.

Activity 10 min

Guṇa Improv

Divide the class into groups (three or four members per group). Ask them all to stand up in their respective groups. Then, the teacher can share a certain prompt along with a guṇa and point towards a group in random order. The assigned group has to do an improv and enact that particular situation.

For example:

Prompt 1: Eating Breakfast (Rajas)

Here, the students should act out eating breakfast in a rājasika manner.

Prompt 2: Driving a car (Sattva)

Here, the students should act out driving a car in a sāttvika manner.

Here are other prompts that can be used. The teacher can use any combination of prompts.

Prompt 3: Waking up in the morning (Sattva)

Prompt 4: Using a device (Tamas)

Prompt 5: Doing homework (Tamas)

Prompt 6: Playing sports (Rajas)

Prompt 7: Giving a speech (Rajas)

After the teacher gives them some prompts, ask each group to assign prompts to the other groups.

The purpose of this exercise is to really help the students understand how the guṇas influence our daily lives.

Activity

continued

Ask the students to compare and contrast their experiences of the different guṇa expressions.

- In which guṇa expression did the tasks feel the easiest?
- In which guṇa expression did you feel the most at peace?
- In which guṇa expression did you experience the greatest clarity?

Debrief: Through this exercise, the students will also gain a clear understanding that a sātṭvika mind is the best mind to use when living in the world. Whether it's eating, driving, doing homework or hanging out with friends, a sātṭvika mind always has the ability to think with clarity, act with calmness, and pay attention to the larger vision behind each action. It is this same mind that helps us dial back to the source.

Note: It is impossible to have a 100% sātṭvika mind because every mind consists of all three guṇas. The goal is to develop a predominantly sātṭvika mind which can even guide our rajas (activity) and tamas (inertia). For example, it is essential to engage in activity and work. However, work guided by a sātṭvika mind (ex: doing homework at the right time, right amount, early enough before the due date) is best. It is also essential to sleep and take breaks, but sleep guided by a sātṭvika mind (ex: sleeping at the right time, right amount) is most beneficial. Recall the definition of dharma as duty from our discussions about karma yoga. Doing our work — or taking restful breaks — guided by a sātṭvika mind also means doing the right thing, at the right place, at the right time — RTRPRT.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Bring back the prism example and have the students reconnect the whole picture together. This time, let them identify what each part of the illustration refers to.

White light = Consciousness or Brahman (Īśvara's Higher Nature)

Glass Prism = Māyā

Spectrum of colored lights = World of names and forms (Īśvara's lower nature) — This consists of space, air, fire, water, earth, mind, intellect, and ego.

When we focus on the **expression** (world of names and forms), we tend to lose out on the **essence** and get stuck in petty arguments like the animal crackers story. **The goal is not to destroy the expression but to see through it.**

Cultivating a **sātṭvika mind** helps us to dial back to the source, see through the expression, and focus on the **essence**, giving us clarity, purity, and a greater vision for life.

Sūtra:

A sāttvika mind
releases the bind

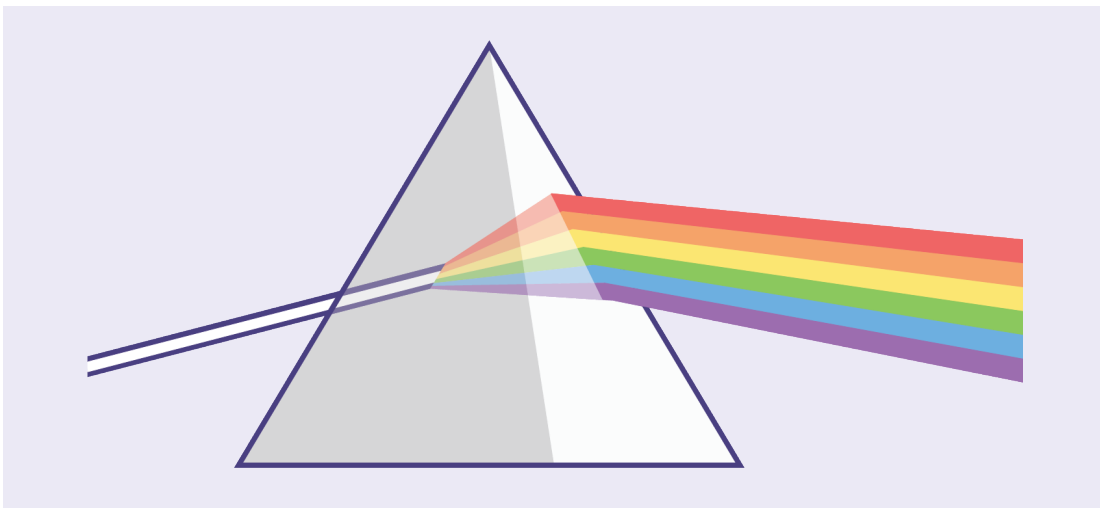
Sāadhanā: This week, practice one sāttvika habit and note down the difference it makes.



Suggestions

- Sāttvika eating
- Sāttvika device usage
- Sāttvika homework

Conclude with closing prayers.





What is Devotion and Who are the Devotees?

This lesson explores the power of prayer and the four types of devotees along with how to cultivate devotion in our daily lives.

7.16 



caturvidhā bhajante mām
janāḥ sukr̥tino’rjuna,
ārto jijñāsuararthārthī
jñānī ca bharatarṣabha.

Four kinds of virtuous people worship Me, O Arjuna, the distressed, the curious, the seeker of wealth, and the wise, O best among the Bharatas.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Index cards
 **Devotion and Devotees slides**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 7.16.

Swami Mitrananda and Yuvaveers. *Gita for Yuva: Wisdom of a Dynamic Man*.

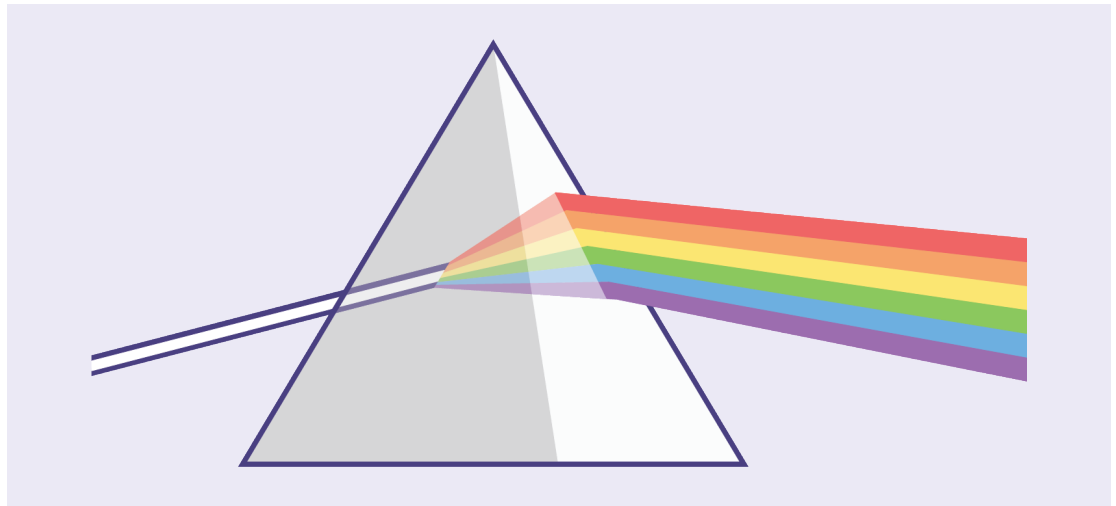
 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Bhagavad Gita Chapter 7 Verses 15 - 17.”

 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Gratitude for those who make food WHOLE.”

What is Devotion and Who are the Devotees?

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Recollect key terms from the previous classes.



Refer to the diagram of the white light going through the prism from the previous class and point to it as you recollect key terms with the class.

White Light = Consciousness or Brahman (Higher nature of Īśvara)

This is Bhagavān's essence which we cannot perceive through our senses and mind. This enlivens each and every being just like electricity enlivens various gadgets.

Glass prism = Māyā

Māyā is of the nature of the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas. It exists depending on Brahman.

Spectrum of colored lights = World of names and forms (Lower nature of Īśvara)

This consists of space, air, fire, water, earth, mind, intellect, and ego. These are aspects of Bhagavān's expression that we can perceive with our senses and mind. These are caused by Māyā.

In the last class we talked about dialing back to the "Source," which is Brahman. We also discovered how Brahman appears with the power of Māyā

WHAT IS DEVOTION AND WHO ARE THE DEVOTEES?

as this world of different names and forms. In order to always trace our minds back to the “Source,” a *sāttvika* mind is required. The next question that now arises is: **how do we cultivate a *sāttvika* mind?** One of the easiest methods is through *bhakti* or devotion. Today, we’re going to learn all about devotion and what it means to be a devotee.

Introduction 10 min



Discussion

What do you think the word devotion means?

Possible answers:

- Love for God
- Being totally committed to a goal, or a person, or an ideal



Activity

Give the students small index cards or sheets of paper. Let them write the first thing that comes to mind when you say the words: Rice, Shirt, Milk, Mango.

Now, take a few minutes to write about the supply chain of how that thing came to your home or in your life. Trace it back to at least ten steps.

Example:

Step 1: I had a glass of milk this morning.

Step 2: The milk was bought from a grocery store.

Step 3: The milk was delivered to the grocery store by a delivery truck.

Step 4: The delivery truck picked it up from a factory.

Step 5: The factory received the milk from a farmer.

Step 6: The farmer received the milk from milking the cow.

Step 7: The cow was able to provide milk because it ate grass.

Step 8: The grass was only able to grow because of the sun and rain.

Step 9: The sun is able to provide sunlight, and the rain is able to provide enough water, only because of a higher power.

Step 10: That higher power is what we call *Īśvara*.

Grain of Rice
Poem



In our very first lesson, we saw that the infinite cause of the world, the source from which everything emerges, by which everything is sustained, and into which everything is dissolved, is called ***Īśvara***.

Introduction

continued

When we trace all supply chains back to their origin, we will inevitably find that there's always going to be something that is beyond human control or comprehension. We cannot command the sun to rise, the clouds to part, the winds to slow down, or trees to grow. All of these functions in nature take place by a higher power, and we are just one tiny portion of it.



Challenge

Can you try tracing AI back to Īśvara?

Here's a response from ChatGPT.

Step 1: I am using AI on my computer or phone.

Step 2: This AI is accessed through the internet, which connects my device to large data servers.

Step 3: Those data servers are located in data centers powered by electricity and cooled by complex engineering systems.

Step 4: The electricity powering those centers comes from energy sources such as solar panels, wind turbines, hydroelectric dams, or fossil fuels.

Step 5: The hardware used — microchips, processors, and circuit boards — was manufactured from raw materials like silicon, copper, and rare earth metals.

Step 6: These materials were mined from the earth by people using machines designed by engineers.

Step 7: The engineers and programmers who built the AI used their intelligence, creativity, and accumulated human knowledge to design and train it.

Step 8: That human intelligence arises from the functioning of the human brain — an incredibly complex biological system guided by laws of nature.

Step 9: The laws of nature — physics, chemistry, biology — operate with such precision and harmony that they sustain the possibility of intelligence, matter, and energy itself.

Step 10: The source of these laws, intelligence, and order is **Īśvara** — the Supreme Intelligence or Consciousness that pervades and governs all creation.

So, even the most advanced creation of human intellect — **AI** — when traced back carefully, leads us to the same sacred origin: **Īśvara**, the source of all order, intelligence, and existence.

Recognition of this Origin of all and offering our love and appreciation towards this Source is known as **bhakti** or **devotion**.

Main Lesson 25 min

Devotion in the Bhagavad-gītā

As we saw earlier in the first lesson, we can decide to invoke Īśvara in whatever way we choose. Recall the example of the fire. When we walk closer to the fire, we feel more heat, but when we walk away from it, we feel less heat. The fire just remains as it is, but it is we who decide how to approach it.

In the same way, Īśvara is the same towards all. When we walk towards Īśvara, we feel His grace, and when we walk away, we do not. **Īśvara responds to us in the way we invoke Him.**

We invoke Īśvara through prayer. **Prayer is the act of attuning our individuality with totality (Īśvara) to connect to the wisdom and strength of totality.**

When we sit down and close our eyes to pray, what exactly is happening? Our mind becomes calm and quiet. When the mind becomes quiet, in these silent moments, it is able to tune in to the secrets of the universe.

For example, when our minds are noisy and constantly erupting with different thoughts, we barely notice the sound of the bird chirping, or the clock ticking, or the wind blowing. But when our minds are silent, we can hear all of these sounds quite distinctly and even understand the patterns behind them.

In the same way, Īśvara, who is in and through the entire universe, is always present, but His sound isn't a bird chirping or the wind blowing. Īśvara's sound is silence. **When our minds are silent, we are able to tune into Īśvara's silence.** And in that silence, deep wisdom, strength, fearlessness come alive. **This is the act of silent prayer.**

Prayer can also be conversational. Sometimes, we might see Īśvara as a friend that we can speak to, a parental figure who gives us advice, or even a loving teacher and guide. Conversing with Īśvara this way helps us empty all of our thoughts, confusions, and doubts. After emptying these at the feet of Īśvara, we pause for a moment of silence so that Īśvara can respond. **This is the act of conversational prayer.** This can bring healing energy to one's heart. The conversation can also be in the form of a song, dance, poem, artwork or even a letter.

Main Lesson

continued

Prayer can also be offering thanks or giving praise. Some might be overwhelmed with love and gratitude for all that Īśvara is and all that He provides. Some might feel so connected to Īśvara and, out of joy, offer a song or dance just to revel in His glory. **This is the act of worshipful prayer.**

Of course, prayer can also be a combination of all three. What matters most in prayer is our sincerity.

Now that we have understood the different types of prayer, let's explore the different types of devotees who pray to Īśvara.

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains four different ways of invoking Īśvara.

caturvidhā bhajante mām
janāḥ sukr̥tino'ṛjuna,
ārto jijñāsuarthārthī
jñānī ca bharataṛṣabha.

Four kinds of virtuous people
worship Me, O Arjuna, the
distressed, the curious, the seeker of
wealth, and the wise, O best among
the Bharatas.

7.16

We can think of the four types of devotees as:

1. Those who just want to **Feel** better
2. Those who just want to **Know** better
3. Those who just want to **Have** better
4. Those who want the **BEST** — Eternal Freedom.

Devotee 1: Ārta — these are the devotees who want to **feel** better.

They are tormented and tortured by the sufferings of the world. This includes people who are sad, or have some bad circumstance in life and are praying for the removal of those circumstances. They could be going through some health challenges, mental health issues, financial loss, relationship drama, etc.

Oftentimes, in our own families or communities, when someone is going through suffering, we get together and chant the Mahā mrtyuñjaya mantra or Hanumān Cālīsā. The prayers may start as a desperate request to heal and eventually become a form of solace.

These devotees can also include activists who are really affected by the sufferings of others or those fighting for a good cause, because it moves them to their core.

WHAT IS DEVOTION AND WHO ARE THE DEVOTEES?



Example

During COVID, so many people started a spiritual sādhanā of some type. Many developed a personal pūjā practice or logged on daily to spiritual sessions in order to pray for everyone. So many people joined together to light candles in their homes or to clap at the same time every day with an intention to change the vibrational energy of the planet to help fight this deadly disease.

Q: What happens after the issue that is prayed for is removed or fixed? Does this type of devotee continue to pray and remember Īśvara? Or do they start moving on with their lives and not think of Īśvara that often? Or do they start praying for the next issue that upsets them?

A: While Īśvara values Ārtas, there is still room for growth because:

1. Their prayer and love for Īśvara is issue-related. As soon as the issue is resolved, the need for the prayer goes away. So an Ārta may stop remembering Īśvara often after their particular problem is fixed. Many will forget; some will continue, but most will stop praying. Some may move on to praying for the next crisis. However, they continue to pray for a fixed or specific outcome that they desire.
2. Some may pray fervently for one particular issue but not pray for another. So their discomfort is specific to certain things and not for other things. They may pray for orphaned children in one place, but not those orphaned in another. They may get caught up in praying about their problems, thinking that they have the biggest problems in the world, and not even pray for others.

Praying wholeheartedly to Īśvara for the abatement or removal of these unpleasant or dangerous or sad circumstances is indeed an important step in devotion, but this is not the ultimate thing to pray for.

Discussion

Can you think of moments when we have approached Īśvara as an Ārta devotee?



Activity

Ask the students to write a prayer of an Ārta devotee and share two to three lines.

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

Can you think of times when we have approached Īśvara as a Jijñāsu devotee?

Devotee 2: Jijñāsu — these are devotees who want to **know** better.

These devotees diligently read spiritual texts and seek to understand the nature of the world and God. They conduct thorough research, study various kinds of logic, postulate proofs, and are very focused on what they do. This is definitely admirable, but sometimes they get lost in their calculations and fail to find the essence.

Story: The Study of Mangoes

Once, a teacher had two students and asked them to perform a study of mangoes for the season. The teacher wanted to know the essence of mangoes. The first student started noticing the color of the mangoes, feeling their texture and shape, and comparing the mangoes of one tree to another. He seemed really in-depth in his analysis and kept recording his findings. The second student went up to the mango tree and tried to spot a ripe mango and then opened it up and ate it! He tasted the sweetness and his stomach was now full. They both went back to the teacher with their findings.

Teacher: “So, what did you all find out about the mangoes?”

Student 1: “I have a full report on their colors, shapes, textures, and the comparisons of different types of mangoes. Here it is.”

Teacher (turns to student 2): “And what about you?”

Student 2: “I ate a mango and discovered its sweetness, and it filled my stomach.”

Teacher: “That’s exactly what the mango is for. The mango is not to be merely studied; it’s to be tasted, digested, and experienced.”

Q: What tends to happen with those that are Jijñāsu?

A: The following are three potential outcomes.

1. Due to their reliance on the knowledge that they keep gathering, it becomes very difficult for this type of devotee to attain direct experience of Īśvara, as they are always looking for proof and validation in the world of published books, scientific research, and other scriptures. This can become a distraction for them. Instead of paying attention to the essence, they may be paying too much attention to the extraneous.
2. Sometimes, those that learn constantly or are part of systematized learning become proud or arrogant of all that they know and from all the books they can quote from. This arrogance creeps up unknowingly, and they may

WHAT IS DEVOTION AND WHO ARE THE DEVOTEES?

not even notice it. This pride in their knowledge is actually unwarranted, as it depends on having a good memory as well as the verbal ability to simplify concepts for all levels of listeners, and patience to explain. They tend to forget that all these qualities are gifts from Īśvara and cannot be gained without Divine Grace.

3. These types of people are innately curious and are always keen to learn more. However, for them constant learning becomes the end goal. They cannot survive if they are not learning. In the end, the goal has to be gaining direct experience of Īśvara in every aspect of life, not being the most knowledgeable about Īśvara.



Activity

Ask the students to write a prayer of a Jijñāsu devotee and share two to three lines.

Devotee 3: Arthārthī — Those who just want to **have** better.

The Arthārthī's devotion and prayers are largely directed towards material and tangible gains like good grades, being part of a varsity sports team or being popular.

These gains can be reasonable and normal goals, such as making enough money to support one's family or praying to make good friends so they aren't lonely.



Example

A person can pray to get admitted to a college of their choice. They may pray or light a lamp at their home altar every day, observe fasts or visit temples frequently during this period. Their parents may also perform all kinds of fasts or make all kinds of promises to Īśvara — “If my child gets in, then I'll donate...”

Discussion

Can you think of times when we have approached Īśvara as an Arthārthī devotee?

Society teaches us that these material gains are the measure of success, so most of us have likely approached Īśvara for these material gains at least once.

Q: What happens after Arthārthīs attain their results?

A: Sometimes when Arthārthīs get what they want, their prayers and offerings stop.

Main Lesson

continued

While Īśvara values Arthārthīs, there is still room for growth because:

1. They offer prayers or remember Īśvara to gain something external and not something internal, like developing a certain virtue which will make them a better devotee.
2. They remember Īśvara for the sole purpose of gaining that “thing.” They may even thank Īśvara after the “thing” is gained; however, they just keep doing it again and again. They see Īśvara only as a granter of wishes and desires and not much more.
3. Their requests are largely for gaining something that they feel they lack. As a student they may ask for things such as good grades in exams, a reputable college, an honorary degree, or a successful career. As they grow older, these requests change to a loving spouse, noble children, kind in-laws, good health, lots of wealth, a nice house, an awesome car, great clothes, extravagant vacations, etc. However, the overall type of request remains the same. They do not evolve in asking to cultivate virtues, progress in the spiritual path, or indeed for Īśvara Himself.

Q: Where does all this lead?

A: These types of devotees stay in the unending loop of requests asked and desires either fulfilled or not fulfilled. **The devotee stays in a constant cycle of joy at fulfillment or disappointment at not being fulfilled. If a desire is fulfilled, it leads to wanting more. If unfulfilled, it leads to sadness or anger or sometimes jealousy. This cycle might prevent the devotee from progressing in the path of devotion or spiritual seeking.**



Activity

Ask the students to write a prayer of an Arthārthī devotee and share two to three lines.

Īśvara is not your wish-fulfiller. He is your well-wisher.

**Swami
Tejomayananda**

Devotee 4: Jñānī — Those who want the **best**.

The Jñānīs are the ones who are seeking the Source. These types of devotees are the ones who want Īśvara only for the sake of Īśvara.

Imagine if you were building a property somewhere and you needed about \$2 million to complete it. Someone told you about a certain billionaire who is quite generous and may give you a good donation if you approach him. Would you ask the billionaire for \$10? \$100? \$1000? Probably not. Maybe you would ask for a million-dollar donation.

WHAT IS DEVOTION AND WHO ARE THE DEVOTEES?

Now, imagine approaching Īśvara who has the capacity to give us eternal peace, attaining which, one is completely fulfilled in life. Would we ask him for a college acceptance? A good career? A loving spouse? The answer is — unfortunately we do! At some point in time, we will begin to realize that when we ask Īśvara for Īśvara, then we will be complete, fulfilled, and ever abiding in eternal peace.

The Jñānī has the following qualities:

1. They believe that seeking Īśvara is the purpose of human birth, no matter the starting point. They believe that Īśvara must be sought with urgency as they only have control over the efforts they put towards this goal in this birth, and they do not know when the end of this birth will come or what lies in store in future births.
2. They see everything that happens in the world and in their lives as a gift of Īśvara, whether joyous or sad, and as lessons that need to be learned for their own improvement as a person. Because of this, they express gratitude for whatever comes into their lives.
3. They see Īśvara as their ultimate benefactor or guide, much like a loving parent or friend who they trust completely. They see all aspects of their life as being guided by Īśvara and for their ultimate benefit.
4. They pray to Īśvara to be blessed with all the necessary qualities to realize Īśvara in this very life itself.



Activity

Ask the students to write a prayer of a Jñānī devotee and share two to three lines.

Discussion



Can you think of times when we have approached Īśvara as a Jñānī devotee?

In summary, the most beautiful thing is that Īśvara says that all devotees are dear to Him! He calls everyone **sukṛtinaḥ**, which means He sees all types of devotees as virtuous, because in some way, they are remembering Him. Yes, it can be due to distress, curiosity, or even seeking wealth and prosperity; the important thing is that we are turning to Īśvara, and that in itself is a blessing. The more and more we build a relationship with Īśvara, the closer we get to praying to Him for what matters most — recognizing our oneness with Īśvara and attaining eternal freedom and peace.

Main Lesson

continued



Devotion and Devotees slides



The types of devotees mentioned in the slides are open to analysis by the class.

Activity 10 min

Option 1: Reflection on Prayer

1. Go through the Devotion and Devotees slides with the class.
2. For each slide, the teacher can recite the prayer and have the students repeat. If everyone is comfortable, recite the prayer together.
3. After reciting, ask someone to read aloud the meaning of the prayer and share what they understood.
4. Discuss what type of devotee would have this kind of prayer.

Option 2: Devotees in Action

Split the class into groups of four to five people and give each group a specific type of devotee. Then, give each group five minutes to plan and record a short scene or skit depicting their devotee in action. Encourage them to be creative in their skits (e.g., the scene should not take place at a temple or place of worship).

After five minutes, let each group show their video to the class to guess which type of devotee they were depicting.

Conclusion 5 min

Silent prayer: Encourage the students to sit silently and write down their own prayer to Īśvara. This will not be shared in class. This is just a chance for them to end in silent reflection and start communicating with the Lord of their heart.

Sūtra:

Pray in your own
special way

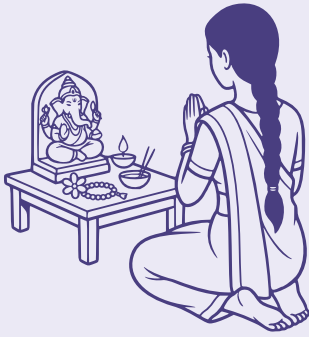
Sādhana: Before going to sleep every night, say a prayer to Īśvara.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Discover your Iṣṭa Devatā

This lesson deals with understanding Īśvara through Iṣṭa Devatās. It also highlights the importance of having sāttvika thoughts and watching what we think because it translates into who we are.

8.6 



yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran-bhāvaṁ
tyajatyante kalevaram,
taṁ tamevaiti kaunteya
sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ.

Whosoever, at the end, leaves the body, thinking of any being, to that being only one goes, O Kaunteya (O son of Kuntī), because of one's constant thought of that being.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

- Colored pencils
- Printer paper
-  **Iṣṭa Devatā worksheet**
-  **Thoughts Become Things slides**
-  **Mean Girls clips**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 8.6.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “It is not possible to think of the Lord at the time of death!”

 Swami Chinmayananda. “When can the last thought be of the Lord?”

Amar Chitra Katha. *Kalidasa*.

Discover your Iṣṭa Devatā

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Recall the following with the class:

Three types of prayer:

1. Silent prayer
2. Conversational prayer
3. Worshipful prayer

Four types of devotees:

1. Ārta: Those who just want to **Feel** better
2. Jijñāsu: Those who just want to **Know** better
3. Arthārthī: Those who just want to **Have** better
4. Jñānī: Those who want the **BEST** — Eternal Freedom.

Now, ask everyone to form a circle. Together, the class will compose a prayer. The teacher can start with the first word and the student to the right can say the first word along with their new word. Then, the next student can say the first two words and then add their word. In the end, the last person should be able to chant the complete prayer.

The class should compose an original prayer and not one that is commonly known.



Example

Teacher: “Hari”

Student 1: “Hari Om”

Student 2: “Hari Om, please”

...

Introduction 10 min



Discussion

When we pray to Īśvara, what or who do we think of? Do we find it easy to pray to Īśvara or is it a little hard? If it's challenging, why?

Normally, it's easy to form a relationship with someone we can see, someone we can talk to face-to-face or hold, someone we can joke around and laugh with. But when it comes to Īśvara, what does Īśvara look like? Does Īśvara have black hair or brown hair? Is Īśvara a man, a woman, or an animal? Is Īśvara funny and jovial, or is Īśvara silent?

**Activity**

Give the class sheets of paper and colored pencils. Ask the class to take a moment to draw what Īśvara looks like to them and share.

Main Lesson 25 min**Īśvara to Iṣṭa Devatā**

In actuality, Īśvara has no specific name or form but is the origin of all names and forms. But sometimes, it can be very difficult to relate or communicate with the nameless and the formless Reality.

**Discussion**

Rate the following 1-5 (1 being the easiest to understand and 5 being the most difficult)

- Watching a movie with full animation and special effects
- Watching a movie with just monotone dialogue
- Watching a movie without sound
- Watching a movie with only one scene the entire time
- Watching a blank screen
- Listening to audio with variations in tone
- Listening to monotone audio
- Listening to silence

What we will find is the more properties something has, the easier it is to connect to. When something has a sound, a sense of feeling, form, taste and smell, we can really connect with it, like a samosa. It has a crunchy sound, feels crisp, has a triangular form, tastes great, and has a smell that makes our tummies hungry! And when we eat the samosa, we may begin to feel full. The samosa becomes very tangible for us and it's incredibly easy to understand and relate to.

Main Lesson

continued



Thoughts
Become Things
slides



Discussion

Do you remember the lower nature of Īśvara? What were the five elements given? Do you remember the properties or qualities associated with them?

- **Space:** sound
- **Air:** touch and sound
- **Fire:** form, touch, and sound
- **Water:** taste, form, touch, and sound
- **Earth:** smell, taste, form, touch, and sound

The teacher can also refer to the first slide in the Thoughts Become Things slides. Which do you think is easiest to relate to?

When something has more properties, it becomes easier to relate to, but when something is so subtle, like space, which is the substratum of sound, it becomes a little bit harder.

Close your eyes for a moment. Can you think of Earth? Describe what you see in your mind. Now, close your eyes and think of space. Can you describe what you see? Is it really space, or is it an object in space or is it darkness in space?

Īśvara is actually **subtler** than space because Īśvara doesn't have any properties. In order to connect to Īśvara and make Īśvara come alive for us, we have **Iṣṭa Devatās or MPG** (My Personal God/Goddess).

An **Iṣṭa Devatā** or **MPG** is a personification of Īśvara that has a particular name and form.

This makes it easy for us to connect with Īśvara via our Iṣṭa Devatās.

An Iṣṭa Devatā can be someone like Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī, Durgā, etc. These names and forms are all representations of that one Īśvara, but they make it easier for us to relate to, communicate with, and understand Īśvara. **By worshipping the form, we prepare our minds to evolve to the formless.**

**Example**

Īśvara in the form of Gaṇeśa has the five elements, with each element corresponding to a particular property.

- **Sound:** powerful chants of Om Gaṁ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ and Gaṇapati Bappā Morayā
- **Touch:** forming turmeric or clay into a mūrti on Gaṇeśa Chaturthī
- **Sight:** A delightfully iconic look that symbolizes the qualities of leadership (for example, large ears and a small mouth pertain to a leader who listens well but speaks only when necessary).
- **Taste:** the classic modaka reminds you of the many fun stories of Gaṇeśa
- **Smell:** fragrance of the incense and flowers during the Gaṇeśa pūjā

Through the worship of Gaṇeśa, which involves all of our senses — there are things we can hear, feel, see, taste, and smell — Īśvara comes alive.

As We Think, So We Become

Why else should we have an Iṣṭa Devatā? The Bhagavad-gītā tells us that whatever we worship, that's exactly where we go.

yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran-bhāvaṁ
tyajatyante kalevaram,
taṁ tamevaiti kaunteya
sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ.

Whosoever, at the end, leaves the
body, thinking of any being, to that
being only one goes, O Kaunteya
(O son of Kuntī), because of one's
constant thought of that being.

8.6

The verse may seem like it's only talking about what happens to us after death, but make no mistake. It's teaching us about what happens to us each and every day of our lives. As we think, so we become!

Therefore, when we constantly think of any being, we actually go to that or tend to become that.

For example, let us say our Iṣṭa Devatā is Hanumān jī and we keep thinking about His form. We keep chanting His name, singing His glories, and listening to His stories. What do you think happens to us? We start to become like Hanumān jī! We start to imbibe His qualities such as strength, wisdom,

It is not
possible to
think of the
Lord at the
time of death!



When can the
last thought be
of the Lord?



Main Lesson

continued

devotion, fearlessness, etc. What happens if we start thinking like Durgā Devī? We start to imbibe Her qualities of courage, fearlessness, wisdom, etc. As we imbibe these qualities, the mind becomes more sāttvika, and as the mind becomes more sāttvika, we are able to tune into Īśvara.

Therefore, worshiping an Iṣṭa Devatā or MPG is a way to reach Īśvara.

Story: Yudhiṣṭhira and Duryodhana

Once upon a time, Prince Duryodhana went to Lord Kṛṣṇa and asked, “Kṛṣṇa, why is Yudhiṣṭhira considered a good man, while I am not?”

“Come to me tomorrow and I will answer you. But find me one good man in your kingdom and bring him along with you,” said Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Duryodhana agreed to do as Lord Kṛṣṇa asked. Before he left, Lord Kṛṣṇa sent a messenger to summon Yudhiṣṭhira to also come at the same time. But rather than ask him to find one good person in the kingdom, Śrī Kṛṣṇa requested Yudhiṣṭhira to find one bad person.

The next morning, the two cousins came to meet Lord Kṛṣṇa, but neither brought anyone with them. The Lord asked, “Why have you both come alone? Where are the people that I asked each of you to bring to me?”

Duryodhana replied, “I searched high and low in my kingdom, but I couldn’t find a single good man in the whole of Hastinapur. Everyone had some flaw or problem that made me conclude they weren’t good.”

Yudhiṣṭhira bowed to Lord Kṛṣṇa and said humbly, “Lord, I searched in vain for a single bad man in Indraprastha, but couldn’t find even one. I could see only your image in all of them, dear Lord!”

Lord Kṛṣṇa laughed and thanked Yudhiṣṭhira for coming. Once Yudhiṣṭhira left, Lord Kṛṣṇa turned to Duryodhana and said, “Now do you have your answer, dear prince?”

He continued, “People consider you a bad man because you can’t see the goodness in others. Yudhiṣṭhira is loved because he can’t see the evil in others! If all you think of is mean and cynical, then you will always see that in the world. However, if all you look for is kindness and love, that too will be what you find!”

Debrief: Constantly thinking about something is actually the best way to become like that. That’s why we have to be careful of what we think.

Watch your thoughts, they become your words.
 Watch your words, they become your actions.
 Watch your actions, they become your habits.
 Watch your habits, they become your character,
 and watch your character, because that becomes your destiny.

When we keep thinking of something repeatedly, those **thoughts** become our words. When we've watched a movie many times or played a song on loop, we find ourselves naturally speaking or singing those **words** out loud without consciously noticing. Long before this, our words become our **actions**. If we keep saying, "Yes, I can do this," then the chances are we will take on everything with unswerving enthusiasm. As a result, meeting challenges head-on becomes our **habit**, and this spirit of determination forms our **character**. This leads to our destiny of being able to achieve what we set our minds to.

Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. When we keep surrounding ourselves with **thoughts** of insecurity and self-doubt, we naturally find ourselves talking down to ourselves saying **words** like "I'm not good enough." Sooner or later, we find ourselves doing such **actions** — shying away from opportunities or making up excuses for not participating in something. Escapism then becomes our **habit**. Feelings of doubt and insecurity pervade our **character**, and lack of achievement becomes our **destiny**.



Activity

Let's watch some clips from *Mean Girls* to see just how much our surroundings can impact us.

Ask a student to give a summary of the plot of *Mean Girls* in case students in the class have not watched it. Pause after each clip and discuss how Cady has changed.

1. Cady is new to the school and has made some real friends. She is a shy, genuinely kind, and sincere person.
2. Cady is introduced to the "plastics" who are the most popular girls in the school.
3. After hanging out more with Regina, Cady's thoughts are affected.
4. Then Cady's words are filled with comparisons and hatred.
5. Cady has started becoming clones of the people she surrounds herself with.
6. Cady has completely transformed into a "Mean Girl" and let her true friends down.

Mean Girls
clips



Main Lesson

continued

Debrief: Ask the students the following questions:

1. How did Cady’s personality change from the first clip to the last clip?

Potential answer: Cady was a sweet, sincere, and kind person and changed into a mean “plastic” by the end.

2. How did Cady’s surroundings affect her?

Potential answer: The cliquey environment of high school and the people she chose to befriend shaped her thoughts, words, and actions and changed her relationship with her own morals and values.

Who do we think about most?

If we find out who or what we think about most, that can probably explain why we act the way we do. Sometimes, we actually “worship” people without knowing it. We might keep following our favorite movie star or celebrity and we might even know all the things they like — what they wear, who they hang out with, their favorite food, where they live, etc. Sometimes, we even imitate them knowingly or unknowingly. But if we really dig deeper, are these the ones that we want to “worship” or think about?

Consider where you are and where you want to be. If you have to think of someone to inspire you to be a better version of yourself, what would you want in your role model? What qualities would you want from them? Who can you choose that shares all those qualities? Even if a potential human role model is very *sāttvika*, why should we worship someone with limited virtues when we can worship the one with **unlimited virtues**?

If you remember from our first lesson, *Īśvara* is also known as *Bhagavān* or *Bhagavatī* because *Īśvara* possesses six *bhagas* (powers) in infinite measure.

aiśvaryaśya samagrasya dharmasya yaśasaḥ śrīyaḥ,
vairāgyasyātha mokṣasya ṣaṇṇām bhaga itīraṇā.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.5.74

The six bhagas are:

- aiśvarya: power
- dharma: righteousness
- yaśa: fame
- śrī: wealth
- vairāgya: dispassion
- mokṣa: freedom

Why should we worship the limited when we can worship the unlimited?

Additional Material

Story: Kālidāsa

Now, let's tune into someone who worshiped the Infinite. Let's see what happened to him. This is a true story.

Kālidāsa (servant of Kālī Mātā) is one of the greatest poets the world has ever known. However, his story didn't quite start out like that. He lost his parents when he was about five years old and he was brought up by a kind-hearted but illiterate cowherd. He slowly grew into a well-built, handsome young man, but he was still uneducated. He used to help his father tend the cows and when he had some free time in between, he would visit the village temple of Kālī Mātā.

Meanwhile, the king of Varanasi had a beautiful daughter named Vasantī and he was looking for a suitable match for her. She was very knowledgeable and would only marry someone who would defeat her in a debate about scriptures. There was a man named Vararuci who was a great scholar, but Vasantī wasn't interested in marrying him, so she set him up for failure in a debate. Vararuci felt utterly humiliated and wanted to take revenge on her.

As Vararuci was walking in the forest, he saw a strange man who was chopping a branch of the tree — but it was the very same branch he was sitting on! Vararuci tried to stop him but he didn't listen. The man ended up falling down. He was none other than Kālidāsa. Kālidāsa thought that Vararuci was very smart since he could predict that Kālidāsa was going to fall from the tree. He went to Vararuci and asked how he could have predicted that. He thought that Vararuci was an astrologer!

Vararuci continued to play along by claiming to be an astrologer who had predicted that Kālidāsa would marry a princess and brought Kālidāsa to the king's palace. Vararuci took Kālidāsa, dressed him up as a scholar, and asked for a debate with the princess, but this would be a special kind of debate: one that was mute.

This is mainly for the teacher's understanding but can be used in class as required.

Main Lesson

continued

To everyone's surprise, Kālidāsa actually won! But shortly after, princess Vasantī found out that Kālidāsa was uneducated and that a trick was played on her. She asked Kālidāsa to leave immediately. Embarrassed and ashamed, he left his wife and sat at the Kālī temple to worship the Divine Mother. He sat for many days without any food or drink. Due to his austerity, Kālī Mātā blessed him with wisdom. With blessings from Kālī Mātā, Kālidāsa went back and shone in all his wisdom. His works such as *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, *Kumārasambhavam*, and *Raghuvamśa* are notable literary masterpieces.

Because Kālidāsa worshipped Kālī Mātā and kept on thinking about Her, he became imbued with Her Divine Wisdom and became one of the greatest poets this world has ever known. This didn't just happen to Kālidāsa, but it has also happened to many people.

**Examples**

- Maharṣi Pāṇini, who was often bullied in school because he wasn't very smart, worshipped Bhagavān Śiva intensely. To him, the Māheśvara sūtras were revealed which formed the organization of grammar in Saṁskṛtam.
- Vālmīki Ṛṣi, a thief, spent his life harming others, worshipped Bhagavān Rāma and later composed the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.
- Sant Janābāi, who was a maidservant, worshipped Viṭṭhala and became one of His greatest devotees and composed abhaṅgas (devotional poetry) about Him, which are sung to this day.
- Chhatrapatī Śivājī Mahārāja worshipped Tulja Bhavānī for courage and fearlessness and became one of the greatest Bharatīya kings.

Finding our Iṣṭa Devatā

As we have seen so far, when we have an Iṣṭa Devatā, it becomes easier to relate to and communicate with Īśvara. It also makes it easier to focus and think about Īśvara. This also enables our mind to tune into unlimited sāttvika qualities.

Have we met our Iṣṭa Devatā yet? How do we find one?



Exercise

Close your eyes. What is the first form of God or Goddess that comes to you?

Our Iṣṭa Devatā is usually someone we are naturally attracted to. This might be because we grew up worshiping this particular form in our family. For example, children that were raised with Lakṣmī Devī as the main deity in their household might be naturally drawn to Her.

It might also be because we admire certain traits that they possess. For example, many musicians and artists worship Sarasvatī Devī. Those in politics or governance usually worship Bhagavān Rāma, and those in the military and combat usually worship Durgā Devī or Hanumān jī.

It could also be what we seek. For example, those who are seeking detachment and equanimity like to worship Bhagavān Śiva. Those who are seeking joy, love, and wisdom like to worship Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa.

Let's explore the [Thoughts Become Things slides](#) to get an idea of Iṣṭa Devatās. (This can be used if any teens still do not have a clear idea of their Iṣṭa Devatā.)

Q: What happens if we like two forms of Bhagavān or Bhagavatī? What if I like Bhagavān Śiva, but I also like Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa?

A: It's important to remember that **Īśvara is only one** and all the forms of God or Goddess are various manifestations of that one Īśvara. Śiva is Kṛṣṇa in essence, Kṛṣṇa is Durgā in essence, etc. It is important to pick only **one** because we are slowly training the mind to see the **one white light** hidden in the whole spectrum of colors. Recall the prism example. If we are to ultimately realize the **one true Reality** that pervades all names and forms, just as electricity pervades all gadgets, then we must only focus on one.

It doesn't mean that we can't sing bhajans, chant stotrams, or celebrate festivals of the other deities. It just means that our main altar of focus is our Iṣṭa Devatā, and as we grow in devotion, we will even begin to recognize our Iṣṭa Devatā in all other forms of Bhagavān and Bhagavatī.

Thoughts
Become Things
slides



Activity 10 min

Option 1: Drawing our Iṣṭa Devatā

Now that we have more of an understanding about who our Iṣṭa Devatās could be, draw your own Iṣṭa Devatā.

Option 2: Iṣṭa Devatā Worksheet

Let's get to know more about our Iṣṭa Devatā.

At this point, the teacher can hand each student an Iṣṭa Devatā worksheet. They can fill it in with their own understanding and then share with the class if they are comfortable.

Conclusion 5 min

Silent prayer: Encourage the students to sit silently, close their eyes and visualize their Iṣṭa Devatā for a few minutes.

Sample meditation:

Step 1: Sit straight, keeping the head, neck, and back in one straight line.

Step 2: Take a deep inhale and exhale (do a few rounds).

Step 3: Relax the body from the tips of the feet to the crown of the head.

Go through each part of the body: ankles, feet, legs, knees, thighs, hips, stomach, chest, lower back, upper back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, face, forehead, and crown of the head.

Step 4: Now bring your Iṣṭa Devatā to your mind and slowly feel Their presence and mentally bow down to the Lord of your heart.

Step 5: Stay silent for a few moments.

Step 6: Chant “Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ,” and gently open your eyes.

Sūtra:

Discover your
Iṣṭa Devatā

Sādhana: Create an altar or a separate space in your room to worship your Iṣṭa Devatā or make something this week that represents your Iṣṭa Devatā and share it in class next week (e.g., make vaḍā for Hanumān jī).

Conclude with closing prayers.



Iṣṭa Devatā
worksheet



Shades of Bhagavān

In this lesson students will explore the different aspects or shades that Bhagavān takes in our daily lives. Students will think through how their own Iṣṭa Devatās embody these different aspects and connect them to their personal lives.

9.18 



gatirbhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī
nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṁ suhṛt,
prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṁ
nidhānaṁ bījamavyayam.

I am the Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Shelter, the Friend, the Origin, the Dissolution, the Foundation, the Treasure-house, and the Seed Imperishable.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Colored pencils and other general art supplies

Printer paper

 **Poems**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 9.18.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “God: The Goal, The Way, The All-Fulfiller.”

Tapovan Maharaj. *Kailas Yatra*. 2013.

 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Bhagavad Gita Chapter 9 | Verse 18-19.”

 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Gītā Dhyānam - Verse 6.mp4”

Shades of Bhagavān

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Ask the class to share what they made for their Iṣṭa Devatā. After this, divide the class into groups of four.

Instructions: The teacher will give the whole class a letter such as A, B, C, etc. When they receive that letter, each group will have to fill in the following details starting with that letter. The first group to fill out all the information gets a point. You can do a few rounds to see who gets the most points.

- Name of form of Bhagavān/Bhagavatī: _____
- Name of any Hindu temple or āśrama: _____
- Name of a stotram or a few lines of a bhajan: _____
- Share a short story associated with the form of Bhagavān/Bhagavatī.

All the entries have to correspond to the chosen form of Bhagavān/Bhagavatī.



Example: Letter S

- **Name of form of Bhagavān:** Sarasvatī Devī
- **Name of any Hindu temple or āśrama:** Sandeepany Sadhanalaya
- **Name of a stotram or few lines of a bhajan:**

sarasvatī namastubhyaṁ varade kāmārūpiṇi,
vidyārambhaṁ kariṣyāmi siddhirbhavatu me sadā.

- **Share a short story associated with the form of Bhagavān:**

Here is the story of Vasanta Pañcamī: As the story of creation goes, Lord Brahmā (ordered by Lord Viṣṇu) created the world. As He looked around the world, it looked dull and lifeless; there were no words, no language, and no sound. There was no way for the beauty of the world to be expressed. So, He sprinkled some special water on the Earth. From the trees, a Divine power came with a vīṇā in both Her hands. The Divine power played the vīṇā and brought such magnificent life to the world. She gave vāk (speech) to all beings — the wind started to rustle, fire started to crackle, water started to splash, birds started to chirp. Before you knew it, everything had its own distinct sound. They even made music! She also bestowed an intellect on all. Therefore, this Goddess is worshipped as the giver of vāk (speech) and knowledge. Because of her, everything had a cosmic rhythm: the sun, moon, and stars.

Then Brahmā told Her that Her name was Sarasvatī and ordained that she should stay in three places: the tip of everybody's tongue (and dance especially on the tongues of learned people), on Earth in the form of a river, and in a third form as His consort. Goddess Sarasvatī agreed to this and thus came the origin of Sarasvatī Devī.

Introduction 10 min

In the last lesson, we talked about how we can find our Iṣṭa Devatās. Now that we have all chosen our Iṣṭa Devatās, let us think about how we can relate to them. In what ways do your Iṣṭa Devatās come to you? As an example, do they come as your friend? Mentor? Teacher? Protector?



Ask the students to take five minutes and think through the different aspects and ways their Iṣṭa Devatā shows up for them in their lives. They can write this in their notebooks.

As a class, discuss some of the ways Iṣṭa Devatās show up in the students' lives. Take note of some of the aspects that come up frequently among the students.

Main Lesson 25 min

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers this exact same question for Arjuna. Let us take a look at that verse in today's class.

gatirbhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī
nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṁ suhṛt,
prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṁ
nidhānaṁ bījamavyayam.

I am the Goal, the Supporter, the Lord,
the Witness, the Abode, the Shelter,
the Friend, the Origin, the Dissolution,
the Foundation, the Treasure-house,
and the Seed Imperishable.

9.18

Bhagavān lists twelve different aspects or shades of His expression in this verse.



As time permits, you can have the students identify the twelve aspects, so that they get familiar with reading and breaking up the Saṁskṛtam.

God: The Goal,
The Way, The
All-Fulfiller



Main Lesson

continued

1. gatiḥ: goal
2. bhartā: supporter
3. prabhuḥ: lord
4. sākṣī: witness
5. nivāsaḥ: abode
6. śaraṇam: shelter
7. suhṛt: friend
8. prabhavaḥ: origin
9. pralayaḥ: dissolution
10. sthānam: foundation
11. nidhānam: treasure-house
12. bījam avyayam: imperishable seed



We will focus on just a few of these aspects in class. For each of the aspects that we focus on, have the students first share their thoughts before going into the details and stories of each one. After sharing the content, have the students share how their own Iṣṭa Devatās show up in that manner.

Shade 1: Gatiḥ

Bhagavān says that He shows up as the Goal (or Gatiḥ).

Ask the students what they think this means.

Gatiḥ means that Bhagavān is the ultimate Goal of everything. That is, He is the Essence behind everything. Recall the lesson about Māyā and how our ultimate goal is to trace all the colors back through the prism to get to the single white light. That white light is a pointer to that ultimate Essence that Bhagavān alludes to here.

Story: The Eccentric Philosopher

Once, students ask their teacher (an eccentric philosopher) about the truth of life — the means to eternal happiness. She tells them that the truth — the means to eternal happiness can be found by going shopping. The students are surprised, but follow their teacher as they have full śraddhā (faith) in their teacher. She first takes them to a shoe store to look at sneakers. After some time, she says, no it's not here. Then she takes them to a bookstore. Once again, after some time, she says that it's not there either. Then, she takes them to a grocery store and the process repeats. The students begin to get tired and don't seem to understand what is going on. Eventually, she

goes to a furniture store and it is not there either. The students grow a bit impatient and frustrated and ask her what she is doing. She tells them this type of seeking is exactly what everyone is doing. Just as I was trying to find happiness in the shoe store, grocery store, and furniture store, everyone is trying to find happiness in this external world, where they will never find it!

The highest Truth only lies in Īśvara, who is the abode of happiness. Realize that this highest Truth does not exist in the world. It cannot be bought or sold. It is found only in Īśvara who is within you and me.

Debrief: In this story, our eccentric philosopher demonstrates to us a key lesson — the ultimate Goal is Īśvara alone, as He alone is the abode of happiness. How do we know this? Every time we walk closer to Īśvara, we feel more peaceful, at ease, and relaxed. Whenever we walk away, we feel disturbed. Recall the exercise with the fire.

Eternal happiness cannot be found in searching for it in the world. If we desire something, then we may temporarily fulfill one desire, only to realize we have uncovered so many more. For example, in high school, we desire to get into a good college. Towards the end of college, we desire to get a good job. While we are working, we desire to start a family and desire to raise our children with a certain set of values. These desires go on and on, and they never seem to satisfy us. The only way we can be satisfied or independently happy is to seek that one ultimate Goal, which is Īśvara.

Similarly, we should all see our Iṣṭa Devatās with that same lens — that they are the ultimate Goal. Let them guide us towards that ultimate Truth.



Discussion

Before moving to the next section, ask the students to share their own thoughts or stories about their Iṣṭa Devatā that help them see their Iṣṭa Devatā as the ultimate Goal or Gatiḥ.

It would be helpful for the teacher to briefly share their personal experiences in seeing their own Iṣṭa Devatā as Gatiḥ. This would help students relate better to this concept as well.



Activity

Give each student a sheet of paper and have them divide it into four sections (one for each of the shades discussed in the lesson plan). In one of the quadrants, have each student design an icon of what Bhagavān as the ultimate Goal means to them.

Main Lesson

continued

This activity must be performed with proper adult supervision to ensure everyone's safety.

Shade 2: Bhartā

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then says that he is the Bhartā or the Supporter.



Activity

Ask students to get into groups of three. They will take turns doing a trust fall into the arms of their two partners. Have the student close their eyes and fall backwards into the arms of their partners without bending their legs or putting out their arms.

Ask the students: Was there any fear that your classmates wouldn't catch you? Were you able to freely fall without bending your legs or putting out your hands?

When we have faith in Bhagavān, he will ALWAYS be there to support us.

Bhartā or Supporter means that Īśvara is the one that nourishes the whole world. He is the one who allows everything to exist and makes everything work. Think about all the colors from our prism analogy in the Māyā lesson. Without Īśvara, none of those colors would shine or glisten with beauty. Īśvara is the one who makes the sun shine and the rain pour. He creates every single food that we consume and allows our favorite snacks and meals to exist!

In a concrete sense, remember how we traced even the most modern technologies, like artificial intelligence (AI), to Īśvara. Truly, we can trace every single thing back to Īśvara. He is the one who supports it all.

God is the one who makes the brown cow eat green grass and produce white milk.

Swami Chinmayananda

Story: Swami Tapovan Mahārāja and the Thieves

Swami Tapovan Mahārāja was traveling on a yātrā towards Kailāsa. At one point, He and His companions saw someone coming towards them on horseback — it was a thief! The thief searched Swami Tapovan Mahārāja's pockets and looked at Swamiji's rudrākṣa mālā. Realizing that the travelers were sādhus, the thief looked at them with reverence. Swami Tapovan Mahārāja requested any food from the thief, even as little as some sattva flour. The thief gave them the little sattva flour he had and left them alone. This was sufficient to sustain the travelers for the night. The next day, they ran into another thief, who once again searched the travelers; however, upon realizing they were sādhus, he felt shame. Swami Tapovan Mahārāja then inquired about the distance to Manasarovar and the thief guided them.

Even in these thieves, Swami Tapovan Mahārāja saw the support of Bhagavān and expressed how much Bhagavān must love Him to come support Him in the form of a thief.

Tapovan Maharaj. Kailas Yatra. 2013. pp. 140-142

Debrief: Swami Tapovan Mahārāja saw the literal manifestation of Bhagavān in the thieves that came to Him. He saw them as the form of Bhagavān that came to support Him in His time of need. Not only does Īśvara support everything in the world around us, He also comes to support us literally in our times of need. We never know how or in what form He may appear, but Īśvara will always be our supporter and our guide on our spiritual journey.



Discussion

Split the class into small groups and have them discuss the following prompt: “Think of a time when you really needed support. What was the resolution of that? Did support come? In what form did it come to you? Now, looking back, can you see Bhagavān’s hand in that situation?”



Activity

On the same sheet of paper as earlier, in the second quadrant, have them draw another symbol of what the Support aspect of Bhagavān looks like to them.

Shade 3: Prabhu

Bhagavān continues saying that his next expression is Prabhu or the Lord. Prabhu is the one who makes the impossible possible.



Activity

Ask the students to close their eyes, clasp their hands, and reach up as far as they can. Ensure they keep their elbows straight. Ask them to hold it for three minutes. After three minutes, maintain the hold for thirty more seconds (you can tell the students you are extending the time). If they feel like they are about to give up, ask them to think of their Iṣṭa Devatā flowing through them, giving them the strength to keep going. After thirty seconds, extend again for another thirty seconds (time permitting).

You can modify the difficulty of the activity according to your class.

Main Lesson

continued

Debrief: When we show our sincere effort, the Lord helps us go from limited to limitless.

One of the best examples of this is the way that Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa helped the Pāṇḍavas in the Kurukshetra battle. Recall the following verse from the Gītā Dhyānam:

bhīṣma-droṇa-taṭā jayadratha-jalā gāndhāra-nīlotpalā
śalya-grāhavatī kṛpeṇa vahanī karṇena velākulā,
aśvatthāma-vikarṇa-ghora-makarā duryodhanāvartinī
sottīrṇā khalu pāṇḍavaī raṇanadī kaivartakaḥ keśavaḥ.

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 6

Have the students recall the meaning and point out all the dangers that the Pāṇḍavas faced. They should identify the following:

- Bhīṣma and Droṇa = banks of the river
- Jayadratha = the water of the river
- King of Gāndhāra (Śakuni) = the blue lotus
- Śalya = shark
- Kṛpa = current
- Karṇa = breaker wave
- Aśvatthāma and Vikarṇa = crocodiles
- Duryodhana = whirlpool

Don't tell God how big your problem is. Tell your problem how big your God is.

Unknown

Imagine once more the danger of the situation. Firstly, the Kaurava army is significantly larger: Eleven akṣauhiṇīs compared to a significantly smaller seven akṣauhiṇīs of the Pāṇḍava army. Beyond this, there were such incredible fighters on the side of the Kauravas as seen in the verse. The Pāṇḍavas were facing such absolutely perilous challenges. How would one even deal with such a situation? The only way the Pāṇḍavas crossed all these dangers and completed this seemingly impossible task was with Bhagavān's grace. They made Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa their helmsman (kaivartakaḥ keśavaḥ).



Further Reading

Please refer to Gītā Dhyānam - Verse 6 for more details on this verse of the Gītā Dhyānam.

In our lives, when we have so many seemingly difficult or impossible things happening, do not think you have to cross these alone. Just as Bhagavān took care of the Pāṇḍavas, He will take care of you too and will help you cross those challenges!

**Discussion**

Ask the students to share their stories of how their Iṣṭa Devatā came to them as Prabhu.

**Activity**

Now, in the third quadrant, have the students draw a symbol of what the Prabhu aspect of Bhagavān looks like to them.

Shade 4: Sākṣī

Finally, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa says that He appears as Sākṣī or the witness of all things. That is, Bhagavān knows and sees everything. He is always watching.

Ask the students why it is important that Bhagavān is always watching. What does that mean about the way that they should be?

In bhakti yoga or mārṅa, we realize that Bhagavān is everywhere. He sees, hears, and knows everything that we do. Even when we think we are alone, we are not alone. Often, when people think no one is around, they act in a different way. Some of their bad habits may emerge and express themselves. When we have this inner and outer dichotomy in our personality, it causes problems for us, and worst of all, Bhagavān knows. He has always known and He very much dislikes this split personality. So, it is very important that we work to cultivate the best qualities within ourselves at all times.

Story: The Woodcutter

During one class, a teacher gives each of her students a log of wood. She tells the students that they should go to a place where no one is around and chop the log in half. Whoever is able to do this successfully first is the winner. The first student takes the log and goes deep into the forest. He carefully looks around to make sure no one is around. He listens and hears no noise. Confident that no one is there, he chops the wood quickly and returns to the teacher. The second student walks far to a quiet clearing by a lake. Here, she also carefully looks to make sure that no one is around. There is no noise. Not even an animal is around. So, confidently, she too chops her wood and returns to the teacher. The third student walks everywhere. She checks in the woods. She checks by the lake. She checks in the fields. No matter where she goes, she cannot find a place to be alone. After a long time, she returns to the teacher with her log still in one piece. The teacher asks her where she has been and why she hasn't chopped her wood. She replies that she couldn't find

Main Lesson

continued

a single place where she was alone. No matter where she went, Bhagavān was always there. So, she was never able to chop the wood. Impressed, the teacher concludes to the other students how Bhagavān is always there. He is always watching and He is ever-present.

Debrief: Just as the students in our story learned, Bhagavān is everywhere. As such, remember that when we take an action, Bhagavān is watching. Bhagavān even knows our thoughts! Therefore, let your thoughts and actions be auspicious. Perform primarily sāttvika actions and act in a way that you tune into Bhagavān always.

Optional Story: Bhagavān Rāma and Hanumān

When Hanumān first meets Lord Rāma, he disguises himself as a Brāhmaṇa. Lord Rāma does not hug or embrace Hanumān. However, when Vibhīṣaṇa (the younger brother of Rāvaṇa) goes to Rāma as himself without any disguise and surrenders to him fully with his whole heart, then Rāma immediately accepts him.

Debrief: Bhagavān dislikes it when people pretend to be something they are not. He only wants us to see the Truth and wants us to be true and transparent. Here Lord Rāma shows us exactly how we should act in our day-to-day life. We should be honest in our words and actions. We should be true to who we are and act in full surrender to Bhagavān.

**Discussion**

Ask the students to share any stories of how their Iṣṭa Devatā acted as Sākṣī and how each of them acted as a result. Do you feel that your Iṣṭa Devatā is really watching you? Why or why not?

**Activity**

In the fourth quadrant, have the students draw a symbol of what the Sākṣī aspect of Bhagavān looks like to them.

Activity 10 min

In the main lesson today, we explored four (out of the many) aspects that Bhagavān expresses as in our world. Can we connect to these shades in our own relationships with Bhagavān? What does it look like when we have these connections? To see examples of this kind of bhakti, it is not enough to just think about these shades, one has to feel the love for Bhagavān too. What better way than to read the poems of great Mahātmās who had both jñāna and bhakti!

Have the students read the following poems for five minutes. They should then identify which Iṣṭa Devatā and shades of Bhagavān they see being expressed by the poets.

Afterwards, give the students pieces of paper to write a poetic message to their Iṣṭa Devatā, choosing one shade of Bhagavān as a lens to describe them. Give them five minutes to write their poems. Their poem should, at a minimum, be two stanzas. It can follow any poetic pattern and choose to include or not to include rhyme, meter, or any other poetic device. Afterwards, if any student wishes to share their poems, have them share.

Poems

**Poem 1**

The name of King Rām: think of it with love.
 It is provisions for those who journey empty-handed,
 and a friend for those who travel alone,
 It is blessedness for the unblessed,
 good character for those with none,
 A patron to purchase goods from the poor,
 and a benefactor to the abandoned.
 It is a good family for those without one,
 they say — and the scriptures agree —
 It is, to the crippled, hands and feet,
 and to the blind it is sight.
 It is parents to those who are destitute,
 solid ground to the ungrounded,
 A bridge to span the sea of existence,
 and the cause of the essence of joy.
 Rām's name has no equal — Rescuer of the Fallen:
 The thought of it makes fertile earth from Tulasī's barren soil.

Goswami Tulasīdās, Vinaya Patrikā 69.

(For teacher only) This is a poem to Śrī Rāma as the Bhartā.

Activity

continued

Poem 2

Janā goes to fetch water
 behind her runs Hṛṣikeśa.
 He doesn't let her hands and feet get wet,
 He carries the pot of water on his head.

He fills the jar with water,
 He spreads the cow dung on the floor,
 He washes and brings back the laundry,
 says Nāma's Janā.

Sant Janābāi, Sant Sāhitya. Abhaṅga 53.

(For teacher only) This is a poem to Viṭṭhala as the Bhartā.

Poem 3

Hari has fashioned an offering of lights
 Created in so utterly unusual a way
 that language can hardly give it a measure.
 A tortoise provides him with a throne unexcelled,
 while Śeṣa the snake makes a long, hooded handle
 For its vessel, Island Earth; the seven seas are the butter-oil;
 and the wick is as thick as a mountain.
 The sun and moon fill the world with their flame,
 vanquishing the darkness of night,
 And sparks fly up like stars, undarkened by a sky
 spread black with the collyrium of clouds.
 Śiva and Brahmā, Sanaka, Prajāpati
 and all the hosts of Gods and antigods and men —
 They rise and dance their dance of many parts,
 each in a rhythm of its own.
 The times, the deeds, the character
 of those who love the Lord
 are creatures of His wisdom and will,
 For Sūrdās' Lord has fashioned it all —
 substance and artifice —
 an offering unexcelled.

Sūrdās, Nagari Pracharini Sabha 371.

(For teacher only) This is a poem to Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Prabhu.

Poem 4

Oh the yogī —

My friend, that clever one

Whose mind is on Śiva and the snake,

That all knowing yogī — tell him this:

“I am not staying here, not staying where

the land’s grown strange without you, my dear,

But coming home, coming to where your place is;

Take me, guard me with your guardian mercy,
please.

I’ll take up your yogic garb — your prayer beads,
earrings,

begging-bowl skull,

tattered yogic cloth — I’ll take them all

And search through the world as a yogī does

with you — yogī and yoginī, side by side.”

“My loved one, the rains have come,

and you promised that when they did, you’d come too.

And now the days are gone: I’ve counted them

one by one on the folds of my fingers

till the lines on the joints have blurred

And my love has left me pale,

My youth grown yellow as with age.

Singing of Rām,

your servant Mīrā

has offered you an offering:

her body and mind.”

Sant Mīrābāī, Meera Bai (*Mystic Saints of India*: 7) by B.K. Caturvedi.

(For teacher only) This is a poem to Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Gatīḥ.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Have the students recall the four primary shades of Bhagavān that we covered in class today. Students are welcome to list other shades (including those from the introduction and those from the verse that we chose not to cover); however, ensure that the four that we discussed in detail are covered as these are important aspects of Īśvara.

Sūtra:

My Iṣṭa Devatā
is My _____

(Share this with the students. Then they can fill it out as they best see fit.)

Sādhana: Select one of the icons that you drew in class that you relate to most. Throughout the week, think about how your Iṣṭa Devatā shows up for you in that shade (based on the icon you selected). Keep your icon with you as much as possible during the week. Whenever you think of a situation when that shade of your Iṣṭa Devatā showed up, make note of it. Next class, you will have an opportunity to share your examples.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Secret of Surrender

This lesson is all about freeing oneself from worries through Divine surrender and truly realizing that whatever we need will be provided by Bhagavān.

9.22 



ananyāścintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate,
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham.

To those who worship Me alone,
thinking of no other, to those ever
self-controlled, I provide what
they need and preserve what they
already possess.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	Index cards for each student
10m	Introduction	Simple altar of Bhagavān in the classroom
20m	Main Lesson	Worry bowl (an offering bowl for their worries)
15m	Activity	
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 9.22.

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. “Lord’s Promise: ‘I shall take care of you.’”

Swami Tejomayananda. *Vision of the Bhagavad Geeta*. Chapter 1, The Universal Problem.

☞ Mary Stevenson. “Footprints in the Sand.”

Secret of Surrender

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Open the class by reviewing these four shades of Bhagavān and their meanings. This can be done through a short quiz or by reminding them of some of the images they drew last week.

1. Gatīḥ: ultimate Goal of everything
2. Bhartā: Supporter
3. Prabhu: Lord who makes the impossible possible
4. Sākṣī: Witness of all things

In what way did the students feel the presence of their Iṣṭa Devatās most throughout the past week? Was it Gatīḥ, Bhartā, Prabhu, or Sākṣī? Ask them to share a few instances with the class (if they are comfortable).



Additionally, if the class wasn't able to go through the poetry of the saints from last class, they can explore this in the beginning and discuss the sentiment of each poem.

Introduction 10 min

In this class, we are going to explore worry and how worshipping Bhagavān is the antidote to all worry!



Activity

Ask the students: Do you ever worry? If so, why do you worry? What do you worry about?

Give each student an index card and ask them to write their worries. They do not need to write their names. Tell them that it's private and no one will look at their worries, so they can freely write down everything that's on their minds. After this, they can flip their index cards over and put them away for the moment. The cards will be used again at the end of class.

To begin with, let us define worry.

Worry is a mental process of overthinking about the future in a way that makes one feel fear, anxiety, or stress.



Examples

Fear: When one is preparing for a public speaking presentation, they may tend to imagine all kinds of scenarios that may happen, like forgetting their lines, stuttering, or even people booing them off stage.

Anxiety: When one is preparing for an exam, they often fixate on what grade they are going to get. This makes them feel so anxious that they cannot concentrate on what they are studying and start to sweat and tremble. While taking the exam, they may even fail to answer the simplest questions.

Stress: When one is constantly thinking about college admissions, they fail to enjoy learning and living in the present. Their mind constantly dwells in the unknown future, and they become tense about it. It feels like a heavy burden they always carry.

Worry and stress are closely connected — worry is a mental process of overthinking potential problems, while stress is the body's response to perceived pressure or threats. Chronic worry can lead to prolonged stress, triggering physical symptoms like tension, fatigue, and other health issues.

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.

Corrie ten Boom

Main Lesson 20 min

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that actually, there are only two categories of things we worry about. They are called **yoga** and **kṣema**.

Yoga:
attaining something that we do not have

Kṣema:
securing what we already have

Lord's Promise: 'I shall take care of you.'



Main Lesson

continued

Yoga	Kṣema
Getting good grades	Maintaining the GPA by consistently attending class and studying
Making the varsity team	Maintaining our physical health by exercising and attending practice
Making new friends	Maintaining those relationships by spending quality time with them

Thus, yoga and kṣema are the main causes of our worries. They take up all of our time and energy because we keep thinking about acquiring something and then securing it, because we don't want to lose it. First, we work so hard to get good grades, and then we worry about maintaining our GPA. Or we work so hard getting into a sports team, and then we worry about staying fit and competitive. We put so much effort into making new friends, but then we worry about sustaining the relationships or someone else getting more attention than we receive. While these things might be reasonable to strive for, the striving never ends, and it never leads to fulfillment.

This seems never-ending. However, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa clearly promises that if we do the following three things, then we will NEVER have to worry about any kind of yoga and kṣema. He will take care of them as long as we put forth our best effort. This verse is very important as it is considered the heart of the Gītā. By just understanding and living this one verse, we can be completely free of worry.

Let's go through this verse in the Gītā:

ananyāścintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate,
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham.

To those who worship Me alone,
thinking of no other, to those ever
self-controlled, I provide what
they need and preserve what they
already possess.

9.22

Let's explore the three qualities that can make us free of worry. Each of these qualities is based on bringing Bhagavān closer to us and removing three fundamental differences of object, space, and time.

Quality 1

ananyāścintayanto mām:
to those whose **goal is Divinity**

Having Divinity as one's goal means tying whatever we are interested in pursuing to a selfless ideal. For example, we want to be an architect. How can we work in our profession in a way that it actually benefits the world at large? Remember, as we have learned, the world is nothing but the visible form of God. Recall **Karma Yoga Lesson 12: Acting with a Higher Vision. We don't have to necessarily change everything that we do; we just have to change the attitude with which we do it.** For example, we have a choice to be an architect who's in it for the money, name, and fame, or we can decide to be an architect who focuses on sustainability and respecting the environment, when designing a blueprint. Through this quality, we remove the notion that Bhagavān is something different from all beings. His expression is the entire world.

This first quality also helps to dispel fear. When we are working for a dhārmika cause, we will always be protected by dharma (dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ), and the truth alone wins (satyameva jayate). When we are working for a cause that is unjust or wrong, we feel fear and guilt in our hearts, and our mind is constantly thinking about getting caught.

In truth, the desires that we categorize as either yoga or kṣema are all inspired by fear. This is a fear of sorrow; a fear that we will be unhappy if we don't get what we want or keep what we currently have. By focusing on the Divine, we can begin to overcome this fear. We can instead start to be motivated by a desire for independent and permanent joy rather than out of fear of sorrow.

The universe is the visible body of God. So love of the universe and love of God are one.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

Quality 2

ye janāḥ paryupāsate:
to those who see **Bhagavān's hand everywhere**

Seeing Bhagavān's hand everywhere means the ability to recognize the inherent goodness in every situation. The ability to see a beautiful lesson unfold even in trying situations — like a flu that maybe forces us to slow down and gives us time to reflect deeper about ourselves, or not getting permission to go to a friend's party, which ends up giving us more time to finish our backlogged work. This will become clearer in an upcoming lesson plan (sthāne). Through this quality, we remove the notion that Bhagavān is in a different space. His hand permeates every situation in our lives!

Main Lesson

continued

The second quality also helps to dispel anxiety because we constantly see Bhagavān's hand in everything, even in failures and mishaps. When we fail to see Bhagavān's hand, we become very anxious and sometimes want to avoid the situation instead of facing it.

When we see God's grace in all things, we begin to be less insistent on the fulfillment of our desires. So what if we didn't get what we initially planned? We were given so much goodness by God anyway!

Quality 3

teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām:
to those ever connected to **Bhagavān**

This refers to those who are sincerely trying to live a divine life. It means trying to live a life of dharma — engaging in their duties, treating others as they would like to be treated, and doing their best in whatever is given to them. Through this quality, we remove the notion that Bhagavān is in a different time. Bhagavān manifests right within our hearts whenever we sincerely try to live the Divine life.

The third quality also helps to dispel stress. Stress is generally about the past or the future — wondering how things will turn out. However, part of living a divine life is staying present, so that we can always give our best selves in each moment we face.

If we really think about it, when do people worry most? It's when they do something wrong or avoid doing the right thing. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we are **afraid** of getting caught and are constantly worried about who will find out! We become **anxious** and tend to stutter or try to avoid speaking to certain people or going to certain places. We become **stressed** because of our own guilt. We carry a heavy burden on our shoulders. But when we do the right thing — when we sincerely try to live a divine life, we become free of worry because Bhagavān will always protect dharma no matter what.

At the heart of it all, we find that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given us what we really wanted all along. We thought we wanted more friends or a new game, but what we really wanted all along was to be happy! Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives us freedom from fears, anxieties, and stress, allowing us to be happy. All we have to do is develop the three qualities.

Qualities	Meaning	Differences	Expressions of Worry
ananyāścintayanto mām	Have a Divine Goal	Removes the notion that Bhagavān is different from the world	Removes fear because if we work for a dhārmika cause which benefits all, we will always be protected
ye janāḥ paryupāsate	See Bhagavān's hand everywhere	Removes the notion that Bhagavān is in a different space	Removes anxiety because even failure or a mishap can be Bhagavān's hand and eventually leads to our growth
teṣām nityābhiyuktānām	Sincerely live a divine life	Removes the notion that Bhagavān is attained in a different time — He manifests in one's own heart here and now.	Removes stress because a divine life means following the path of dharma and living in the present to be our best selves

To those who have these three qualities:

1. Divinity as the goal
2. Ability to see Bhagavān's hand everywhere
3. Ever connected to Bhagavān/living a divine life

Bhagavān says: I will carry your yoga and kṣema such that you will never have to worry for a day in your life! Let's see this in action.

Story 1: Arjuna Miśra's Trust

Arjuna Miśra was a great devotee and scholar. Every day, he went begging for alms. Arjuna Miśra's wife would prepare the food collected by her husband, offer it with love to their deity of Bhagavān, Śrī Gopīnātha, then they would partake of the food as prasāda.

Every day, Arjuna Miśra would spend time writing a commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā when he came across the verse:

ananyāścintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate,
teṣām nityābhiyuktānām
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham.

To those who worship Me alone,
thinking of no other, to those ever
self-controlled, I provide what
they need and preserve what they
already possess.

Main Lesson

continued

The verse literally says that Bhagavān carries (vahāmyaham) the needs of His devotees. He paused for a moment and thought, “Will Bhagavān, the Master of the whole universe, really carry the needs of his devotees?” He had a doubt about this statement. He took a red pen and scratched out vahāmyaham (“I carry”) and replaced it with dadāmyaham (“I give”), believing it to be more appropriate and realistic.

He later stepped out to beg alms for the day. At that time, a young boy appeared at his home carrying a heavy load of food and supplies. “Mother, Paṇḍitī (Arjuna Miśra) has sent these supplies. Please take them inside.”

She looked at the beautiful, young boy who brought all the supplies. She had never seen so much food in her life! But when she gazed at him, she noticed three red marks on his chest. When she asked who had hurt him, the boy replied that it was her husband who had struck him because he was late. Confused and dejected, she asked the young boy to stay while she prepared some food for him.

Meanwhile, Arjuna Miśra was unable to collect any alms. Losing all hope, he returned home and was surprised to see his wife cooking. “What are you cooking? How is it that you have some supplies?”

Now she was surprised, and said, “Well, you sent a six-month supply of food with that little boy. Why do you ask? And I never knew your heart was so hard like stone. How could you slash the tender body of that boy three times on His chest? Have you no mercy?” Arjuna Miśra was astonished and asked her to explain. She led him to the courtyard to meet the young boy, but he had disappeared!

She told him the entire story and when he heard everything, tears started rolling down his cheeks. He went to his room and returned to the verse of the Bhagavad-gītā, where he had scratched out vahāmyaham (“I carry”) and replaced it with dadāmyaham (“I give”) — those red marks were completely gone. It was the Lord Himself who came and carried all the food and supplies!

He turned to his wife and said, “My dear, you are so fortunate! Today you directly saw Śrī Gopīnātha! And He personally brought all these foodstuffs! How could I have possibly sent so much stock, just by begging?”

From then on, Arjuna Miśra continued to write his commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā with full faith that he and his wife would always be cared for by the Lord of the universe.

Debrief: The young boy who came to visit Arjuna Miśra and his wife was none other than Śrī Gopīnātha (Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa). The marks on Śrī Gopīnātha were the same marks that Arjuna Miśra had made on the Bhagavad-gītā verse. Bhagavān loved His devotee so much that He was willing to get hurt for His devotee. Beyond that, Bhagavān brought exactly what Arjuna Miśra and his wife needed (yoga) — supply of food! In coming and carrying (vahāmyaham) the needs of His devotee, Bhagavān also clarified all doubts that Arjuna Miśra had about the verse in the Gītā.

This story beautifully illustrates that Lord Kṛṣṇa doesn't just bless His devotees — He personally takes care of their needs when they surrender to Him with unwavering faith.

Takeaway:

Divine support works in mysterious ways when we surrender our worries.

Story 2: The Traveling Doctor

A man stepped out of his car and hurried into the airport. His plane was ready for takeoff, and he had to reach an important conference that had been organized especially for him.

He took his seat, and the plane soon left the ground. After a short while, the captain announced, “Due to a severe storm with heavy rain and lightning, our radio system is malfunctioning. We are forced to land at the nearest airport.”

The man got off the plane and angrily complained to the captain, saying how essential it was for him to reach the conference on time. Another passenger nearby recognized him and said, “Dr. Patnaik, the place you need to go can be reached by taxi in about three hours.” The doctor thanked him and hired a taxi.

However, the storm grew worse. Rain, wind, lightning, and poor visibility made it very hard for the driver to continue, but he kept going. After some time, the driver realized that they had lost their way. In the distance, they noticed a small house with a faint candlelight shining through the window.

Assuming someone there could help with directions, they stopped. The doctor got out of the car, walked up to the door, and knocked. A voice from inside called, “Whoever it is, come in. The door is open.”

Main Lesson

continued

Inside, an old woman was sitting and reading the Bhagavad-gītā. The doctor said, “Ma’am, with your permission, may I use your phone?” The old woman smiled gently and replied, “Son, what phone? There is no electricity here and no phone. But please sit down. I will bring you some fruit to eat, so you can regain some strength for your journey.”

The doctor thanked her and began to eat. The old woman returned to her chanting and prayers, absorbed in devotion. As he watched her, he noticed a small child wrapped in a blanket, whom the old woman occasionally checked on and gently adjusted.

When she paused in her chanting, the doctor said, “Mātā jī, your kindness has really touched me. Please pray for me as well. I hope your prayers are always answered.”

The old woman replied, “No, son, it is nothing like that. You are my guest, and serving a guest is like serving God. I have already prayed for you too. I thank God that He has answered almost all of my prayers. There is just one more prayer I keep asking for. When He wishes, He will grant that one as well.”

“What prayer is that?” the doctor asked.

Pointing to the child, the old woman said, “This two-year-old boy is my grandson. His parents are no longer alive, and he is my responsibility now. The doctors say he has a serious disease that very few can treat. They say only one doctor can perform the operation he needs.”

“What is the doctor’s name?” he asked.

She replied, “His name is Dr. Patnaik. Only he can help my grandson, but I have no way to reach him. I do not know if he would even have time for us. So I have been praying to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to make a way and remove these difficulties.”

Tears filled the doctor’s eyes. He said, “Mā... I am that Dr. Patnaik. Because of your prayer, the lightning in the sky, the failure of the plane, and the wrong turns on this road — all of it brought me here to you. O my Lord, I can’t believe how you answer the prayers of your devotees in such a way.”

Then Dr. Patnaik examined the child and began the treatment needed to cure him.

Debrief: We might think that these are just stories, but this happens to us every day. Here Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa gives us a spiritual insight — when we do our duties sincerely and keep our minds on Divinity, then He will surely take care of us. We NEVER have to worry — not even one moment because **yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham** — “I carry whatever you need and preserve what you possess” is His divine promise!

Q: What if we don’t have the three qualities? Does Bhagavān still take care of our yoga-kṣema?

A: Yes. There’s one difference though. Those who have the three qualities have full trust and surrender that Bhagavān is carrying their yoga-kṣema so they are free of worries. However, those who do not have these qualities, constantly doubt Bhagavān due to lack of faith. Hence, even if Bhagavān takes care of them, they still worry or do not recognize it as Bhagavān’s grace.

Pūjya Gurudev used to give this example of a man who was on a train with his suitcase. He bought one ticket for himself. Since he didn’t buy a ticket for his suitcase, he thought that he should carry the suitcase on his head! So, the entire train journey, he stood there carrying the suitcase on his head, while the other passengers also stood, resting their suitcases on the ground. He failed to recognize that either way, the train would move and carry everyone and their suitcases.



In this world, there are some intelligent people who rest their worries (suitcases) on the ground, knowing that they’ll be carried by the train of Bhagavān. However, there are many foolish ones who carry their worries on their heads even if ultimately, everything is really carried by Bhagavān.

Main Lesson

continued

There are only two departments in life: the “worry” department and the “worship” department. Our job lies in the “worship” department. Instead, if we constantly worry about the future, all of our energy is zapped; we become miserable imagining all kinds of outcomes, and we fail to enjoy the present moment. **Worst of all, when we are worrying, we are definitely not worshipping Bhagavān!** So who handles the worrying then? Bhagavān is in charge of the “worry” department! Whenever a worry arises, instead of trapping ourselves in those thoughts, we should hand them over to the head of the “worry” department — Bhagavān — and focus on our true job: worship. In fact, worrying is an insult to Bhagavān! The One who takes care of the entire world and ensures that the sun rises and sets, the planets revolve, the wind blows, water flows, and trees grow — will He not also take care of us? **When we worship and offer everything to the Higher, there’s no worry because the Lord promises that He will always protect His devotees. So throughout life, do our best in our department — the worship department.**

Activity 15 min

Yoga-kṣemaṁ Vahāmyaham Circle

At this point, the teacher should share their own personal story of when they felt **yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham** — the times when they felt they were carried by Bhagavān.

After this, give each student a sheet of paper and give them five minutes to write down their own **yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham** moments in silence. This can refer to any time in their lives where they felt carried by the arms of Bhagavān. After this, form a circle with the entire class and open it up for students to share their moments if they wish. After reading out or speaking about their moments, they should say the phrase “**yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham.**”

After the students have shared their moments, the teacher should ask the students to close their eyes and read out the poem “Footprints in the Sand” by Mary Stevenson and then pause for a moment in silence. After the silence, ask them to feel all of their worries being lifted from them and carried by Bhagavān.

One night I dreamed I was walking
along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed that
during the low periods of my life, when I was
suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord, “You promised me
Lord, that if I followed you,
you would walk with me always.
But I have noticed that during the most trying periods
of my life there have only been
one set of footprints in the sand.
Why, when I needed you most,
you have not been there for me?”

The Lord replied,
“The times when you have
seen only one set of footprints,
is when I carried you.”

Mary Stevenson, “Footprints in the Sand”

Conclusion 5 min

Act of Letting Go: After the poem and moment of silence, ask students to tear up their index cards of worry (from the “Introduction”). Ask them to drop the pieces of paper into the worry bowl in front of the altar, offer it to Bhagavān, and do namaskāraḥ. As they drop their worries, ask them to let go with ultimate surrender knowing that Bhagavān is always taking care of them no matter what.

Sūtra:

yoga-kṣemaṁ
vahāmyaham (YKV)

Sādhana: Every night, before going to bed, chant verse 9.22 of the Bhagavad-gītā and remember the meaning of yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham in your heart.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Secret of Worship

In this class, we will explore the meaning of sādhanā and how Śrī Kṛṣṇa illustrates the power of proper sādhanā through simple offerings, like leaves, flowers, fruits, and water.

9.26 



patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati,
tadahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ.

Whoever offers Me with devotion
a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water,
that I accept, offered by the
pure-minded with devotion.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
20m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Materials for a Pañcopacāra Pūjā for each student

-  **Photo of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda**
- Ārati Plate/Thālī
- Candan (Sandalwood) & Kumkum powder
- Akṣata (rice mixed with a little turmeric and drops of ghee)
- Flowers
- Lamp/dīyā (can be an electric tea-light)
- Incense Stick and Holder
- Naivedyam (e.g., fruits, nuts, raisins)
- Water to make the paste of candan and kumkum

 **Pūjā Vidhi**

 **Śodaṣopacāra Pūjā.pdf**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 9.26.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “How am I to Invoke Thee, O Lord?”

 Brnī. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Bhagavad Gita Chapter 9 | Verses 26-27.”

 Apni Sanskriti. “The Story of the Great King Rantideva.”

Secret of Worship

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Have the students chant verse 9.22 of the Bhagavad-gītā. They should have practiced this every day as part of their sādhanā from last week.

ananyāścintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate,
teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham.

To those who worship Me alone,
thinking of no other, to those ever
self-controlled, I provide what
they need and preserve what they
already possess.

9.22

Have the students recall the first three parts of the verse that define the qualities that help transform us into a bhakta who is free of worries. These are reproduced here for teacher reference.

1. ananyāścintayanto mām: to those whose goal is Divinity
2. ye janāḥ paryupāsate: to those who see Bhagavān's hand everywhere
3. teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām: to those ever connected to Bhagavān

Ask the students: What's it like to be carried by Bhagavān? Did they feel yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham this past week? How do we show our love to the One who has carried us throughout our lives?

Introduction 10 min



Examples

I buy my friends their favorite things every time I see them. I text or call my grandparents whenever I think of them. I offer Bhagavān something every morning.



Discussion

Ask the students to think of someone that they really care about and love. Maybe it's their grandparents, their sibling, or a best friend. Perhaps, it's their Iṣṭa Devatā! Now, give the students five minutes to reflect on the following:

If this is a person I truly love, then I am probably thinking of them often. How do I express this care and fondness to them?

Regroup together as a class and discuss some of the ideas that students came up with. If you have a board, feel free to list the items on the board, so students can see them.

Over the last few lessons, we have begun to understand and develop our relationship with our Iṣṭa Devatās. We have understood the many roles and shades that Īśvara can play. We understood how Īśvara carries what we need and secures what we possess, as long as they are helping us evolve to realize our true Nature.

Today, we continue to explore that question: what exactly can we do to strengthen our relationship with Īśvara? What can we do to keep our mind on Him always?

Main Lesson 20 min

What is sādhanā?



Discussion

Ask the class the following and write their responses on the board (if possible).

1. What do they think sādhanā means?
2. What are some examples they can think of?

Sādhanā is a regular spiritual practice that a seeker performs to grow closer to and strengthen their relationship with the ultimate Goal or Īśvara.

Often, we take this on as a daily discipline, like prayer, meditation, chanting, and pūjā. By doing each of these, we give ourselves at least a little bit of time in our day, where we wholly dedicate ourselves to Īśvara and remind ourselves of the Ultimate.

Connecting to the lesson plans: After every lesson thus far, we have taken on a sādhanā as homework to practice for the week. The reason for this is so we can make that lesson come alive for each one of us. The more time we spend reflecting on and practicing the concepts that we learn, the more we understand them and begin to live them naturally.

Why should we do sādhanā?

Understandably, a question may arise: Why should we do sādhanā? Does it really need to be daily?

Sādhanā is the most powerful tool we have to purify our mind. This purification of our minds is essential to connect to the Highest. Sādhanā helps cultivate purity, focus, and clarity of mind, which are essentials of a sāttvika mind.

Main Lesson

continued

So much of our days are spent in noise and chaos, so sādhanā acts as a grounding force for us to stay connected to what is true and to not get lost in the din around us. So it is important that we practice our sādhanās daily or as frequently as possible to keep us connected to Bhagavān. Very often, we feel that we pray, but our prayers remain unanswered — we only feel that way because we haven't really done our sādhanā. When we do sādhanā, it makes our minds silent and open to actually hear the answers. In silence, Bhagavān speaks.

What is pūjā?

Pūjā is a ritualistic form of worship which involves the body, speech, and mind. It is done to create a bhāva or emotional relationship with Bhagavān.

It's not enough to have an Iṣṭa Devatā; rather, one needs to actually cultivate a relationship with the Iṣṭa Devatā to feel that closeness. There are actually three ways to deepen our sādhanā to Bhagavān. They are pūjā, japa, and cintanam. These will be discussed in more detail in the coming lesson plans.

Imagine if someone were your acquaintance — you wouldn't really pour your heart out to them; rather, you might just exchange some pleasant greetings. This is like just bowing down in front of our altar or pūjā rooms as a formality — maybe because our parents told us to do so, but we don't really feel anything.

Maybe one day you offer something to that acquaintance — perhaps share your lunch or a piece of chocolate — and then the relationship becomes a bit closer. This is like **pūjā** — the offering of leaves, flowers, fruits, water, etc., as a sign of love.

Next, you slowly begin to converse and exchange messages and emails. This is just like **japa** — chanting the Divine name.

Then finally, that very person becomes the subject of your thoughts. You often think about them with love, pray for their well-being, and long to enjoy their company. This is like **cintanam** — constantly dwelling on Divinity.

Thus, among these sādhanās, pūjā is the first step to really start building a relationship with Bhagavān. Many times the feeling isn't there yet. We might do something just because someone told us to do so, but if we want to really start feeling something, then pūjā is an excellent method. **Emotions get strengthened through offerings.** That's why when we visit someone's home,

perhaps someone we don't know, we normally bring a small token just to build that relationship — it could be flowers, food, or even prasāda that we received from a temple or pilgrimage.

As we start doing pūjā, a relationship with Bhagavān forms, which can manifest in many different ways. Some regard the Lord as their own child, which is called **vātsalya bhāva**, as seen in mother Yaśodā. Those devotees who regard themselves as servants to their Lord exemplify **dāsyā bhāva**, as seen in Hanumān. Other devotees see the Lord as their very own friend, and this is known as **sakhya bhāva**, as seen in Sudāmā. Devotees like Mīrābāī, who see the Lord as their beloved, express **mādhurya bhāva**. The purpose of these relationships is to develop a bond with the Lord and keep the Lord as the supreme Goal of life. This helps the devotees offer everything as worship to the Lord, be it eating, speaking, walking, studying, or working. Eventually, the minds of the devotees dissolve into the very Lord they worship, thus realizing the union with the Divine.

Does sādhanā need to be complicated?

We might have visited the temple and seen intricate pūjās being done with many offerings for a long period of time. We may have listened to chants in Saṁskṛtam, but didn't really understand the meaning. Maybe we couldn't connect at all. There's a place and time for these kinds of pūjās, but the beauty is that pūjā can also be done in a very simple way.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Guidance

Now, let us look at what Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said in today's verse.

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyarṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati, tadahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ.	Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, that I accept, offered by the pure-minded with devotion.
--	---

9.26

In this verse, Bhagavān explains a very simple form of pūjā that we can take on as a sādhanā. He shows that it does not need to be so complicated or intricate and can be as simple as just offering a few basic items, like the four listed.

Further, Bhagavān makes it clear that it is not about how fancy an item is or how big of a show you put on in doing your sādhanā. None of that matters to Him. **The only thing that matters is the quality of the action. That is, it must**

Main Lesson

continued



How am I to
Invoke Thee, O
Lord?



be done with: (1) a pure mind and (2) filled with devotion. Therefore, any sādhanā we do or any offering we make, we must make sure our mind is fully focused on the glory of Bhagavān and filled with love and devotion for Him.



Discussion

Ask the students: Do any of them do any type of pūjā or offerings in their homes? If so, what kind of things do they offer? The teacher can also share stories and details from their own homes.

In this verse, Bhagavān lists four specific types of offerings: leaves, flowers, fruits, and water. Each of these has beautiful stories associated with them. We will now explore some of the stories of Bhagavān’s devotees in relation to these items.



Choose one or two stories to share in class. The remaining time will be used for a pañcopacāra pūjā.

Patram (Leaf)

Story: Rukmiṇī Devī and Satyabhāmā Devī

Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā were the prime consorts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Rukmiṇī was very devoted, dedicated, and humble. Satyabhāmā, on the other hand, was very proud of her beauty, wealth, and royal lineage. Yet, she was unhappy because she thought Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not giving her enough attention.

R̥ṣi Nārada happened to visit Dwarka once, and she complained to him about Śrī Kṛṣṇa and sought his help to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s undivided attention all to herself. Nārada devised a plan to teach her a lesson. He told her to give away Kṛṣṇa as “dāna” (gift) to a brāhmaṇa. Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would become his property. Afterwards, she could pay a fat price and purchase Śrī Kṛṣṇa back. Then He would become her property exclusively. Satyabhāmā readily and happily agreed to this. Nārada warned her to check whether she had sufficient “wealth” to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa back. Otherwise, the Lord would become the brāhmaṇa’s property! She very confidently told Nārada not to worry.

R̥ṣi Nārada came up with a plan: they would set up a balance scale with Śrī Kṛṣṇa on one side. If Satyabhāmā could make all her wealth outweigh Śrī Kṛṣṇa, she could get her dear Śrī Kṛṣṇa back. First, Satyabhāmā went and piled all her gold, gems, jewels, and treasures on the scale. The scale did not move at all. She even added the ornaments and treasures of the

other queens; however, the scale still did not move. Dejected, she yielded to Rukmiṇī's turn. Rukmiṇī, knowing that there is no material item that can outweigh Bhagavān, placed a single leaf (patram) on the scale, and immediately the side of the weighing scale with Śrī Kṛṣṇa went up, and the side with the leaf went down. A single tulasī leaf had outweighed Śrī Kṛṣṇa!

Debrief: How was this possible? Rukmiṇī placed that leaf with her utmost love and devotion. She had prayed to Bhagavān and offered it with full surrender. It is only something offered with such love that can move Bhagavān.

Similarly, for each of us, when we offer something to Bhagavān, let it be from this place of love and devotion. Then, even something as small as a leaf can be so powerful!

Puṣpam (Flower)

Story: Gajendra

Gajendra was the king of a herd of elephants. One very hot day, Gajendra led the herd to a nearby lake to cool down and pluck some flowers. As Gajendra was in the water, a crocodile grabbed his leg and caused excruciating pain. The elephant, being a land animal, has less strength in water. Gajendra struggled mightily against the crocodile. Gajendra thought that he could win against the crocodile, but the battle went on for a long time. All his companions tried together to pull him away, but they too failed. Finally, Gajendra's strength started to wane. When his energy was almost spent, he realized that it was futile for a jīva to seek help from another jīva. He turned his attention towards Īśvara. "The omnipotent Lord alone can save me. No one else has the power to do so. I should take refuge in the Lord alone." He plucked a lotus from the water and with his full devotion offered it to Bhagavān asking for help. Bhagavān Viṣṇu came immediately to his bhakta and saved Gajendra from the crocodile.

Debrief: Once more, here we see the power of devotion when offered with full surrender and love.

Story: Arjuna and Bhīma

There are some devotees who want to show off. They may meditate or chant for hours and look down on those who do not spend as much time in sādhanā. Arjuna happened to be one of these devotees. Every day, Arjuna needed to pray to as many Gods as possible. He would sit for at least two hours and offer one thousand flowers to Bhagavān Śiva for each of His names.

Main Lesson

continued

In contrast, Arjuna's brother Bhīma seemed like all he would do was eat and fight. However, before eating, Bhīma would sit quietly with his fingers on his forehead and concentrate for a couple of minutes before each meal and then eat voraciously. These few minutes were his meditation. Over time, Arjuna developed some pride based on his more "impressive" form of worship. Lord Kṛṣṇa sensed this and took Arjuna on a walk. On the walk, they met a person pulling a cart full of flowers. As Arjuna tried to talk to the cart puller, he said that he was extremely busy and solely focused on gathering flowers. The cart puller said he could only talk to one person on earth: Bhīma, as Bhīma was the greatest spiritual seeker. In those few minutes when Bhīma meditated, his concentration was most intense and his meditation most sincere. In fact, in that time, Bhīma was able to offer thousands of flowers to Lord Śiva. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explained to Arjuna that it is not about the number of hours or the number of flowers; it is about the power of dedication that counts.

Debrief: Arjuna finally realizes. It is not about the show of the offering that he makes. It is about the quality and intensity of the devotion. Even though Arjuna was offering so many flowers, he was not doing it with the intensity and focus that Bhīma was doing his sādhanā. Similarly, for us, it is not about the quantity or the showiness of our sādhanā, but rather the quality and intensity with which we connect to Bhagavān.

Phalam (Fruit)**Story: Śabarī Devī and Lord Rāma**

Every day, Śabarī would leave the āśrama and pluck berries for Lord Rāma. She would pluck one, taste it, and if it was sweet, she would put it in her basket. If it was bitter, she would discard it to the side. She wanted to only give the best berries to Lord Rāma. She did not know that the berries should not be tasted; she was merely acting from her purest devotion. Then, she would return to the āśrama and sit silently and wait eagerly for Lord Rāma's arrival. She carried out this practice and waited for many years. Even though there were many others waiting for Him, Lord Rāma went directly to Śabarī's hut. Overjoyed, Śabarī offered the berries she had collected for Him. Lord Rāma tasted the berries. Lakṣmaṇa, who was with Him, noted the berries had already been tasted and were therefore impure and unfit for Lord Rāma to consume. Rāma told Lakṣmaṇa that he was not tasting the berries for their physical sweetness, but rather the loving devotion with which they were plucked, selected, and offered to Him.

Debrief: This story is a beautiful embodiment of the verse we are exploring today. Lord Rāma shows us that when even a half-eaten fruit is offered with unwavering devotion, He will accept it from His devotee with utmost love and joy.

Story: Vidurānī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa

One time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was visiting Hastinapur. Duryodhana had prepared a huge feast for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa instead chose to go eat at the humble home of his devotees — Vidura and Vidurānī. Hearing this, Vidura rushed to buy items to make a nice meal for Bhagavān. Vidurānī spent her time planning everything she was going to make. She wanted it to be perfect for Bhagavān. At the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's arrival, Vidura was still gathering groceries. Vidurānī opened the door and was stunned as she didn't have any food to serve Him. She found some bananas in the kitchen and offered them to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. She took the bananas and one by one, she peeled them and fed them to Bhagavān. She was in such a trance out of her devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, that she didn't realize that she was feeding Him the peel and throwing away the banana! When Vidura arrived home, he noticed and was shocked and said, "Vidurānī, what are you doing?" Śrī Kṛṣṇa didn't say anything at first, then responded that He loved the taste of the peel since it was offered with the love of a devotee.

Debrief: Bhagavān is even willing to eat the peel of a fruit if it is offered with true love and devotion. This once more emphasizes the importance of the devotional aspect of our offerings and our sādhanā.

Toyam (Water)

Story: King Rantideva

King Rantideva loved Lord Viṣṇu and he was always worshiping the Lord. He saw Viṣṇu in everyone and everywhere. As a form of worship, he took care of all the people of his kingdom with great love. He was always ready to provide whatever was needed. One season, there was a large disaster. Unseasonable rains and winds destroyed many crops and caused lots of danger. When people came to him asking for help, the king generously distributed his wealth to the people and prayed to Lord Viṣṇu to bless him with strength to protect them. The condition worsened, leading to a horrible famine as all the crops had been destroyed. People starved and were homeless. Even Rantideva himself did not have any food. Whenever Rantideva did get some food, he distributed it to those in need. As the days passed, he maintained his strong faith in Lord Viṣṇu and prayed to Him with devotion.

Main Lesson

continued

One day, Rantideva was offered food by a passerby. Soon thereafter, a poor, hungry person came seeking food. The king received him, gave him food, and bade him goodbye. As soon as he left, another person came asking for food. For this person too, Rantideva offered some food. Soon, a man came with his dogs. Rantideva offered the man and his dogs the remaining food. Now, all Rantideva had left was water. As he was about to drink the water, another man came by and asked the king for some water as his throat was completely parched. Without hesitation, Rantideva gave the water to the man. Rantideva prayed to the Lord to give him strength to continue serving his people. As soon as the man drank the water, Lord Viṣṇu and his attendants arrived. Lord Viṣṇu conveyed that He was very pleased with Rantideva's devotion to his people and offered to give Rantideva back all the wealth and riches if he continued to worship the Lord. Instead, Rantideva told him that he was done with worldly pleasures and wanted to be fully absorbed in Lord Viṣṇu. Over time, Rantideva attained mokṣa.

Apni Sanskriti. "The Story of the Great King Rantideva."

Debrief: King Rantideva saw Bhagavān in everyone. Even when he only had water left, he was ready to offer that to Bhagavān. This action of his pleased Lord Viṣṇu as it was the action coming from a place of true devotion and love for the Higher. No matter how simple and how dire the situation, Bhagavān is grateful to devotees who offer anything with full surrender and devotion.

All of the stories we discussed today show the power of devotion. Even the simplest of items is worth so much to Bhagavān when given with true love and devotion from His devotee.

How do I find a sādhanā for myself?

In fact, what Bhagavān has detailed in today's verse is a very simple form of pūjā that we can all do every day as our sādhanā. Bhagavān is showing how even the simplest things can help bring out the greatest devotion and help us connect to the Higher.

**Discussion**

As a class, brainstorm examples of sādhanās. Allow the students to share their ideas from what they've seen in the Mission as well as in their homes, temples, or other settings. Write their answers on the board.

If students are stuck, ask them to imagine the smallest, most impactful gift or act they could offer their loved ones, such as making a cup of tea for their mom every day. Use this to help connect to ideas for offerings to Bhagavān.

Additionally, the teacher is welcome to supplement with examples.

Questions

1. Which of these sādhanās do I relate to the most? There can be multiple!
2. How can I make this simple enough that I can practice this daily (or as often as possible)?
3. Which part of my day can I add my sādhanā to? Can I do it right when I wake up? After I shower? In the evening after school?

Examples

Japa, meditation, daily prayer, chanting, listening to or singing bhajans, pūjā, playing music for Bhagavān, studying texts, practicing the values and lessons we learn in Bala Vihar, fasting or taking vows (vratas).

Activity 15 min

Pañcopacāra Pūjā

Today we learned that even four simple offerings done with utmost devotion are enough to thrill Bhagavān. Now, as a class, we will do a slightly different, but equally simple form of pūjā. This will be similar to some of the pūjās you may see in temples or your homes.

We will be doing a **Guru Pādukā Pūjā to our Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda**, as it is only Guru who can connect us to Bhagavān.

This is called **pañcopacāra pūjā (pañca = five and upacāra = items or services)**.

This worship consists of offering five types of upacāras (items or services) to the deity or Guru, usually consisting of sandalwood, flowers, incense, a lamp, and naivedyam (food). The basic idea is that these items are related to the five senses, and so by performing the ritual worship, one is engaging and utilizing all of their senses in service of the Divine. In a deeper sense, pañcopacāra pūjā is offering not only the sādhanā's own senses, but the elements of creation in the form of pañcamahābhūtas back to the deity — a deeply moving and devotional contemplation that is widely taught across lineages and traditions.

Activity

continued

	Offering	Saṁskṛtam Name	Item	Element/Sense Relation
1	Fragrance	Gandhaḥ	Candan, Kumkum	Earth (Smell) — We can smell the fragrance of candan and kumkum.
2	Flower	Puṣpam	Fresh flowers	Space (Sound) — Flowers fill the altar with beauty without adding bulk or weight, symbolizing how space pervades everything, but does not obstruct.
3	Incense	Dhūpaḥ	Burning incense stick	Air (Touch) — The smoke from the incense stick swirls in the air and purifies the air we breathe.
4	Lamp	Dīpaḥ	Ghee or oil lamp	Fire (Sight) — Fire illumines the deity, so we can see the deity clearly.
5	Food	Naivedyam	Fruit, sweets, cooked food	Water (Taste) — Food is offered to the deity to quench their hunger and thirst and is later eaten as prasāda.



Pūjā Vidhi



Pūjya Gurudev Picture



Teachers should prepare either a classroom altar or individual small plates with all the offerings as detailed in the Pūjā Vidhi. Conduct the pūjā as detailed in the vidhi.

Ensure that the “Symbolism of Guru” and “Why do we perform puja?” sections from the document are discussed with the class.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Have the class recall eight things they learned in class today. Ensure that they cover the following topics:

- What is the meaning of sādhanā? Why do we do sādhanā?
- What are some examples of sādhanā?
- What are the four items Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa says are enough to satisfy Him?
- What are the two important mental qualities that Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa says are important in making offerings?

Sūtra:

The best offering
is LOVE

Sādhanā: Every day this week before going to school, offer something with love to your Iṣṭa Devatā. This can be a leaf, flower, fruit, water, or all the dravya/ materials from the pañcopacāra pūjā. Whatever you offer, make sure it is done with the utmost love and devotion.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Addendum

Śodaṣopacāra Pūjā

For those who are interested in a full 16-step puja, please see the information and steps presented on pages 3 to 11 of the following excerpt taken from the Bala Vihar Teacher's Handbook: P.O. Box Mr. God. See Śodaṣopacāra Pūjā.

Śodaṣopacāra
Pūjā

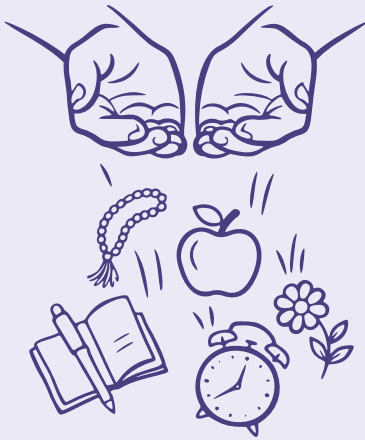




Everything is Worship

In this lesson, Śrī Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna and us to dedicate every action to Him as an offering of worship. Through this, we are able to imagine what living in total prayer looks like and work towards building our own lives to resemble that.

9.27 



yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi
yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat,
yattapasyasi kaunteya
tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam.

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in charity, whatever you practice as austerity, O Kaunteya, do it as an offering to Me.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
30m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Slips of paper with prayers for possessions (See “Pray for Purity not Possessions” in the main lesson)
2 sheets of origami paper per student
2 sticky notes per student
Wall surfaces where students can post notes

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 9.27.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “What can I Offer the Lord who is in my heart?”

🔗 Dr. R Balasubramaniam. “Swami Vivekananda and the Rockefeller Foundation.”

Everything is Worship

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Ask the students to identify the four examples of offerings Lord Kṛṣṇa says he will accept, when offered with pure-minded devotion.

- Patram: Leaf
- Puṣpam: Flower
- Phalam: Fruit
- Toyam: Water

Ask the students what sādhanā is and what sādhanās they decided upon over the last week. Ask how successful they have been in following them.

Introduction 5 min

In the last verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains to Prince Arjuna that the size or scale of a devotee's offering is immaterial; what truly matters is the devotion with which the offerings are made. Additionally, **sādhanā was defined as a regular spiritual practice that a seeker performs to grow closer to and strengthen their relationship with the ultimate Goal or Īśvara.**

It is incredibly important that we start by building a regular habit that allows us to grow closer and build our relationship with God. But what comes next? We need to learn to transform our entire lives into an expression of devotion. We may start with a fixed practice of devotion like pūjā or chanting, but what we really need to aim for is a life of devotion — not just a practice of sādhanā, but a life of sādhanā.

Main Lesson 30 min

To live a life of devotion, we must offer every action we perform, large or small, to the Lord. Make no mistake — this is incredibly difficult! Even the strongest devotees can struggle to remember the Lord when focusing on their daily duties and responsibilities! The following is the story of the time when Ṛṣi Nārada, the most famous devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, himself faced this struggle!

Story: Ṛṣi Nārada

Once, Ṛṣi Nārada — constantly playing on his divine vīṇā and singing the Lord's name — went to Vaikuṇṭha (home of Lord Viṣṇu) and asked Lord Viṣṇu who His greatest devotee was. Ṛṣi Nārada felt certain that the Lord would

choose him, as he constantly chanted the Lord's name while wandering the cosmos and meeting all types of people.

The Lord pointed out a farmer in one of the remotest villages in India and said that he was His greatest devotee. The Sage was shocked. How could he who was constantly and ceaselessly remembering the Lord not be His greatest devotee?

Seeing His devotee's confusion, the Lord told Ṛṣi Nārada to go to the village and observe the farmer's faith for himself. Following this guidance, Ṛṣi Nārada visited Earth and quietly, unnoticed by anyone, stayed very close to the farmer's humble and simple hut to watch his daily habits. Early in the morning, the farmer woke up with Lord Nārāyaṇa's name on his lips. Next, he went about his daily routine, which included working in the field under the scorching sun along with other farmers. He worked till late in the evening. At dusk, he returned home, washed up, spent time with his wife and children, and had his simple meal. Tired and exhausted, he fell asleep with Lord Nārāyaṇa's name on his lips.

In a day, the farmer seemed to remember the Lord only twice! Ṛṣi Nārada was puzzled. So, he spent a couple more days observing the farmer. The routine was the same every day. Ṛṣi Nārada was quite annoyed that the Lord would even consider this farmer, who remembered the Lord only TWICE a day, as His greatest devotee. He went straight to Vaikuṇṭha and narrated all that had happened with the farmer.

The Lord smiled and told Ṛṣi Nārada that He would explain, but first He wanted Ṛṣi Nārada to accomplish a task for Him. The Lord gave Ṛṣi Nārada a pot filled to the brim with oil and asked him to walk around Vaikuṇṭha with it balanced on his head, taking care not to spill even a drop of oil. Ṛṣi Nārada was confused but followed the Lord's instructions.

Ṛṣi Nārada put down his vīṇā, nervously picked up the pot of oil, placed it on his head and started walking slowly. The pot of oil was filled to the very top and even a slight mistake in movement would cause the oil to spill out. Carefully balancing the pot of oil on his head, Ṛṣi Nārada stepped forward cautiously, went around Vaikuṇṭha and came back. He took each step with complete focus on the task at hand. He was beaming with happiness as he had not spilt even a single drop of oil. He had been able to carry out the Lord's instructions perfectly!

Lord Nārāyaṇa asked Ṛṣi Nārada how many times he had remembered the Lord during his trip around Vaikuṇṭha. Ṛṣi Nārada was surprised and told

Main Lesson

continued

It is prayer
that brings the
reviving rains
of joy and
transforms the
dreary wasteland
of our hearts
into a perfumed
garden of bliss.

Swami
Chinmayananda

the Lord that he had not had the chance to remember Him even once, as he had been fully focused on the task at hand. How could he remember the Lord when all his attention was in balancing the pot of oil on his head?

The Lord smiled and told Ṛṣi Nārada that all he had to do was go around Vaikuṇṭha with a pot full of oil on his head once, and yet he had forgotten the Lord, even during that short interval of time. And here was this farmer, working day in and day out with that same complete focus, shouldering all the responsibilities and problems of his family and work, and yet he never forgot to take the Lord Nārāyaṇa's name twice a day — once in the morning and once at night. In fact, throughout the day, Lord Viṣṇu never left the farmer's thoughts! In this manner, the entire day of hard work the farmer performed had been dedicated to the Lord! Hence according to the Lord, the farmer's devotion was superior to that of Ṛṣi Nārada's.

Ṛṣi Nārada immediately understood that this was the Lord's unique way of destroying his ego. Completely humbled, Nārada prostrated to the Lord, sought His forgiveness, prayed to the Lord to grant him total and unconditional devotion, picked up his vīṇā and with “Nārāyaṇa” on his lips left Vaikuṇṭha with a sense of total happiness and inexplicable bliss.

Debrief: The story illustrates the difficulty of the task ahead of us. If Ṛṣi Nārada found it hard to remember the Lord while focusing on his task, we too will find that dedicating every action to the Lord will not be so easy. So how did the farmer do it? How can we do it? Let us break this down into more practical steps.

In today's verse, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi
yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat,
yattapasyasi kaunteya
tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam.

Whatever you do, whatever you
eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice,
whatever you give in charity,
whatever you practice as austerity, O
Kaunteya, do it as an offering to Me.

9.27

With the following five examples, Śrī Kṛṣṇa lays out the path to developing a life of devotion.



What can I
Offer the Lord
who is in my
heart?



1. Act for Totality not for Thirst: *yatkaroṣi*

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the phrase, “whatever you do,” we may think that performing religious or spiritual acts is the only way to worship Bhagavān — only when we visit a temple, pray, chant some śloka, then we worship Bhagavān, but actually that is not the case. “Whatever you do” literally means every single action can be an offering to Bhagavān as long as the intention is pure.

All actions start from intentions. When our intentions are pure, then our actions reflect that same purity. But when our intentions are impure, our actions become selfish.

A pure action is born from a selfless intention — one that always thinks of and envisions for the benefit of totality. Anytime we act with such an intention, that action is a worship unto the Divine.



Self-Reflection

How do you feel if someone befriended you just because they wanted your help getting good grades? How would you feel if someone befriended you because they genuinely cared about you? In both cases “befriending” is common but the intentions are different. When someone connects with us for a personal or selfish intention, we feel as though we are being used. However, when someone connects with us because they genuinely care, then we feel cared for and loved.

In the same way, in this particular verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is asking us to act for totality and not out of thirst. Meaning, act from a place of love and care, seeing and understanding that the other is an expression of Bhagavān.

Acting for totality: Really thinking about everyone involved in the action and aspiring to create harmony with them or help them evolve in some way.

Acting from thirst: Solely thinking about our own “thirsts” or selfish desires.

Main Lesson

continued



Example

Waking up late is something that is quite tempting and feels good at the moment. However, as we mature, we recognize that waking up late is a selfish act that doesn’t really benefit anyone. Everyone around the house gets stressed and has to rush for our sake. On the other hand, waking up on time is acting for totality, because it gives us enough time to get ready, have a full breakfast, and keep everyone calm in the household.

- Acting for totality (offering): Being selfless is not always easy, but after a while, we feel a sense of peace within ourselves and harmony with others.
- Acting from thirst (suffering): Initially being selfish might appear to feel good, but after a while, we either feel guilty or regret what we have done. We also hurt others in the process. We are never satisfied with the outcome.

Let’s reflect on these prompts and see what it looks like to act out of thirst versus totality.



The teacher should only provide the first column. The students should fill out the other two columns.

Action	Suffering (Impure Intention)	Offering (Pure Intention)
Playing a sport	Playing to score the most points	Playing as team
Doing household chores	Doing chores to get brownie points or a reward from parents	Doing chores to genuinely help around the house
Helping a friend	Helping a friend to get something back from them	Helping a friend because one genuinely cares

Debrief: What we will begin to notice is that even “good” actions may have “impure” intentions. Therefore, even if actions seem like they are pure (like helping a friend), they are inherently not, if the actions are done for a selfish gain. The intention is the most important part of the action.

The farmer in the story worked from a place of pure intention. He worked hard every day, not thinking of himself, but doing his duty diligently as worship to the Lord. This allowed him to work tirelessly for his family! In contrast, Ṛṣi Nārada worked to claim the title of greatest devotee for his own ego, and that meant he could not work for anyone other than himself.

2. Eat for Sustenance not for Satisfaction: yadaśnāsi

How can eating be turned into an offering of worship?

Eating for sustenance: Eating to sustain our body so we can perform our duties to the best of our abilities.

Eating for satisfaction: Eating purely for enjoyment without thinking about how food will affect our bodies.

Eating a really heavy meal right before a test might make us feel bloated, tired, and sleepy. Our minds may start to focus on the discomfort in our stomach instead of the test! As a result, we may not do our best. This is eating for satisfaction. Instead, eating a meal that is light and wholesome will give us the energy required to take our test without feeling sleepy. This is eating for sustenance.

Sometimes people eat less to maintain a slim body out of societal pressure or to please others. This can also lead to eating disorders which are contrary to having good health. This is not considered an offering to Bhagavān because it makes our system weaker and unable to perform our duties well.

- Eating for sustenance: offering
- Eating for satisfaction: suffering

Let’s reflect on these prompts and see how we might eat in these situations:



The teacher should only provide the first column. The students should fill out the other two columns.

Main Lesson

continued

Situation	Suffering	Offering
Competing in a five mile race	Eating junk food and feeling heavy	Eating nutritious food and feeling energetic
Taking an SAT exam	Eating heavy and feeling bloated and sleepy	Eating light, wholesome food and being alert
Going for a long car drive	Eating heavy and then feeling nauseous on the road	Eating light to avoid feeling nauseous

Debrief: It is common knowledge that what we eat affects our performance. If we decide to fill our stomachs with junk food and too many sugary treats, we can start to feel bloated and sick, making us unfit for the task at hand. If we eat too much, we often feel sleepy and tired. Conversely, when we eat food that is nutritious and suitable to our body types, then we are energized to do the work before us efficiently. **When we eat for sustenance, it helps us do our duties in the best way possible. This is an offering of worship.**

Consider the farmer from the story, who has dedicated his entire life to Lord Viṣṇu. He loves the Lord so deeply that he wants to do his very best for Him. Out of this love, he wants to farm as well as he possibly can and be the best father and husband to his wife and kids. How should he prepare himself? He should eat healthily and properly so he has sufficient energy to put forth his best effort.

3. Pray for Purity not Possessions: yajjuhoṣi

Next, we look at the phrase “whatever you offer in sacrifice.” Sacrifice in this context means the rituals and prayers that we offer to Bhagavān. Many times we visit temples and offer prayers. We perform pūjās and offer fruits and sweets to Bhagavān, just like in a traditional yajña or sacrifice. Outwardly, that may be true; however, what are the thoughts in our minds as we make those offerings? Most of the time, we don’t visit the temple to seek Divinity; instead, we go there to ask Bhagavān for material possessions and positions. We ask for good health, good grades, good friends, and the latest iPhone!

When we do this, we are treating our relationship with God as transactional. We may break a coconut once in a while or donate to the temple, and we expect the Lord will give us what we want. These offerings are therefore not acts of sacrifice; they are our attempts to enter into a business negotiation with God!

Praying for purity: Praying for virtues that will help us grow and unfold in the spiritual path. These virtues can lead us to discover our nature as eternal happiness.

Praying for possessions: Praying for more material things or achievements. These will come and go and will never satisfy us.



Activity

Prepare small slips of paper such that each has a prayer for possessions. Read aloud the quote by Gurudev. Then, have each student pick one prayer and read it.

Ask them to reflect: why is this prayer a compromise? How can we turn this prayer into one for purity?

Have each student read their original prayer out loud followed by their reframing of it.

Prayer Examples:

- I want a good grade on this test.
- I want this person to invite me to a party.
- Please help me get away with not submitting my essay on time.

Reframes:

- Help me be focused and disciplined with studying.
- Help me love myself more.
- Help me be more diligent instead of procrastinating all the time.

Why do you think praying for purity is a sacrifice?

Debrief: Praying for purity is a sacrifice because we are willing to let go of our lower tendencies or vices and open our hearts to embrace virtues. On the other hand, praying for possessions is a compromise, because we give up the opportunity to seek virtues and beg for material pleasures instead.

Giving up the lower for the higher is a sacrifice.

Giving up the higher for the lower is a compromise.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

- Prayer for purity: offering
- Prayer for possessions: suffering

Main Lesson

continued

4. Give to Boost and not Boast: dadāsi yat

**Discussion**

What do you think charity as an offering is? What do you think charity as suffering is?

Have you ever donated money or food to an unhoused person? Did you ever wonder if they were using your donation properly? Did you give because you wanted to look good or because it was the right thing to do?

When people ask us for charity, we often shrug and wonder why we should do it. With all the things going on in our lives, it feels hard to give anything up. Charity doesn't mean just money. Charity here means understanding who needs what at a given point in time and giving to them according to our own ability (yathā śakti). We can give food, money, time, and even just a smile to bring love and nourishment into someone's heart and home. It is the attitude of giving without any sense of superiority, without seeing the recipient as inferior, and without seeking recognition or reward.

Giving to boost: Giving charity to those who need it without expecting anything in return.

Giving to boast: Giving charity with the intention of seeking recognition or reward.

- Giving to boost: offering
- Giving to boast: suffering

Story: The Rockefeller Foundation

It was early 1894 and Swami Vivekananda was traveling around the United States giving lectures. He had become very popular after his famous speech at the Parliament of Religions. It was around the same time another American had amassed a lot of riches from the oil business. This was John D. Rockefeller and he was known for his ruthlessness and single-minded pursuit for making money. In fact, he was known to be so obsessed with his wealth and making profits that it had begun to take a toll on his health.

It was around then that he learned of the wonderful and extraordinary Hindu monk staying in the house of one of his business colleagues in Chicago. Rockefeller was invited many times by this friend but he refused the invitation.

One day, although he did not want to meet the Swamiji, he was pushed to do so by an impulse. Rockefeller entered Swamiji's adjoining study room and was much surprised to see Swamiji behind the writing table, not even lifting his eyes to see who had entered.

After a while, in a quiet voice Swamiji, who had not seen Rockefeller even once, talked to him of his (Rockefeller's) innermost secrets and anxieties. He talked of things which even his closest friends and relatives would not have known. It seemed miraculous, almost supernatural to Rockefeller. "How do you know all this? Who has talked of this to you?" he burst out. Swamiji looked at him with a quiet, calm smile on his lips as if a child standing before him had asked a foolish question. Swamiji said, "...Do not dwell on your sorrows. Transmute your emotions into some form of creative external expression. Your spiritual health requires it. You are only a channel for God's money that you have accumulated and it is your duty to do good to the world. God has given you all His wealth in order that you may get an opportunity to serve Him and His starving millions of children."

On hearing this, Rockefeller was annoyed that anyone dared to talk to him in that manner. He left the room in irritation, not even saying goodbye. But after a week, again without being announced, he entered Swamiji's study and finding him the same as before, threw on his desk a paper which told of his plans to donate an enormous sum of money towards financing a public institution. "Well, there you are, Swami," Rockefeller said. "You must be satisfied now, and you can thank me for it."

Swamiji did not even lift his eyes, did not move for a time. Then taking the paper he quietly read it and said, "It is for you to thank me." That was all!

This is how Swami Vivekananda inspired Rockefeller to view charity — not as something to take pride in, but as a precious opportunity to give.



Discussion

Based on this story, what do you think true charity means?

Debrief: Charity really means being grateful for the opportunity to give to another. It means recognizing that God has provided us with an abundance that actually doesn't truly belong to us, and that we are being given the opportunity to channel it further.

Main Lesson

continued

5. Discipline for Growth not Glamor: yattapasyasi

**Self-Reflection**

List three discipline-based practices you already perform that you believe have helped you grow, whether in terms of making you more skilled, more patient, more focused, or another positive quality. Additionally, list three such practices you are interested in trying out in the future.

Tapas or austerity is the practice of single-pointed focus. Whenever we are intently focused on something for a higher purpose, that is austerity. Austerity can be practiced at the level of the body, speech, and mind. As mentioned earlier, it is the intention behind our actions that is most important. Common religious examples of austerity include going on a pilgrimage, fasting, or doing japa.

However, a very simple austerity at the body level is going to the gym to work out. How do we offer this action as worship? When we work out for the purpose of looking good, this boosts our ego and makes us think only of ourselves. The more we are focused on our own superiority or inferiority complexes, the more we are thinking about ourselves and not others. However, when we work out with the intention of strengthening ourselves, making our bodies healthier so that we can serve others, this becomes an act of worship. This is because we are practicing austerity with the intention of helping others. Another way to think about austerity is discipline.

Discipline for growth: Taking up a consistent practice to help us grow so that we can serve others.

Discipline for glamor: Taking up a consistent practice to gain more attention from others and have something to brag about.

**Example**

Here's another example: developing a healthy routine. These days, there are countless influencers who post on social media about their healthy routines and how they wake up very early. Perhaps, some of them actually do so for their personal growth; however, the majority

post just for clicks and views — to augment their celebrity profile and/or for monetary gain. This is **discipline for glamor**, because they are doing it purely for attention and to brag. In contrast, someone who takes on building a healthy daily routine with a proper sleep-wake schedule, not for show, but for their own health and productivity, is practicing **discipline for growth**. The consistent routine will help them grow and enable them to do better in their own lives and, by extension, serve others.

- Disciplining for growth: offering
- Disciplining for glamor: suffering

Through these five acts that Lord Kṛṣṇa has laid out — acting for totality, eating for sustenance, praying for purity, giving to boost, and disciplining for growth — we can start to convert our daily life into one of total worship. These actions are just a sample to illustrate that everything we do can be a form of worship.

Worship means dedicating everything that we do daily unto a Higher Vision so that we can evolve and help others evolve.

This is also the deeper meaning of sādhanā. It's not just a regulated practice, but a life of practice. It's something that can be woven in and through our daily lives and not something that we practice just for a few minutes a day.

In lesson 9, we learned about doing a pañcopacāra pūjā, but imagine if our whole lives can be a pañcopacāra pūjā — this is the true meaning of tatkurūṣva madarpaṇam.

If we approach each moment with full focus and devotion, and consider how we can live it for the Lord, we will have achieved a total life of worship. Thus, it is our choice to make life an **offering or suffering** by simply shifting our vision.

Every attempt at living in self control in all our contacts with the outer world, wherein all the efforts are dedicated for the higher purpose of evolving ourselves into a diviner being is known as “tapas.”

Swami Chinmayananda



When all the activities are performed in the spirit of offering, not only that our love for the Supreme increases in us, but also our entire life becomes sanctified with a noble purpose and a diviner aim...we can easily find how this stanza provides us with an efficient and secret method by which the seekers are unconsciously made to remember the Supreme constantly; not in the deep jungles, nor in secret caves, but right on the field of life's contentions.

Swami Chinmayananda

Activity 10 min

Origami Offering

Round 1: Give each student a sheet of origami paper and ask them to make any creation that they would like — whatever comes to their mind. They should do this in silence.

Round 2: Give each student another sheet of origami paper (different color) but this time, ask them to keep in mind that this is an offering to the Lord.

Discussion

1. What did the students make in the first versus the second round? Ask them to describe their creations.
2. How were the two origami creations different? Did one of them come out better than the other? Why?
3. Did knowing it was an offering to Bhagavān change the intention with which the origami piece was made?

Debrief: When we constantly keep in mind the vision of Bhagavān, then everything can truly be worship — even creating a simple piece of artwork. The same action can either be work or worship — it's all a matter of correct vision and attitude.

Alternate Activity: Reframing My Prayer

Label the four corners of the room: Eat, Act, Pray, and Give. Then, split the class into four groups and have them each stand in one of the corners. Give every student a sticky note, and have them write something they do regularly that falls in that category, and stick it on the wall in their corner.

Then, have each group move to the corner on their right (Eat group moves to the Act corner, and so on). As a group, read through each of the sticky notes and reframe them to be aligned with worshipping Bhagavān as we learned today.



Examples

Having Cinnamon Toast Crunch for breakfast (Eat)

Sharing my clothes with friends (Give)



Example

If someone wrote “Praying to get on the tennis team,” underneath the sticky note, the group might write “Praying for strength to accept any outcome.”

Then have each group rotate again. This time have students review all of the sticky notes and the updates made. As a group, students should discuss if they agree or disagree with any reframing.

Finally, have the group rotate one more time (the Eat group should be in the Give corner now). Have the group review all the sticky notes in this corner and select one to practice for this week.

Now that everyone has picked one way to practice growing this week, as a class reflect on how to maintain discipline all week. As an example, if you chose to practice giving to boost (not to boast) — what is one way to stick with that discipline every day this week? Come up with practical tips as a class. Then reflect: how can we be disciplined silently?

Debrief: In all five of these (eat, act, pray, give, and discipline), remembering our goal as Bhagavān will help keep us steady on the path.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Ask each student to take two minutes and come up with their own way of worship inspired by one of the five that were discussed.

Sūtra:

**Make life an offering,
not a suffering!**

Example 🔍

Watch for
learning and not
for loafing.

Sāadhanā: For the next week, think about your plans for the next few hours or for the rest of the day before you eat each meal. Consider what you are eating for and if your meal is appropriate to achieve your goals. If not, plan to substitute what you should be eating in your next meal, if possible!

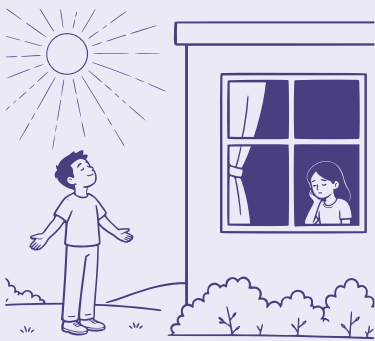
Conclude with closing prayers.



Secret of Grace

This lesson is all about grace. Bhagavān's grace is equally available to all, but those who purify themselves and turn their attention towards Him will feel it most.

9.29 



samo'ham sarva-bhūteṣu
na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ,
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā
mayi te teṣu cāpyaham.

I am the same to all beings; to
Me there is none hateful or dear.
But those who worship Me with
devotion, reside in Me and I reside
in them.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

- Three-dimensional campfire cutout made out of cardboard (can be made or purchased online)
- 8 paper cups
- Bottle of water
- Large rectangular box that can hold water (see demo 2)
- 1 mirror/reflective surface (big enough to write on) per student
- 1 dry-erase marker per student
- Clorox/wet wipes

 **Gratitude – Life of Adi Shankaracharya**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 9.29.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "All are Equal to Me."

Secret of Grace

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

As a review of what was covered in the previous class about worship, chant the Bhagavad-gītā verse 9.27. Review the five ways to bring worship into our daily lives, and ask them to cite examples of when something is an offering versus suffering.

1. Act for Totality not Thirst
 - Group project
 - Cleaning one's room
2. Eat for Sustenance not Satisfaction
 - School lunch
 - Family dinner
3. Pray for Purity not Possessions
 - Big exam
 - Huge competition
4. Give to Boost not Boast
 - Social media
 - Giving away old toys
5. Discipline for Growth not Glamor
 - Social media
 - Learning an instrument



Example

Doing everything by yourself in a group project and getting all the credit is suffering, while inspiring all your team members to contribute and working with them so that everyone benefits is an offering.

Introduction 10 min

We have learned a lot about worship and surrender the past few classes and have been reflecting on what we can do to get closer to Bhagavān. We also know that we can make all of our actions a form of worship, as long as our mind is tuned to Bhagavān.

However, just like any healthy relationship, this effort must be two-sided. So how do we know whether Bhagavān is reciprocating our bhakti for Him? How does He view our actions and how does He respond to them? How can we know whether He is truly listening to us, or if we are just worshiping fruitlessly?



Demonstration 1

Ask the students to form a circle around the room and close their eyes. Meanwhile, put the makeshift fire in the middle of the circle and then ask them to open their eyes. Do they recall this activity in the earlier lessons? What happens when they walk closer to the fire? What happens when they walk away? What does the fire represent? What does the heat represent?

When they walk closer to the fire, they feel the heat, but when they walk away from the fire, they feel less heat.

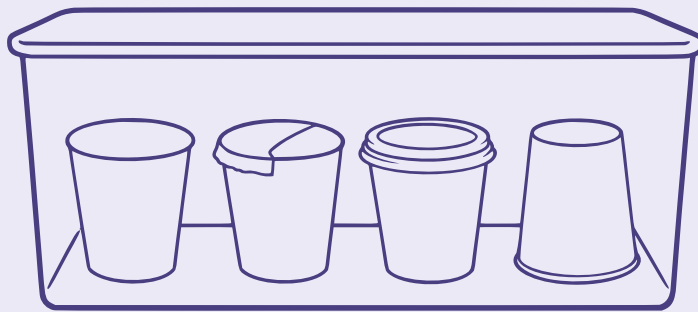
Fire = **Īśvara**

Heat = **Grace**

Was the fire or its heat ever impartial? Not for even one moment. It has always been the same to everyone, and it will always be so.



Demonstration 2



Arrange four cups in front of the class. Make sure to place them in a box.

- **Cup 1:** Completely open
- **Cup 2:** Half covered
- **Cup 3:** Completely covered
- **Cup 4:** Upside down

Next, ask one of the students to fill the remaining four cups with water. The water in the four cups should be about the same quantity.

Then, give each of the four cups with water to four students and ask them to pour the water over each of the original cups in the box.

Introduction

continued



Discussion

What were the things that were the same in this demonstration? What things were different? Which cup received the most water? Why do you think that is? What does the water symbolize? What do the four different cups symbolize?

Debrief: The water poured over all of the cups was the same. That is the grace of Bhagavān. The four different types of cups represent the four different types of minds. When the mind is very pure and completely open, it receives the most. When it is not so open, it receives less. When it's completely covered, it doesn't receive anything. When it's upside down, it is clueless to what's happening.

Self-Reflection: Which of the cups do you think you are?

Grace is the constant radiance of Bhagavān's love shining through all beings.

There are three characteristics of grace:

1. It is always there, **ever available**. There is actually no need to wait for grace, just like there's no need to wait for the fire to get hot. Therefore, grace doesn't need to be anticipated, just recognized.
2. Grace is **infinite**. It's not like Bhagavān has a quota for grace or that His grace ever runs out. He has an infinite ocean of grace that never dries up. In fact, if we reflect deeper, every incident in our lives is filled with His grace.
3. Grace needs to be **tuned into**. Even if it is always there — ever available — not everyone tunes into this grace. Those who tune in by performing their sādhanā or worshiping Bhagavān through their thoughts, words, and actions, will feel the most grace.

Let's explore this further in the Bhagavad-gītā.

Main Lesson 25 min

Śrī Kṛṣṇa clarifies our doubt about whether He is watching and responding to our actions in the following verse:

samo'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu
na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ,
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā
mayi te teṣu cāpyaḥam.

I am the same to all beings; to
Me there is none hateful or dear.
But those who worship Me with
devotion, reside in Me and I reside
in them.

9.29

All are Equal
to Me



Let's think about the first quarter of this verse: **I am the same to all beings.**



Discussion

Share these scenarios and ask the students to share their thoughts at the end of each one.

Scenario 1: Is it actually possible for everyone to be the same to all beings? When you spend a long time studying for a test — putting in the time and effort required, you find that you're able to answer most of the questions and get them right. However, maybe one of your classmates didn't put in that much time and effort and actually made some mistakes while answering the questions. When the teacher grades both your answer sheets, is it fair for both of you to get the exact same grade?

Scenario 2: You and your classmate are on a soccer team playing offense, and your classmate exercises and trains every day, but you train maybe just three times a week. When you're on the same field, she finds that she's able to score more goals than you. If the coach had to make a list of the best players on the team, do you think the coach would perceive both of you in the same way?

Debrief: In the first scenario, although the two students are in the **same** class, answering the **same** test and have the **same** teacher, their effort was clearly **different**.

In the second scenario, although the two players are on the **same** field, playing the **same** roles and have the **same** coach, their effort was clearly **different**.

Main Lesson

continued

So what does this mean when it pertains to Bhagavān? When Bhagavān says, “I am the same to all beings,” He means that He is ever available and accessible, but those who tune into His grace will feel it most. **Putting forth effort in the right direction is tuning into Bhagavān’s grace.**

Story: Morse Code and the Interviewers

A company was holding interviews for someone who could interpret Morse code. The interview was held in an open format. That is, anyone interested could come and interview for the position. At the beginning of the day, lots of people came and all sat in the waiting chairs. They all patiently waited to get called into the room to interview. A few hours passed and no one had been called into the room yet. A few people grew impatient and got up and left in frustration. Others started to get antsy and pulled out their smartphones and began looking at the news and playing on their apps. A few more hours passed and still no one had been called in. People started talking to each other. Some people loosened their ties and clothes to be a little more comfortable. It was now close to the end of the workday and still no one had been called. Suddenly, one man got up and walked into the room. Everyone watched this eagerly and was a little confused. Who was this person to just walk into the room? Then, the manager came out of the door and told everyone the interview process was over and that they were hiring the man. All were shocked and asked why? The manager explained that this whole time, there had been a message playing on the speaker in Morse code that said: “At 3:30 PM, walk into the room and the job is yours.” The man who walked in was the only one to have deciphered the message and so the job was his.

Lord’s ways are wonderful! Lord’s grace is wonderful! The very way the Lord distributes that grace is wonderful! And yet, we are so blind and deaf that when it is all so beautifully declared, we don’t hear, we don’t see.

Swami
Chinmayananda



Discussion

What elements of this story were the same? Which elements were different? Who finally got the job? Can you say the company was biased or partial?

Debrief: The company, opportunity, and the Morse code message were the **same** to all. The effort of the man who got hired was **different**.

The one who got the job was the one who was tuned in to the company. The company put out a very creative test to identify the best person for the job, and they succeeded.

Now, let's look at the second quarter: **to Me there is none hateful or dear.**

Realistically, in day-to-day life, we might encounter some biases. There may be teachers, coaches, or employers who have a bias or those who choose someone just because they have a long-standing relationship with the person. However, when it comes to Bhagavān, He has no such favorites or biases. So much so that even Rāvaṇa had access to His grace!

We all know that Rāvaṇa was a rākṣasa, but do you know that he was a very great devotee of Bhagavān Śiva? In fact, he performed intense austerity, and as a result, he received a boon to become almost invincible — no one except a human could kill him. However, because he misused his strength and power, he was later defeated by Bhagavān Himself, who manifested as Lord Rāma in a human form. While performing intense tapas, even Rāvaṇa walked towards the fire of grace, but then he became greedy and turned away. That's what led to his destruction.

Some of us might also feel that Arjuna was the favorite of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa because Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave him the beautiful message of the Gītā and not to anyone else. However, was that really because Arjuna was His favorite? When we look at Arjuna's life, at every point, he surrendered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. First, he asked for Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be his charioteer, and when he wasn't sure of himself, he asked Śrī Kṛṣṇa for guidance and admitted his weakness. Finally, he followed Śrī Kṛṣṇa's every instruction to win the war. That is why Bhagavān's grace flowed through Arjuna!

When we understand that Bhagavān has no favorites, we are freed from the idea of comparison and competition. We stop thinking about why others get better grades than us, or have more friends than us, or maybe even look better than us. It's not that Bhagavān loves others more than He loves us or vice versa. When we think deeply, we start to understand that **there's a direct correlation between our self-effort and Bhagavān's grace.**

Q: If Bhagavān doesn't pick favorites, why are some people smarter or more athletic than I am?

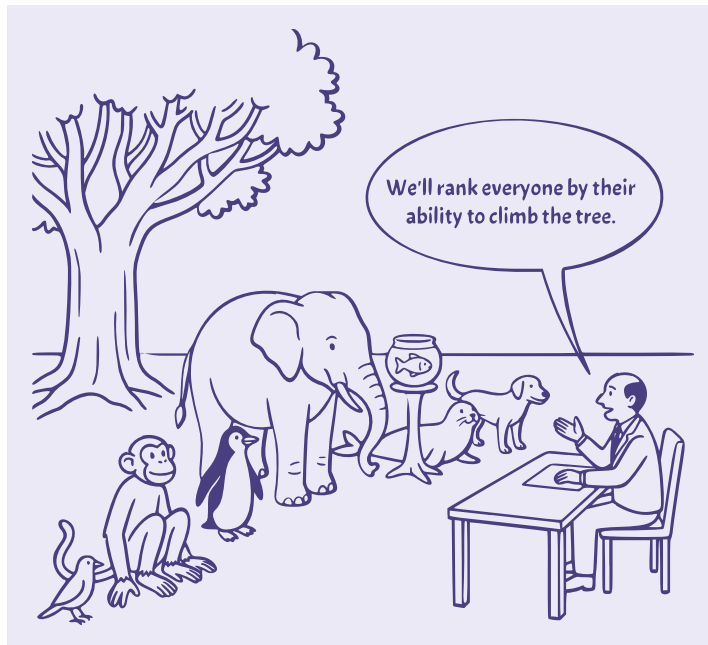
A: Remember our svadharma! When we direct our self-effort in line with our svadharma, we can see the beauty of all Bhagavān has given us.

Main Lesson

continued

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

Unknown



When the mind of a seeker is purified through self-effort, divine grace will rush in to flood his life with light and joy... Self-effort is required first — ask, seek, and knock, and divine grace will follow. It shall be given to you.

Swami Chinmayananda

Now let's examine the third and fourth quarters: **But those who worship Me with devotion, reside in Me and I reside in them.**

Story: The Unfoldment of Toṭakācārya

During Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's residence at Sringeri, he accepted a disciple named Giri, whose defining quality was extraordinary humility. Unlike his two disciples, Padmapāda and Sureśvarācārya, with their scholarly brilliance, or Hastāmalaka with his innate quietude of Self-realization, Giri possessed neither exceptional learning nor profound spiritual insights. Yet he excelled in one invaluable virtue: wholehearted service to his Guru.

Giri attended to the Ācārya's needs with meticulous care and unwavering devotion, finding profound joy in even the simplest tasks. His fellow disciples, however, regarded his intellectual abilities with little respect. Even Padmapāda, despite his own spiritual advancement, shared this dismissive view of Giri's mental capacity.

Now we will see the unfolding of Giri.

Watch this clip of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and Giri from 14:46-19:48.



Ādi
Śaṅkarācārya
and Giri





Discussion

Were all of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's disciples the same? How was Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's attitude towards his students? What made Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya bestow his grace on Giri?

Debrief: The story of Giri, who became Toṭakācārya, is a true testament to how purity of mind and selfless service can open our hearts to receive Divine Grace. Toṭakācārya eventually became one of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's foremost disciples. He was the first ācārya of the Jyotirmaṭha in northern Bharat.

In this way, Guru is an embodiment of Bhagavān. Just as Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya saw all His disciples in the same way, Bhagavān too is impartial and has no favorites. However, those who walk closer to Him, by performing their sādhanā and sevā, truly feel Him in their hearts.

Sunlight and its Reflection

Swami Chinmayananda mentions in his commentary: "The same sun illumines all objects in the world and its rays get reflected on all surfaces; be it upon the dull, rough surface of a rock, or the bright polished facet of a jewel."

Bhagavān is the substratum of this Universe (the white light shining through the prism), so He must be reflected in every object and being. The Source is the same, but how it is presented and reflected differs between objects. The quality of that reflection is what becomes clearer depending on the nature of the surface. For example, when light shines on water, its nature is to reflect some of it. A polluted, raging river will not reflect very well, but a clean, still lake can create some beautiful reflections of the mountains and scenery surrounding it.

By cleaning these surfaces, we don't change the light reaching the object, but rather alter how it is reflected. Similarly, by worshiping and staying devoted to God, we aren't changing the nature of God, but rather how we can perceive and witness Him. This means that we should practice the five lessons we learned last week:

- Act for Totality not Thirst
- Eat for Sustenance not Satisfaction
- Pray for Purity not Possessions
- Give to Boost not Boast
- Discipline for Growth not Glamor

Main Lesson

continued

By doing so, we purify and cleanse ourselves so that we can reflect the qualities of God more clearly. **That is how we can be aware of the fact that He is residing in us.** And because our lives become more divinized, we reside in Divinity — we reside in Bhagavān.

Activity 10 min

Now that we know Bhagavān resides in us and cares for us, let us think about how we can amplify that presence from within.

Ask the students to get into groups of three or four. Then provide each student with a mirror, marker, and wipe. Have students discuss within their groups and think of some negative characteristics of people with unclear minds.

Sample Responses: Someone with an unclear mind may have what we called the six gangsters: kāma (lust), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusion), mada (pride), mātsarya (jealousy). Check out **Karma Yoga Lesson 22: Fire of Desire** for a refresher. They may have little control over their emotions and act on them impulsively. They can be unkind and unempathetic.

Have each student write eight to ten of these characteristics on the mirror as they come up with ideas. Then, ask them how clearly they can see their reflections in the mirror.

Then, ask them to erase two of the characteristics and ask them whether they can see themselves more clearly or less clearly.

Then, ask them to erase two more characteristics, and ask the same question. Repeat this once more.

Finally, in the last round, ask them to erase all the negative characteristics. Ask the students again whether they can see themselves more clearly or less clearly.

What do each of these things symbolize?

- face
- mirror
- reflection in the mirror
- negative words
- wipes

Possible answers:

- face = Bhagavān
- mirror = our mind
- reflection in the mirror = Bhagavān's reflection

- negative words = negative qualities
- wipes = sādhanā

Debrief: We can connect this activity back to the verse. When we cleanse our minds, we are able to really see and feel the grace of Bhagavān in us. His image becomes reflected in our minds clearly. But when we are full of impurities, His image is obstructed and we can't see clearly.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Go around the class and ask each student what they think of grace now. Ask each of them to share something that really resonated with them throughout the lesson.

Sūtra:

Tune into Grace

Sādhana: Every morning when you wake up say, “Tune into Grace.” Then, before you go to bed at night, reflect on everything that happened that day. Did you tune into Bhagavān’s grace or did you find yourself tuning out of it? Make a promise to yourself to keep tuning in. Before you sleep, say it once more, “Tune into Grace.”

Conclude with closing prayers.



Secret of Forgiveness

In this lesson, we explore forgiveness of both ourselves and others. Doing so allows us to rightly resolve and turn openly towards Bhagavān. This gives Him an opportunity to forgive us and purify us further.

9.30 



api cetsudurācāro
bhajate māmananyabhāk,
sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ
samyagvyavasito hi saḥ.

Even if the most sinful one worships Me, with single-pointed devotion, they too, should indeed be regarded as “righteous” for they have rightly resolved.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Guess the Words slides

White index cards (2 per student)

Blue index cards (2 per student)

Glue sticks

Colored markers

Picture of Lord Śiva

Gaṅgā Jalam (available online or any sacred water)

Ted Lasso clips

Om Namaḥ Śivāya Meditation audio

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 9.30.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “The Lord says, “They are in Me, and I am in them!””

 Upanishad Ganga. “How Knowledge Transforms Life | Valmiki Story.”

Secret of Forgiveness

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Ask the class to recollect the definition of grace and its characteristics:

Grace is the constant radiance of Bhagavān's love shining through all beings.

There are three characteristics of grace:

1. It is always there, **ever available**. There is actually no need to wait for grace just like there's no need to wait for the fire to get hot. Therefore, grace doesn't need to be anticipated, just recognized.
2. Grace is **infinite**. It's not like Bhagavān has a quota for grace or that His grace ever runs out. He has an infinite ocean of grace that never dries up. In fact, if we reflect deeper every incident in our lives is filled with His grace.
3. Grace needs to be **tuned into**. Even if it is always there, ever available, not everyone tunes into this grace. Those who tune in by performing their sādhanā or worshiping Bhagavān through their thoughts, words, and actions, will feel the most grace.

Now share the **Guess the Words slides** with them and see if they can “tune into” what the words are trying to say. The answers are in the speaker notes for the teacher's reference.

Introduction 5 min

In the last verse, we had discussed that Bhagavān's grace is ever available to everyone, but what if we did something really wrong? What if we did something that made us dislike ourselves? Something that we don't even want to admit to anyone. Do you think Bhagavān would still be available for us?



Activity

Give each student an index card and ask them to write down something wrong that they have done in the past, which they have a hard time letting go of. They should write this on the front of the card and then turn it over. The card will not be seen by anyone, so they can write freely.



Guess the Words slides



Main Lesson 25 min



Discussion

After the students have written down their reflections, ask them:

How do we feel when we have done something really wrong? Do we still carry this burden within us? Does it make us dislike ourselves in our hearts? Does it feel like a weight on our shoulders?

If anyone would like to share, allow the students to share their thoughts briefly.

How do we let go of such a strong feeling? If we keep beating ourselves up about it, we create an enormous amount of guilt. **The only antidote to guilt is sincerity.** When we become sincere, all guilt becomes light.

Sincerity is a genuine attempt to make changes and improve for the better.

Instead, if we continue to make the same mistakes, then that guilt never fades. Rather, we develop self-blame and other negative thoughts and tendencies.

This sincerity is exactly what Bhagavān expounds upon in the following verse.

api cetsudurācāraḥ
bhajate māmananyabhāk,
sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ
samyagvyavasito hi saḥ.

Even if the most sinful one
worships Me, with single-pointed
devotion, they too, should indeed
be regarded as “righteous” for they
have rightly resolved.

9.30

Bhagavān says that even the most sinful individuals, if they worship Him with pure devotion, shall be considered “righteous.” Just the mere resolve to turn to Bhagavān turns a sinner into a sādhu in Bhagavān’s eyes! **A sādhu is one who lives a life of nobility** — one who chooses to follow dharma (the right path), even if it’s hard sometimes. At first, we may be shocked by what Bhagavān is saying: just by pure devotion, someone who is among the worst in society can be transformed into a sādhu. We might wonder how this is even possible — it seems to run contrary to what we see in our external, worldly life. Bhagavān truly shows us that His grace is available to anyone who rightly resolves.

The Lord says...



Main Lesson

continued

Upanishad
Ganga

Story: Ratnākar

In the forest, there lived a criminal named Ratnākar, who would murder and steal from all the people that passed through the forest. One day, Sage Nārada visited Ratnākar and questioned why Ratnākar was performing such vile acts. Ratnākar replied that he was doing this for his family, out of his utter devotion to taking care of them. Nārada Muni responded, “For such actions, you know that you will have to suffer.” To which Ratnākar responded that he didn’t care, because he was doing it for his family. Nārada jī then inquired, “Does your family care for you? Will they share the cost of your sins with you? Why don’t you go and ask them?” Ratnākar confidently said, “Of course,” and decided to go and ask to prove his point to Nārada jī. Before departing, he also tied up Nārada jī so that Nārada jī wouldn’t escape and when Ratnākar returned, he could steal from Nārada jī. Upon inquiring with his family, Ratnākar found, to his dismay, that no one wanted to share the burden of his sins. His wife and children even said, “Your duty is to take care of us, but how you do that is entirely your problem.” So, Ratnākar returned to Nārada Muni worried about his actions and asked Nārada jī, “What should I do now?” Sage Nārada gave him the mantra of Rāma, and Ratnākar immersed himself in it day and night. This Ratnākar eventually became our beloved Sage Vālmīki!

Debrief: See how such a dangerous criminal (Ratnākar) was reformed to such great heights. By taking the right resolve and surrendering to Bhagavān, he turned himself towards a life of dharma and eventually transformed into Sage Vālmīki, who was blessed to speak and write the beautiful glories of the Rāmāyaṇa! This is the power of transformation that Bhagavān promises us.



Discussion

When you’ve done something wrong, what are things that you usually do to fix it?

Debrief: Sometimes, we do nothing but that really doesn’t help us. What is required is the act of forgiveness.

Forgiveness of ourselves means the ability to let go of our own past shortcomings by resolving to start anew.

To Forgive Means to Give Four

1. **Accept our shortcomings:** This is often the most difficult step because it takes time to admit that we have done something wrong. It's easier to blame others than pierce our own egos. Once we wholeheartedly accept that we have done wrong, we have taken the first step.

Bhagavān's grace is such that even the feeling that we did something wrong arises because of Him! When we commit a wrongful act, the feeling of regret arises because of our connection with Him. Often the stronger our devotion, the clearer and more acute this feeling of regret is.

2. **Resolve to evolve:** When we do something wrong, we often say "sorry." An apology is required, but it is not enough. What makes us change is not the "sorry" nor anyone pointing out our flaws. What actually makes us change is taking a firm resolve to do so. The resolve has to come from within. Although someone can trigger it, like Sage Nārada for Ratnākar, at the end of the day, we have to feel it in our hearts, like Ratnākar did.

In our śāstras, we take up a **prāyaścitta** (act of atonement) to purify ourselves. This act of purification prepares us to take a new resolve to become better.

3. **Forget the pain:** We must then let go of the pain of our mistake. If we hold onto the pain, we will be stuck in a cycle of guilt. We will not be able to grow and follow our new resolve properly.
4. **Remember the lesson:** Most importantly, we must remember the lesson. This we must never forget. The earlier mistake should act as guidance for us to grow and improve ourselves.

We have all made mistakes and missteps in our lives. The important thing is not to keep blaming ourselves for our mistakes, but to see our faults, learn how to improve upon them, and turn them towards the Higher. We should forgive ourselves for what we have done, but remember the lessons so that we can learn and grow from them. This enables us to resolve towards the Higher and open ourselves to Bhagavān, so that he too can forgive us and purify us further.

Always Turn Towards Bhagavān

Sometimes, we may feel that we are too "dirty" or have done too much wrong to turn towards Bhagavān. This is a silly notion! When we are super sick, we go to the hospital for further care. We do not say that we are too sick for the hospital. Similarly, if we feel we are "dirty" or "wrong," then who is better to turn to in order to purify and lift ourselves than Bhagavān!

Examples

Chanting the name of Bhagavān, likhita japa, fasting, visiting sacred places, and bathing in holy rivers.

Main Lesson

continued



Ted Lasso clips



Discussion

Watch the Ted Lasso clips as a class. If students have seen the show, ask them to share the context for the class — if not, share some context on the show.

Context: The show follows Ted Lasso, an American college football coach who is hired to coach an English soccer team — whose owner secretly hopes his inexperience will lead it to failure; instead, Lasso's folksy, optimistic leadership proves unexpectedly successful.

Clip #1: A player is struggling during drills in soccer practice, and Ted coaches him to keep playing and shake it off.

Clip #2: Ted is speaking to the team after they lost and were relegated out of the premier league.

Clip #3: Rebecca, the owner of the football club, comes clean to Ted after unexpectedly forming a strong friendship with him while lying to him the entire season.

Questions:

- How does it feel when we hold a grudge (against ourselves or others)? How does it feel to forgive?
- What is the result of forgiveness?
- How can we practice being a goldfish?



Activity

Ask the students to glance again at their index cards. On the back, they should write down a resolve that they are willing to take in order to let go of their past mistakes. Give them a few minutes to write this down and ask them to share if they are comfortable.

What about when others hurt us?



Activity

Now, hand the students a different index card. On this card, ask them to write down someone or something they had trouble forgiving. For example, a friend might have hurt them by not inviting them to a party, or maybe one of their close friends lied to them.

We can slowly learn to forgive ourselves, but what happens when others hurt us? Should they also be forgiven? If Bhagavān forgives them, then we must too!

Story: The Snake and the Young Boys by Ramakrishna Paramahansa

There was once a snake that lived in a meadow where some young boys would play. The boys feared the venomous reptile and complained to the Mahātmā. The Mahātmā went to the snake and told the snake to not bite the boys, and the snake agreed. Over time, the boys became very comfortable with the snake. They started picking it up, throwing it, and harming it. One day, the Mahātmā saw the snake again and noticed that it was very bruised, hurt, and looked unwell. When asked by the Mahātmā what happened, the snake replied that the Mahātmā had asked the snake not to bite the boys, so it did not fight back when the boys attacked it. The Mahātmā replied, “I told you not to bite, but I never told you not to hiss.”

Debrief: The Mahātmā had told the snake not to harm others; however, the snake should still have fought back and stood its ground in a dhārmika manner to protect itself. Otherwise, others will hurt and maim the snake as the boys had done.

When someone else wrongs us, it may cause us lots of pain; however, if we hold onto the pain, anger, and other feelings that arise along with it, we often end up carrying a grudge. This emotional pain hurts us and becomes a physical toxin in our bodies. So, it is important for us to forgive others too. We forgive others, so that we ourselves can be happy. The more we hold onto grudges, the more pain we inflict upon ourselves and others.

As we forgive, it's important that we stay alert so that we do not get hurt again. We should do whatever is required to protect our safety and keep ourselves away from harm.



Sandalwood **perfumes** even the axe that hurls it down!
The more we rub sandalwood against a stone, the more its **fragrance spreads**. Burn it, and it **wafts its glory** through the entire neighbourhood. Such is the enchanting beauty of **forgiveness** in life.

Swami Chinmayananda

Main Lesson

continued

Next, we will repeat the same steps that we did in forgiving ourselves:

To Forgive Means to Give Four

1. **Accept their shortcomings:** Nobody is perfect. Have you ever met anyone who has made no mistakes in their lives? We all make mistakes because we are still learning in life. As we learn more, we become better. Our parents didn't get a graduate degree in parenting, so they may make some mistakes. Even if there was such a degree, how would they know how to handle a teen like you? Even though teachers, doctors, and lawyers have degrees, the system is changing so fast that there may be things that these professionals have never seen before. The system may be completely new to them. Since it is impossible for people to know and experience everything, mistakes will happen. However, they should be acknowledged and addressed, but not everyone does so.

2. **Resolve to evolve:** Whether or not the other person addresses or acknowledges the mistake that they have made, resolve to move forward. Don't wait for apologies.

Just as we take up a **prāyaścitta** (act of atonement) to purify ourselves when we have done something wrong, we should find ways to relieve our pain. Some people heal their wounds through painting, music, writing, etc.

3. **Forget the pain:** Remember, **the past is a place of reference and not residence**. Carrying pain in one's heart is like excess baggage. It is a true burden and after time passes, it hurts our arms, our back, all parts of our body, because we're carrying so many things. It also slows us down in life. Think! When we have excess baggage, are we able to walk faster or slower? Often, we can't focus on our present work because we are constantly carrying that pain and reliving it.

4. **Remember the lesson:** Being forgiving doesn't mean letting people push you around. It means knowing how to "hiss" but not "bite" just like in the story. Examples of "hissing" include talking things out with those who hurt you while standing your ground in a dhārmika manner, avoiding hurtful people and situations when possible, or seeking help from those in authority when safety is a concern. It's important to stay alert to situations that can hurt us so that we do not go through the same thing again.



Activity

At the back of the second index card, ask the students to write down a way they will let go of the hurt that someone has caused them.

Activity 15 min

Bitter to Better

Show the students the picture of Lord Śiva and ask them if they remember why he has a blue throat. What's the deeper significance?

When Lord Śiva drank the poison (hurt), He didn't digest it and keep it inside His body because that would poison Him. Nor did He spit it out onto others, because it would poison everyone else. He kept it in His throat and made it an ornament, and that's why He is called Nīlakaṇṭha (One who has a blue throat). Lord Śiva didn't get bitter; He got better!

Now, ask them to take the two index cards where they wrote the following:

- Index card 1 (front): Something wrong that they did
- Index card 2 (front): Something wrong that others have done to them

Glue a blue index card on the front of each one covering all the past mistakes and misgivings. This is a symbol of their "blue throats." They are transforming bitter into better.

Instruction: Next, imagine that this is your blue throat, what are the lessons that you have learned from the painful experiences? From yourself? From others? Write them or draw them on your blue index cards. Let's transform the bitter into better.

Once they are done, ask them to pair up with someone else and share their "better" moments.

Conclusion 5 min

Closing Meditation: Ask the students to sit straight and close their eyes. Play the Om Namaḥ Śivāya Meditation while sprinkling Gaṅgā jalam over their heads. The waters from the Gaṅgā are very holy and purifying. They help us transform into a sādhu.

Sūtra:

Turn Bitter
into Better

Sādhana: Every day this week, wear something blue to remind yourself of your blue throat.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Om Namaḥ
Śivāya
Meditation





My Devotee Never Perishes

In this lesson, we explore one of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa's most profound statements: My devotee never perishes! We examine what it means to be a devotee and how Bhagavān will always take care of us no matter what.

9.31 



kṣīpraṁ bhavati dharmātmā
śāśvacchāntiṁ nigacchati,
kaunteya pratijānīhi
na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati.

Soon one becomes
righteous and attains
Eternal Peace, O Kaunteya,
know for certain that My
devotee never perishes.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	Blank white greeting cards (5" x 7")
5m	Introduction	Art supplies
25m	Main Lesson	 Trials of Mīrābāī
15m	Activity	 Devotee Story Resource
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 9.31.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "My Devotee shall never come to any Harm."

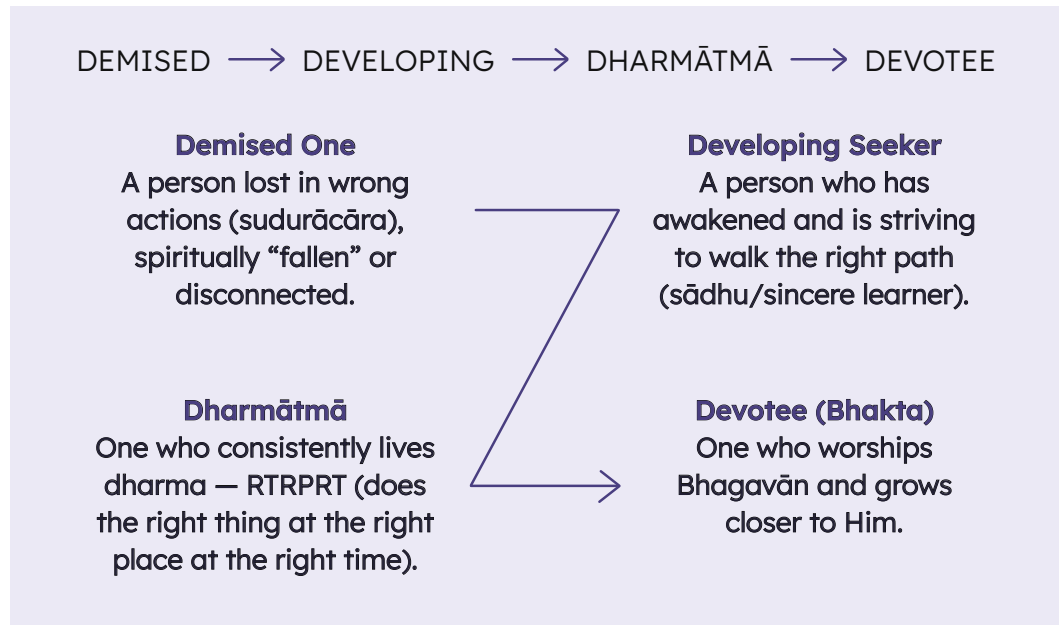
My Devotee Never Perishes

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Begin class with a meditation on Lord Śiva, reminding them of their blue throats. Ask the class if they remember the lessons from their blue throats last week and if they would like to share them.

Introduction 5 min

Last week, we saw the story of Ratnākar who became Vālmīki. He made the transition from a **sudurācāra** (a person who has committed many wrong acts) into a **sādhū** (noble person who walks the path of dharma even if it's hard). When one constantly walks the path of dharma, dharma becomes their very nature. They are called dharmātmā. Bhagavān considers this dharmātmā as His bhakta (devotee).



In this lesson, we're going to explore Bhagavān's special promise to all His bhaktas (devotees).

Main Lesson 25 min

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmātmā
śāśvacchāntiṁ nigacchati,
kaunteya pratijānīhi
na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati.

Soon one becomes righteous and
attains Eternal Peace, O Kaunteya,
know for certain that My devotee
never perishes.

9.31

Now let's take a look at this again:

DEMISED → DEVELOPING → DHARMĀTMĀ → DEVOTEE

Let's dive deeper into who a devotee is.

A **devotee** is one who develops a relationship with Bhagavān as a parent, friend, teacher, guide, etc., and who has faith that Bhagavān will always take care of them.

We can **see Bhagavān in different ways** as we learned (Lesson 7):

1. Gatiḥ: ultimate Goal of everything
2. Bhartā: Supporter
3. Prabhu: Lord who makes the impossible possible
4. Sākṣī: Witness of all things

We also learned to **deepen our relationship** with Him through a simple pūjā and to make everything in life an offering instead of suffering (Lessons 9 and 10).

We also learned to have **faith in His promises** to us (Lessons 8, 11, and 12).

1. yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham: He carries whatever we need and secures what we already have.
2. samo'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu: His grace is ever available to all.
3. sādtureva sa mantavyaḥ: He forgives our wrongdoings if we make a sincere resolve to change.

So, in a way, we are all becoming devotees of Bhagavān.

Main Lesson

continued

Today, we are going to focus on the following pāda.



The teacher should write the following line on the whiteboard.

na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati. My devotee is never destroyed!

9.31

This is such a powerful and profound statement — **“My Devotee Never Perishes!”** Bhagavān is so certain of this that he asks Arjuna to proclaim this loudly to everyone! Could this really be true?

Let’s explore all of the ways that Bhagavān has come to save his devotees. In this portion, the teacher should mention the name of the bhakta and then see if the students can remember how Bhagavān came to protect them and in which form. As an example, the teacher may say Draupadī and the students should respond with the story of the vastra avatāra coming to save her.



Teachers can reference Devotee Story Resource for more information on each of the stories.

Vastra for Draupadī: During the rigged dice game in the Mahābhārata, Draupadī was lost. The Kauravas dragged her into the court and attempted to disrobe her; however, when she fully surrendered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He appeared as vastra (cloth) avatāra to save Draupadī’s dignity.

Śālagrāma for Mīrābāī: In one attempt to harm Mīrābāī, she was sent a basket containing a venomous cobra snake. When she opened the basket, she found a śālagrāma instead, a sacred stone symbolizing Lord Viṣṇu.

Water for Janābāī: People accused Sant Janābāī of stealing Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa’s ornaments. They brought her near the river to strike her with a sharp spear. Just then, the spear turned into water and Sant Janābāī was saved.

Narasimha for Prahlāda: King Hiranyakaśipu disliked Prahlāda’s intense devotion to Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa and tortured Prahlāda in numerous ways to hinder and stop him; however, due to his devotion, Prahlāda survived all of these attempts. Eventually, Bhagavān manifested as Lord Narasimha and defeated Hiranyakaśipu.

Deer for Tapovan Mahārāja: During Swami Tapovan Mahārāja’s deep meditation, a young deer nudged him and acted in a peculiar way. Swamiji



My Devotee shall never come to any Harm



Devotee Story Resource



woke up from his dhyāna and, curious about the peculiar behavior, followed the deer out of the cave. Right after Swamiji stepped out of the cave, the cave completely collapsed.

Thieves for Tapovan Mahārāja: During one of his Kailāsa yātras, Swami Tapovan Mahārāja and his companions were hungry and needed directions. They ended up finding help in the most unlikely of individuals — thieves!

How will Bhagavān come to me?

Bhagavān comes in many forms! He won't always come to us in a pūrṇa avatāra form, like Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa or Lord Śrī Rāma. Oftentimes, He will come to us in the form of a parent, friend, stranger, sibling, teacher, and so on. Tell the following story of the drowning man.

Story: The Drowning Man

There is a man stuck in the middle of a raging river struggling to stay afloat. A few passersby see this from the shore and decide to help by throwing him a rope. The man tells them not to worry, because he is a devotee of Bhagavān and his Bhagavān will save him. So after some time, the passersby leave. Then, a woman comes by in a kayak, sees the man, and tries to offer her help to save him. Once more, the man declines the help and tells her that his Bhagavān will save him. A while later, a man on a jet ski comes by, and he too tries to save the drowning man and asks him to get on the jet ski. The drowning man refuses help once more. Eventually, the man drowns fully. When he reaches Bhagavān, he asks, "Why didn't you save me? I cried for your help so many times." Bhagavān replies, "I came to you three different times and you denied my help. I came to you as the passersby on the shore, the woman in the kayak, and the man on the jet ski. I never let my devotee perish." The man was shocked by his own foolishness and realized that Bhagavān had come to his aid; he just had not opened himself up to fully embrace Him.

Debrief: We never know in what form Bhagavān will come to us. In fact, Bhagavān saves us every single day, and we just have to open ourselves up to see it! In our lives, there are days when things will fail us: our things may break down, our alarm clock may not ring in the morning, or our best friends may have stopped talking to us; however, there will never be a day that Bhagavān will fail His devotee.

As we discussed in [Lesson 11: Secret of Grace](#), the grace of Bhagavān is endless. It is our duty to practice recognizing the myriad ways it appears in our life to protect us and guide us! If we can learn to stop and appreciate His grace, we will never forget that the Lord will always be there for us.

Discussion

Can you think of the ways that Bhagavān has come to save you?

Main Lesson

continued

If you ever find yourself lost in confusion, try pausing and opening your mind and heart to the Lord's grace!

Why does Śrī Kṛṣṇa ask Arjuna to proclaim the statement?**Discussion**

Now, there's a unique line in this verse: Śrī Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to loudly proclaim the statement "na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati." Why can't Bhagavān declare it Himself?

Debrief: The reason is that Arjuna is a man of his word. When Arjuna says something, he does it, and he has always stayed true to his promises. However, Bhagavān breaks His promises from time to time. At first, this seems a bit odd. Are we allowed to break our promises?

Story: Bhīṣma's Vow

During the Kurukṣetra War, under Duryodhana's provocation, Bhīṣma vows that he will either kill Arjuna or make Śrī Kṛṣṇa pick up a weapon on the next day of battle. Despite his unparalleled mastery, Arjuna begins to falter and get tired from Bhīṣma's relentless and powerful attacks. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa notices this and breaks His own vow to never pick up a weapon by picking up a broken chariot wheel and running towards Bhīṣma. Lord Kṛṣṇa protected both of His devotees: (1) He protected Arjuna from being killed, and (2) He protected Bhīṣma from breaking his own vow. Bhagavān loves his devotees so much that He is willing to break His own vows to protect His devotees from being destroyed!

**Discussion**

Do you think what Śrī Kṛṣṇa did was right or wrong? Is it okay to break promises?

Debrief: There's only one reason it's okay to break a promise and that is to protect dharma. For example, let us say you promised your friend that you would go to their party, but just as you are about to leave, there's an emergency situation at home that has to be taken care of right away. Would you still go to your friend's party because you promised them? Probably not. The dhārmika action would be to handle the emergency immediately and explain the situation to your friend later.

In the same way, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's dharma is to protect His devotees. Even if we let Bhagavān perish from our minds and hearts, He never lets us perish. We may sometimes forget to pray, to remember His name, or to even look at His picture, but He will never forget us. **Bhagavān has never failed His devotee. It has never happened, and it will never happen.**

yadā yadā hi dharmasya
glānir-bhavati bhārata,
abhyutthānam-adharmasya
tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham.

Whenever there is a decay of
righteousness, O Bharata, and
a rise of unrighteousness, then I
manifest Myself.

4.7

Earlier in the Bhagavad-gītā, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa explains how He comes in a manifest form whenever there is a decay of dharma. He comes to set and preserve the righteousness of the world. In the same way, He protects His bhaktas from declining in their own dharma. Even if this means breaking His own vow!



Discussion

What does “**My Devotee Never Perishes**” mean?

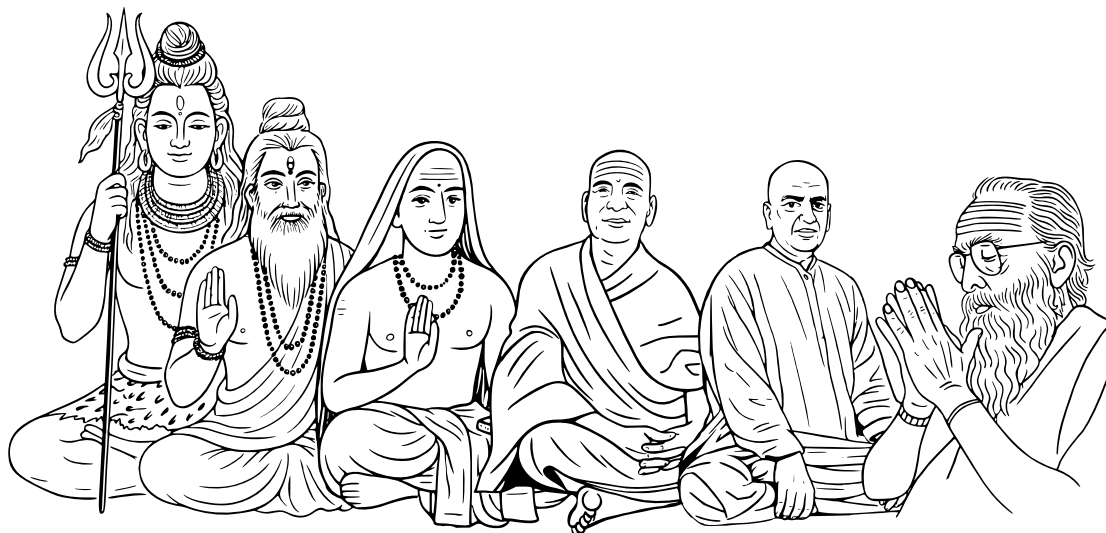
A question might arise in our minds as to what this really means. After all, didn't Arjuna eventually die? Didn't great devotees like Prahlāda and Mīrābāī actually die?

Debrief: Their bodies may have perished but their legacy never will. Until today, many thousands of years later, we are still singing the glories of these bhaktas and dwelling on their stories. Their bodies may have perished but not their devotional spirit. Just like Swami Chinmayananda's body has perished, but His name and glory continue to live on in all of our hearts, which is why we are here today. In fact, Bhagavān has ensured that the Guru-śiṣya paramparā never perishes. There will always be someone who continues the grand vision of knowing this Truth and sharing it with others.

Main Lesson

Guru-śiṣya Paramparā

continued

Lord
ŚivaBhagavān
Veda
VyāsaĀdi
ŚaṅkarācāryaSwami
Sivananda
MahārājaSwami
Tapovan
MahārājaPūjya Gurudev
Swami
Chinmayananda

On a deeper level, true bhaktas become one with Bhagavān, and because Bhagavān is eternal, they will never perish. This is why when great bhaktas leave their bodies, we do not call it death, but instead call it a samādhi or mahāsamādhi, indicating that they have merged with the Source — Bhagavān.

Samādhi: union with Bhagavān

Mahā: final

The term mahāsamādhi means final union with Bhagavān.
Though sometimes, people just use the word samādhi to indicate this.

In fact, in Chinmaya Mission, we celebrate August 3rd as Pūjya Swami Chinmayananda's mahāsamādhi day. This is a day when we take time to reflect deeply on Gurudev's glory and how much He has done for us. It is a day when we offer our gratitude to the entire Guru paramparā and renew our commitment to walking closer to Bhagavān.

After hearing this, we might look at ourselves and think that we aren't the greatest bhaktas, or maybe we are still trying to walk the path of dharma. Will Bhagavān also protect us? Will He never let us perish?

Actually, we need not even wait for Bhagavān to take any external avatāra such as a vastra (cloth) or flowing water or even a helping hand. Bhagavān is within us. He is the antaryāmī (inner voice of wisdom).

There may be times when we are tempted to do something wrong — maybe we want to scream, yell, or get angry. However, there’s a voice inside that tells us to be silent and calm down. There may be days when we don’t want to get out of bed. We just want to laze around, but there’s a voice in us that pushes us out of bed and beckons us to face the day. Sometimes, even if we want to ignore that voice, we cannot. It’s silent and at the same time alarmingly loud. In fact, the closer we get to Bhagavān, the louder the silent voice becomes.

This inner voice of wisdom is called **antaryāmin** and is a sure sign that Bhagavān is always watching us from within.

When we’ve surrendered to Bhagavān, He won’t let us do anything wrong even if we want to. **This is a sure sign of His protection.**

Activity 15 min

My Personal “na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati”

Ask the students to reflect on their own “na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati” moments when Bhagavān came to them at their lowest. Give students a greeting card each and some art supplies. Have them make a drawing of their personal “na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati” moment on the front of the card and a reminder message to themselves on the inside of the card.

Allow them the peace and quiet to fully immerse in the moment. After everyone is finished, they can share with the class.

Optional Activity: Trials of Mīrābāī

Divide the students into groups and ask them to read through the “Trials of Mīrābāī” from *The Woman Seeker*, and go through the following questions.

1. Describe Mīrābāī’s devotion to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa.
2. What were the challenges she faced and how did she respond to them?
3. In what ways did Bhagavān protect her?

Trials of
Mīrābāī



Conclusion 5 min

Silent Meditation: Ask everyone to sit quietly with their eyes closed, and think of a time when Bhagavān has saved them. Ask them to offer their love and gratitude to the Lord of their hearts and to remain in silence for a few moments.

Sūtra:

na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati
— Bhagavān's devotee
never perishes!

Sādhana: Display your card from class in a place that is visible at home. This can be in your room or a common area that you frequently visit. At least once a day, go and look at your drawing, and remind yourself of how Bhagavān saved you in your lowest moments. If He saved you then, He will save you now. In fact, He will always save His devotees.

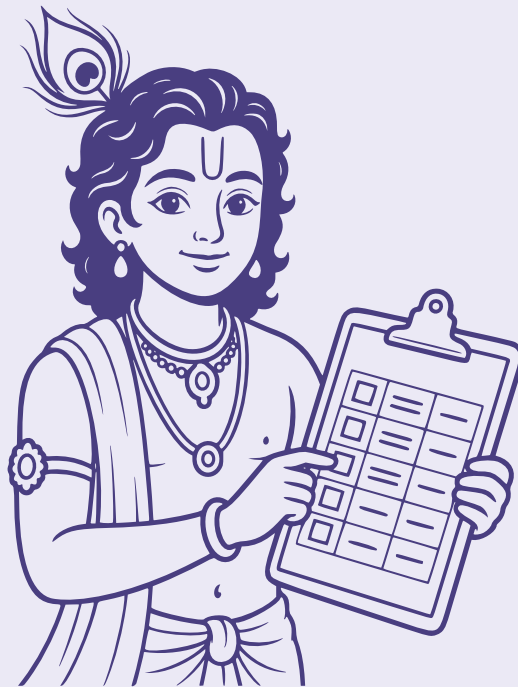
If the students didn't make the cards, then ask them to simply write down the sūtra on the cards and then do the same.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Review Checkpoint

Lessons 1-13

Time 55 min



This particular class will be a comprehensive review of all prior lessons (1-13). This should be an interactive discussion/quiz. You can use tools like hangman, Kahoot, Jeopardy, etc. to go through what we have done so far in 13 steps.

Once this foundation is set, it will be easier to move on to the next main topic of seeing Bhagavān's Divine Glories in everything.

[!\[\]\(404998467308fb18602019e9453b0c36_img.jpg\) Sample Jeopardy Quiz](#)



Review Checkpoint: Lessons 1-13

Lesson 1: Intro to Bhagavān and Bhakti

How do we establish the existence of Bhagavān?

- Step 1: If there is something created, then there must be a creator.
- Step 2: The creator of that particular object should have knowledge of how to create it.
- Step 3: The creator of that particular object should have knowledge AND the ability to create it.
- Step 4: If we are experiencing an infinite effect, there must be an infinite cause behind it.

The infinite cause of the world, the source from which everything emerges, by which everything is sustained, and into which everything is dissolved, is called **Īśvara**.

Being the source of this infinite universe, Īśvara has infinite knowledge (sarvajña/omniscient) and infinite ability (sarva-śaktimān/omnipotent). **Īśvara is Consciousness with the power of Māyā expressing as the cause of this universe.**

Because Īśvara is infinite, Īśvara is also known as Bhagavān (in the masculine form) and Bhagavatī (in the feminine form). The words Bhagavān and Bhagavatī mean the one that has the six bhagas (powers) in infinite measure.

aiśvaryaśya samagrasya dharmasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ,
vairāgyasyātha mokṣasya ṣaṇṇām bhaga itīraṇā.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.5.74

The six bhagas are:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| • aiśvarya: power | • śrī: wealth |
| • dharma: righteousness | • vairāgya: dispassion |
| • yaśa: fame | • mokṣa: freedom |

Opening our hearts to Īśvara is known as **bhakti yoga**.

Lesson 2: Bhagavān's Lower Nature

Īśvara's lower nature is eightfold — the five elements (space, air, fire, water, earth) and the inner thought equipment (mind, intellect, and ego). This is how Īśvara expresses in the world.

Because everything in the world is Bhagavān's prakṛti, **we recognize Divinity in everything — even in gross and subtle matter.** When we do this, our attitude towards the world changes.

Lesson 3: Bhagavān's Real Essence

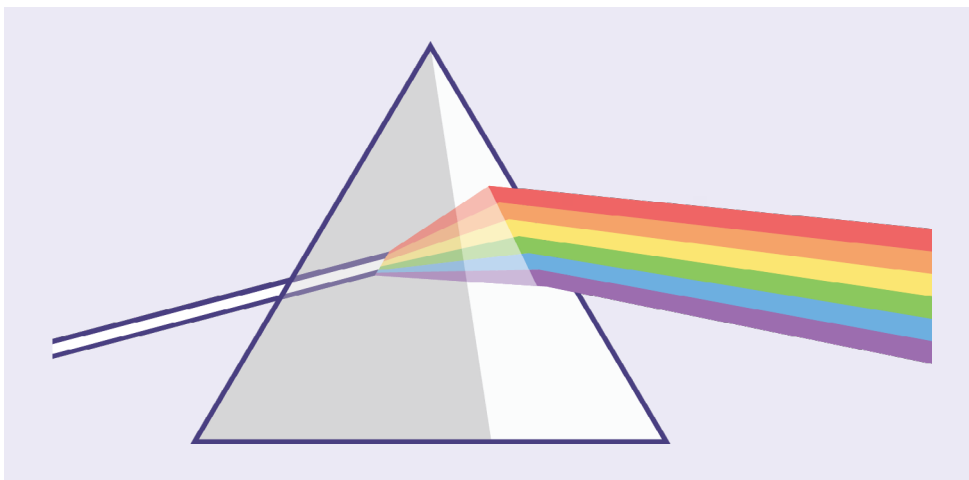
The higher Nature of Īśvara is the spiritual factor. This is also known as **Consciousness**. Just as a string underlies and holds together the gems on a necklace, Consciousness underlies and holds together all the names and forms we see in this universe.

Lesson 4: Bhagavān's Māyā

If there is only one string called Consciousness, then what makes us see many? That is the power of Māyā. **Māyā is the power that makes something appear as it is not.**

Review this illustration:

- **The prism** which takes in white light and seemingly “converts” it into a whole rainbow is symbolic of Māyā.
- **The white light** represents Consciousness or Brahman — higher nature of Īśvara.
- **The spectrum of colorful light** represents all the names and forms that we perceive on a daily basis — lower nature of Īśvara.



When we get too caught up in the expression of names and forms of things, we lose out on their essence. When this happens, we get into petty arguments and unnecessary disagreements all because we aren't paying attention to the deeper things in life. Recall the story of the animal crackers.

So, how do we focus on the essence, Brahman, rather than the expression of Māyā? **The trick is to tune into Brahman by cultivating sāttvika tendencies and qualities in ourselves.**

Lesson 5: Devotion and Devotees

A great way to cultivate a sāttvika mind is through bhakti. Recognizing the Origin of all and offering our love and appreciation towards this Source, is known as **bhakti or devotion.**

We offer our love and appreciation through prayer. **Prayer is the act of attuning our individuality with Totality (Īśvara) to connect to the wisdom and strength of Totality.**

There are generally three types of prayer:

- Silent prayer: A prayer when our minds are silent and able to tune into Īśvara's silence. In that silence, deep wisdom, strength, and fearlessness come alive.
- Conversational prayer: A prayer in the form of a dialogue with Īśvara where we empty all of our thoughts, confusions, and doubts.
- Worshipful prayer: A prayer of offering thanks, giving praise, or simply reveling in the Lord's glory.

There are four types of devotees according to the Bhagavad-gītā:

- Ārta: Those who just want to **Feel** better and are going through suffering.
- Jijñāsu: Those who just want to **Know** better.
- Arthārthī: Those who just want to **Have** better and are seeking fulfillment of desires.
- Jñānī: Those who want the **BEST** — Eternal Freedom.

Remember, all of the devotees are dear to Bhagavān because they are connecting to Him!

Lesson 6: Discover your Iṣṭa Devatā

In actuality, Īśvara has no specific name or form, but He is the origin of all names and forms. However, sometimes, it can be very difficult to relate or communicate with the nameless and formless Reality.

An Iṣṭa Devatā or My Personal God (MPG) is a personification of Īśvara who has a particular name and form. This makes it easy for us to connect with Īśvara via our Iṣṭa Devatās.

An Iṣṭa Devatā can be someone like Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī, Durgā, etc. These names and forms are all representations of that one Īśvara, but they make it easier for us to relate, communicate, and understand Īśvara. **By worshiping the form, we prepare our minds to evolve to the formless.**

Lesson 7: Shades of Bhagavān

After figuring out our own Iṣṭa Devatās, there are many ways to see their expressions in our lives. Some of the expressions we discussed are:

- Gatih: ultimate Goal of everything
- Bhartā: Supporter
- Prabhu: Lord who makes the impossible possible
- Sākṣī: Witness of all things

Lesson 8: Secret of Surrender

Bhagavān is always there for us. In fact, when we surrender to Him, we will never have to worry!

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that actually, there are only two categories of things we worry about. They are called **yoga and kṣema**.

- Yoga: attaining something that we do not have.
- Kṣema: securing what we already have.

However, Bhagavān carries yoga and kṣema (yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham) for those who have these three qualities:

- ananyāścintayanto mām: to those whose goal is Divinity
- ye janāḥ paryupāsate: to those who see Bhagavān's hand everywhere
- teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām: to those ever connected to Bhagavān

What if we don't have those qualities, does Bhagavān still carry our yogakṣema? Definitely! Recollect the story of the man carrying the suitcase on his head on the moving train versus the man simply keeping the suitcase on the ground. Which one are we? Which department do we belong to — the worshiping or worrying?

Lesson 9: Secret of Worship

How do we further strengthen our relationship with Īśvara? We can do this through **sādhana — a regular spiritual practice that a seeker performs to grow closer to and strengthen their relationship with the ultimate Goal or Īśvara.**

A sādhana helps us to deepen our relationship with Īśvara. One of the sādhana that we performed was **pūjā — a ritualistic form of worship which involves the body, speech, and mind.**

We also learned that pūjā doesn't have to be elaborate. We can worship through patram (leaf), puṣpam (flower), phalam (fruit), and toyam (water), or we can do a pañcopacāra pūjā like we did in class. The most important offering of pūjā is love.

Lesson 10: Everything is Worship

While pūjā is a beautiful way to adore and pray to Īśvara, the deeper meaning of pūjā is worshiping through our daily thoughts, words, and deeds. Five simple ways of worshiping were given in the Bhagavad-gītā:

- Act for Totality not Thirst
- Eat for Sustenance not Satisfaction
- Pray for Purity not Possessions
- Give to Boost not Boast
- Discipline for Growth not Glamor

Lesson 11: Secret of Grace

Just like any healthy relationship, our relationship with Bhagavān must be two-sided. So, how do we know whether Bhagavān is reciprocating our bhakti for Him? How does He view our actions, and how does He respond to them?

Bhagavān is impartial. He doesn't dislike anyone, nor does He have any favorites. But to the extent that we walk towards Him (just like walking towards the fire), to that extent, we will feel His grace.

Grace is the constant radiance of Bhagavān's love shining through all beings.

Three characteristics of grace:

1. It is always there, **ever available**. There is actually no need to wait for grace, just like there's no need to wait for the fire to get hot.

2. Grace is **infinite**. It's not like Bhagavān has a quota for grace or that His grace ever runs out.
3. Grace needs to be **tuned into**. Even if it is always there, ever available, not everyone tunes into this grace. Those who tune in by performing their sādhanā or worshipping Bhagavān through their thoughts, words, and actions, will feel the most grace.

Lesson 12: Secret of Forgiveness

What if someone really messed up in life? Do they have access to Bhagavān's grace? Definitely! Bhagavān says the moment someone resolves to transform, they become a sādhu. The key is learning how to forgive oneself and take the right resolve.

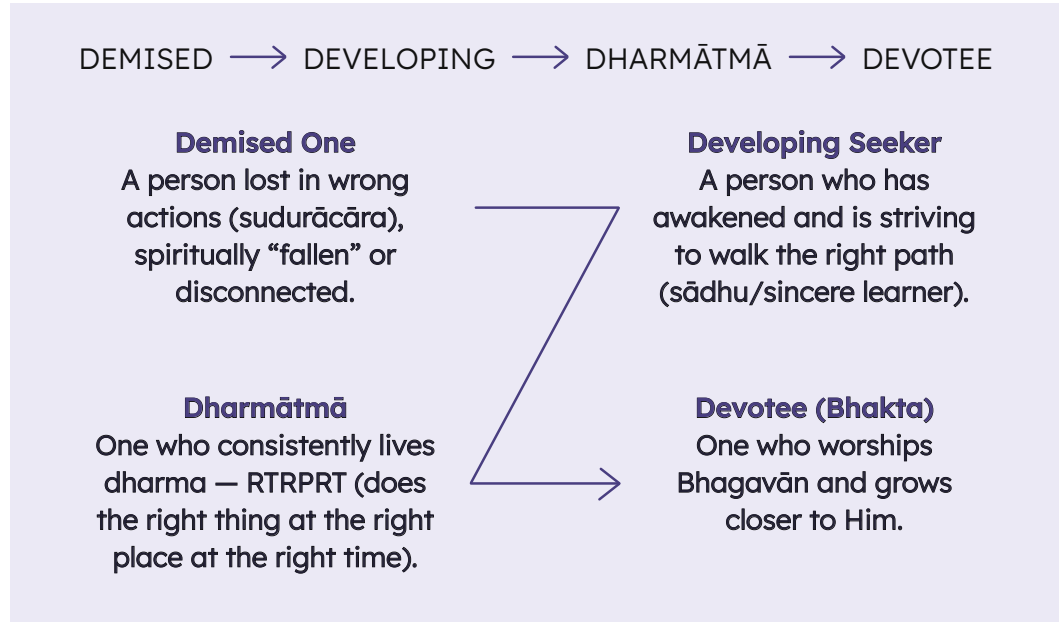
Forgiveness of ourselves means the ability to let go of our own past shortcomings by resolving to start anew. There's a common saying: forgive and forget. What do we actually forget? We forget the pain involved with those particular experiences, but we remember the lessons so that we don't repeat the same mistakes again. Once we have acknowledged our shortcomings, we take a firm resolve by putting forth sincere effort to change for the better and move towards the Higher.

Forgiveness of others means the ability to let go of their shortcomings, whether they acknowledge it or not, so that we can feel at peace. Sometimes, they may recognize their mistakes and offer an apology. Other times, they may genuinely feel that they haven't done anything wrong even if we feel hurt by their actions. We let go of their shortcomings for our own peace because if we don't, we carry a heavy burden of toxins which affects us not only mentally but also physically. When we forgive others, we should forget the pain but remember the lesson, so that we become more alert and know how to interact with them in the future.

In both cases, Bhagavān says that whoever makes the right resolve to change becomes a **sādhu**.

Lesson 13: My Devotee Never Perishes

Slowly but surely, we make a transition and move from a demised one (sudurācāra) to a devotee (bhakta).



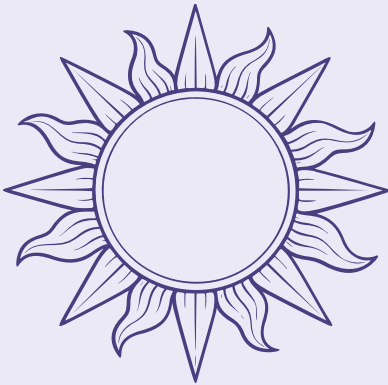
When a sudurācāra person recognizes their mistakes and makes a firm resolve, they become a sādhū. As the sādhū begins to practice a dhārmika lifestyle, they become a dharmātmā. By practicing righteous living, they grow closer to Bhagavān and His grace, thus becoming a bhakta. Bhagavān declares that He will never ever let his bhakta perish. It has never happened, and it will never happen!

Now that we have slowly transitioned into a bhakta, we are ready to strengthen our relationship with Bhagavān through seeing His Divine Glories everywhere. We will start with Chapter 10 of the Bhagavad-gītā next week.

Divine Glories: The Sun

This lesson introduces the class to Bhagavān's Divine Glories so that we can see Him not only as our Iṣṭa Devatā but also as the Lord that expresses in all glorious things. This lesson especially focuses on the Sun.

10.17  10.21 



kathaṁ vidyām-aham yogin
tvāṁ sadā paricintayan,
keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu
cintyo'si bhagavan-mayā.

How shall I, ever meditating,
know You, O Yogin? In what
aspects or forms, O Blessed Lord,
are You to be thought of by me?

ādityānām-aham viṣṇuḥ
jyotiṣāṁ raviraṁśumān,
marīcirmarutāmasmi
nakṣatrāṇām-aham śaśī.

Among the (twelve) Ādityas, I
am Viṣṇu; among all of the lights,
the radiant Sun; I am Marīci
among the Maruts; among the
asterisms, I am the Moon.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

-  **Vibhūti Yoga Game slides**
-  **Bhagavān's Vibhūti: The Sun slides**
-  **108 Chanting of Gāyatrī Mantra Audio**
-  **Yoga with Swami Sharanananda!**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 10.17, 10.21.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Bhagavad Geeta - Infinite Glories series- 2 - The start, the middle the end."

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Infinite Glories Series - 3 - The Brightest Sun."

Divine Glories: The Sun

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Through the previous lessons, we have slowly transitioned into a bhakta or devotee. We have learned that Īśvara is essentially pure Consciousness with the power of Māyā expressing as the cause of this world. When we personify Īśvara in order to worship Him or Her, we call that personification an Iṣṭa Devatā. We can worship our Iṣṭa Devatā through a simple pūjā or by performing every single action for a Higher purpose. When we start to build a relationship with our Iṣṭa Devatā, we start to become free of worries and feel Divine Grace flow through us. We are able to let go of our past mistakes and are inspired to change for the better. This is how we slowly emerge as a bhakta.

Introduction 5 min

Now that we have slowly transitioned into a bhakta, what's the next step of strengthening this relationship with Bhagavān? This is the very question Arjuna asks.

katham vidyām-aham yogin
tvām sadā paricintayan,
keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu
cintyo'si bhagavan-mayā.

How shall I, ever meditating, know
You, O Yogin? In what aspects or
forms, O Blessed Lord, are You to
be thought of by me?

10.17

Arjuna's question here is a very powerful one. He wants to know how he can constantly meditate or pray to Bhagavān even while he is going through his day-to-day activities.



Discussion

Do you think it's possible to keep the form of Bhagavān in your mind throughout the entire day? Have you ever thought about someone or something uninterruptedly the entire day? It's easier to think about Bhagavān when we do pūjā, when we close our eyes, or are in a temple, but how about when we are out there interacting in the world? How can we still keep our minds on Bhagavān? Is it even possible?

In the previous lessons, we learned that "as we think, so we become." There's so much going on in the world today. Sometimes, it's hard to even keep our minds positive, especially with news and social media easily available, accessible, and

showing up on our feed even if we really didn't ask for it. It's so easy to get caught up and keep scrolling through. Before we know it, we've lost our whole day! How do we get our minds away from this into something deeper and more positive?

Main Lesson 25 min

Bhagavān very beautifully answers this question. He tells Arjuna about his vibhūti. When we hear the term vibhūti, the first thing that comes to most of our minds is ash — like the vibhūti (sacred ash) that Bhagavān Śiva wears on his body. The word “bhūti” means being or manifestation. The prefix “vi” means special or glorious. **A vibhūti is a glorious manifestation of Bhagavān.**

When we burn a piece of wood, cloth, or paper, it all turns into ash. This reminds us that there is one underlying Truth in everything we experience. Thus, vibhūti, in terms of sacred ash itself, is a glorious manifestation.

In the Bhagavad-gītā, there are other vibhūtis pointed out. Although Bhagavān expresses as all names and forms manifesting in this world, there are some names and forms which make us think of Bhagavān easily, simply because they are sāttvika in nature. When we see a flower blooming, birds chirping, and trees swaying, their peaceful expressions remind us of Divinity. In other words, their nature is very close to Bhagavān while simultaneously naturally pleasing to witness.



Activity

The Vibhūti Game

Let's explore some of Bhagavān's Vibhūtis through a game.

Round 1: Divide the class into two teams. Give them a vibhūti prompt. Ask them to guess Bhagavān's vibhūti and explain their answer. You can use the Vibhūti Yoga Game slides. The answer will show up when you advance the slide. The team who answers correctly first gets a point. The team with the most points wins.

Sample prompt: Of all the bodies of water, I am (10.24)

Sample answer: Ocean, because it appears to be infinite and Bhagavān is also infinite. Another reason is that it accommodates all kinds of life forms under water. Bhagavān, too, accommodates all kinds of life forms in this world.

Vibhūti Yoga
Game slides



Main Lesson

continued

The vibhūti prompts are based on chapter 10 of the Bhagavad-gītā.

- Of all of the mountains, I am the Himālayas (10.25)
- Of all the weapons, I am the Vajra (10.28)
- Of all the beasts, I am the lion (10.30)
- Of all the asuras, I am Prahlāda (10.30)
- Of all the birds, I am Garuḍa (10.30)
- Of all the seasons, I am spring (10.35)
- Of all the rivers, I am Jāhnavī (Gaṅgā) (10.31)
- Of all the letters, I am letter A (10.33)

Optional Round (time permitting): Each team has to come up with three of their own vibhūtis of Bhagavān and explain their reasoning. The teacher should give them about three to five minutes to discuss and then one minute each to present.

Now let's explore a special vibhūti today:

ādityānām-aham viṣṇuḥ
jyotiṣām raviraṁśumān,
marīcirmarutāmasmi
nakṣatrāṇām-aham śaśī.

Among the (twelve) Ādityas, I am Viṣṇu; **among all of the lights, the radiant Sun;** I am Marīci among the Maruts; among the asterisms, I am the Moon.

10.21

This week we will focus on the phrase: jyotiṣām raviraṁśumān.

Bhagavān says “Of all the lights, I am the radiant Sun.” There are many lights in this world — not only artificial light, but also natural light like the Sun, Moon, stars, planets, etc. Out of all of them, Bhagavān says that His vibhūti is the Sun, meaning this is His most glorious light.



Discussion

Self-Reflection: Why do you think that is? Give the class a few minutes to think through their answers and share.

Debrief: One of the reasons could be that most of the other lights do not generate their own light. Instead, they reflect sunlight. However, the Sun stands out on its own. It doesn't need anyone else's light. It is self-luminous and illumines the entire world. Similarly, Bhagavān is independent and doesn't need anything else or anyone else to manifest this world — He is the infinite source of the entire world.

Another reason could be that the Sun makes life possible here on Earth. The plants use sunlight to perform photosynthesis. In this process, they convert sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide into food and release oxygen. Animals and humans ultimately depend on plants (directly or indirectly) for food. Therefore, the entire food chain begins with sunlight. Similarly, everything begins with Bhagavān — even the Sun itself.

Apart from this, whenever we glance at the Sun, we tend to feel a sense of peace and warmth, especially during sunrise and sunset. There are so many photographers who eagerly wait to capture the perfect sunrise or sunset simply because it is just breathtaking and there are no words to describe it.



Activity

Let's explore more ways in which the Sun is glorious. Did you know that the Sun resembles the following?

1. Karma yogī or a selfless worker
2. Bhakta
3. Jñānī or enlightened being
4. Īśvara
5. Guru
6. Mahātmā
7. A loving parent
8. Carefree child
9. Ātman

Divide the class into groups of four. Each group should come up with ways that the Sun resembles these things. You may share Bhagavān's Vibhūti slides during the debrief and these key points:

Debrief:

1. **Karma yogī:** The Sun serves selflessly and silently without wanting or needing appreciation.
2. **Bhakta:** The Sun brightens everyone's day just as a devotee brings cheer to everyone's hearts.
3. **Jñānī:** With the help of the Sun, we can see things very clearly. The jñānī is one who is able to see things crystal clear.

Bhagavān's
Vibhūti slides



Main Lesson

continued

4. **Īśvara:** The Sun is impartial. It shines on everyone and has no favorites. This is just like Īśvara and His grace. When the Sun rises, humans too rise and begin their day. When the Sun sets, we end our day. This way, the Sun structures time as humans know it. Days, months, and years all stem from our dependent relationship to the Sun!
5. **Guru:** The Sun guides us in the right direction just like a Guru.
6. **Mahātmā:** When the Sun rises and sets, it maintains the same red color. In the same way, when things are up or down, the mahātmā remains equanimous.

udaye savitā raktaḥ
raktaścāstamaye tathā,
sampattau ca vipattau ca
mahatāmekarūpatā.

(Just as) the Sun is red in color at the
time of rising as well as setting, (similarly)
great beings maintain the same conduct in
prosperity as well as in adversity.

Pañcatantra 2.7

7. **Loving parent:** The Sun provides a warm embrace to all.
8. **Carefree child:** The Sun is energetic, vibrant, and free.
9. **Ātman:** Just as the Sun illumines the entire world, the Ātman or pure Consciousness illumines the entire universe, even the Sun.

Now we can definitely see why the Sun is a vibhūti! The Sun is known as Sūrya Devatā or the Sun Deity. Because the Sun resembles so many wonderful things, we worship the Sun through the Gāyatrī Mantra.

The Gāyatrī Mantra is a highly revered mantra, based on a hymn of the Ṛgveda (3.62.10), attributed to the Ṛṣi Viśvāmitra. The mantra is named Gāyatrī, which is actually the name of a poetic meter. There are many mantras in the Gāyatrī meter, but this is considered the most important Vaidika mantra written in that particular meter. Therefore by tradition, it came to be known as the Gāyatrī Mantra. It is also called the Sāvitrī Mantra.

The main goal of life is Self-realization or knowing who we truly are. In order to attain this, a **pure, sharp, and subtle** mind is required. When we chant the Gāyatrī Mantra, it helps us develop this kind of mind.

1. **Pure:** The vibrations of the mantra produce a sound that makes the mind calm. Thinking of the Sun makes us more energetic, vibrant, radiant, and expansive.

2. **Sharp:** Chanting and focusing on the Sun Deity builds concentration.
3. **Subtle:** Learning the meaning behind each of the words, turns the mind inward in silent contemplation.

Thus, chanting the Gāyatrī Mantra helps us reach the ultimate Goal of life. Many sincere seekers take up this sādhanā for this purpose.

At this point, the teacher can play the chanting of the Gāyatrī Mantra for the students to listen. This is a very powerful mantra. It prepares the mind for spiritual knowledge by making it pure, sharp, and subtle. However, it must be chanted the correct way to harness its complete energy.

Gāyatrī Mantra
Audio



Gāyatrī Mantra: A Universal Prayer

om bhūrbhuvassuvāḥ
tatsāviturvareṇyam,
bhargodevasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo nāḥ pracodayāt.

R̥g Veda 3.62.10

Gāyatrī Mantra's simple word meaning:

Om	The Supreme Lord	dhīmahi	we meditate
bhuḥ	the earth	bhargah	on effulgence
bhuvaḥ	the interspace	devasya	of the sun
suvaḥ	the heavens	yaḥ	that which
tat	that	pracodayāt	enlightens
savituḥ	sun	naḥ	our
vareṇyam	which is most worthy of adoration	dhiyaḥ	intellect

We meditate on the effulgence of the Sun, who is the supreme Lord who illumines this whole universe (the earth, sky, heavens); please enlighten our intellect.

After explaining the meaning, play the chant once again for a few minutes. Have the students close their eyes and feel the vibrations of the chant.

Main Lesson

continued

Can you feel the glory of this vibhūti? It's not only the Sun. Many people find that going for a walk and getting a breath of fresh air heals them or sitting by a lake and watching it flow calms them. The reason is that nature is Bhagavān's vibhūti! Nature is very giving, patient, nurturing, and silent — just like Bhagavān. We already have an intrinsic appreciation for the glories in nature, but we should grow to see the Divine in them. Once we start to see the Divine in this most wonderful world of ours, our thoughts will naturally return to thinking of the Lord and praying to Him more regularly. This is why Lord Kṛṣṇa answers Prince Arjuna's question on how to constantly pray to God by illuminating him on His Divine Glories, His vibhūtis!

Activity 15 min

Choose one of two possible activities to run with your class, depending on weather, class size, and class interest.

Option 1: Sūrya Namaskāra

One well-known way to practice worshiping the Sun is through the Sūrya Namaskāra. This famous yoga practice is really good for both stretching the body and energizing the mind. If teachers are not comfortable with leading a yoga exercise, please have the students follow along with the video resources created by Swami Sharanananda.

Option 2: Go for a Walk Outside

For ten minutes, the class can go outside for a walk. During the walk, the students should stay quiet and not talk to each other. The students should be instructed to try to focus on the feeling of the Sun on their skin and the beauty that the Sun's light allows them to witness. The class can do a debrief after.



Yoga with
Swami
Sharanananda!



Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Ask the class to share one thing they love about the Sun. It can be any of the nine different aspects they have studied or their own reflection. Then conclude the class with the chanting of the Gāyatrī Mantra.

Sūtra:

See the Divine
Vibhūti!

Sāadhanā: Chant the Gāyatrī Mantra every day this week. By next class, you should have this mantra memorized. As you chant, acknowledge the Sun's divine light. Bow down and offer gratitude for the many ways it supports our lives.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Divine Glories: Japa

This lesson talks about the spiritual practice of japa — what it is, why one should do it, and the process of how one should take up this sādhanā.

10.25 



maharṣiṇām bhṛgur-aham
girām asmyekam akṣaram,
yajñānām japa-yajño'smi
sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ.

Among the great Ṛṣis, I am Bhṛgu;
among sounds, I am the one-
syllabled 'OM'; among sacrifices,
I am the sacrifice of japa; among
immovable things, the Himālayas.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

An index card for each student

A japa mālā with a pouch for each student (27 or 108 beads)

🔗 **Masaru Emoto — Water Experiments**

🔗 **Iṣṭa-devatā Mantra Game slides**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 10.25, 7.4.

Swami Chinmayananda. *Meditation and Life*. Chapter 15-16.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. "What is Japa Yajña?"

🔗 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. "How to do Japa."

Divine Glories: Japa

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Last class, we discussed one of Bhagavān’s vibhūti — the Sun. One of the most profound Vaidika mantras associated with the Sun is the Gāyatrī Mantra. Have the class close their eyes, and with full attention and intention, chant the Gāyatrī Mantra at least three times.

After chanting, review the overall meaning of the Gāyatrī Mantra as reproduced here: We meditate on the effulgence of the Sun, who is the supreme Lord who illumines this whole universe (the earth, sky, heavens); please enlighten our intellect.

Today, we are going to see another wonderful vibhūti of Bhagavān.

Introduction 10 min



Activity

Give everyone an index card and ask them to write a word/phrase that they repeat almost every day. Ask them to get into two concentric circles (inner circle and outer circle like garba). Each person in the inner circle should have a partner in the outer circle. Have the students repeat the word/phrase softly to themselves while walking in their circle. After thirty seconds, ring a bell, have them stop in front of a partner in the other circle, and share their word/phrase with the person in front of them. Do this for two to three rounds.

After this exercise, ask them to sit down and share the word that they repeat most. How do they think that has an impact on their lives?

Watch the [video of Dr. Masaru Emoto](#).



Discussion

1. What happens when you say the word “snake” or when you say the word “chocolate cake”? How does the body feel?
2. If ideas, thoughts, words, and music affect the molecular structure of water, and our body is 70% water (so is the planet), how do you think words affect us?
3. How do words shape our lives?

If needed, you can do lead-and-follow chanting to review the Gāyatrī Mantra before having the class chant on their own.



Masaru Emoto
— Water
Experiments



Debrief: Words have a direct effect on our bodies. When someone says the word snake, most people's bodies start to tremble or they panic in fear. When someone says chocolate cake or something that we enjoy eating, the body immediately feels hungry. The words that we think and speak not only affect our bodies but they also shape the way we interact with others. When we interact with each other through kind and sweet words, our relationship becomes beautiful. However, when we interact with harsh words, the relationship turns sour. Even plants and animals can feel our words. That's why when we talk to our plants or sing to them, they bloom gracefully, but when we neglect them, they wilt and die sooner.

Main Lesson 25 min

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa speaks about His vibhūti — japa:

maharṣīṇāṁ bhṛgur-aharṇ
girām asmyekam akṣaram,
yajñānāṁ japa-yajño'smi
sthāvarāṇāṁ himālayaḥ.

Among the great Ṛṣis, I am Bhṛgu;
among sounds, I am the one-
syllabled 'OM'; **among sacrifices,**
I am the sacrifice of japa; among
immovable things, the Himālayas.

10.25

Key phrase: Among sacrifices, I am the sacrifice of japa.

What is Japa?

Japa is the repetition of a Divine mantra
or the name of Bhagavān.

A **mantra** is a systematic arrangement of
syllables that vibrate at a certain energy.

For example, the Gāyatrī mantra.

om bhūrbhuvassuvāḥ
tatsāvīturvarēṇyaṁ,
bhargodevasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo nāḥ pracodayāt.

R̥g Veda 3.62.10

What is Japa
Yajña?



Main Lesson

continued

Recall how when we chant the Gāyatrī mantra, its syllables and intonations are arranged in such a way that it produces concentration, clarity, and purity. This is why this mantra is given to us when we are younger, so that we can tune our minds.

We can also chant the names of Bhagavān or Bhagavatī like the following list. When chanted, these sacred sounds also produce concentration, clarity, and purity. In fact, each one has their special and unique strengths. You can ask the students to guess the strength of each form of Bhagavān and Bhagavatī or refer to the [Iṣṭa-devatā Mantra Game slides](#). The mantras will show up when you click/transition the slide.



**Iṣṭa-devatā
Mantra Game
slides**



Om Gaṁ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ	Wisdom and Auspiciousness
Om Śrī Sarasvatyai Namaḥ	Knowledge and Creativity
Om Namaḥ Śivāya	Equanimity and Dispassion
Om Śrī Durgāyai Namaḥ	Strength and Fearlessness
Om Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya	Strength and Protection
Om Śrī Mahālakṣmyai Namaḥ	Virtue and Prosperity
Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma	Dharma and Equanimity
Śrī Kṛṣṇaḥ Śaraṇaṁ Mama	Wisdom and Joyfulness
Om Śrī Hanumate Namaḥ	Devotion and Service
Om Śrī Chinmaya Sadgurave Namaḥ	Wisdom and Service



**The Divine Life
Society:
Japa Yoga**



For more, please check [The Divine Life Society: Japa Yoga](#).

When we perform japa, we should do the japa of our Iṣṭa-devatā mantra. This helps us to deepen our connection with them. (See [Lesson 6: Discover Your Iṣṭa Devatā](#))

Japa helps us develop a whole new rhythm in our thoughts and words. When we keep repeating common complaints like: “I’m so tired,” “I’m too busy,” or “I can’t do this,” our actions start to express these same vibrations. Sometimes, we even repeat songs in our heads the whole day long. Some of them might be good, but some of them may not. Instead of repeating things which may hinder us from being our best selves, we can try repeating the name of Bhagavān, who will help elevate us to the Higher.

There is an immense power in repetition. **Whatever we repeatedly think, we become.** If we keep thinking about something again and again, we actually become that thing.



Example

We keep thinking we are bad at public speaking, so we start dreading an upcoming presentation. When the time comes to present, we stammer, get anxious, and don't do our best.

On the other hand, if we keep thinking that we can do it and we will succeed, we look forward to the presentation. At the time of the presentation, we feel confident and sure of ourselves and perform very well.

So too, when we keep repeating the Divine name again and again, we actually cultivate those very qualities in us.

Can you recollect this from a prior lesson?



Write this on the board and see if the class can fill in the blanks.

Watch your _____, they become your _____.

Watch your _____, they become your _____.

Watch your _____, they become your _____.

Watch your _____, they become your _____,
and watch your _____, because that becomes your _____.

Watch your **thoughts**, they become your **words**.

Watch your **words**, they become your **actions**.

Watch your **actions**, they become your **habits**.

Watch your **habits**, they become your **character**,
and watch your **character**, because that becomes your **destiny**.

Recall Dr. Masaru Emoto's experiment. Every sound has an effect on our bodies. Now just imagine what the name of Bhagavān can do to your body and mind.

Main Lesson

continued

Glory of the Divine Name

Why is japa Bhagavān's vibhūti?

1. It brings joy.

When do we experience joy? We normally experience joy when we are surrounded by love, compassion, empathy, and forgiveness. Actually, all of these are nothing but manifestations of Bhagavān! Really, we experience joy when we remember God.

When do we experience sorrow? It's simple — whenever we forget God. The beauty of God's name is that, if we remember God even in times of distress, we will feel joy!

**Activity**

Pick a few small challenges for the students to do and ensure you have the necessary materials for them.

Some examples: lemon-on-spoon race, three-legged hop, balancing a book on your head, water bottle flip relay, or walk the plank.

Split the class into two groups: Lord Rāma versus Sorrow.

The Lord Rāma team will always chant Lord Rāma in their head and the other team is given no specific instruction.

For each little challenge, pick one or two students from each team and have them compete. Pick different students for each challenge and keep score.

Debrief: Which team did better? What were students thinking of during and after the challenge?

When we chant Lord Rāma's name — all of our fear, sorrow, worry is removed. With our mind focused on Lord Rāma, all of our thoughts, words, and actions become joy-filled.

Sant Kabīr's Doha:

dukh mein sumiran sab kare,
sukh mein kare na koye.
jo sukh mein sumiran kare,
tau dukh kahe ko hoye.

In anguish everyone prays to Him,
in joy does none.
One who prays in happiness, how
can sorrow come?

2. In Rāmacaritamānasa, the “name” of Rāma is said to be greater than Rāma Himself!

Śrī Rāma redeemed only one Ahalyā, but just His name saves so many devotees. For the sake of Viśvāmitra, Śrī Rāma destroyed Tāṭakā, but His name destroys the negative tendencies of so many people all over the world. Śrī Rāma broke the bow of Bhagavān Śiva, but the glory of His name dispels the fear of rebirth for humankind. Śrī Rāma restored the charm of the Daṇḍaka forest, while His name purifies the minds of countless devotees. He crushed so many demons, while His name alone uproots all the impurities of Kali Yuga.

Further Reading 
Rāmacaritamānasa
Bālakāṇḍa
do. 20-27

3. This is the recommended sādhanā in Kali yuga.

In Satya yuga, contemplation was recommended as the sādhanā. In Tretā yuga, it was performing sacrifices. In Dvāpara yuga, it was worshiping the Lord through pūjā. In Kali yuga, the recommended sādhanā is chanting the Divine name because it is the simplest. There are no materials required, and it can be done anywhere, at any time. Just simply chant the name!

4. The Divine name helps us transform.

As we have seen in the previous lesson, by the name Rāma, Ratnākar transformed into Vālmīki. When we practice japa regularly, we will notice a few things happening to us. We will find our minds becoming calmer and more obedient, which will allow us to become more disciplined in all other aspects of our lives as well. Changes to our lives that we only dreamt of will suddenly become more possible. And the stability that comes into our lives will make it easier for us to practice japa. A positive feedback loop will form!

Japa is training
by which the
ever-dancing
rays of the mind
are compelled
to behave in a
certain order and
rhythm.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

Thus the name of Bhagavān is far superior to Bhagavān Himself! Imagine what happens when we repeat it.

Japa versus Affirmation Statements

Affirmation statements such as “I am strong,” “I am brave,” and “I can do this” are all okay in the beginning, but this is still boosting one’s ego. Through japa, we surrender to the Divine being, truly knowing that it’s only through Bhagavān’s grace that everything is possible. Thus, while affirmation statements can help in the beginning of a seeker’s journey, eventually one must move towards Divine mantras which reduce the ego.

Example 
“Dear Bhagavān,
it is only because
of Your grace,
that I am able to
do this.”

Main Lesson

continued

Why is japa important?

There was a man who was cutting a tree with a blunt axe. He took so many hours to cut it. When his boss asked him why he took so long, he said, “My axe was blunt.” The boss then asked, “Well, why didn’t you sharpen it?” He said, “Oh!” The next day he went to cut the tree but this time with a sharp axe. As a result, he finished the work in just a few hours.

We may laugh at this simple story, but this is exactly what we do. We are using a **blunt mind** to study and work in the world, and that’s why it takes us so long to finish everything. We’re confused and distracted, and we find ourselves caught between two inner voices all the time. One part of us wants to finish the work while the other part wants us to enjoy ourselves. Japa is a tool that sharpens the mind and makes us more efficient in everything we do. It makes our minds so single-pointed that we are able to focus on what needs to be done and complete it in a timely manner. The irony is that many people say they don’t have time to do japa, but japa actually saves time!

Pūjya Gurudev gives a metaphor of a river to describe three ailments of the mind:

1. A mind with too many thoughts is like a river that is overflowing with too much water.
2. A mind with impure or lower-quality thoughts is like a river with dirty, impure water.
3. A mind that is turned outwards and in many directions is like a river flowing in the wrong direction.

Ideally, we’d like to be a river that is flowing with the appropriate volume, with clean water, and in the right direction. Japa is a simple, beautiful sādhanā that helps elevate the mind and address all of these issues.

1. **Japa decreases the quantity of thoughts.** Normally, we have hundreds of thoughts racing in our minds by the minute — one after the other. Because of this, we become very restless and distracted. When we do japa, we actually learn how to slow down. The quantity of our thoughts reduces, and we are able to be more attentive to our daily actions.
2. **Japa increases the quality of thoughts.** As we read earlier, whatever we think, we become. As we start thinking of our Iṣṭa-devatā, those very qualities start coming alive in us. For example, one who worships Bhagavān Śiva naturally becomes very calm and equanimous.



Further Reading

Swami Chinmayananda. *Meditation and Life*. Chapter 15: Train the Mind.

- 3. Japa changes the direction of thoughts.** Our true Self lies beyond the body, mind, and intellect. It is difficult to recognize because our thoughts are always turned outward. When we start to do japa, our thoughts become more subtle and capable of going inward to the very source of thought.

In its truest sense, japa means love. It means a special practice by which we develop love and adoration for our Īṣṭa-devatā.

Where?

Designate a special place in one's room or home where nothing else but japa happens. Each place has a vāsanā. For example, when we go into the kitchen, we automatically feel like opening the fridge and eating. When we are by our bed, we automatically feel like lying down and sleeping. Similarly, create a space where you always feel like sitting and contemplating. Nothing else should happen in that space except for japa.

When?

The morning is the best time to do japa because the clutter of the day hasn't entered the mind yet. Wake up, freshen up, and sit down for japa practice. If you cannot do it in the morning, then do it in the evening after a refreshing bath.

How?

Please take this time to do a live demonstration on how to do japa. You may reference the video [How to Do Japa](#) for more information and a video demonstration.

You can use a japa mālā which traditionally has 108 beads plus one extra bead called the merū. See the following diagram for how to hold the mālā. Take the mālā and search for the merū. The merū is the extra bead that usually stands apart from the rest of beads on the mālā. The chanting should begin with the first bead after the merū. Repeat your mantra fervently, and after each repetition, turn one bead towards you, always allowing the index finger to stand apart. The index finger represents the ego. Thus, it is never used in japa practice.

When you have repeated your chosen mantra 108 times, you will reach the merū. Do not cross the merū. Turn the mālā the other way around and start again. The merū symbolizes Guru, the one to whom we always surrender. Thus, we never cross that bead during japa practice.

How to Do
Japa



Main Lesson

continued



Why 108?

The number 108 is very significant.

8 = The Five Elements (Space, Air, Fire, Water, Earth) + Mind, Intellect, and Ego (known as the eightfold prakṛti, as we have studied earlier in [Lesson 2: Bhagavān's Lower Nature](#)).

0 = Disidentification from the **eightfold prakṛti**

1 = Identification as our One true Being

When we disidentify from the five elements and the mind, intellect, and ego, and we only identify as our One true Being, that is 108.

Activity 10 min

Make sure everyone has a japa mālā. Go over the instructions on how to hold the mālā, how to turn the beads towards oneself, and what to do after completing 108 beads. After this, lead the class in a group japa meditation.

Group Japa Meditation

1. Start with three Oms.
2. Take a saṅkalpa not to open the eyes until the dhyānam is complete.
3. Relax the body and do a body scan from the feet to the tip of the head.
4. Watch the breath, inhale all the good, positive things, and exhale negative thoughts.
5. Invoke Guru and Bhagavān and seek Their blessings.

gurur-brahmā gurur-viṣṇuḥ
gurur-devo maheśvaraḥ,
gurur-eva paraṁ brahma
tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ.

6. Chant the dhyāna śloka of your Iṣṭa Devatā.



For a list of dhyāna ślokas, please refer to The Divine Life Society: Dhyana Slokas. In class, you may just chant the following śloka from the Gītā Dhyānam since we are studying the Gītā.

vasudeva-sutaṁ devaṁ
kaṁsa-cāṇūra-mardanam,
devakī paramānandaṁ
kṛṣṇaṁ vande jagadgurum.

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 5

7. Chant the mantra at least nine times.



For a list of mantras, please refer to The Divine Life Society: Japa Yoga. In class, you may just chant Om Śrī Kṛṣṇāya Namaḥ.

8. After chanting the mantra nine times, contemplate on it in silence.

9. Chant:

Om
Śāntiḥ 3x
Hariḥ Om Śrīgurubhyo Namaḥ Hariḥ Om

10. Bless yourself. Slowly rub your palms together, creating heat, and put them over your eyes. Put them over your head and bless yourself. Then move your palms to your face, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, back, and legs. Slowly blinking, open your eyes. Keep your hands in namaskāraḥ position and thank all the ṛṣis who gave us this mantra.

The Divine Life Society:
Dhyana Slokas



The Divine Life Society:
Japa Yoga



Conclusion 5 min

Closing: Address any questions the students may have about japa.

Sūtra:



Do Japa!

Sādhana: Do japa — at least one mālā every day.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Divine Glories: Om̐kāra

This lesson introduces the concept of Om̐kāra as the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper, as well as the silent presence that pervades all three identities and states.

10.25 



maharṣiṇām bhṛgur-aham
girām asmyekam akṣaram,
yajñānām japa-yajño'smi
sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ.

Among the great Ṛṣis, I am Bhṛgu;
among sounds, I am the one-
syllabled 'OM'; among sacrifices,
I am the sacrifice of japa; among
immovable things, the Himālayas.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Dark-colored tablecloths (1 cloth per 3 students)

Rice grains (1-2 cups per 3 students)

 **Iṣṭa-devatā Mantra Game slides**

 **Where does my time go?**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 10.25.

Divine Glories: Omkāra

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Open with a short quiz about the different japa mantras. Using the **Iṣṭa-devatā Mantra Game slides**, show the picture of the deity and then ask if they can identify the corresponding japa mantra and the unique strength associated with it. The mantras will show up when you advance the slide.



**Iṣṭa-devatā
Mantra Game
slides**



Om Gaṁ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ	Wisdom and Auspiciousness
Om Śrī Sarasvatyai Namaḥ	Knowledge and Creativity
Om Namaḥ Śivāya	Equanimity and Dispassion
Om Śrī Durgāyai Namaḥ	Strength and Fearlessness
Om Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya	Strength and Protection
Om Śrī Mahālakṣmyai Namaḥ	Virtue and Prosperity
Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma	Dharma and Equanimity
Śrī Kṛṣṇaḥ Śaraṇaṁ Mama	Wisdom and Joyfulness
Om Śrī Hanumate Namaḥ	Devotion and Service
Om Śrī Chinmaya Sadgurave Namaḥ	Wisdom and Service

Introduction 10 min

Is there anything that you notice in most of the mantras? They have a common word that pervades them. What is it? It is Om. Today, we're going to explore the meaning of Om — one of Bhagavān's vibhūtis!

Give each student the "Where does my time go?" worksheet. Ask them to identify how much time they are likely to spend on these activities in one day.



**Where does my
time go?**



- Hanging out with friends.
- Dreaming about a future achievement.
- Sleeping peacefully in the bed.
- Going to school.
- Watching a show.
- Daydreaming during a class.
- Taking a nap on the couch.
- Going for a run.
- Playing a sport or dancing.
- Imagining what it's like to be in college.

Once they have written out all their answers, ask them to share with the class.

Next, ask them to see if there's any way to classify all ten statements. Is there a way to group them? Do some of them share commonalities?

After classifying them, ask students to total the number of hours they spend in these states each day. If they do not participate in a certain activity, they can just put in zero hours.

Hint: The statements can be classified into three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep.



Example

Waking State: twelve hours total

- Hanging out with friends
- Going to school
- Watching a show
- Going for a run
- Playing a sport or dancing

Dream State (includes daydreaming): one hour total

- Dreaming about a future achievement
- Daydreaming during a class
- Imagining what it's like to be in college

Deep Sleep: six hours total

- Sleeping peacefully in the bed
- Taking a nap on the couch

Ask them to keep these papers with them as we will return to this topic in the main lesson.

Main Lesson 25 min

Let's look at the same verse as last week, except this time, we will have a different focus.

maharṣiṇām bhṛgur-aham
girām asmyekam akṣaram,
yajñānām japa-yajño'smi
sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ.

Among the great Ṛṣis, I am Bhṛgu;
among sounds, I am the one-
syllabled 'OM'; among sacrifices,
I am the sacrifice of japa; among
immovable things, the Himālayas.

10.25

In this particular verse, Bhagavān says, among sounds, His vibhūti is the single syllable "Om." What do you think of when you hear the word Om?

Main Lesson

continued

Om is the primordial sacred sound. It is uttered at the start and end of all worship. It is chanted with mantras, revealed in scriptures, and expressed in deities. For example, Bhagavān Gaṇeśa's form is often drawn as Om. Bhagavān Śiva's trīśūla, Śrī Rāma's bow, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's curves, Śrī Hanumān's tail, Lakṣmī Devī's lotus — all resemble this sacred syllable.

What makes this sound so soulful and why does it put us at ease?

Physical Level: Scientific studies show that chanting Om reduces blood pressure, improves psychological wellbeing, reduces stress, and improves the quality of sleep.

Emotional Level: When we come together and chant Om, we automatically feel a surge of positive vibrations. We begin to slow down and become more aware of our thoughts and emotions.

Intellectual Level: Chanting Om continuously while focusing on the sound or on the form improves our concentration.

**Activity**

Ask the class to sit straight, join their palms together, and close their eyes. The teacher should chant Om three times, asking them to repeat after each chant. Then ask them to open their eyes and see how they felt during the chanting. Did they feel disturbed or relaxed? Were their minds agitated or calm? How do they feel now?

In the next round, chant Om together three times. Ask the students to focus on the sound of the chanting in the beginning, middle, and end. Pause for a moment of silence in between each chant. Feel the silence. Were their minds distracted or focused? How do they feel now?

Spiritual Level: Om is the closest sound to Brahman or Reality. In fact, if all of our Vedas were lost, they could be revived through the Gāyatrī mantra which contains their essence. If even the Gāyatrī mantra were to disappear, its entire essence could be revived by the sacred mantra Om. Therefore, Om is the most important mantra in the Vedas. Worshiping Om is worshiping the entire Vedas. Om is also indicated in our Purāṇas, Yoga śāstras, Bhagavad-gītā, and Upaniṣads. The proximity of Om to Brahman is beautifully explained in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.

Now, let's explore this further. Take a look back at the quiz. Through the exercise, we recognized that we go through three states every day — **waking, dream, and deep sleep**. We sometimes have in-between states, but they all fall

in the purview of these three states. For example, daydreaming can fall under the dream state.

Waking state: This is the state where we spend most of our time interacting with the world around us. It's when both the mind and senses are active — we see different sights, hear a range of sounds, smell fragrances, taste food, and examine things through touch.

Dream state: This is the state where we imagine things with our minds. In a dream, we may see, hear, and taste but not through our senses. It's only a play of the mind. If we had any strong unfulfilled desires in the waking state, they might just show up in our dreams. Often, dreams are a representation of vāsanās or deep impressions that haven't been expressed in the waking state.

Deep sleep state: This is the state where we lie on the bed and doze off. We experience nothingness because the mind and senses are both inactive. There is no experience of the external world around us or even our own inner thoughts.

When we identify with these states, we become the **waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper**, respectively. These three identities correspond to the three letters of AUM.



We commonly spell OM with two letters. However, when we break it down, it actually consists of three letters: AUM. Because of a Saṁskṛtam pronunciation rule, AUM becomes OM. It is supposed to be chanted as OM and not AUM.

The chanting of Om emerges from silence and dissolves into silence. In fact, silence exists in and through the chanting of Om because the foundation of all sound is silence. The silence that pervades the chanting of Om represents Turīya or Ātman.

Analysis of AUM

A: represents the waker and the waking experience

U: represents the dreamer and the dream experience

M: represents the deep sleeper and the deep sleep experience

Silence: represents Turīya or Ātman, our true Self, which pervades all three states

AUM is actually the totality of all experiences of everyone at all times. It's not something outside of us. It's our own Reality.

Main Lesson

continued



Example

Waker: 14 hours
 Dreamer: 2 hours
 Deep Sleeper: 8 hours

Now let's re-examine the quiz. Let's draft an average number of hours that we spend during the day for the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper.

Let's analyze these questions:

- When we are the **waker**, are we also the dreamer and deep sleeper?
- When we are the **dreamer**, are we also the waker and deep sleeper?
- When we are the **deep sleeper**, are we also the waker and dreamer?

The waker is our current identity. It's our name, form, personality. It's what we identify with most. Interestingly, when we are the waker, we are not the dreamer and deep sleeper. But what happens when we start to dream? The minute we go into a dream, we tend to take up a different name and form altogether and believe it to be true. Do you remember any of your dreams? Were you the same exact person with the same exact body in the dream? Did you carry all of your family, friends, possessions, likes and dislikes in the dream? In the dream state, there was no notion of the waker.

When we glide into deep sleep, we lose our other identities and have no notion of the waker or the dreamer. Do you know who you are when you are sleeping? Just think about it. We have no notion of our day-to-day personalities in deep sleep. How many hours a day do we sleep? If we sleep for six hours a day, that means we are sleeping for a quarter of our lives! For a quarter of our lives, we had no awareness of our day-to-day or "waking" personalities. Despite this, don't you feel like you go through all the three states?

If we examine these closely, there are three different states with three distinct personalities of the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper. Even though they are distinct personalities, there is one constant presence in them.

The common thread in all these experiences is known as **Turiya**.
 That is your real Nature and that is the essence of Om.
 Other names for Turiya are Ātman and Brahman.



Example

Think of a gold bracelet, ring, and necklace. They are all different and unique. The bracelet isn't in the ring and the ring isn't in the necklace. The necklace most certainly isn't in the bracelet. But the underlying reality in all three of them is only one gold. That is similar to Turiya.

Om represents the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper. At the same time, it represents the silent common presence in all states, which is Turīya.

Story: King Janaka

King Janaka once had a troubling experience. One night, as he slept peacefully in his palace, he dreamt that he had become a beggar.

In the dream, he wandered hungry for days. At last, after great difficulty, he managed to obtain a little khichḍī. Just as it was prepared and placed before him, two bulls began fighting nearby. In the chaos, their hooves struck the pot, spilling the food onto the ground. King Janaka was filled with sorrow — after days of hunger, even that small meal was lost.

At that very moment, he woke up. He found himself back in his palace, lying comfortably on his bed. Deeply perplexed, he began to wonder: **Am I the beggar who dreamt of being a king, or the king who dreamt of being a beggar?**

Seeking clarity, he summoned the wisest people in his kingdom and asked them to answer his question. None could satisfy him.

Finally, Sage Aṣṭāvakra arrived. Hearing the king's dilemma, he calmly replied, "Neither the waker is true, nor the dreamer. You are the Truth."



Discussion

What did Sage Aṣṭāvakra mean when he told King Janaka, "You are the Truth"?

Debrief: Sage Aṣṭāvakra meant that King Janaka — that particular personality — was only the waker. The beggar in the dream was only the dreamer. The king disappeared in the dream, and the beggar disappeared in waking. Something remained throughout both states, and that is the Turīya or Truth.

We can all agree that we are not our dreams. When we dream about something crazy, sometimes we may wake up and want to tell someone, but soon after, we forget, or let it go. Our dreams don't dictate our sleeping state or our waking state. But as we learned, the dreamer is just as real as the waker and the sleeper. Underlying all three is the Truth. Just like we realize the falseness of our dreams and shake them off, when something sad or disturbing happens in our waking state — we can try to shake it off as just an experience of the waker!

Activity 10 min

Option 1: Shake it Off

Have everyone get up and spread out a little. In this activity, they will act out the different states.

For this activity, the students will be given a certain time of day to act out what their personalities would be like. After they act, the teacher should say “Shake It Off.” When this happens, the students should shake off their current personalities and forget about them and take up new personalities in the new time given.

Say a random time of day, like “11 PM and you’re asleep,” and ask everyone to act out how they would be at that time. For example, some students might act like they are sleeping on the bed, others might fall asleep on their desks, others in bed on their phone, or they may try to act out a dream, and so on.

After giving students thirty seconds to act out this position, have all the students get up and “Shake it Off” by wiggling, shaking their bodies, twirling, etc. Do this during each state change.

Then say a different time, “6 AM,” and ask everyone to act out what they would be doing at that time.

Then say a different time, “9 AM,” and ask everyone to act out what they would be doing at that time.

Then say a different time, “3 PM,” and ask everyone to act out what they would be doing at that time.

Debrief: Each time, we took up a different personality and then shook it off. Many personalities came and left, but what remained was your true Self. That is Om. Close your eyes and just feel that presence that is beyond time, beyond space, beyond any personality. **Listen to the sound of Om and feel that unshakable presence that always remains as it is.**

Have the students close their eyes, chant Om, and feel their unshakable presence.

Option 2: Rise with Rice

Divide the students into groups of three. Give each group a dark-colored tablecloth and one to two cups of rice. Ask the students to sit around their tablecloths and then make their creations with the rice provided. Give them two minutes for each round.

Round 1: One of the students in the group should create an illustration of something that upset them this week. When they are done, ask the illustrator from each group to share what they have created and what they were feeling at that moment. Then, ask them to merge all the rice back in the center to get ready for the next creation. Repeat this process with the next two rounds.

Round 2: The group should appoint another student to create an illustration of the last dream they remember.

Round 3: The group should appoint another student to create an illustration of how the deep sleep state feels.

Discussion

1. Which creation was the easiest to make?
2. What was the same about all three creations? What does the rice represent?
3. Was any one state or drawing more “real” or “important” than the others? Explain. Does one image leave an impression on the other images?

Debrief: Throughout all creations, rice remained as rice. The waker was not in the dreamer, nor was the dreamer in the deep sleeper, but rice was there throughout all three identities and states. A represents the waker, U the dreamer, and M the deep sleeper. The rice represents Turiya or the Truth of our being.

At the end of each day, when we transition from the waker to the dreamer to the sleeper, and back to the waker, remember that you are not any one state. Just like we merged all the rice back into the center, shake off the feelings of the waking state when we are trying to sleep. And when it is time to transition from sleeping or dreaming to waking, shake off the tiredness and disturbances from dreams or nightmares. And remember, you are the one thing that can never be shaken off!

Have the students close their eyes, chant Om, and feel their unshakable presence.

Conclusion 5 min

Group OM Meditation

1. Relax the body and do a body scan from the feet to the tip of the head.
2. Watch the breath, inhale all the good, positive things, and exhale negative thoughts.
3. Invoke Guru and Bhagavān and seek Their blessings.

gurur-brahmā gurur-viṣṇuḥ
gurur-devo maheśvaraḥ,
gurur-eva paraṁ brahma
tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ.

4. Chant the dhyāna śloka of Om.

omkāraṁ bindusaṁyuktaṁ
nityaṁ dhyāyanti yoginaḥ,
kāmadāṁ mokṣadāṁ caiva
omkāraṁ namo namaḥ.

The yogīs constantly meditate upon Om united with the bindu (the dot above ॐ). Om fulfills all desires and grants liberation. I bow again and again to Om.

5. Chant Om three times, feeling the unshakable presence throughout the waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper. Pause for a moment of silence. Now, feel your unshakable presence beyond space, time, and any personality.
6. Chant:

Om
Śāntiḥ 3x
Hariḥ Om Śrīgurubhyo Namaḥ Hariḥ Om

7. Bless yourself. Slowly rub your palms together, creating heat, and put them over your eyes. Put them over your head and bless yourself. Then move your palms to your face, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, back, and legs. Slowly blinking, open your eyes. Keep your hands in namaskāraḥ position and thank all the ṛṣis who gave us this mantra.

Sūtra:

You are Unshakable

Sādhana: Before going to bed, chant Om three times and feel your unshakable presence.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Divine Glories: Silence

In this lesson, we will explore the glory of silence and how silence recharges our body, speech, and mind, paving the way for great secrets to unfold.

10.38 



daṇḍo damayatām asmi
nītir-asmi jigīṣatām,
maunaṁ caivāsmi guhyānām
jñānaṁ jñānavatām aham.

Among punishers I am the sceptre;
among those who seek victory,
I am statesmanship; and also
among secrets, I am silence; and I
am knowledge among knowers.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

 **Theater Games | Focus | Counting to 20**

References

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 Swami Chinmayananda. “Infinite Glories Series - 24 - I am Sceptre, Statesmanship, Silence.”

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Divine Glories: Silence

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min



Discussion

Start the class by asking the following questions:

1. Which parts of ourselves can we shake off?
 - The waker, dreamer, and deep sleeper.
2. What is unshakable in us?
 - Om — our true Identity.

In the last class, we talked about Om and how it represents our true unshakable Nature. Ask the class to recollect what each of the letters stands for and what the silence after Om means.

Note: We commonly spell OM with two letters. However, when we break it down, it actually consists of three letters: AUM.

A: represents the waker and the waking experience

U: represents the dreamer and the dream experience

M: represents the deep sleeper and the deep sleep experience

Silence: represents Turīya or Ātman, our true Self, which pervades all three states

AUM is actually the totality of all experiences of everyone at all times. It's not something outside of us. It's our own Reality.

Introduction 10 min



Activity: Tuning into Om

Have the students sit in a circle, facing outwards. Everyone closes their eyes and chants Om three times to tune into each other. The goal is to count up to 21, one at a time in a random order, without talking over each other. The teacher taps one student to start counting from 1. Any student, other than the ones next to the previous student, says "2." Another student says "3," and so on, till they reach 21.

Students must count in random order. If they do not, or if two students speak at once, they must restart by chanting Om and counting from 1. This requires pure tuning. The trick is to be very silent and to tune into each other.

Refer to the Theater Games video.

Discussion: What do you think was the key to counting effectively even if you couldn't see each other? What could everyone have done differently to make it easier to count to 21?

Debrief: The key to counting effectively without knowing who's going first is to really listen to each other's silence. In silence, we can hear each other's breathing patterns, subtle body movements, and even feel the vibrations of each other's thoughts. In today's class, we will dwell on silence as the vibhūti of Bhagavān.

Theater Games video



Note: The only difference is that in this activity, they are sitting in an outward facing circle with their eyes closed, so they cannot see each other. They just have to tune in.



Alternate Activity: Tuning into Silence

As a class, play two rounds of the game Telephone. For reference, the game goes as follows:

- Before the start, the students sit in a circle or stand in a line.
- The first player will come up with a secret message (sāttvika phrase) and whisper it to the next student, ideally only once.
- Each player whispers what they heard to the next person, continuing down the line.
- The last player reveals the final message they received.

Before the first round, purposefully hype the students up, perhaps by playing a high-energy popular song. Get them excited and brimming with energy. When they play the first round, their excitement may make the final message less precise.

Before the second round, have the students sit for two minutes either in silence or listening to quiet chanting. When they play the second round, they may be more precise in passing along the message.

Debrief: The students probably performed better in the second round, as being silent for a couple of minutes gave them the mental space to listen attentively to the others. In today's class, we will dwell on silence as the vibhūti of Bhagavān.

Main Lesson 25 min

In this verse, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa expounds on more of His vibhūti and, in particular, how He is the silence among secrets.

daṇḍo damayatām asmi
nītir-asmi jigīṣatām,
maunaṁ caivāsmi guhyānām
jñānaṁ jñānavatām aham.

Among punishers I am the sceptre;
among those who seek victory,
I am statesmanship; and also
among secrets, I am silence; and
I am knowledge among knowers.

10.38

Silence or mauna is the absence of sound in the form of noise, speech, music, etc. representing a state of stillness or quiet.

It is used for communication pauses, concentration, introspection, and contemplation, and it provides a deep sense of peace.



Discussion

Ask the class: Why do you think Bhagavān says that silence is a secret?

Debrief: It's because only when we are silent, we are alert to all the secrets of the universe.

Let's explore how some of the great discoveries happened when people were silent.

Bhāskarācārya

Bhāskara II, also known as Bhāskarācārya, was a renowned Indian mathematician and astronomer who lived in the 12th century. He is considered one of the greatest mathematicians of Bhārat. In his treatise *Siddhānta Śiromaṇi*, he wrote on planetary positions, eclipses, cosmography, and mathematical technique. In his work he explains that the Earth has gravitational force. This was well before the discovery by Isaac Newton in the 17th century!

Bhāskarācārya worked in an era without laboratories or instruments as we know them. There was no external noise to disturb him; there were no heavy machines nor bustling research centers at that time. **His work emerged from a quiet mind reflecting deeply on numbers, patterns, and the cosmos.**

His insights remind us that our greatest instruments are within us. And when we silence our minds, we can perceive truths that are otherwise hidden.

Archimedes

The Ancient Greek scientist Archimedes is famous for his “Eureka!” moment, but what led to it was actually a moment of relaxation.

The great scientist had been tasked with determining whether a crown was made of pure gold without damaging it, and at that time, the only way to test for gold’s purity involved destroying a sample of the material. Archimedes carried this question with him constantly, turning it over in his mind. Yet, he was unable to make real headway on this investigation.

Then, one day, while stepping into a bath, he quietly observed how the water level rose as his body submerged itself in the tub. In that simple, still moment of awareness, insight dawned: the displacement of water by an object could measure its volume. Combining this new understanding with existing ways to measure mass (using weights and scales), one could calculate an object’s density. Then the gold crown’s density could be compared to the density of a known pure gold object to prove or disprove the crown’s purity.

The shout of “Eureka!” came after, but the discovery itself only happened in a **silent moment of observation**. Archimedes needed a still and attentive mind to see the truth.

Henry David Thoreau

One of the greatest authors in American history was Henry David Thoreau. His greatest work was known as *Walden*, and was written on the banks of Walden Pond in Massachusetts. For over two years, Thoreau lived independently from human society in a self-built cabin, only having a few visitors and living otherwise in the wild. During this time, he spent a lot of time reflecting on solitude and silence, inspired by teachings found in the Vedas and the Bhagavad-gītā.

Here are a few thoughts on his reflection on silence.

“The silence rings; it is musical and thrills me. A night in which the silence was audible, I hear the unspeakable.”

“I wish to hear the silence of the night, for the silence is something positive to be heard. I cannot walk with my ears covered. I must stand still and listen

Main Lesson

continued

with open ears, far from the noises of the village, the night may make its impression on me. A fertile and eloquent silence.... Silence alone is worthy to be heard.”

“Silence is the universal refuge, the sequel to all dull discourses and all foolish acts, a balm to our every chagrin, as welcome after satiety as after disappointment; that background which the painter may not daub, be he master or bungler, and which, however awkward a figure we may have made in the foreground, remains ever our inviolable asylum, where no indignity can assail, no personality can disturb us.”

In this return to silence and simple living, Thoreau wrote *Walden*. And *Walden* ended up being one of the great classics of American literature. If you wish to walk at the pond where Thoreau reflected on silence, you can visit it in Massachusetts!

As we have seen here, great discoveries didn’t happen in hurried and bustling minds, they happened when people were relaxed and at ease. The Universe has all the answers we are searching for, but we have to be silent and still to hear and observe them. In fact, **brilliant ideas don’t come when the brain is storming, they come when the brain rests. When we are silent, that’s when the universe speaks to us.** That’s when answers to our questions start to unfold.

There’s a famous saying that silence is golden, but it’s often neglected in our daily lives. We have a tendency to fill our schedules and pack our days, thinking that we can be productive by staying busy every moment. We tend to forget that our bodies and minds need silence. Just as we charge our devices to use them again and again, we too need to recharge to radiate freshness again. We often find that when we’re working on something, we get stuck on an idea or concept not knowing what to do with it. But when we take a silent break, like a shower, a walk, or a few deep breaths, everything comes together.

Let’s explore how to recharge through silence in four levels:

Level 1: Phone Maunam (Phone on Mute)

Phone silence means giving ourselves time and space to be off our phones, so that we can connect to our deeper selves.

What happens when we’re constantly on our phones?

Quite often, we see people scrolling through their phones while talking to someone, eating a meal, or even walking down the street! When the mind is

This should be an interactive session.

constantly bombarded with information, it doesn't get the time to rest and recharge. We swipe from one thing to the next, and find ourselves exhausted by the end of the day. We end up replying or reacting to unnecessary conversations or getting involved in things we don't need to.

Talk less. Think more. Act wisely.

Swami
Chinmayananda



Discussion

Self-Reflection: Have you ever tried to put your phone on silent mode? What if you took a break from texting, talking, swiping, and scrolling? On a sheet of paper, write down three effective ways to keep your phones on mute when you need to recharge.

Level 2: Kāṣṭha and Indriya Maunam (Body and Senses on Mute)

The silence of the body and senses is when the body is completely still, and the senses are intensely focused on one thing. Stillness of the body means sitting without any movement — no swinging of the legs, no fidgeting with the hands, no shaking the head. Just complete stillness. Stillness of the body isn't just required for people on the spiritual path; it is necessary for everyone in their daily lives. For example, a tooth cannot be extracted from a patient who keeps moving or fidgeting.

Silence of the senses is when each of our sense organs are steady.

- Eyes are held in a fixed gaze without wandering.
- Ears are attentively listening and not distracted by other sounds.
- Nose is breathing gently and not distracted by other smells.
- Tongue is used in silently chewing instead of talking while eating.
- Hands are gently resting instead of fidgeting.

One of the best practices to keep the body and senses still is *yogāsana*.



Activity

Ask the class to hold the *vṛkṣāsana* or tree pose for one minute without moving.

Vṛkṣāsana/
Tree Pose



Level 3: Vāk Maunam (Mouth on Mute)

Verbal silence means choosing not to speak or restraining speech — especially unnecessary or harmful speech. With every movement, we expend our energy. Speech takes an enormous amount of energy. When we indulge in idle talk, gossip, and unnecessary talk for long hours, we drain energy from our bodies.

Main Lesson

continued

That's why people who go on long hikes or mountain climbs stay silent. Our goal should be to conserve our energy for higher purposes.

However, verbal silence is more than just that. It also means having peaceful intentions, by which pleasant speech can emerge.

Story: The Meeting of Two Enlightened Masters

Before Swami Tapovan Mahārāja set off to the Himālayas, he met Bhagavān Ramana Maharshi at Arunachala Hill in Tiruvannamalai. Bhagavān Ramana Maharshi was sitting in silence. Swami Tapovan Mahārāja sat down near him. Both of them were facing each other for about half an hour, but not a word was exchanged between them. After that Swami Tapovan Mahārāja left. That was the highest form of communication. At that level, words were an obstacle to the peace they already had within.

**Activity**

Ask the class to be silent and only speak if there's something valuable to say. See how long the silence goes on and what the first spoken word is. If the silence doesn't break in five minutes, the teacher can end it in the interest of continuing the class which, of course, is valuable.

**Discussion**

Imagine spending one day at school where you speak only when truly necessary. What would you say? How would it change the way you listen, observe, and interact with others? What would you discover about yourself and the people around you if you practiced this kind of silence?

Ask students to share what they would say in school if they spoke only what was necessary.

Fools talk a lot and miss the point. The wise say little, and hit the mark.

Unknown

Level 4: Mano Maunam (Mind on Mute)**Mental Silence**

Even if we manage to restrain our speech, our mind still chatters. Mental silence refers to the quieting of mental chatter. It is more than just being physically quiet; it is when the mind stops its constant stream of inner dialogue and emotional turbulence. It is when the mind is completely present in the moment.

When we are stressed and anxious, the situations we face seem overwhelming and catastrophic, regardless of their actual severity. But with a calm mind, even truly difficult situations seem manageable and solvable. Our minds only have limited space in them after all. If most of our mental energy and space is spent on feeling regrets of the past, anxieties for the future, and excitement for the present, we will not have the energy to truly dedicate ourselves to being present and responding mindfully to whatever's in front of us.

When we achieve the highest levels of mental silence, we can even become aware of a still, serene observer behind thoughts.

Story: Gurudev's Silent Mind

Every year on Mahā Śivarātri, Pūjya Gurudev would maintain maunam for the entire day and spend it in solitude by meditating in the basement of His kuṭiyā at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in Powai. He would give strict instructions that no one is to disturb Him on that day. In the evening after sunset, He would come out of His kuṭiyā and go directly to Jagdeeshwara temple and sit with everyone.

During this time, no one was allowed to touch Him. He would be shimmering and appeared to have a glow all around Him. That was due to the immense heat produced by His meditation. Devotees recall that those who placed their feet on the same spot that Pūjya Gurudev had walked on, could actually feel the warmth. This is the power of His silence. Many people are familiar with Pūjya Gurudev's powerful speech, but we must not forget that it came from an even more powerful silence.



Discussion

Close your eyes for a few moments and imagine turning down the volume of all your thoughts, like lowering the sound on a TV. For just a few moments, there are no worries, no plans, no judgments — just quiet inside your mind. Feel yourself breathe.

Slowly open your eyes. How does this inner silence feel? Describe what changes you notice in your mood, focus, or sense of peace when the mind becomes still. Share with the class.

Out of purity and
silence come the
words of power.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

The highest form of silence is known as **mahā maunam**. It is the silencing of the ego where the ego is completely destroyed. This is Self-realization.

Silence doesn't only reveal secrets of the universe, it reveals the secrets of our selves.

Main Lesson

continued

Story: The Power of Silence

An old, regular devotee came to Swami Tapovan Mahārāja and complained to the Master, “My grandson doesn’t listen. He smokes, comes home late at night, and has developed a number of vices. Swamiji, I have persuaded him to come with me. I have a feeling that if Swamiji meets him, he will change.” Swamiji agreed and welcomed the boy. As described by his grandfather, the boy did not remove his shoes or prostrate before the Mahātmā. Swami Tapovan Mahārāja talked to the boy about a variety of worldly topics: movies, college, etc. and slowly won the boy’s confidence. When Swamiji noticed this, He told the boy to leave things like pūjā and worship to his grandparents, but there is one thing that Swamiji would like the boy to do for his own health — wake up at 5 AM every day no matter what happens the previous night and go to a park and sit for ten minutes. Swamiji also added that afterward, if the boy wished, he could return home and go to sleep. The boy inquired as to what would happen, and Swamiji replied that he would tell him in one month. Years later, Swami Chinmayananda had the opportunity to meet this now transformed boy. When Swami Chinmayananda inquired as to what happened, the boy shared his story: the first day, the boy was skeptical, but decided to try it out and ended up enjoying the melodious sounds and beautiful sights of nature. He ended up staying more than the prescribed ten minutes! The next day, motivated by the initial experience, the boy returned to the park. After a week, the boy was no longer interested in the outward sounds, but the inner quietude. As he began to reflect on his life, he realized what kind of person he had become in his youth, in comparison to the innocence of his childhood, and he decided to change.

Swami Chinmayananda. *Reflections*.



Discussion

1. What was the teaching of Swami Tapovan Mahārāja?
2. What really prompted the boy to change?

Debrief: Swami Tapovan Mahārāja’s teaching is very profound. He wanted the boy to experience his own silence, which paved the way for self-reflection. The boy was able to recognize his flaws on his own. This is what really led him to change. He didn’t change when others told him to, but only when he realized it for himself.

Typically, when we are alone, we become more introverted and attuned to how we live our lives. Just like when we clean our rooms and discover buried treasures, when we are silent and clear our minds, thoughts that have been buried inside come to the surface.

Activity 10 min

Ask students to spread out in the room and sit in silence for about seven minutes without pen, paper, or devices. Let them just be by themselves and reflect on their thoughts.

If the weather is nice, they can take a silent walk outside or sit in the garden.

After this, have a short debrief about what their experience was like and if anything became clear to them just by being still.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Silent Meditation:

1. Relax the body and do a body scan from the feet to the tip of the head.
2. Inhale and exhale deeply five to seven times.
3. Spend a few moments just watching the breath.
4. Chant:

Om
Śāntiḥ 3x
Hariḥ Om Śrīgurubhyo Namaḥ Hariḥ Om

5. Bless yourself. Slowly rub your palms together, creating heat, and put them over your eyes. Put them over your head and bless yourself. Then move your palms to your face, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, back, and legs. Slowly blinking, open your eyes. Keep your hands in namaskāraḥ position and thank all the ṛṣis whose powerful words emerged from silence.

Sūtra:

Silence reveals
Secrets

Sādhana:

- **Option 1:** During the week, keep your phones silent all night and into the morning. Only unmute after prayer or sādhana. Connect with yourself before you connect with the world. Recharge and be attentive to secrets.
- **Option 2:** Sit in complete stillness (body, speech, and mind) for five to ten minutes daily. Practice abiding in silence. To do this, one may use any support like japa, prayer, or observing the breath.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Viśvarūpa Darśana

In this lesson, we learn about Arjuna's divine eye through which he had the vision of Bhagavān in His Cosmic Form. We also learn how to awaken our own cosmic eye.

11.8 



na tu mām śakyase draṣṭum
anenaiva sva-cakṣuṣā,
divyaṁ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ
paśya me yogam-aīśvaram.

But you are not able to
behold Me with these,
your own eyes; I give you
the divine eye; behold My
lordly yoga.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

4 distinct objects (or 4 pictures of distinct objects)

Suggested items:

- The Holy Geeta book
- A piece of cloth
- A picture of a lunch/dinner meal
- A picture of a human body

World map

1 huge strip of paper (large enough for all students to work on at the same time)

 **Lord Krishna Reveals His Divine Viśvarūpa**

 **I Am The Coach | Scene | Chak De India**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 11.8.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "The Divine Eye of Comprehension."

 USA For Africa. "USA For Africa - We Are the World."

Viśvarūpa Darśana

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Ask the class if they remember what last week's vibhūti was. Of all the secrets, Bhagavān is silence. What happens when we are silent? We open ourselves up to the secrets of the universe and the secrets within ourselves too. Ask if they were attuned to any secrets in the past week. Then, play a short game of Telephone and see if they are able to capture the secret message.



For reference, the game goes as follows:

1. Before the start, the students sit in a circle or stand in a line.
2. The first player will come up with a sāttvika phrase and whisper it to the next student, ideally only once.
3. Each player whispers what they heard to the next person, continuing down the line.
4. The last player reveals the final message they received.

See if the last player received the secret message correctly to test their ability to listen in silence.

Introduction 10 min

Arjuna was in awe of Bhagavān's vibhūtis, seeing Bhagavān's divine glories everywhere, yet he felt something was missing. He wanted to see all of Bhagavān, Bhagavān in His entirety. Would that be possible? What would that even look like?

Now, let's think about this for a second. One way is to see mud in every pot, pitcher, cup, and another way is to see all the pots, pitchers, glasses as mud.

Bhagavān's Vibhūtis consist of different names and forms that manifest Bhagavān's glory most. This vision is known as **Vibhūti Darśana**.

To see the mud in every pot, one has only to train one's eyes to detect the mud as separate from the pot shapes, but to see all pots in the mud, the observer needs a special eye.

Swami
Chinmayananda



Examples

- Of all of the mountains, I am the Himālayas (10.25)
- Of all the seasons, I am spring (10.35)
- Of all the rivers, I am Jāhnavī (Gaṅgā) (10.31)

Bhagavān's Viśvarūpa is the Cosmic Form of Bhagavān.
The vision of this form is known as **Viśvarūpa Darśana**.

Let's explore the difference between the two Darśanas.



Bhagavān's Vibhūti Darśana	Bhagavān's Viśvarūpa Darśana
Seeing Bhagavān in some things and not others.	Seeing Bhagavān in ALL.
Seeing Bhagavān as divided by space and time.	Seeing Bhagavān as undivided by space and time.
Developing "likes" towards what seems Divine and "dislikes" towards what seems undivine.	No likes and dislikes. Everything IS Bhagavān.

What would a Viśvarūpa Darśana look like? Swami Chinmayananda explains this beautifully in the introduction of Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad-gītā.

That which separates me from you, or me from my book, is the intervening space. Within my forearm, from the elbow to the wrist, there is certainly oneness, because there is no intervening space present within the homogeneity of its entire length, while my fingers are separate, each being interleaved in space. If the concept of space has been totally blotted out, it will be clear that all objects will immediately come together in a happy embrace, and will represent themselves as one congenial, homogenous whole. And, in this mass of things, there must be all shapes and forms of all the things of this world at one and the same place and time. This is the concept of the Cosmic Man; the vision of the world, when viewed by a mind in which the concept of time and space has been dried up! Though, not totally.

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. Chapter 11.

Introduction

continued

If we removed all space and time from all objects and beings in the entire world and lump everything together in one infinite embrace, what we would see is Bhagavān's Viśvarūpa Darśana! Can you imagine what that would look like? In order to see it, we must develop a divine eye. Let's explore the verse where Bhagavān gives Arjuna the divine eye and see how we can develop it too.

Main Lesson 25 min

In this particular verse, Bhagavān gives Arjuna the divya cakṣuḥ (divine eye).

na tu mām śakyase draṣṭum
anenaiva sva-cakṣuṣā,
divyaṁ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ
paśya me yogam-aīśvaram.

But you are not able to behold Me
with these, your own eyes; **I give
you the divine eye;** behold My
lordly yoga.

11.8

Arjuna wanted to see Bhagavān's Viśvarūpa or Cosmic Form, so he requested Bhagavān to manifest this way. Bhagavān manifested with the whole universe as His body. All names and forms of various colors and shapes were in Him but Arjuna couldn't see!

When Bhagavān noticed this, He gave Arjuna the cosmic eye to see the Cosmic Form.

The **cosmic eye is known as divya cakṣuḥ**. It's the eye of wisdom where we can see all names and forms, terrific and terrible, beyond time and space, resting in Bhagavān.

Arjuna then saw countless faces and countless bodies from the Devatās to the tiniest creature. Arjuna saw all hands in Him, from the branches of trees to the wings of birds, to the fingers of children. Arjuna saw all feet in Him, from the crawl of spiders and the gait of lions to the strides of man. He saw everything merged into one space without beginning, middle, or end. It was in a light so bright that it looked like the splendor of a thousand suns blazing forth at the same time in one sky. Arjuna didn't just see "terrific things," like Divine deities, the expanse of the galaxy, or the beauty of nature, he saw "terrible things" like death and fires of destruction!



The Divine
Eye of
Comprehension





Imagine if we saw something like this. How would we feel? Go around the class and ask them to share one emotion each of what this would feel like.

Arjuna was afraid because he had never seen anything like this before, but he was also in awe of the infinite expanse of Bhagavān. He began to realize that all things rest in Bhagavān alone. All things in all spaces, from all times, whether they are terrific or terrible, in whatever name and form, all are Bhagavān alone because nothing can exist apart from Him.

The students can watch the [Kurukshetra clip](#) for reference.

Arjuna was so blessed that he got to see this vision, but what about us? Is this something that we have access to? Can we also see Bhagavān in this way? Let us see how we can awaken our cosmic eye to see Bhagavān in all.

Awakening the Cosmic Eye

Awakening our cosmic eye means the ability to see how we are interconnected with each other because we all rest in Bhagavān's body.

Kurukshetra



In fact, the whole entire universe is Bhagavān's body. When we awaken to this fact, we feel a bond with each other because we share the same Source. Instead of always wanting to argue and focus on our differences, we start to focus on our similarities and what holds us together. Instead of speaking hateful words, we speak the language of love.

Let's explore what it means to awaken the cosmic eye and how this impacts our daily living.

1. Individuality cannot exist without Totality.

We think that we are limited beings from head to toe, but have you ever thought about how interconnected our bodies are? Earlier, we discussed Bhagavān's lower nature, the expression of Bhagavān as space, air, fire, water, and earth. If we were disconnected from all of these five elements, would we still exist?

- If we were disconnected from **space**, there would be nowhere for us to exist, our bodies would be constricted — no room for air to flow, no vessels for blood to circulate, no passages for food to travel.
- If we were disconnected from **air**, we would suffocate!

Main Lesson

continued

- If we were disconnected from **fire or the energy** of the sun, we would freeze to death! We would be bereft of any light or energy to act.
- If we were disconnected from **water and earth (food)**, we would starve.

In other words, if we were disconnected from any of these, we would perish. This shows that individuality cannot actually exist without Totality. We cannot exist without space, air, fire, water, and earth around us. This means that we are all interdependent.

2. Everything is made from the cosmos.

When we buy a t-shirt and look at the label, we see a “made in” tag. Something can be in “made in China” or “made in India,” but the reality is that everything is made by the entire cosmos coming together. Let’s take a look at this beautiful quote by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk.



This piece of paper I am holding in my hand is something that exists right now. Can we establish a time and place of birth for this paper? That is very difficult to establish, impossible actually because before it manifested as a piece of paper, it was already here in the form of a tree, of the sun, of a cloud. Without the sun, without the rain, the tree would not have lived, and there would have been no piece of paper. **When I touch this piece of paper, I also touch the clouds.** There is a cloud floating in this piece of paper. You do not have to be a poet to see it.

Thich Nhat Hanh



Discussion

1. What did Thich Nhat Hanh mean when he said that it is difficult to establish the time and place of birth for a sheet of paper?
2. What does this sentence mean: “When I touch this piece of paper, I also touch the clouds”?

Debrief: We cannot really establish the time and place of birth for a sheet of paper because there are so many components that make it — from the sun, rain, wind, and trees. Without all of them, there would be no paper. We might see something that’s 8.5 x 11 inches, but really the boundaries of the paper extend to the entire Cosmos. The whole Cosmos comes together in a sheet of paper!



Activity

Divide the students into groups of four and give each group a different picture/object: The Holy Geeta book, a piece of cloth, a picture of a lunch/dinner meal, and a picture of a human body. Ask them to reflect:

1. What is the apparent boundary of this object? Does that boundary ever change? Is that boundary 100% real?
2. When was the beginning of this object? When is the end?
3. How does the whole world come together in this object?
4. It appears to be a simple object, but what is it actually? Given the new understanding, what is the new name you would call it?

Debrief: We think that a book, piece of cloth, a meal, or a human body have certain boundaries, but when we look deeper, the whole cosmos can be found in them! Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa's words, Bhagavān Veda Vyāsa's composition, Arjuna's dilemma, the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Swami Chinmayananda's explanations — all from different times and places come together in one book! We may look at the book being a certain size and shape, but as we look deeper, the size and shape dissolve into totality. Similarly, a piece of cloth might look like it's a certain size, but so many things come together for one t-shirt — cotton farming, weaving, sewing, printing, labeling, and selling. These happen in different times and places. A dinner meal looks so simple, but so many things come together for it to happen — nature, farmers, spices from distant lands, and generations of recipes. If we look at our bodies, they are shaped by the five elements along with countless generations of ancestors.

3. Who we are depends on our identification and not our perceived identity.



Discussion

Play the clip from the movie Chak De India.

1. Why did the coach throw people out of the team?
2. What do you think they felt when they said "India" instead of their states?
3. How would that change the way they play as a team?

Debrief: Though we live in a particular place, when our identification expands to our country or even the world, then we are able to interact with each other with more love and compassion.

Chak De India
clip



Main Lesson

continued



Activity

For this exercise, the teacher should show a world map. Then, ask the students where they live. They might say that they are from a certain county, township, or city. The teacher should then point out to a specific county, township, or city indicated by the students (e.g., Manhattan). Take them through the five following scenarios and ask them how their interactions would change based on their new identification. Please replace Manhattan, New Yorker, East Coast resident, etc. based on your class's geographical location.

1. What if you lived in Manhattan and identified as a Manhattanite, how would your interactions be with people?
2. What if you lived in Manhattan and identified as a New Yorker?
3. What if you lived in Manhattan and identified as an East Coast resident?
4. What if you lived in Manhattan and identified as an American?
5. What if you lived in Manhattan and identified as a citizen of the world?
6. What if you identified yourself as a human being, a living being, or just a being instead of “so-and-so” individual?

Debrief: When we live in a certain place and identify with a greater area, we become more expansive. For example, if we thought of ourselves to just be “New Yorkers,” then we probably wouldn’t bother about what’s happening in the rest of the country and be stuck in our own bubbles. If we thought ourselves to be just “Americans,” we wouldn’t really care about the rest of the world or make an effort to learn and understand different cultures or religions. As we grow, we should expand our identities from the residents of a particular town to citizens of the world.



The land of India is my own body. The Kanyakumari is my feet:
The Himalayas are my head: From my hair flows the Ganges:
From head come the Brahmaputra and the Indus: I am the
whole of India and its East and West are my arms... and I
spread them in a straight line to embrace humanity. I am
universal in love. When I walk, I feel it is India walking. When I
speak, it is India speaking: When I breathe, it is India breathing.

Swami Rama Tirtha

There's a famous saying in our culture:

ayaṁ nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām, udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam.	“This is mine, that is another’s” — such narrow thinking belongs to small-minded people. The noble ones see the entire world as one family.
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This is how our great saints and sages lived. They loved their countries tremendously and yet they also expanded to love the entire world. Ultimately, our vision should expand to embrace the rest of the world in a way that even if we are representing our country, we do so with openness and appreciation for other countries too.

What happens when we awaken the cosmic eye?

When we awaken the Cosmic Eye, the whole world comes together to foster global peace and prosperity. In other words, we strive for win-win situations instead of win-lose ones.

A man of full
realization
instinctively
becomes a lover
of the whole
Universe.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

International Cooperation During Crises

In 1980, the World Health Organization declared smallpox eradicated. Smallpox is the first and only infectious disease that has been eradicated in humans, which means it no longer exists naturally anywhere in the world. Smallpox is also the first disease for which a vaccine was developed and vaccination played a significant role in eradicating the disease.

Prior to eradication, smallpox was a serious disease that frequently led to permanent scarring, blindness, and in many cases death. Smallpox spread from person to person through direct and prolonged contact, in ways similar to COVID-19. Before smallpox was eradicated, the disease was a massive issue for humanity; about 3 in 10 people infected with smallpox died. And around 500 million people died due to smallpox over 3,000 years, including 300 million deaths in the 20th century alone.

The world really came together to eliminate this horrifying disease. The original vaccine was first discovered in England in 1796. The World Health Organization, an international body founded and served by people across the world, decided to make smallpox its target in the 1960s and 1970s. The United States Center of Disease Control worked with young eager doctors, social workers, and experts from both the USA and from over twenty countries where smallpox was endemic, to systematically eliminate the disease using improved technology to make administering the vaccine easy and available to everyone of all income levels.

Main Lesson

continued

Initial successes in West Africa, which saw 25 million people vaccinated, allowed the teams to improve techniques of spreading the vaccine across other parts of Africa and South America and finally India and Bangladesh. For example, the teams learned that they should start offering the vaccines by going house to house instead of forcing people to come to them. They also learned to work with people's existing traditions and faiths; in parts of Northern India, doctors kept a shrine of a locally popular Devi named Śītalā Mātā associated with health and sickness in mass vaccination locations. By developing a deep understanding and love for their fellow humans, the doctors of the world were able to make sure that every person in the world who could be exposed to smallpox was able to get the vaccine.

In 1978, the last fatal case of smallpox occurred. Since then, it is believed that no human in the world has either been infected by or died from smallpox. This is considered one of the greatest public health achievements of all time.

Celebration of International Days

Earth Day began in the United States on April 22, 1970, as a nationwide movement to raise awareness about environmental destruction and inspire action to protect the planet. The idea was initiated by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson after witnessing the devastating 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara. Inspired by the energy of student anti-war movements, he envisioned a large-scale public “teach-in” focused on the environment. He partnered with activist Denis Hayes, who helped organize events across the country.

On the first Earth Day, around 20 million Americans — students, teachers, workers, and families — gathered in streets, parks, schools, and campuses to protest pollution, oil spills, toxic waste, pesticides, and environmental neglect. The movement united people across political and social backgrounds around a shared concern for the Earth.

The impact was enormous. The momentum from the first Earth Day helped lead to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and major environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act. Today, Earth Day is observed globally in more than 190 countries and remains one of the largest civic observances in the world.

USA for Africa

“We Are the World” was a monumental charity single recorded in 1985. Over 45 top artists came together to sing and raise funds for famine relief in Africa.



USA for Africa



It was initiated by Harry Belafonte and written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie. They all gathered overnight to record this song and it became a global anthem that raised millions of dollars in aid.

Discussion



Can you think of any events where the world has come together for global peace and prosperity?

Activity 10 min

Cosmic Collage

Create a space to lay out a huge sheet of paper on the floor. Each student should have access to draw, paint, or color on this sheet of paper. Once everyone is seated comfortably, ask them to come up with a single image of global harmony they would like to create. Then, ask them to divide the image into sections. Each of them should get a section to work on. After they have completed the project, ask them to hold it up to see the cosmic vision of the entire project.

Discussion

1. What was the image created by the team? What does it represent?
2. What was the thought process behind selecting that particular image?
3. How did it feel to be part of creating something greater?
4. What would happen if everyone actually adopted this vision in their daily lives?

Debrief: As they were working on the cosmic collage, they may have felt a sense of oneness due to a shared vision. This oneness might have inspired them to do better, knowing that every portion of their work affects those around them. This is called awakening the cosmic eye.

Alternate Activity

Split the class into groups of three to four students. In each group, the students should research and brainstorm an organization or movement that has a global purpose. Give each group five to ten minutes to research about this organization and answer the following questions:

1. Who does this organization/movement serve? What is its purpose?
2. How are they making positive global change?
3. What are some tangible impacts of this organization/movement?
4. If you were to start a global movement or organization, what cause would you support?
5. How would it feel to be aligned to an expansive purpose?

Stop by each group and guide the group's conversation as needed. Then have each group present their answers to the five questions.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Go around the classroom and ask each student what they can do to awaken their cosmic eye in their daily life.



Ask students to bring any instruments that they play to the next class.

Sūtra:

Awaken the
Cosmic Eye

Sāadhanā: Find at least five things in common with every person you meet this week. Keep dwelling on how the whole world is one family.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Be An Instrument

In this lesson, we learn what it means to be an instrument in the hands of Bhagavān, allowing Him to play divine music through us.

11.33 



tasmāt-tvam-uttiṣṭha
yaśo labhasva
jītvā śatrūn bhuñkṣva
rājyaṁ samṛddham,
mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvameva
nimittamātraṁ bhava savyasācin.

Therefore, stand up, and obtain
fame. Conquer the enemies and
enjoy the unrivalled kingdom.
Verily by Myself they have
already been slain; be you a mere
instrument, O left-handed archer.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
20m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
10m	Conclusion

Materials

Musical instruments that students play brought by them, or a śruti box

Blindfolds (1 blindfold per 2 students)

 **Play Through Me**

 **Play Through Me lyrics printout for students**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 11.33.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Be My Instrument.” 4:55 - 8:51.

Be An Instrument

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last lesson, we learned about what it means to awaken the cosmic eye and recognize our interconnectedness with all beings. Start the class by this simple activity.



Activity

Circle of Common Ground

Everyone forms a circle, and then the teacher shares a prompt asking students to step inside the circle if the prompt applies to them. After each prompt, the teacher checks to see if anyone inside the circle wants to share their experiences. If not, all the students can step back out of the circle and wait for the next prompt. The objective of this activity is to feel that we are all connected and part of something bigger than ourselves.

Here are some prompts that can be used:

“Step into the circle if ...”

- You enjoy listening to music.
- You’ve stayed up late scrolling on your phone.
- You have a favorite food you could eat every day.
- You’ve ever danced like nobody was watching.
- You’ve ever sung in the shower.
- You’ve ever moved to a new house or apartment.
- You have a family tradition you look forward to.

Then challenge the students to come up with a prompt that will make everyone step inside the circle. It should be something that’s not physically obvious, like “Step into the circle if you have a body or go to high school.”

Debrief: As the class starts to feel connected to each other, bonds grow deeper and they become more sensitive to each other’s needs. This is all part of awakening the cosmic eye as we have learned in the previous lesson.

Introduction 10 min

As Arjuna starts to awaken his cosmic eye, he sees that the whole world is really interconnected, residing in the body of Bhagavān. He then begins to realize that everything is part of a Divine plan and all he has to do is be an instrument.



Now, ask the students to introduce their musical instruments (including their own voice for vocalists) in class. They should start by saying what the instrument is, how long they have been playing/using it, what their favorite song or melody is. After this is shared, move to the following discussion questions.



Discussion

1. What exactly is an instrument?
2. What are the commonalities between all these instruments?

Debrief: An instrument is a device that can produce music. Here are some of the commonalities they have:

1. They tend to be empty inside. A flute is hollow, a guitar has a sound box, a tabla has empty chambers, etc.
2. Most instruments can be tuned a certain way to play in a particular pitch.
3. With the right musician, Divine music flows through the instruments.

With this idea in mind, let's enter into the main lesson.

Main Lesson 20 min

Let's explore this verse from the Bhagavad-gītā.

tasmāt-tvam-uttiṣṭha
yaśo labhasva
jītvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva
rājyaṁ samṛddham,
mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvameva
nimittamātraṁ bhava savyasācin.

Therefore, stand up, and obtain
fame. Conquer the enemies and
enjoy the unrivalled kingdom. Verily
by Myself they have already been
slain; be you a mere instrument, O
left-handed archer.

11.33

Main Lesson

continued

Be My
Instrument

In this verse, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna two things:

1. He has already slain the enemies (Duryodhana, Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karṇa, etc.).
2. All Arjuna has to do is be His instrument.

The first statement might seem quite shocking. According to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the warriors that Arjuna is supposed to fight are already destroyed! It seems like the war is over before it has even begun.

Bhagavān is reminding Arjuna that everyone has to face the consequences of their actions. Duryodhana, Droṇa, Bhīṣma, etc., all chose to be on the side of adharma, so they have already been killed by their own actions. When someone chooses to do something wrong, they will have to face the results, and no one can escape this. Those results may manifest instantaneously or after a while, but they will manifest. Similarly, when someone chooses to be on the path of dharma, they will also reap the results of their actions.

Bhagavān continues to explain in the second statement that Arjuna has a choice as he follows the path of dharma. He can be afraid and anxious about what's going to happen and struggle to solve everything on his own. Or, he can simply choose to surrender to Bhagavān and be an instrument in His hands. By being an instrument, Bhagavān assures Arjuna that he will be guided every step of the way. The path will gradually unfold. Decisions will become clearer, and victory will be certain.

Now, let's reflect once again on the commonalities of instruments:

1. They tend to be **empty** inside. Just like instruments are empty inside, when we empty ourselves of our ego, then, Bhagavān has space to enter and play His divine music and guide us in our lives.
2. They can all be **tuned**. In order to make ourselves completely empty, we have to tune ourselves by doing our sādhanā or spiritual practices in the form of pūjā, japa, or even spending time in silence, as we have seen in the previous lessons.
3. Once we are completely empty, Divine music starts to **flow**. It's no longer the ego that's operating through us, it's Bhagavān.

The phrase in this verse, “nimittamātram bhava,” means to just be an instrument and not let your ego overpower you.

Being an instrument means flowing with life and letting Bhagavān guide us instead of being driven by our own egos.

When the ego overpowers, we make a lot of noise, but when Divinity empowers, we make music.

When our minds are disturbed, our expressions will sound harsh, agitated, tense, and completely out of tune. When our minds are silent and free of ego, the Master Musician plays sublime melodies through us.

Story: The Flute in Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa's Hand

One late afternoon, the gopīs approached Śrī Kṛṣṇa and said, “Gopāla! We have a problem, and You are the cause. So You must solve it for us.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa lowered His flute and looked at them with a smile.

Rādhā, foremost among the gopīs, spoke: “Are we not Your devotees? Do we not constantly think of You and long for Your presence? Yet each day we only glimpse You briefly as You return to the village with the cowherds. Though we wish to spend every evening with You, our household duties hold us back. Festivals give us more time with You, but it is never enough. Without Your presence, our hearts are parched.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa motioned for them to sit and lifted His flute once more. Its melody soothed their minds and lifted their hearts.

In deep communion, they forgot their bodies, families, and responsibilities. They forgot that life existed beyond that perfect moment with their beloved Bhagavān.

As the final notes faded into dusk, the gopīs sighed in sorrow, for it was time to leave.

They said, “We envy Your flute. You never part from it. You hold it in Your lotus hands, place it upon Your lips, and even sleep with it upon Your bosom. Why must we leave Your presence while the flute never does?”

“I will tell you why,” Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied. “Listen to the story of My flute.”

The gopīs listened intently.

“One day I asked the bamboo, ‘Will you give Me whatever I ask?’

The bamboo replied, ‘Your wish is my command. It is my privilege to serve You.’

I said, ‘It will be painful. I must cut you down for a special purpose.’

‘Is there no other way?’ the bamboo asked.

Example

A guitar can be strummed to make sound, but without a true musician, no music will ever be made.

Main Lesson

continued

‘No,’ I replied, and the bamboo consented. I cut it from its roots, shaped it with a knife, hollowed it from within, and drilled many holes into it. Though it trembled in pain, it never complained. By surrendering completely into My hands, it became a perfect instrument for My music. Through it, I awaken the world from the sleep of *māyā*. Because it serves My purpose, it has become beloved to Me. Therefore, I never part from it.”

The *gopīs* understood. The flute had become inseparable from Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa through humility and total surrender. By emptying itself completely, it became a divine instrument for the Lord’s song. They too must become like the flute, allowing the Lord to play His melody through them. Then, they would know no separation.



Discussion

1. Why was the flute so dear to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa?
2. What does it mean to really empty ourselves and become instruments of the Lord?
3. Did Bhagavān favor the flute over the *gopīs*?

Debrief: The flute was so dear because it surrendered itself completely to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. Emptying ourselves means allowing our minds to go through the practices of *sādhana* so that they become purified and open to receiving grace.

Bhagavān didn’t favor the flute over the *gopīs*. We learned that Bhagavān is the same to all beings and His grace is ever available to all. The flute however, allowed itself to be completely empty and this is why it was filled with grace. When we find other people flowing better in life, it’s not that they are more favored by Bhagavān. Perhaps, they are just more tuned. Many times we only see the expressions of grace radiate through people, but we don’t see the *sādhana* or intensity of spiritual practices behind them.

The Art of Tuning

Have you ever had an experience where Divine things just flowed from you automatically? A poem, idea, composition came through you without you even thinking about it? It flowed so spontaneously and it felt like you had absolutely nothing to do with it. That spontaneous flow of creativity, called the flow state, is nothing but the hands of Bhagavān at work. It means that Bhagavān is able

to play music through you. When this happens often enough, then our lives continuously dance to Bhagavān's song.

Let's see a beautiful example of being an instrument.

Ātukūri Molla

Ātukūri Molla was a 15th-century poetess from Andhra Pradesh. She grew up in a very spiritual household with deep devotion to Śrīkaṇṭha Mallēśvara, a form of Bhagavān Śiva. After her dīkṣā (spiritual initiation), she intensified her sādhanā, strictly following the rules laid down by her Guru with constant practice of japa, meditation, and daily worship at the temple. As a teenager, she experienced deep samādhi.

Sitting in deep samādhi one day, she had a vision of Śrī Rāma, asking her to write the Rāmāyaṇa. Molla told the temple priest about this vision. The temple priest immediately provided her with writing material. Ātukūri Molla wrote her extraordinary, flawless Rāmāyaṇa in just five days! As soon as she finished it, she started reciting her Rāmāyaṇa aloud. Hearing her melodious, rhythmic and witty recital, the priest excitedly beckoned the villagers to come listen.

Highly acclaimed, her Rāmāyaṇa came to be known as Molla Rāmāyaṇam. Molla traveled widely throughout Andhra from village to village, reciting this sacred epic from the only copy of Molla Rāmāyaṇam handwritten by Molla herself. The artistry of her words and rhythmic play of sounds in Telugu, captivated the minds and hearts of all who were fortunate to hear it. So far, the great epic Rāmāyaṇa had been ensconced in the enclaves of Saṁskṛtam scholars, but Molla had brought it to the common people in their language.

Later on, Molla offered her remarkable book to her beloved Śrīkaṇṭha Mallēśvara at the Gopavaram temple. Molla never felt Molla Rāmāyaṇam belonged to her. She declared in the avatārika or preface, that this composition belongs to Śrī Rāma. Having fulfilled her dharma to spread His glorious story, Molla with great dispassion was able to renounce her book, village, and relations. She spent her last decades at Srisailam Mallikarjuna Temple continuing meditation, austere spiritual practices and teaching spiritual seekers who sought her, till her mahāsamādhi in 1530. Her life of ninety years was dedicated to inspiring and uplifting the Telugu community through her pure, divine compassion for all and humble bhakti for her Guru and Śrīkaṇṭha Mallēśvara.

Excerpt from *The Woman Seeker*

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

1. What happened when Molla was sitting quietly?
2. We learned that Molla was able to write her version of the Rāmāyaṇa in five days. How do you think she was able to accomplish that feat?
3. Why is it that Molla didn't feel like the Molla Rāmāyaṇam belonged to her?

Debrief: In Molla's story, we see that she spent time intensifying her sādhanā through consistent and steady practice. This was her tuning which led her to become empty, silent, and open. It was during this time that the Rāmāyaṇa came through her but not from her. She was an instrument for the Rāmāyaṇa to be written in Telugu.

Being an instrument of Bhagavān doesn't only happen to artists, it also happens to those like Arjuna. Arjuna began to recognize that the best way to live life was not by resisting what was in front of him or being anxious about what was to come, but actually through surrender. When he became an instrument in the midst of the battlefield, Śrī Kṛṣṇa not only drove his chariot but guided his every move and led him to victory.

Life works the same way. The more we resist things, the more we struggle. The more anxious we become, the more out of balance we feel. When we start to align with Bhagavān, we feel more relaxed. Think of a river. If it resists its course, it crashes into rocks. But when it flows naturally, it reaches the ocean effortlessly. We're all made to reach the ocean, which is our true Self. When we do it with surrender, there's a natural flow and beauty to our actions, but when we do it with resistance or anxiety, there's constant turbulence.

The **burden of doership** is the notion that we are solely responsible for everything, and that we have to control and mold our lives to get what we want. It is this burden that we surrender to the Lord!

The **lightness of surrender** is the deep understanding that Bhagavān has a Divine plan for each and every one of us. If we empty ourselves of our ego by doing our sādhanā, He will guide us every step of the way. He will hold our hands and lead us to the ultimate victory — being one with Him.

Therefore, the real way to live life is not “to do” but “to flow.” Once we learn how to flow with everything and let Bhagavān guide us, we feel lighter having freed ourselves from the burden of doership. We remain merely as instruments.

Now, let's come back to the verse. When Bhagavān told Arjuna that the enemies were already slain, and all he had to do was “be an instrument,” what did Arjuna do? He didn't resist fighting or drop his bow. He was no longer anxious about the outcome. He picked up his bow, but now, the bow felt much lighter, because it was without the burden of doership. He became a mere instrument.

Therefore, we must act. But the question to ask ourselves is not “Are we in control?” but rather “Are we in tune?” We have a choice between struggling with life and trying to control everything, or flowing with it and knowing Divine Intelligence is at work. We must pick up our bows and arrows, but we can do so without the weight of doership. This is what being an instrument means.

Activity 10 min

Split the class into two groups: the “doers” and the “instruments.” Ask all the “instruments” to blindfold themselves. Give the following instructions only to the “doers”: For Round 1, guide your “instrument” to draw a perfect circle. For Round 2, guide your “instrument” to draw an inclined oval. Keep this information a secret.

Round 1: Pair each “instrument” with a “doer.” The “doer” should then place their hand on top of the “instrument's” hand and guide them to draw a simple circle on a sheet of paper. After this, have the “instrument” take off their blindfold and allow the “doer” to share that they were trying to draw a circle.

Round 2: Ensure the “instruments” keep their blindfolds off. Only the “doers” should know they are trying to draw an oval this time, while letting the “instruments” think they are drawing a circle again. Then complete round 2.

Discussion

1. For the “doer” and the “instrument,” which round went smoother? Which produced the correct shape?
2. In life who is the “doer” and who is the “instrument”?
3. What does the circle symbolize?
4. What happens if the “instrument” keeps resisting or wants to throw everything off?

Debrief: In life, the doer is Bhagavān and we are His instruments. The circle is Self-realization or Enlightenment or infinite Happiness. Bhagavān is constantly guiding us to realize that we are infinite Happiness. When we flow with His hand, then the path is smooth, pleasant, and light, but when we fight against it (maybe because we think we know better or we feel we have control), it becomes an encumbrance and we are prone to anger, worry, and stress.



Play Through
Me



Play Through
Me lyrics
printout



Conclusion 10 min

Group Summary: The closing in this lesson plan will take slightly longer. Ask the students if they would like to play their instruments or sing. While one student is playing/singing, the others can just close their eyes and listen.

Alternatively, students can listen and enjoy [this song inspired by this Bhagavad-gītā verse](#). Make sure to print out the lyrics for students to follow along and enjoy.

Sūtra:

Be an
Instrument

Sāadhanā: Spend this week just tuning yourself through a spiritual practice like pūjā, japa, or meditation. Let yourself become empty gradually and let Bhagavān's music play through you.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Sthāne: Everything Is as It Should Be

This lesson is about understanding how everything is exactly as it should be. Even if something seems incredibly out of place, unfair, difficult to deal with, or challenging, it's happening for a reason. We just need to trust that there's a bigger vision that will unfold.

11.36 



arjuna uvāca
sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā
jagat-prahr̥ṣyatyanurajyate ca,
rākṣāṁsi bhītāni dīśo dravanti
sarve namasyanti ca
siddhasaṅghāḥ.

Arjuna said: It is but right,
O Hṛṣīkeśa, that the world
delights and rejoices in Thy
praise; rākṣasas fly in fear to
all quarters, and the wise bow
down to Thee.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

A complete puzzle set with enough pieces so that each student has 1-2 pieces.

 **The Butterfly and The Cocoon**

 **Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 11.36.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Cosmic Form Divine - 31 - Chapter 11 Verse 36."

Sthāne: Everything Is as It Should Be

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we learned what it means to be an instrument rather than a doer. Let's recall the points we discussed:

1. Instruments tend to be **empty** inside. Just like we can produce richer sounds with instruments that are empty or hollow inside, when we empty ourselves of our ego, Bhagavān has space to enter, play His Divine music, and guide us in our lives.
2. Instruments can be **tuned**. In order to make ourselves completely empty, we have to tune ourselves by doing our sādhanā or spiritual practices in the form of pūjā, japa, or even spending time in silence, as we have seen in the previous lessons.
3. Once we are completely empty, Divine music starts to **flow**. It's no longer the ego that's operating through us, it's Bhagavān.

Think of a chariot. When Bhagavān is the “driver” and we are the “rider,” and we follow His larger plan, then we can be very relaxed because He knows what He is doing. But when we become our own “drivers” due to our egos, and Bhagavān becomes the “rider,” then we're in for a rollercoaster ride of stress, anxiety, and fear!

A question may arise: If Bhagavān is the driver, shouldn't it always be a smooth ride? Why do we go through bumps in our lives? Why do we experience so many challenges?

Introduction 10 min



Activity

Give each student at least one piece of the puzzle. Do not show or tell the students what the finished puzzle is. In addition, the puzzle pieces shouldn't be too obvious to prevent students from figuring out the whole picture too quickly.

Now, ask each student to describe their piece and what they think it represents. Next, give them about five minutes to put the puzzle pieces together.

Discussion

1. What was their initial idea of the puzzle piece? Did it come close to the vision of the finished puzzle?
2. How does this relate to our lives?

Debrief: In life, many times, we often question why we have to go through struggles and hardships. Eventually, the entire vision becomes clear. All the pieces start to fit, and we begin to understand that those struggles actually made us grow into who we are today. Sorrow comes when we keep judging the piece instead of having faith in the entire puzzle.

Main Lesson 25 min

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Arjuna says a beautiful prayer to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa in the following verse:

arjuna uvāca
sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā
jagat-prahṛṣyatyanurajyate ca,
rakṣāmsi bhītāni diśo dravanti
sarve namasyanti ca siddhasaṅghāḥ.

Arjuna said: It is but right, O
Hṛṣīkeśa, that the world delights
and rejoices in Thy praise; rākṣasas
fly in fear to all quarters, and the
wise bow down to Thee.

11.36

Key phrase: sthāne hṛṣīkeśa — everything is as it should be

Arjuna tells Śrī Kṛṣṇa that he is beginning to realize that everything is as it should be, including all of his struggles. Everything that happened, happened for a reason.



Discussion

Watch the first three minutes of [The Butterfly and The Cocoon](#) video.

This video is about a butterfly that is struggling to come out of its cocoon. Seeing the struggle, a man comes forward and tries to help by cutting open the cocoon, but it backfires. The process of coming out of the cocoon gradually is meant for the butterfly to develop its wings. With the cocoon being broken open suddenly, the butterfly did not get the time to grow its wings fully.

Cosmic Form
Divine



The Butterfly
and The Cocoon



Main Lesson

continued

Discussion

1. What were the man's intentions when he cut open the cocoon?
2. Did he end up healing or harming the butterfly?

Debrief: It's not easy to go through struggles or watch other people go through them, but they are necessary for us to build strength. There's a beautiful phrase: "**growing pains.**" Every time there is some form of growth, it tends to be painful.

Think about these examples:

1. A seed that is about to sprout breaks the ground open and slowly grows into a plant with beautiful flower blossoms.
2. A young child complains, cries, and wails about going to school, but eventually finds a nice group of friends to play with.
3. A teen drags themselves to the gym every morning, then gradually sees their body grow healthier and stronger.
4. A parent who is reluctant to send their teen to college far away from home ends up being grateful for their teen's growth and adaptability.

Challenges Help Build Resilience

One way to become physically strong is to start lifting weights. When we find a certain amount of weights easy to lift, we move onto heavier ones to continue building strength. The same method applies to building mental strength as well. When we face tough situations and learn how to handle them, it builds resilience and helps us handle even tougher situations in the future. If we keep embracing challenging moments, we will find ourselves growing mentally stronger. We pray to God for the strength to deal with the world around us, and He wonderfully provides us with tough situations to develop that strength.

While remaining in familiarity provides a sense of security, challenges are also required to pave the way for growth. When reflecting deeply about our lives, we will find that every single challenge was needed. **Life isn't happening to us. It's happening for us.** Every moment, every interaction, every experience has led to our evolution. Everything is as it should be.

Let's explore some of the adversities Arjuna faced and see how that paved the way for his growth.

A comfort zone is a beautiful place, but nothing grows there.

Unknown



Ask the class to share their thoughts before going through these instances.

1. It wasn't easy being exiled in the forest for thirteen years, but this gave Arjuna the **opportunity to perform immense austerity and deepen his connection with Bhagavān**. For any sādhanā to fully take root, it takes about twelve years, which is why the Pāṇḍavas were in the forest for twelve years performing austerities followed by a year living incognito. After his intense sādhanā, Arjuna also had the darśana of Bhagavān Śiva as a hunter and gained the Pāśupatāstra.
2. Living the last year incognito as Bṛhannalā, also wasn't easy, but it gave Arjuna a **chance to efface his ego**. Arjuna was a mighty hero, who was well-known for his heroic skills. As a result, he had a lot of pride and ego tied to his stature. But while living incognito, Arjuna had to completely let go of that identity. He couldn't display any of his valor because he was disguised as a dance teacher! It must have been very challenging not to express his nature, but during this process, he experienced great detachment from his ego. This eventually led him to understand that there's a deeper presence within than just "Arjuna the warrior."



Discussion

How does it feel when something we identify with is taken away? What if someone told us to become a "nobody" for one whole year and not express our abilities?

Debrief: It would probably open our eyes to the fact that we are much deeper than our abilities or external personalities.

3. During this period living incognito, the Pāṇḍavas also had to let go of their weapons, which were some of their greatest attachments. Imagine a warrior living without their most prized possessions.



Discussion

What if you had to give up your most prized possession for one year? How would you handle that?

Debrief: This would open our eyes to our dependency on that particular object, showing how foolishly we let it define our self-worth.

Main Lesson

continued

4. The period of exile gave the Pāṇḍavas the strength to stand up for dharma and fight the war. The greatest blessing was that Śrī Kṛṣṇa became Arjuna's charioteer and gave him the Bhagavad-gītā.

**Discussion**

What would have happened if Arjuna did not go through these trials and tribulations? The class can either discuss this or put together a mini skit.

Debrief: If Arjuna hadn't faced these adversities, he wouldn't have developed the strength to fight the war, he wouldn't have acquired Divine weapons, he wouldn't have had darśana of Bhagavān Śiva, and he wouldn't have been guided every step of the way by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa! Lastly, the Bhagavad-gītā would not be available to us today. The reason we have the Gītā is because Arjuna was faced with such a terrible dilemma and he sincerely asked Śrī Kṛṣṇa for help.

The game of dice, which led to the Pāṇḍavas spending thirteen years in exile, seemed treacherous initially. The Pāṇḍavas felt a lot of anger and resentment towards the Kauravas. In hindsight, it became clear that it was actually part of a larger scheme and was meant for the Pāṇḍavas' evolution. As time went by, the Pāṇḍavas understood that everything was exactly as it should be.

Each of them evolved to become greater than they ever were. During their period of exile, Arjuna had the darśana of Bhagavān Śiva, Yudhiṣṭhira had the darśana of his father Dharmarāja, and Bhīma had the darśana of his brother Hanumān. They all performed many austerities, acquired astras (Divine weapons) and had satsaṅga with saints and sages. This was part of the larger puzzle.

There is a bigger plan for all of us to evolve. However, we may not see the entire vision just yet. But wait, years later, when we reflect on our lives, we will be able to put the puzzle pieces together and know that truly everything is “sthāne.”

How does one develop this attitude of “sthāne”?

Trust the process. When we feel confused or frustrated with how our life is going, have faith, and trust that there is a master plan.

Anandamayī Ma, a renowned saint from the 20th century, tells a story about how a person comes to know who is a Guru and who is a disciple.

The teacher can do the same exercise with events in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Q: What is the difference between the Guru and the disciple?

A: It is said that the disciple's task is to efface the ego and become blank.

There is a story of a king who invited the best artists to paint murals in his palace. Two painters were working in the same hall but on opposite walls with a curtain separating them. Neither could see what the other was doing. One of them created a marvelous picture that evoked the admiration of every onlooker. The other artist had not painted anything at all. Instead of painting, he had spent all his time polishing the wall to perfection. When the curtain was parted, the picture of the other painter was reflected on this perfectly polished wall and made it appear even more beautiful than the original. It's the disciple's duty to polish away the i-ness.

We don't know more than Bhagavān. We don't have the ability to see the whole picture here and now. So, what is our dharma? It's just to purify ourselves. Bhagavān's dharma is to paint a beautiful and amazing picture, and our dharma is to purify our minds so that the picture is perfectly reflected in us and the Divine plan gets unveiled. Haven't we evolved thus far? Didn't we develop hair, teeth, nails, a body, and so on? Haven't we grown? Therefore, everything will surely work out. We just have to keep doing our dharma — purifying our minds. This means taking up a spiritual practice that quiets our mind and tunes it to the Total mind. The devotees' dharma is to purify, with faith in Bhagavān's artwork.

Reflections from Swami Tejomayananda

Q: How should we face a situation when someone dear to us is suffering?

A: You can pray to God to give strength, patience, faith to that person to go through it. In every pain, there is also gain. Many times people think that the person is suffering, but if he has some spirituality, his inner growth happens faster than the healthy person! You think that you love and care, but God is the father and mother of the whole universe. He will take care. Faith is the real strength.

When we start to get carried away by one piece of the puzzle, have faith that there's a grander puzzle ahead! Don't just go through life. **Grow through it.**

Remain where
you are.
Remember God
in His infinite
wisdom has
not committed
a mistake in
putting you
where you are.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

Activity 10 min

From Struggle to Sthāne

Give every student two different colored sticky notes.

On the first sticky note, ask them to write down a small struggle they are currently facing. This can be a small annoyance, something actively bothering them, or something they complained about this week. For example, “I have to babysit my brother instead of hanging out with my friends.”

On the second sticky note, have students write down the biggest challenge they have faced in their lives up until now. For example, “Making friends in high school and feeling like I belong.”

Give students three to five minutes to reflect and note these down, and then stick the notes on the wall.

Next, each student should grab one sticky note of each color that they did NOT write from the wall. Have them reflect on these big and small challenges and think about what the bigger picture might be.

Split the students into groups to discuss the struggles they just reflected on, and how they would reframe the struggles to practice sthāne. Have a few students share with the class.



Example

“In Bhagavān’s plan, babysitting my brother was a way of forming a strong connection with him. We now have become a support system for each other in life.”

Debrief: Through this activity, students will begin to see that there’s a reason for everything that happens in life. They just need to have faith that the entire puzzle will become clear at the right time.

Alternative Activity

Watch the first five and half minutes of [Steve Jobs’ 2005 Commencement Speech](#) video.

Steve Jobs was the co-founder of Apple. He actually dropped out of college and started studying calligraphy and found that he enjoyed it very much. He didn’t know then of what value calligraphy would be to him. However, later on, he used these exact skills when he was designing the typography for the very first Macintosh computer.



Steve Jobs
Speech



Discussion

As a class:

1. How does this relate to the theme of sthāne?

In groups of three:

1. What is something that happened in your life which you thought was totally off at that time, but now you realize that it is “sthāne”?
2. How did that situation affect your life?
3. What learnings came out of it that you didn’t expect at the time?

Debrief: When we start to look back at our lives, we begin to realize that everything is as it should be. Everything made us who we are today.

After either of the activities, the students can reflect on the benefits of sthāne.

What happens when we practice this attitude of sthāne?

Then the rākṣasas fly in fear to all quarters. This means that all of these rākṣasas which represent our negative tendencies disappear. What is the main rākṣasa? It’s called complaining! This attitude of complaining disappears from us because we have faith in the larger puzzle.

Complaints stem from a sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with life. Complaining does three things:

1. Complaining makes us focus on the problem instead of the solution.

Instead of putting forth our mental energy in trying to fix something, we are using all our energy in complaining about it. When we do that, we make the issue larger than it is by dwelling on it.

You can complain because the roses have thorns, or you can rejoice because the thorns have roses.

Alphonse Karr



Examples

- If we say, “It’s cold,” that should be the end of the story. Put on a sweater and get over it. But if we say, “I can’t believe it’s so cold. Why is it so cold? It’s too cold.” It’s definitely going to feel colder because our words are giving too much importance to the situation.
- If we’re stuck in a traffic jam, we can use our energy to find an alternate route, instead of complaining about it.

Gratitude makes us focus on evolution. When we know and trust that there’s a reason for the current circumstances, we go through them with a balanced mind and come out stronger.

Activity

continued

No education is a waste, no bit of knowledge redundant, no experience superfluous, but they all can be intelligently made to serve our purpose in our pilgrimage to Truth.

Swami
Chinmayananda

2. **Complaining makes us unpleasant to be around.** Nobody likes to be around those who complain because they drain everyone's energy and cause so much negativity. Complainers constantly focus on things that aren't working, always criticize others, or give too much importance to negatives instead of positives.

Gratitude makes us pleasant to be around because it lifts people's spirits. It makes them feel calm, whole, and open to receiving grace.

3. **Complaining makes us forget Bhagavān's Vision and Glory.** It makes us mistrust the Divine plan and the omniscience of Bhagavān.

Gratitude keeps us in an attitude of surrender. We always know that there's a bigger reason for why things are happening the way they are. We just have to be patient to see it.

Complaining happens when we focus on the piece and forget the puzzle.

Gratitude happens when we have faith in the puzzle,
while we look at the piece.

The second thing that happens when we practice this attitude of sthāne is that **the wise bow down to Bhagavān**. The wise ones who know the secret of sthāne are in awe of Īśvara and His master plan. They bow down in total surrender, gratitude, and faith. **Sthāne hr̥ṣīkeśa — everything is as it should be.**

A beautiful episode occurs at the end of the Kurukshetra war when Kuntī Devī meets Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Despite all the trials she went through, she kept her faith in Him. She never questioned why her family had to go through such challenges. On the other hand, she prayed for even more challenges!

vipadaḥ santu tāḥ śaśvat
tatra tatra jagad-guro,
bhavato darśanam yat syād
apunar-bhava-darśanam.

I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.8.25

When we reflect on our lives, we find that we think about the Lord most when we're in trouble. When we're happy, we tend to forget Him. However, when we are going through difficult times, we invoke Him in every way possible. Sometimes, going through such adversities can really turn us Godward.

Conclusion 5 min

Closing Meditation:

1. Start with three OM's.
2. Take a saṅkalpa not to open your eyes until the dhyānam is complete.
3. Relax the body and do a body scan from the feet to the tip of the head.
4. Watch the breath, inhale all the good, positive things and exhale negative thoughts.
5. Invoke Guru and Bhagavān and seek Their blessings:

gurur-brahmā gurur-viṣṇuḥ
gurur-devo maheśvaraḥ,
gurur-eva paraṁ brahma
tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ.

6. Meditation: (Pause between sentences) Let us be grateful to Bhagavān for all the abundant blessings — for the love of our family and friends, for our home, for our education, and comforts, but let us also be grateful for any adversities that we had in our lives. These made us stronger and better, and we understand that there is a greater plan. Though we might only see a shade of a color or a line, we trust that there's a beautiful masterpiece that will be unveiled at the right time and place. Sthāne — everything is as it should be. Feel that gratitude in every pore of your body.

Or the teacher can read this poem out loud:

The Master Weaver's Plan

My life is but a weaving
Between the Lord and me;
I may not choose the colors —
He knows what they should be.

For He can view the pattern
Upon the upper side
While I can see it only
On this, the underside.

Sometimes He weaves in sorrow,
Which seems so strange to me;
But I will trust His judgment
And work on faithfully.

'Tis He who fills the shuttle,
And He knows what is best;
So I shall weave in earnest,
And leave to Him the rest.

Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needed
In the Weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern, He has planned.

Unknown

Conclusion

continued

7. Observe a moment of silence.
8. Chant:

Om
Śāntiḥ 3x
Hariḥ Om Śrīgurubhyo Namaḥ Hariḥ Om

9. Bless yourself. Slowly rub your palms together, creating heat, and put them over your eyes. Put them over your head and bless yourself. Then move your palms to your face, neck, shoulders, arms, chest, back, and legs. Slowly blinking, open your eyes. Keep your hands in namaskāraḥ position and thank all the ṛṣis who gave us the knowledge of sthāne.

Sūtra:

**Sthāne hr̥ṣīkeśa —
Everything is as it
should be**

Sāadhanā: Keep a gratitude journal for this week. At the end of each day, write at least three things you are grateful for and reflect upon them.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Essence of the Gītā

This class discusses the summary of the entire Bhagavad-gītā through five key practices that lead to devotion and knowledge of the supreme Self.

11.55 



matkarmakṛṇ-matparamaḥ
madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ,
nirvairāḥ sarvabhūteṣu
yaḥ sa māmeti pāṇḍava.

The one who does actions for Me, who looks upon Me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment, who bears enmity towards none, that one comes to Me, O Pāṇḍava!

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

- 2 transparent glasses of water
- 2 coins
- Mud or dirt
- 1 sheet of colorful round stickers for each student (at least 40-50 stickers/student)
- 1 blank sheet of paper for each student
- Devotional music

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 11.55.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Conditions to be created to Awake into the Higher State of Consciousness.”

Essence of the Gītā

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In our last class, we learned about sthāne. This is a deep understanding that everything that happens in our lives, happens for a reason. All our experiences, whether joyful or sorrowful, have contributed to our growth and made us who we are today. When we live life with this vision of sthāne, we do not try to avoid challenging circumstances or complain about them. Instead, we embrace them with acceptance, knowing that they are a message from God to help us purify ourselves and turn within.

List the following challenging experiences on the whiteboard and ask the students to share how these experiences can make a person grow.

- Your team lost in a sports game.
- You froze while giving a public speech.
- You scored a very low grade on your test.
- You didn't get into a school team after you tried out.
- You lost one of your friends.

Introduction 10 min

When we awaken the cosmic eye, we begin to realize that we are all connected and we reside in the body of Bhagavān. We begin to understand that everything is part of the Divine plan, and all we have to do is be His instruments. Being an instrument isn't always easy — it is a bumpy ride, but those bumps are necessary for our growth. They are sthāne. This beautiful awakening is one thing, but remaining awake is a whole different story.

It's easy to get a glimpse of something Higher, but to have a sustained vision, we need a lot of purity. For example, when we're studying these verses from the Gītā, they seem to make a lot of sense especially when we're in class. The moment we step out and get engrossed in our lives, we seem to forget those very lessons that were so crystal clear! Why is there this pattern of understanding, then forgetting? Why can't we always remember and hold these lessons close to our hearts?



Class Demo

Take two transparent glasses of water and put them on a flat surface. In glass A, let the water remain as is. In glass B, mix a little mud or dirt into the water. Now put a coin in each of the glasses.

Ask the students the following:

- In which glass can you see the coin better, A or B? Why do you think that is?
- What if we put a little more mud in glass B, what would happen? (At this point, the teacher can actually try that).
- What do the glass of water, mud, and coin symbolize?

Debrief:

- Glass of water: pure mind
- Coin: knowledge
- Mud: impurities of the mind

When our minds are pure, we can easily access the knowledge and profound lessons we have learned throughout our lives. When our minds are impure — disturbed by anger, jealousy, anxiety, busyness, etc. — the knowledge isn't accessible. The knowledge is still present — it doesn't go away; rather, it becomes inaccessible due to the impure mind. When the mind becomes pure again, we start to remember these teachings.

Pure mind = accessible knowledge
Impure mind = inaccessible knowledge

In the very last verse of chapter 11, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives us five key practices to keep our minds pure so that knowledge can be ever accessible.

Main Lesson 25 min

Bhagavān Ādi Śankarācārya says that this verse is the essence of the entire Gītā! It's very profound and precious. Let's see what Bhagavān says.

matkarmakṛṇ-matparamaḥ
 madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ,
 nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu
 yaḥ sa māmetyi pāṇḍava.

The one who does actions for Me,
 who looks upon Me as the Supreme,
 who is devoted to Me, who is free
 from attachment, who bears enmity
 towards none, that one comes to Me,
 O Pāṇḍava!

11.55

Main Lesson

continued

Conditions to
be created to
Awake...

The Lord says:

1. One who offers all actions unto Me
2. Who looks upon Me as the Supreme Goal
3. Who is devoted to Me
4. Who is free from attachment
5. Who bears enmity towards none

That one comes to Me, O Arjuna!

Let's explore each of these practices.



The order has been rearranged to facilitate the thought process of the verse.

1. matkarmakṛt: one who offers all actions unto Me

In the first practice, Bhagavān is indicating the path of **karma yoga**. He asks us to offer every single action as worship, just as we have seen in [Lesson 10](#).

Offering means shifting our intention in every action. For example, we can eat just to satisfy the cravings of our tongue, or we can eat healthy foods to keep our bodies fit and serve others. We can use our devices to doomscroll and drain our energy, or we can use them as tools to stay inspired and connected to the people we love.

Here are some questions we can ask ourselves:

1. **Are we selfless or selfish?** When we do something, are we doing it with the intention of being our best selves and helping others, or are we doing it for our own selfish reasons? When we continue to think of a higher purpose, we grow above our own likes and dislikes and our sense of individuality — in other words, we sublimate our ego and begin to embrace others as one.
2. **Are we trying to flourish or finish?** When we do something, do we just want to take the easy way out or do we see it as a means to purify ourselves? For example, in the current age, many people want to use AI just to get things done instead of thinking for themselves. **But remember, the purpose of an action is not completion but purification. It's not about checking a box but checking our hearts.** Did that action make us wiser, calmer, more loving, and kind? Did that action take us one step closer to God? If the answer is yes, that is the spirit of karma yoga.

3. **Are we focused or frantic?** When we do something, are we present and focused on the action? Do we get lost in it or are we constantly worried about the outcome? When we lose ourselves in the action, we already experience the result. We no longer crave what is to happen, so we become relaxed.

One might wonder if this is possible to do all the time. Can we really keep shifting our intentions to a higher purpose with every action that we perform? Bhagavān answers this question in the next step.

2. madbhaktaḥ: one who is devoted to Me

In this second practice, Bhagavān is indicating the path of **bhakti yoga**. Here, He asks us to do something deeper than offering. **In offering, we shift the intention in every action. But through devotion, we shift our primary identification, so everything becomes an offering.**



Example

A mother doesn't have to constantly remind herself that she is cooking for her child or working for her child. Due to the strong identification with her child, the mother automatically does everything for her child. Everything she does is, in one way or other, for the well-being of her child. Her love is so strong.

In the same way, when we shift our identification to being a servant of Bhagavān, a friend of Bhagavān, a beloved of Bhagavān, then automatically, everything we do will be for Bhagavān! We don't have to keep reminding ourselves of this.



Example

Another wonderful example is Hanumān jī. He didn't have to keep reminding Himself that every action was for Śrī Rāma. Hanumān jī's main identification was that of being the servant of Śrī Rāma. Therefore, everything He did automatically reflected this sentiment.

Can we tell which action of Mīrābāī's was not for Śrī Kṛṣṇa or which action of the Gopīs was not for Śrī Kṛṣṇa? These devotees lost themselves in their love for Bhagavān! The way to cultivate this strong identification with Bhagavān is through the practices we have seen in the previous lessons, such as connecting with our Iṣṭa Devatās through prayer, pūjā, and japa.

Never complain about the number of hours you have put in to do a job. Your nobility must estimate how much of you was put into each hour of your daily work.

Swami
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Main Lesson

continued

**Discussion**

Ask students to reflect on who they devote their actions to on a weekly basis. Give them a few minutes to think about it and then share with the class.

For example, when we want to impress someone, naturally, we might think about them while picking an outfit or spend time practicing what we would say to them.

Then discuss:

1. How does the desire to please others affect how we think and act?
2. How much time/energy do we spend acting for others' validation?
3. What happens when we start to devote ourselves to Bhagavān instead?

Why would someone shift their primary identification to Bhagavān instead of identifying with other things or people? Why cultivate such a relationship in the first place?

3. matparamaḥ: one who looks upon Me as the Supreme Goal

In the third practice, Bhagavān is indicating the path of **jñāna yoga**. When we are children, our parents tell us to offer prostrations to the Lord, say a prayer, chant His name, or sing a bhajan. We would do these things because our parents did them, and slowly, they became habits for some of us. As we grow, we wonder why we should connect to God in the first place. Why should we even pray or chant His name? Why even learn about Him?

In action, we shift our intention. In devotion, we shift our identification.

In knowledge, we shift our inquiry. We start to question the existence and importance of Bhagavān. Since we have already established the existence of Bhagavān through our previous lessons, we are now going to delve deeper into the importance of knowing Bhagavān.

All of us are looking for only one thing in life — eternal happiness. We think that we want money, but we actually want the joy that we will feel from gaining that money. We think that we want a relationship, but we actually want the joy and comfort of being loved. We think that we want to be popular, but we actually want the joy of being recognized. If we think about it deeply, we don't really want money or a relationship or popularity, but what we want is the joy that supposedly comes from these things. They may give us joy for a limited time, but they eventually fade away. Money comes and goes, so do relationships

and name and fame. Therefore, they cannot be the true seat of joy. Bhagavān, on the other hand, is the seat of permanent happiness. We know this because many realized Masters have directly experienced this. To some extent, we have too.

Think of the times when you were the happiest. What was your mind like? Was it distracted, agitated, confused, or afraid? Or was it calm, peaceful, and still? We experience bursts of happiness whenever our minds are calm and peaceful. That's because when we're peaceful, we're most connected to God.

More connected to Bhagavān = more peace = more happiness
Less connected to Bhagavān = less peace = less happiness

Therefore, in this practice, Bhagavān is asking us to realize that if we want true happiness, then we should start connecting to Him and making Him the goal of our lives, because that's where true and permanent happiness lies.

Now, let's summarize the first three practices. If we look at them closely, they tie in perfectly with the BMI chart:

- The **body** is a tool for performing **karma yoga**.
- The **mind** is an instrument for performing **bhakti yoga**.
- The **intellect** is a faculty for performing **jñāna yoga**.

By purifying all three instruments, we are able to transcend our vāsanās and realize our True Self. The results of these three practices are indicated in the last two practices. This means that when we practice karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jñāna yoga, we naturally become free from attachment and hatred.

4. saṅgavarjitah: one who is free from attachment

By practicing karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jñāna yoga, we become free of attachment.



Examples

- We can become dependent on a phone because we feel like it gives us company. When we happen to forget it at home or elsewhere, we feel anxious and lost.
- We can become very dependent on a group of friends because they make us feel wanted and loved. Getting separated from them makes us feel very vulnerable.

Main Lesson

continued

Having a phone or being part of a friend group isn't the issue. The issue is being so tied to them that we feel like we cannot live without them. When this happens, we become insecure and don't know what to do if we lose them. We live in fear and anxiety, and sometimes we even try to control them or do whatever we can to keep them closer to us.

On the other hand, detachment gives us freedom and clarity.

Detachment is being independent of something or someone for our happiness.

Through the first three practices, the connection with Bhagavān becomes very strong, which in turn makes it easy to detach ourselves from other things or people. We stop depending on them for our happiness because we begin to find happiness in Bhagavān. In fact, detachment makes our relationships with others even more beautiful because we aren't trying to control them or keep them too close. We give them enough time and space to grow and evolve. We accept them for who they are instead of trying to change them to what we want them to be.

Love for all and hatred for none can be considered the Gītā touchstone.

Swami Chinmayananda

5. nirvairah sarvabhūteṣu: one who bears enmity towards none

As our love for Bhagavān grows stronger, we are not only able to break free from attachments, but we are also able to understand that everything has its place. This is just like what we saw in lesson 20. We learned that Bhagavān is omniscient and omnipotent. But sometimes, when we examine this world, we think that Bhagavān made lots of mistakes! The truth is, there are no mistakes. Bhagavān has manifested this world according to all the karmas of all the jīvas. There is a story behind each and every being. Therefore, each and every being has a place in this enigmatic world.

Just as nighttime provides us rest from the day's work, the winter provides us with a cool refresh from the summer's heat. So too the challenges and challenging people in life — they provide us with strength and resilience. It's hard to believe, but sometimes, the most challenging people in our lives shape us the most.

The one who practices karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jñāna yoga, and realizes that the same Truth expresses in all beings, becomes an ocean of love — without attachment or enmity towards anyone. This is the essence of the entire Gītā.

**Example**

Would Harry Potter have been as strong without Voldemort? Would Spider-Man have grown into a hero without his villains?

Activity 10 min

Sticker Holī

Instructions

1. Give each student a sheet of colorful round stickers (with 40-50 stickers) and a clean sheet of paper.
2. Turn on some devotional music.
3. As the music starts, ask students to go around the classroom and put stickers on each other's clothes (not faces), as though they are playing Holī with stickers!
4. As students run out of stickers, stop the music.
5. Next, ask them to settle down in their original spots, close their eyes, think about a form of Bhagavān, and identify their relationship with that form.
6. They should write down the relationship in the form of a dedication at the top of their sheet. For example, "To Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, my best friend."
7. Next, ask them to remove the stickers from their own clothes and create different shapes, symbols, or figures with the stickers, as an offering to Bhagavān. Allow them to silently create their offerings.
8. Finally, students can share their offerings.

They may need help from their fellow students to ensure that all the stickers are removed.

Debrief: Bhagavān provides us with the best circumstances to evolve. He gives us all the tools required (all the stickers). All we have to do is turn them into an offering by strengthening our identification with Bhagavān and inquiring into His nature.

During this activity, all the five practices are covered. Ask the class if they can identify them.

1. **matkarmakṛt:** Whatever we received from others, we made it an offering to Bhagavān.
2. **madbhaktaḥ:** We identified our relationship with Bhagavān.
3. **matparamaḥ:** We turned the direction of our senses and mind to Bhagavān for joy and peace.
4. **saṅgavarjitaḥ:** We kept our minds in something higher and away from lower things during the duration of the activity.
5. **nirvairāḥ sarvabhūteṣu:** We openly received every sticker from everyone around us without any dislike. We used whatever we received for our own evolution.

Conclusion 5 min

Offering Collage: Ask all the students to put their offerings in the center of the room and then chant verse 11.55. Then, take a group picture to remember the essence of the Bhagavad-gītā.

Sūtra:

Body in karma,
mind in bhakti, and
intellect in jñāna

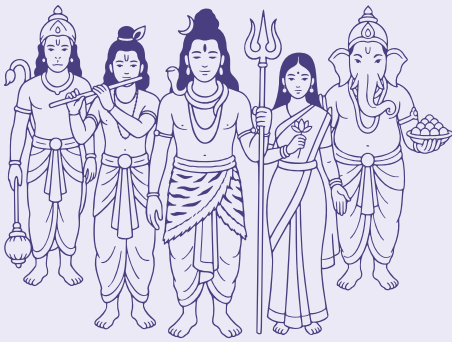
Sāadhanā: Think of someone who has been challenging you lately. List all the ways in which they may have shaped you to become stronger.

Conclude with closing prayers.

Form or Formless?

This lesson explores two ways to worship the Lord — form and formless. Though the Ultimate Reality is formless, it is much easier to connect to a form and use that as support to reach the formless.

12.1 



arjuna uvāca
evaṁ satatayuktā ye
bhaktāstvām paryupāsate,
ye cāpyakṣaram-avyaktam
teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāḥ.

Arjuna said, “Those devotees who, ever steadfast, thus worship You, and also those who worship the imperishable, the unmanifested — which of them are better versed in yoga?”

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	Pre-prepared cards of different forms of Gods and Goddesses (see Activity)
10m	Introduction	
25m	Main Lesson	Playdough (1 handful per student)
10m	Activity	Pre-prepared cards of simple objects that can be made out of playdough (see Activity)
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 12.1.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Arjuna’s question: Which is Nobler? Worship or Contemplation?”

Form or Formless?

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Ask the class to recall the five key practices from the last class. The teacher can provide the Saṁskṛtam term and then ask the students to explain the English meaning or vice versa.

Alternatively, the teacher can also play Hangman to make them guess the words.

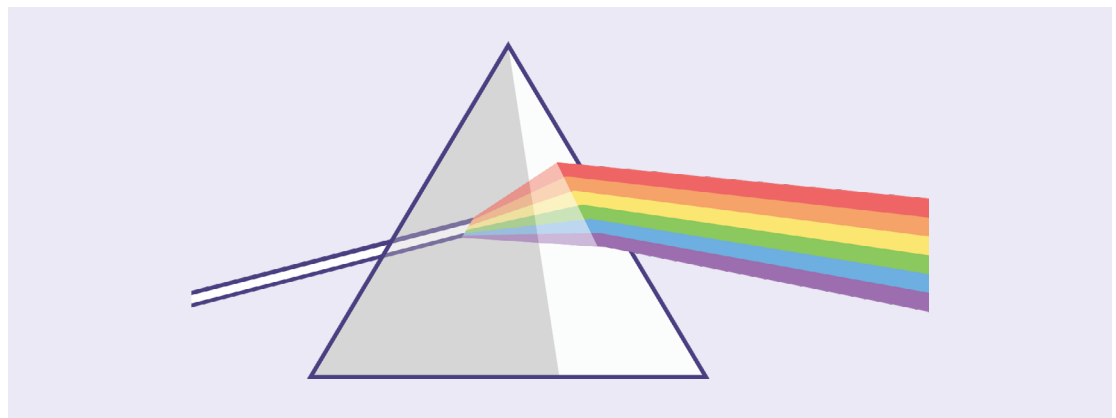
1. **matkarmakṛt**: one who offers all actions unto Me
2. **madbhaktaḥ**: one who is devoted to Me
3. **matparamaḥ**: one who looks upon Me as the Supreme Goal
4. **saṅgavarjitaḥ**: one who is free from attachment
5. **nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu**: one who bears enmity towards none

Ask them if they remember what each one symbolizes and the underlying connection: The one who practices karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jñāna yoga, and realizes the same Truth expressing in all beings, becomes an ocean of love — without attachment or enmity towards anyone. This is the essence of the entire Gītā.

Introduction 10 min

We are now entering Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad-gītā. Prior to this, we learned so many wonderful lessons about how to connect to Bhagavān. Let's go through them so that we can prepare ourselves for Chapter 12: Bhakti Yoga.

Do you remember this diagram?



- **White light** = Consciousness or Brahman (Īśvara's Higher Nature)
- **Glass Prism** = Māyā
- **Spectrum of names and forms** = World (Īśvara's lower nature) — This consists of space, air, fire, water, earth, mind, intellect, and ego.

The **Higher Nature of Īśvara is Consciousness**. Consciousness is formless. It cannot be heard, touched, seen, tasted, smelled, or even thought of.

The **lower nature of Īśvara is the world of names and forms**. This can be heard, touched, seen, tasted, smelled, and thought of. In fact, it is through this that we connect to our Iṣṭa Devatās.

Arjuna recalls these two natures of Īśvara and starts to wonder, which is the best way to worship Īśvara? Is it through His Higher Nature, which is formless? Or is it through His lower nature, which has a form, like through our Iṣṭa Devatās?

What do you think is the answer?



At this point, the teacher can ask the students to answer the question and explain their reasoning. Alternatively, the teacher can also conduct a mini debate. Once the class has warmed up to these ideas, we can explore them in this lesson.

Arjuna's question



Main Lesson 25 min

Arjuna asks which is better: to worship the form or the formless?

arjuna uvāca
evaṁ satatayuktā ye
bhaktāstvāṁ paryupāsate,
ye cāpyakṣaram-avyaktam
teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāḥ.

Arjuna said, “Those devotees who, ever steadfast, thus worship You, and also those who worship the imperishable, the unmanifested — which of them are better versed in yoga?”

12.1

Let's examine his question.

Form: A form is something that can be perceived by the senses and mind.

Physical forms have at least one of the properties: sound, touch, sight, taste, or smell. They can be perceived by the senses.

- sound = the beat of a song or the melody of an instrument
- touch = the texture of a cloth or a stone
- sight = the structure of a building or the color of a flower
- taste = the taste of a sweet juicy fruit or a spicy curry
- smell = the smell of your favorite food or the scent of a candle

Main Lesson

continued

Thought forms have the same properties: sound, touch, sight, taste, or smell, but they may not be experienced by the senses at the time of the thought.

- sound = a memory of your favorite song looping in your head
- touch = missing the hug of your parent or sibling
- sight = dreaming about achieving a future goal
- taste = craving for chocolate ice cream
- smell = imagining the smell of fresh rain

Because forms can be perceived by the senses and mind, they become very easy to relate to. Physical forms make it easier for us to grasp things, such as live demonstrations, experiments, visuals, and audio. Thought forms are a little subtler, such as concepts, ideas, and visions. Our Iṣṭa Devatās belong to the category of forms, because they can be perceived by the mind and senses.

Formless: A formless substance is something that cannot be perceived by the senses and mind.

The best example of a formless substance that we can conceptualize is space.

Space doesn't have a definite sound, texture, shape, size, color, taste, or smell. It's vast and infinite. Because of this, space is the closest to Brahman. The difference between space and Brahman or Consciousness is that space can be conceptualized. We can still speak of space and conceptually divide it into room space, hall space, and kitchen space (even if it's actually indivisible). Brahman, on the other hand, cannot be conceptualized at all. When all the senses and mind are shut down, Brahman stands revealed in Its own light.

Let's try a little experiment with this.

**Activity**

Round 1: Give each student a card with a different form of the Lord. (Include a variety, such as Lakṣmī Devī, Sarasvatī Devī, Hanumān jī, Bhagavān Rāma, Bhagavān Śiva, etc.) Ask them to spend one minute studying the form in detail. Then ask them to close their eyes for two minutes and lead them in a meditation.

Visualize the Lord's form in your mind. Go to the very crown of the head, to the forehead, and notice the beautiful eyes of Bhagavān or Devī. Think about their face and gentle smile. Notice their neck and the garland or necklace around them. Think about their hands and what each hand is holding. Recall the color of their attire and how they

are sitting or standing. Do they have a vāhana? Slowly, try to imagine them from head to toe. Remember as many details as you can.

Round 2: Next, ask them to sit in silence and write down some qualities of “space.” Then ask them to close their eyes and contemplate for two minutes.

Discuss: What’s the difference between the first round and the second round? Which one was easier?

Debrief: They may have found it easier to contemplate on something with form because it has more attributes. Space is much harder to contemplate on because it has no attributes (e.g. height, width, weight, etc.). When they imagined “space,” did it appear in reference to objects (like planets or inside a box)? Is that truly formless space alone or tied to a form? The concept of space is usually tied to some object, which means we are still depending on an object in our contemplation.

Now, let’s look at the relationship between the form and formless:

Form: Consciousness is the fundamental substance from which all the forms of the Universe are shaped. That same Reality appears as Śrī Rāma, you, me, and even Rāvaṇa! All the forms from the most auspicious to the lowest are fashioned from the fabric of Reality.



Example

Clay can be shaped into countless forms. Because clay has no fixed shape of its own, it can become all varieties of shapes.

Formless: Forms arise or dissolve, but the formless Reality remains untouched and unaffected, transcending all changes/qualities of form.



Example

Clay can be shaped into many forms. It can become a scorpion or a flower, but nothing happens to the clay. It does not become poisonous when shaped into a scorpion or fragrant when shaped like a flower. If the shapes are dissolved or broken, nothing has happened to the clay itself. The clay is untouched.

Main Lesson

continued

Is it easier to worship the form or the formless?

1. Because forms have more attributes, it is easier to connect with them. Recall this exercise from Lesson 6: Discover your Iṣṭa Devatā. Which is the easiest to do?
 - Watching a movie with full animation and special effects
 - Watching a movie with just monotone dialogue
 - Watching a movie without sound
 - Watching a movie with only one scene the entire time
 - Watching a blank screen

The more attributes something has, the easier it is to hold our attention.

2. Because we think we are with form (i.e., this body), we most easily connect with other forms. We connect easily with other people. If we were asked to become friends with the wind or the sky, it would be very difficult to relate to them.

What is the relationship between the forms we worship (Lord Kṛṣṇa, Sarasvatī Devī) and the formless Brahman?

Worshipping divine, auspicious forms makes our mind pure, sharp, and subtle. Slowly, we start to see beyond the form to the formless aspect pervading all forms. This is why Sanātana Dharma represents the Divine in so many forms — as Devī, Bhagavān Śiva, Bhagavān Viṣṇu, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, etc. Slowly, as devotion increases, we begin to feel the Divine not just in that particular form but as the formless Divine in all forms and beyond.

**Example**

A country's flag embodies the spirit of the nation across all its people and places. Although initially we may see the form and color, we start to understand that it indicates a deeper aspect. It represents the entire country.

Q: Can you think of any other examples?

A: A picture of a parent or a loved one shows a specific name and form, but eventually it will come to symbolize all the love and affection they have towards us and that we have towards them.

Why should we go from form to formless?

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers Arjuna's question and tells him that the best is to worship the formless via form. Worshiping the formless directly is very difficult. At the same time, limiting our worship to only the form will not lead us to the Ultimate Truth. **The path of bhakti teaches us to worship the form to prepare our minds to connect with the formless.**

How do we go from form to formless?

The mind must become purified and single-pointed, and then seek the Supreme through the steady path of contemplation, from gross to subtle.

1. **ekarūpa: worshipping the Lord in one form to focus and purify**

Contemplate on one beloved form of God. This purifies our thoughts and makes them single-pointed towards the divine object of our worship. This is also known as worshipping an Iṣṭa Devatā — MPG (My Personal God), a form of Bhagavān or Bhagavatī that's dearest to one's heart, as we have seen in the earlier lessons.

2. **anekarūpa: seeing the Lord in all countless forms**

Next, learn to see that particular form in all the differences we see — the various forms of trees, plants, animals, and beings — moving and unmoving. Learn to see that particular form in other forms of God also. This is learning to see Bhagavān in His vibhūti and learning to see one's Iṣṭa Devatā in different forms. For example, if one's Iṣṭa Devatā is Sarasvatī Devī, learn to see Her in Kṛṣṇa, in Śiva, etc.

3. **viśvarūpa: seeing all forms in That One Lord**

Next, come to something subtler. Contemplate on the Lord, your Iṣṭa Devatā as the Totality. The entire Universe is ONE Divine being. Arjuna sees this divine vision of the entire Universe as residing in the Supreme Lord, as revealed in Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad-gītā and as we have seen before.

4. **arūpa: that One Lord is the formless Supreme**

Just like the underlying clay, contemplate on the formless Reality that lies beyond the universal form. There is no set shape, form, or limitation to the Supreme. Because of this, it can take on any shape, any form!

5. **svarūpa: I am That Supreme**

Contemplate on this formless Reality as one's true Nature. Just like Consciousness is the Essence of all forms that we see in the Universe, it's also our own Essence!

Activity 10 min

Playdough Charades

This activity requires some cards (one per student) and some playdough. Each card should have the name of a simple object (e.g., suitcase, beach ball, paintbrush, microphone, etc.) and be placed in a paper bag.

Instructions

1. Each student is given a medium piece of playdough.
2. Next, each student picks a card from the paper bag, ensuring no one else can see what is written on the card.
3. Once all students have a card, they should try to make the object mentioned on their card with their playdough.
4. After they are done, students can share their objects and guess what each other's objects are. They can have some fun trying to guess. The main idea is to show them how one substance can take many forms.
5. Finally, each student squashes their object.

Discussion

1. When you guessed what your fellow classmates had created, why didn't you guess playdough?
2. When you squashed your object, could the object still be identified?
3. When you created and squashed your object, did anything really happen to the playdough? Was it harmed or changed in any way? Did it become more or less?

Debrief: Our mind is more easily able to identify with objects having limited forms and shapes rather than tuning into the underlying substance — the playdough. That's probably why students didn't guess playdough! The playdough remains the same before, during, and after the formation of the object. The main idea is that one substance can form all the various objects, and yet be untouched by the objects. This is akin to Brahman, the formless substratum of all objects and experiences. It is the very fabric which does not get changed, diminished, or affected by taking on all the shapes and forms of the universe. This is the Reality that is to be realized.

Conclusion 5 min

Group meditation: Do a short group meditation on any form of Bhagavān. First ask students to focus intently on the image and then close their eyes and recollect the image. The teacher can also ask them questions while their eyes are closed to ensure that they are able to recollect attributes, such as what is on the hair, what kind of tilak or marks are on the face, what kind of garland is around the neck, etc.

Sūtra:

Worship with form
to prepare for the
formless

Sāadhanā: Change the home screen or screensaver on your phone or computer to the form of your Iṣṭa Devatā this week. Spend time worshiping the form.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Qualities of a Bhakta: Free from Hatred

This lesson defines adveṣa (being free from hatred) and dveṣa (hatred), how they feel, and the results of practicing them on our psyche. It also covers strategies and practical methods to overcome hatred and grow in love.

12.13 



adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānāṃ
maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca,
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ
sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣamī.

The one who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving...

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

3 or more large sheets of paper or whiteboard space

Pens/Markers

Image of Bhagavān

Lord of the Rings Clips

[🔗 #1](#)

[🔗 #2](#)

Kung Fu Panda Clips

[🔗 #1](#)

[🔗 #2](#)

Harry Potter Clips

[🔗 #1](#)

[🔗 #2](#)

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 12.13.

Qualities of a Bhakta: Free from Hatred

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we discussed Bhagavān's nature with form and as formless. We saw that the best approach is to worship the formless via the form, since worshipping the formless directly is very difficult. At the same time, limiting our worship to only the form doesn't lead us to the Ultimate Truth. The path of bhakti teaches us to worship the form to prepare our minds to connect with the formless.

Let's begin class by meditating on a form of Bhagavān.



Activity

Do a short group meditation on any form of Bhagavān. First, ask students to focus intently on an image of Bhagavān, and then close their eyes and recollect the image. The teacher can also ask them questions while their eyes are closed, to ensure that they are able to recollect attributes, such as what is on the hair, what kind of tilak or marks are on the face, what kind of garland is around the neck, etc.

Introduction 5 min

Ask the students how they feel after they think about Bhagavān. Thinking of Bhagavān feels very peaceful and calming. It brings joy to our hearts. However sometimes, our minds think otherwise. They think other types of thoughts. Take them through the following exercise.



Quiet Reflection

Guide the students to close their eyes, run through the previous day in their heads, from morning to evening, and look for one thing:

Try to recall how many times we disagreed with someone or some situation, and therefore felt irritation, dislike, or ill will towards them. This could be in relation to a friend, parent, teacher, or even a stranger. You could even bear resentment for a particular situation.

After giving them a few minutes to recall such a situation, ask students to reflect on how that ill will felt, and how it manifested through their mind and speech. For example, if we were irritated with our siblings, did we say something in a negative tone to them? If we disliked a situation, did we complain about it?

Next, quietly reflect on how it feels to engage in this type of negative thought and action. This negative thought is *dveṣa*, or general ill will, and its opposite, *adveṣa*, is the focus of this lesson.

Main Lesson 25 min

In the remaining lessons, the attention shifts from bhakti to a bhakta.

One who worships Bhagavān and grows closer to Him is known as a **bhakta** or **devotee**.

Bhagavān starts to describe what the ideal devotee is like. As we learn about these qualities, we can see how to practice them in our lives so that we can be better bhaktas.

adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānām
maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca,
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ
sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣamī.

The one who hates no creature,
who is friendly and compassionate to
all, who is free from attachment and
egoism, balanced in pleasure and
pain, and forgiving...

12.13

In this lesson, we will focus on “adveṣa,” or having no hatred towards anybody.

Adveṣṭā refers to the person who is absent of ill will, dislike, and hatred towards others. **Adveṣa** is the quality of being free from hatred.

It is a subtle yet powerful level of *ahimsā*, wherein even our thoughts do not harm others. Naturally, such a mind is serene, full of love and compassion, and balanced. When we live in this spirit, we are living in harmony with everyone around us.

As we grow up, not only do our responsibilities increase, but we also face more challenges. We encounter different kinds of people and places. When things do

Main Lesson

continued

not measure up to our expectations, our minds may become agitated, leading to feelings of dislike. It is important to learn how to remain free from hatred in the midst of all of these changes and to deal with them with a balanced and fair mind. This loving and harmonious way of living leads to the greatest happiness and fulfillment.

The opposite of adveṣa is dveṣa, which is hatred. Dveṣa can also affect us — sometimes, it comes in the form of being judgmental, whether towards ourselves or towards others. It can come in the form of peer pressure, where we may dislike someone who acts differently from everyone else. It can also come in the form of unhealthy competition, where we dislike someone outperforming us. These feelings manifest in our mind and speech, and in extreme cases, even through our actions, as we saw in the Introduction.



Discussion

1. How does dveṣa manifest in our thoughts, words, and actions?
2. How does adveṣa manifest?
3. When we express dveṣa, how does it affect our mental state?
What about when we express adveṣa?

Debrief: As the students respond, some examples of answers can be categorized as follows:

	Mind	Speech	Body
Dveṣa: Ill will	Agitation, anger, a lack of ease, envy	Hurtful, curt, thoughtless, expressing dislike	Negative/closed- off body language, harmful actions
Adveṣa: Goodwill	Serenity, love, dynamism, compassion	Pleasing, soft, uplifting, expressing inclusion and love	Open, warm body language, helpful, loving gestures

We realize through this reflection that whenever we express dveṣa, we intensify it, and hatred grows stronger. On the other hand, expressing adveṣa brings openness and love, and prevents any hatred from growing in our minds. Adveṣa feels much better mentally than ill will, and it unifies our personality, bringing us closer to other people and to Divinity through our good intentions and noble actions.

Even if we know what adveṣa is and why it is important, we must also understand how it works, so that we can develop and practice it in our lives. Let's first look at dveṣa.

How Dveṣa Works

Our mind is made up of thoughts, and each thought takes a certain amount of energy from us. With each thought that we encourage and engage with, we are depleting our quota of mental energy.

When a thought of dislike or hatred (dveṣa) arises, it takes energy away from other productive thought processes we could be having, like problem-solving, understanding, inquiry, investigation, or anything else. In fact, not only does dveṣa take up our valuable mental energy, it is actually a weakening force.



Activity

The Strength of Love

The teacher should call one student volunteer to the front of the room. Ask the student to hold their arm out horizontally, directly in front of them, without bending their elbow. Their goal is to try and keep their arm straight and horizontal for as long as possible.

In the first scenario, ask them to close their eyes and imagine their near and dear ones, and how much love they feel for them. As you gently press downwards on their hand, ask them to imagine the weight on their hand as the weight they are bearing out of love for their dear ones. Continue to apply more pressure on their arm until they are unable to hold it up horizontally anymore. Note the time and pressure applied. Ask them to open their eyes and shake their arm out.

In the next scenario, ask them to hold their other arm out similarly. They should close their eyes and imagine someone or something they dislike or hate. Ask them to constantly think about this and imagine that the pressure on their arm is the burden put on them by that person or thing they hate. Again, continue to apply more pressure on their arm in the same manner as before. This time their arm will likely go down faster and with far less pressure.

Discussion

1. Why do you think the second scenario resulted in less strength in the body?
2. What is the connection between hatred, strength of the mind, and strength of the body?
3. Why does love give us strength, and why does hatred weaken us?

Main Lesson

continued

Debrief: Dveṣa is weakening because it is a form of agitation, sapping our mental strength. It is also based on a lie — the lie that we are all different. Love is strengthening because it calms the mind, collects energy, and uses it productively. Love also taps into the strength of the Lord, because it is based on the truth that the Lord is in everyone, and so everybody deserves our compassion and love. **A strong mind supports strength in the body, creating strong, powerful actions. Love truly is strength.**



Optional Activity

Ask the students to debate the following topic: Which is stronger, the power of love or the power of hate?

Split the class into two groups and assign each group the side they will be supporting. Give them five minutes to prepare their arguments involving the following components:

1. An opening statement
2. A supporting argument from pop culture (movies, TV, news)
3. A supporting argument from our Purāṇas or other scriptures
4. A closing argument.

Hold the debate and let each side go back and forth with their arguments. At the end of the debate, discuss the main points brought up and guide the class to the understanding that the power of love is greater than the power of hate. Use the debrief points from “The Strength of Love” activity.

Developing Adveṣa

Strategy 1: Put Yourself in Another’s Shoes

Now that we understand how hatred weakens our minds, we can focus on how to develop adveṣa. One approach is to develop understanding through critical thinking. Being able to love everyone immediately and constantly may be difficult, but through practice, we can come to understand and appreciate the perspectives of people around us, even when they inconvenience us or act contrary to our expectations.

Dveṣa arises because someone or something exists in a way that is not in accordance with our expectations, desires, or inclinations. However, if we

analyze the situation, we may find that the other person is acting reasonably from their own perspective. Substituting the gut reaction of dislike with thoughtfulness and empathy can help us conserve our mental energy, bring us closer to others, and resolve otherwise high-tension situations. True understanding of others helps us develop adveṣa.



Activity

Pair students up and have them discuss and act out the following:

1. Recall the introductory activity where you were asked to remember a situation when you disagreed with somebody's actions and it caused you to dislike or hold a grudge against them. If you are comfortable, share the incident with your partner. If not, come up with another scenario.
2. Take turns role-playing the thought process from the other person's perspective. Give students a few minutes to do this.

Discussion

1. Were you able to find any middle ground in the situation?
2. Was there any point that the other person made that was valid?
3. Now has your perspective of the person changed?
4. How did your dislike, grudges, or ill will affect your ability to understand and connect with that person?

Debrief: In most situations, we can find a reasonable explanation for another person's actions. When we realize that they are not acting with malice towards us, then our dveṣa or hatred automatically lessens. For example, sometimes parents may seem overbearing, but it is an expression of their great love for us.



If a student asks what to do if someone genuinely does something out of malice, use that to transition to the next strategy.

Strategy 2: How the Hero Shines

Sometimes, the behavior of a person or a situation cannot be explained rationally. Wrong things do happen. We should use such situations as a chance to do the right thing and evolve. When we engage in adveṣa, we gain the strength to face trying situations.

Even in stories, we love the heroes that stand out because of their nobility in the face of evil, like gentle hobbits Frodo and Sam versus the power-hungry Sauron

Main Lesson

continued

in *The Lord of the Rings*, sweet Po versus vengeful Tai Lung in *Kung Fu Panda*, or the brave Harry versus the ruthless Voldemort in *Harry Potter*.

**Activity**

Pick one of the three movies for discussion:

Lord of the Rings

- Clip 1: Frodo and Gandalf
- Clip 2: Frodo and Sam

Clip context: Frodo, the young hobbit, has been tasked with destroying a terrible ring that gives power to the evil Sauron. Sauron wants power over the entire realm of Middle-earth, and seeks to destroy everyone in it. Gandalf guides Frodo to accept his destiny, and Sam supports him in his quest.

Kung Fu Panda

- Clip 1: Shifu and Tai Lung
- Clip 2: Po and Tai Lung

Clip context: Po, the unlikely panda Dragon Warrior, has been trained by his teacher, Shifu. Tai Lung, the old student of Po's master, badly wanted to be the Dragon Warrior, but was denied the position due to his lack of character. Out of hatred, he comes back to take revenge.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

- Clip 1: Harry and his parents
- Clip 2: Harry and Voldemort's fight

Clip context: Orphaned as a baby, Harry discovers he is a famous wizard and begins attending Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. There, he uncovers his magical heritage and learns he must stop the evil wizard Voldemort, who killed his parents, from stealing an artifact that grants eternal life. The love of Harry's parents protected him against Voldemort, making him indestructible.

Discussion

1. What are the qualities and motivations for the villains? And what are the qualities and motivations for the heroes?
2. How do the heroes get the strength to overcome the villains? Do they engage in hatred?
3. What makes us admire these heroes, and how can we be more like them in our daily lives?

**Movie clips**

Debrief: Sauron is motivated by his hatred to dominate the whole of Middle-earth, while Tai Lung is motivated by hatred due to perceived personal slights. On the other hand, Po is motivated by a desire to protect his teacher and fulfill his destiny; in other words, to be the best he can be. The hobbits also try to fulfill their destiny as Gandalf guides them, and work to protect the Shire, their village, and all of Middle-earth. Harry's parents are faced with pure evil in Voldemort, and yet they respond only with the deepest love to protect their child. The parents do not give up their values in the face of even their own deaths. All of these heroes are motivated out of love, which gives them strength. They never engage in hatred, no matter the personal cost, and most importantly, they all surrender to their destiny and are accepting of what comes their way. We can emulate them by finding a higher cause to love, and to work out of that noble intention, rather than working out of spite, resentment, or any other negative emotion.

Working out of love, even in the face of hardship, makes us heroes.

Recall the **lesson on sthāne**. The Lord creates all sorts of scenarios for us to go through, and they all happen for our benefit and growth. Sometimes, the behavior of others or any difficult situation is our chance to make our inner goodness and purity stronger, to make our inner hero shine. Understanding this can help us cultivate adveṣa even in the most trying of circumstances.



Discussion

Who do you admire for their goodness in difficult times?

Debrief: Whoever we may admire, whether a teacher, a historical figure, our parents, or friends, we always appreciate how they do not abandon their values even when faced with difficulty. They stick to their good nature, their loving character, even when everyone around them may not. This is the heroism of adveṣa.

When we engage in heroic love, we come closer to the Lord, because everybody and everything is Bhagavān alone. When we acknowledge this reality by truly loving everybody around us, no matter what the situation is, we gain the Lord's strength, we are purified, and we become closer to Him.

Main Lesson

continued

Strategy 3: A Vision of Oneness

The third approach to developing adveṣa is to understand that, in the final analysis, nobody deserves hatred. This includes ourselves; loving ourselves is an important part of developing adveṣa. Everyone is still evolving, and so we all deserve compassion. Hating others and ourselves for making mistakes on the journey does not help anyone. When we have a vision of oneness and unity, we can forgive others and ourselves for any mistakes made.

Story: The Monk's Response

There was a wise and peaceful monk, traveling alone on a quiet path through a dense forest. He was on his way to a distant village. The path was remote. Suddenly, from behind the thick bushes, a group of rough-looking men jumped out. They were bandits, looking to steal. They surrounded the monk, demanding money. The monk, living simply, had little to offer, and seeing that, they grew angry.

Seeing he had almost nothing, they beat the monk harshly, venting their frustration, and then disappeared back into the forest, leaving him injured and alone.

Sometime later, kind villagers found the injured monk. They rushed to his side, filled with compassion, saw his injuries, and carefully carried him to their village nearby.

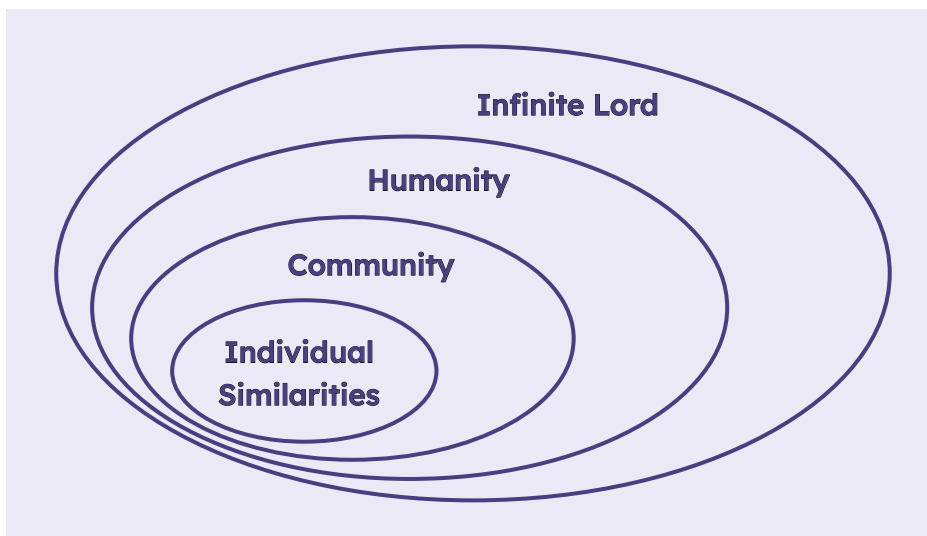
Back in the village, they laid him gently on a clean mat. Some brought water, others brought soothing herbs. As one kind villager was carefully tending to a cut on the monk's face, another villager, deeply concerned, asked softly, "Revered sir, this is terrible! Who did this awful thing to you? Can you tell us who the men were that beat you so badly?"

The monk, despite his pain, opened his eyes and looked calmly, with deep peace, at the villager cleaning his wound. He replied softly but clearly, "The same person who is serving me now, beat me."

**Discussion**

1. What vision did the monk have that prevented him from having hatred?
2. How do we develop that vision?
3. How do we see oneness between ourselves and others in daily life? What do we do if we cannot see the vision of oneness at the level of the monk?

Debrief: The vision of oneness prevented the monk from hating anyone, even those who hurt him. He understands that the same Lord, the same Reality, is in the one who hurts and the one who heals. In our daily life, we can try to see Divinity in everyone around us. However, if that is hard, we can begin with factors that are common to people, and slowly work up to universal oneness. We can start by seeing the similarities between people, recognizing everyone as part of one large community, or even embracing our collective humanity.



Suppose we have an enemy — even then, isn't he still ours? What do we say? My friend, my enemy... we say "my" enemy. The friend is mine, and the enemy is also mine. Not someone else's. So we should understand that he too belongs to us. We should not hate or dislike even an enemy.

Swami Tejomayananda

Activity 15 min

Practical Methods for Developing Adveṣa

Preparation: Split the class into a minimum of three groups depending on size. Each group should have one large white sheet of paper along with pens and markers at each station.

Introduction: We will now brainstorm practical ways to overcome dislike in various scenarios to develop the quality of adveṣa.

Activity
continued

Phase 1: Dveṣa

Ask each group to divide the sheet into three vertical columns. In the first column, write down the different types of dveṣa. They could be ill will, dislike, hatred, and so on. In the second column, ask them to write down a specific situation for each type of dveṣa. The third column for the solution will be kept blank for now and filled out in phase 2. Students can note down three to five examples. A sample table is provided here.

Dveṣa	Example Situation	Solution (Strategy + Action)
Dislike	I felt dislike for my teachers when they assigned me a lot of homework.	(To be written in Phase 2)

Phase 2: Practical Advēṣa

Have each group move clockwise from one sheet to the next sheet. When they arrive at the next sheet, they should read the examples of dveṣa written by the previous group and think of practical ways to counter the dveṣa based on the three strategies given in the “Main Lesson.” Ask them to write the strategy and actual action to take in the third column.

The following table gives the students some ideas to get started:

Understanding Others	The Hero Moment	Loving All
• Dialogue with the person • Imagining the other perspective • Journaling from a third-person POV	• Prayer and quiet time to ground myself • Writing my learnings from a difficult scenario • Reading stories of saints’ challenges for inspiration	• Finding similarities between me and others • Identifying good qualities in others and myself • Forgiveness (can be written or spoken)

Ensure that the solution provided is a concrete action, rather than only a mental change. Emphasize to the students the need to solidify their understanding through practice.

Have the groups move clockwise to the next sheet again. When they arrive at the next sheet, ask them to add a new solution to each example of dveṣa using a different strategy from the lesson, or another practical approach to the same strategy. For example:

Dveṣa	Example Situation	Solution (Strategy + Action)
Dislike	I felt dislike for my teachers when they assigned me a lot of homework.	• Write down what I will learn from a difficult class versus a class that is an easy A. • Appreciating the good qualities in a teacher who is working hard for me to learn well. • Imagine the teacher's POV: why would she want to assign more homework?

Continue until the students arrive back at their original paper, and allow them two to three minutes to read what other students have written as practical solutions of developing adveṣa in their scenarios.

Discuss: What were some unique practical methods listed on your sheet that you did not expect, but ended up liking?

Debrief: We can see that there are many ways to introduce adveṣa into our lives, and to connect with people around us with goodwill and love.

Conclusion 5 min

Summary: Ask students to share their definition of adveṣa and their favorite practical method to develop it by overcoming dveṣa.

Sūtra:

Love
strengthens;
hate weakens

Sādhana: For this week, students should pick one area of their life where they have the opportunity to practice adveṣa, ideally from the Introduction activity. They can pick one practical method to practice every day, and write down a short journal entry about their feelings while implementing it.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Qualities of a Bhakta: Contentment

This lesson will explore the nature of contentment and how to develop it in the context of individual circumstances. The topics covered include a focus on personal growth, self-appreciation, gratitude, and being rooted in one's svadharma.

Note: This lesson is much longer than others so it may take up to two classes to complete.

12.14 



santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī
yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ,
mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ
yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ.

Ever content, steady in meditation,
self-controlled, possessed of firm
conviction, with mind and intellect
dedicated to Me, My devotee, is
dear to Me.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Blindfolds for each student

An MP3 player or laptop, with a playlist of sāttvika songs that can be danced to. The songs should contain no foul language, nor should they contain any indecent themes.

Speakers to play the music

 **Your brain on social media**

 **The Social Dilemma scene - What are advertisers paying for?**

 **The Social Dilemma scene - predicting our actions**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 12.14.

Swami Tejomayananda. *The Bill That Never Came*.

 Orlowski, Jeff. "The Social Dilemma."

Pandit Ramanarayana Datta Shastri. *Mahabharata*. Vol. 1, 4.

Qualities of a Bhakta: Contentment

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we learned that one of the key qualities of a devotee is “adveṣa,” or not having any hatred or ill will towards anyone. We saw the differences in how dveṣa and adveṣa express through body, mind, and speech, and how both work by weakening and strengthening us, respectively. We also discussed the key ways to develop adveṣa — to consider other people’s perspectives, to undergo difficult situations with nobility and love, and to find similarities between everybody to truly love all.



The sādhanā last week was to apply some practical methods to grow adveṣa whenever students felt dveṣa towards a person or situation. If they feel comfortable, ask them to share their experience practicing adveṣa in the past week. Also ask if they found any unique or creative ways to practice adveṣa and how it felt to inculcate this virtue in their daily life.

Introduction 5 min

Last week, we saw a key quality of the devotee is a lack of hatred, because the bhakta sees the Lord everywhere. In today’s lesson, we will see another quality of devotees as a result of their divine vision, which is contentment.

Have students quietly reflect for a few minutes on the following questions:

1. What significant things do we have in our lives that we regularly take notice of?
2. What significant things do we feel we are missing in our lives that we regularly take notice of?
3. Which one do you think we pay more attention to?
4. What is the result of paying more attention to one over the other?



After they reflect quietly, ask them to share in pairs, and transition into the topic of contentment.

Main Lesson 25 min

In today's verse, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa talks about qualities that He finds dear in His devotees.

santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī
yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ,
mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ
yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ.

Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, My devotee, is dear to Me.

12.14

Today we will focus specifically on santuṣṭaḥ, one who is ever content.

Contentment is a deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

In contentment, there is reassurance that everything happening in life is for our growth and ultimate benefit. It is a feeling of ease and acceptance regarding our life circumstances, both inner and outer, and is characterized by fewer pressing desires, and with peace and fulfillment within. There is always a feeling of plenty, and that we are on the road to greater spiritual development.

The opposite is **discontent**. It is an acute sense of lacking something.

It is characterized by restlessness, agitation, desires for many different things, dissatisfaction, and even anxiety. There is a feeling of scarcity or emptiness, and those who are discontent will do anything to fill up that empty space.

Contentment relates to two aspects of our lives: what we have, and what we do not.

	What we have	What we do not have
Contentment	Appreciation, remembrance, a feeling of fullness	Peace, acceptance
Discontent	Neglect, forgetfulness	Desire, anxiety, jealousy, comparison, a feeling of lack

Main Lesson

continued

In order to foster true contentment, we should bolster appreciation and purpose in what we do have, while accepting and understanding what we do not have.

**Example**

With regard to college admissions, we may feel discontent, because we may not acknowledge the positive aspects of the schools we are admitted into. Instead, we may compare college rankings with admissions of other students, and feel something lacking in ourselves because we did not get that admission. On the other hand, if we appreciate where we are admitted, by truly seeking out the benefits of that college, and accepting what we do not have, then we will experience a feeling of fullness and ease with our future. This is the feeling of contentment or fulfillment.

Accepting What We Don't Have**Part 1: Avoid comparisons**

Longing for what we do not have comes to us in various ways. It can come through popular culture, our own fanciful ideas, or our social settings. However, they are all based on one fundamental idea: comparison.

“Comparison is the thief of joy,” goes the old saying. We may compare our grades, skills, resumes, looks, or belongings to those of other people. When we do that, we naturally shift our attention away from what we have to what we do not have. A feeling of emptiness or anxiety takes hold of us, because we desire to fill the empty space created by what we are missing.

Sometimes, the opposite happens, and we feel better than others based on what we have and what others do not — however, in this case too, we are still comparing. We are tying our self-worth to what we have, and a desire to always outperform others takes hold of us. Even here, there is a feeling of anxiety to be better than others.

**Example**

If we take pride in always having the highest grades in class, we will feel constant pressure to always outperform others. We will always compare ourselves to others in the class, but if our focus is to learn the material well, then we will be content with our best effort in the test, no matter where we place relative to others.

We can see how comparison creates agitation, discontentment, and anxiety, which prevents us from being at peace and fulfilled. It saps our energy and makes us forget our true goal, often leading us to resort to any means to calm our minds, even if it is not the best for us.

Story: Karṇa

A powerful example of this comes from the story of Karṇa in the Mahābhārata. Karṇa was born with extraordinary abilities, but was abandoned by his mother at birth and raised by a charioteer's family. His character was full of comparison, jealousy, and a need to prove himself. For example, while the Pāṇḍavas, Kauravas, and Karṇa were all learning about weaponry and warfare from Droṇācārya, Karṇa, accompanied by Duryodhana, often defied and insulted Arjuna out of jealousy. This shows that he was constantly comparing himself to Arjuna. Arjuna, on the other hand, dedicated himself to learning and to his Guru, and was clearly the most excellent student. Another example of Karṇa's behavior occurred when there was a tournament among the students of Droṇācārya. After Arjuna excelled in the tournament, Karṇa entered, and the first thing he said to Arjuna was that he would outperform anything Arjuna has accomplished thus far. We can see that Karṇa's desire to outperform Arjuna was born out of an intense sense of comparison with Arjuna.

Duryodhana was pleased that Karṇa could cause disturbance in Arjuna's mind, and he immediately claimed Karṇa as a friend. When Karṇa was not allowed to compete in the tournament because he was the son of a charioteer, Duryodhana crowned him the king of Aṅga-deśa. In return, he asked Karṇa for his undying friendship. Thus, because of his jealousy and rivalry with Arjuna, Karṇa mistakenly allied himself with and became loyal to the adhārmika Duryodhana. He lost sight of his values because of his obsession with comparison and rivalry.

As a result, Karṇa suffered a fall in character. He was a key instigator in Duḥśāsana insulting Draupadī by encouraging him to disrobe her during the game of dice. The elders of the Kuru court were alienated by his behavior — so much so that Karṇa refused to fight in the war as long as Bhīṣmācārya was the commander-in-chief. Ultimately, Karṇa died in the war at the hands of Arjuna and at the urging of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa recounted for Karṇa all of his ignoble deeds and said that he has earned his end. Thus, Karṇa met his end due to his adhārmika actions — the result of picking the Kaurava side out of misplaced loyalties and competition with the Pāṇḍavas.

Sambhavarparva 130.12-130.14, 135.9, 135.11, 135.36, 135.40,
Dyūtaparva 68.38, Karṇaparva 91

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

1. How did the comparison to the Pāṇḍavas harm Karṇa?
2. If he had accepted his differences with the Pāṇḍavas, how do you think Karṇa's story could have been different?
3. With regard to comparing with others, how do we accept the things that we do not have in our daily lives?

Debrief: Karṇa's story illustrates how comparisons can lead to discontentment, cloud judgment, and cause one to stray from their true path. If he had focused on his own journey, rather than trying to take down the Pāṇḍavas, he may not have become indebted to Duryodhana and joined him in adhārmika activities. When we do not engage in comparison and instead accept what we have, we can focus on our own growth and walk the path that is right for us. We can learn to accept our current situation by understanding that we don't always get what we think we need. If we don't get it, we should understand that we probably don't need it. The Lord gives us exactly what we need at the right time.

Key Solution: Focus on your own journey.

The only comparison worth making is the comparison of who we are today to who we were yesterday. This shifts our attention away from what we do not have, and it allows us to accept ourselves for who we truly are. We begin to accept what we lack while trying to actively improve our strengths. As a result, we become introspective, inspired, and strengthened in our journey to spiritual unfoldment. As we improve, we may find ourselves stumbling on our quests. We should practice patience with ourselves and remember that everything takes time! By focusing on our own growth and journey, we are able to bring out the best in ourselves.



Avoid comparison trips. What you have now is His thoughtful gift. Stop crying for what you have not. You don't really need them. When needed they will be given.

Swami Chinmayananda

Another solution is to just focus on Bhagavān. When our minds are constantly focused on Bhagavān, we start to emulate His virtues and poise without even thinking about them. As our love for Bhagavān grows deeper, we automatically

become better. When we look at the lives of great bhaktas, they weren't preoccupied with comparing themselves to others, because their eyes solely rested on the incomparable Truth.

Part 2: Practical application — use social media wisely

A key source of comparisons is social media. Social media, when used without intention, can bring a lot of discontentment in our lives, and when used intelligently, can actually help us develop a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Social media algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement by amplifying content that triggers emotional responses. The user interface of social media is specifically designed to keep people on the media interface as long as possible, regardless of how it makes us feel.



Discussion

Watch the following clips from *The Social Dilemma*.

- How social media is designed for our brains
- Social media benefits from monetizing our attention
- How social media tracks our every move

Questions

1. How do you think social media uses “comparison” techniques to keep us on the app longer? Who does it help more — me, the user, or the social media company?
2. Why does comparison through social media lead to discontent?
3. What are some ways to make our social media feed less about anxiety for something we do not have, and more about acceptance, love, and higher values?

Debrief: Social media companies use all types of strategies to engage us emotionally. One of these strategies is to generate comparisons with other people we know, who are posting highly curated, idealized versions of their lives. This constant comparison to “highlight reels” of other people’s lives can result in feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and a distorted sense of self-worth, as we are forced more and more to feel a longing for something we do not have, while others do. Comparison leads to discontent because it shifts our attention away from what we have towards a feeling of lack for what we do not have. It does not foster acceptance.

*The Social
Dilemma clips*



Main Lesson

continued

Students may give many ideas to regulate their social media usage, but here are some ideas to get them started:

1. **Limit Usage:** Set boundaries for time spent on social media to reduce exposure to triggering content. To do this, we can use screen-time features on our phone or “phone lock” apps that can be downloaded and applied when we need to be away from our feeds.
2. **Curate Feeds:** Follow accounts that inspire growth and positivity rather than those that provoke envy or dissatisfaction.
3. **Engage Mindfully:** Use social media as a tool for connection and learning rather than validation. Check to see which accounts and apps give us useful information for our hobbies, interests, and general knowledge, and which ones seek our attention through constant comparisons.

Using social media to fuel acceptance, rather than a feeling of lack or inadequacy, can help us mitigate discontent and foster contentment.

Appreciating What We Have**Part 1: Offer gratitude**

In contentment, there is a feeling of fullness, completeness, and security. After turning our attention away from what we do not have and paying special attention to how truly blessed we are in life, we feel a sense of completeness and satisfaction. This attention to what we have in life is *kṛtajñatā*, or gratitude.

Gratitude can be felt for many things:

- Unique circumstances in life
- Personality and skills
- Opportunities and resources
- Relationships and support systems
- Fundamental necessities of life
- Faith and belief systems
- Country, community, and society

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* verse 1.1.2, Lord Rāma is described as “*kṛtajñah*,” grateful, which means He remembered every single thing that others had done for Him, no matter how small.

pitāṁ dīnha mohi kānana
rājū, jaham̐ saba bhāṁti
more baḍa kājū.

Father has given me the kingdom
of the forest, wherein there will
be many great opportunities for
me in every way.

Rāmacaritamānasa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, do. 52, cau. 3

Bhagavān Rāma is so grateful for every opportunity, and not only does He recognize it, but He also expresses that gratitude always through sweet words and generous actions.



Discussion

Expressing Gratitude

1. Come up with three to five ways that people help you in your everyday life. Recall, if possible, the five yajñas from last year's Karma Yoga curriculum: Deva (God), Ṛṣi (the Seers), Manuṣya (other people), Pitṛ (ancestors), and Bhūta (natural forces).
2. Do you feel adequate gratitude for these people?
3. If you feel gratitude, how can you express that gratitude better?
4. What is something that appeared difficult at first, but you learned later to appreciate and feel grateful for?

Debrief: Gratitude is a state of mind, which reflects in thoughts, words, and deeds. Although feeling gratitude is an adequate way to bring our attention to what we have in life, expressing gratitude, whether it is through acts of sevā, kind words, generous giving, or communicating our thanks, is an exceptional way to root ourselves in a feeling of fulfillment for the wonderful life Bhagavān has given us.

We can practice gratitude as a sādhanā in creative ways, such as maintaining a gratitude journal, or finding a unique way to express thanks to people every day. Learning to concretize gratitude into words and actions helps us actively grow our contentment.

Example



Our teachers,
janitors, bus
drivers, coaches,
sanitation
workers, or even
our parents.

Thus, gratitude as a spiritual practice can help us feel more connected to our communities, and that feeling of connectedness translates into a feeling of belonging and satisfaction. On a greater level, constant gratitude can help us appreciate more and more of what we have, leading to greater attention and remembrance of the Lord's blessings in our lives. The more we understand and actively appreciate what we have in our lives, the more our contentment grows and the more we can connect to the Divine who has ordained our lives. This, in turn, leads to even more gratitude, which feeds into a positive cycle of more contentment.

Main Lesson

continued

Story: “The Bill That Never Came” by Swami Tejomayananda

There is so much oxygen outside, yet some people still need an oxygen machine.

An old man was admitted to the hospital for breathing difficulties. He was placed on oxygen for a few days. When he was discharged, the hospital sent him the bill. Looking at it, he started crying.

Everyone assumed he was upset because of the large amount. But he said, “I am not crying because of the bill.”

Then they asked, “Why are you crying?”

He replied, “All these years, I have been breathing this air for free. God never sent me a bill. He gave it all for free!”

Who provides oxygen to a fetus?

Our inner equipment, the lungs, and the outer oxygen are like hardware and software. Both must function properly. Otherwise, even though plenty of oxygen is available, one has to rely on a machine. Therefore, we should always be grateful. We do not understand the value of what we have been given until it is taken away from us.

When you know that everything is Brahman, you cannot complain.

In fact, you have no right to complain about anything.

Reported by Radhika Katker. Sandeepany Sadhanalaya. May 15, 2026.



Have the students quietly reflect by themselves on the magnitude of what the compassionate Lord has given us.

Part 2: Walk our own path

The other way to be focused on what we have is to be rooted in our svadharma.

Svadharma is our own unique inner calling.

Recall from the Karma Yoga lessons:

Sva: one's
Dharma: essential nature

Svadharmā is our essential nature. It is the natural, intrinsic inner expression of ourselves that can be applied to all aspects of our life, including our social life, career, relationships, goals, and studies. It is deeper than simple talents, hobbies, college majors, or professional fields of achievements. Rather, svadharmā is the authentic expression of our inner aptitudes.

Therefore, we have to discover for ourselves our own path in life, one that will keep us fulfilled and evolving continuously — this is a key factor to contentment. Our svadharmā, based on our aptitude, is the field in which we can express ourselves to our fullest. When we are sure of that, and when we focus on it, we have the inner fulfillment of being on the path that is best for us. With this understanding, all that we “lack” no longer weighs on us, nor causes us anxiety. Instead, we are appreciative of whatever we have within us as our inner calling.



Discussion

How do we feel when we come home after a long journey?

Debrief: Students may share that they feel relief, joy, restfulness, or just a feeling of “letting go.” As much as we may like to wander, at the end of the day, we love the feeling of sleeping in our own beds, and living in our own spaces. That is an example of the feeling of contentment. Our svadharmā is our “inner home,” the field of action in which our own inner self can express creatively and naturally.

When we are working according to our svadharmā, we are “at home” with ourselves. We are comfortable with ourselves, and therefore, do not compete with others or feel insecure about our choices. Bhagavān has made each of us unique, with our own specific personality and skill set. What a wonderful set of gifts to have received! How better to honor these gifts than to use them to contribute to the world and express our authentic selves?

Main Lesson

continued



Activity

What is my svadharma?

We have recalled svadharma as it was taught in the Karma Yoga curriculum. Now, let us discuss how to understand our svadharma. One way to understand our svadharma is to identify our inherent good qualities, strengths, and talents, and to help grow them through practice. Let us now reflect on the following:

1. What are three unique strengths that I have?
2. Am I working to foster and inculcate these unique strengths of mine?
3. How does working in a field that is related to my strengths bring about fulfillment?

Debrief: As we come to understand our strengths and develop them further, we will gain greater satisfaction and ease with whatever we do. Appreciating and following our own strengths will lead us to our greater svadharma, and working within our natural talents helps us to maximize fulfillment and minimize discontent and restlessness.

Svadharma is natural to us because the Lord has blessed us with our inherent nature based on our past karma. The Lord, in infinite compassion and total wisdom, has endowed each of us with a unique personality, a unique set of skills and strengths to serve others. When we realize that Bhagavān has blessed us with a unique path, we will not compare to others, and instead accept the path of growth that Bhagavān has set us on. This surrender out of love is essential to devotion. That is why one of the prime qualities of the devotee is contentment: the bhakta is always content with what the Lord gives.

Contentment versus Complacency

On the surface, it's hard to tell the difference between being complacent and being content. The key is to connect it to one's svadharma. When we are positively pursuing and are dedicated to our svadharma, and we are grateful for whatever results that yields, we are practicing contentment. When we are avoiding responsibilities, avoiding planning, or avoiding our personal growth due to overconfidence or lack of motivation, then that is complacency. Contentment is always accompanied by hard work and commitment, while complacency is devoid of both.

Why contentment?

We all seek fullness and completeness. Contentment is the art of changing our inner vision to gain that completeness, rather than changing something outside of us. It gives us independence and control over our own joy, rather than being dependent on outside factors for our sense of ease and satisfaction. As the proverb goes, “the contented mind is a continual feast.”

Contentment is an important virtue in the face of a world that always seems to tell us that we are lacking, or that we need to gain and achieve more in order to deserve happiness. The logic of contentment is that we already deserve to be happy, that we already deserve peace of mind, because our current life is a gift from the Lord. This mental peace frees us up to be comfortable in our own skin and focus on our individual journey, which in turn gives us motivation to work hard in our chosen pursuits.

Contentment is the key to living a serene, peaceful, yet dynamic life. It helps us ride the line between tireless action for our higher ideal, and intelligent withdrawal from unnecessary actions.

Contentment is also an important sādhanā to connect to Bhagavān. We realize that Bhagavān is the one who has given us both what we do have and has decided what we should not have. The Lord, in His infinite mercy, kindness, and wisdom, knows what is best for our ultimate growth, and delivers the results of our own past actions back to us in a way that facilitates that spiritual evolution. Being content, therefore, is a way to maintain trust and connection with that all-compassionate, infinite Lord.

Discussion

Is my contentment driving me to dedicate myself to my goals?

Contentment can never make you idle. It is a sāttvika virtue that propels man towards God.

**Swami
Sivananda
Mahārāja**

Activity

continued

Activity 15 min

Introduction to Club Contentment

Announce to the students that they are about to enter Club Contentment, a space where everyone is encouraged to dance freely and joyfully. Explain that this activity is about recognizing and overcoming discontent.

Round 1: Dancing Without Blindfolds

Spread the students around the room with ample space around them to move and dance. Before they dance, give them the instruction to observe others while they dance, and take note of how they are moving, whether they are enjoying themselves, and how others' dance moves compare to their own.

For one to two minutes, play upbeat music and ask students to dance freely.

Pause the music and gather students for a brief reflection. Ask them:

1. How did you feel while dancing?
2. When your focus was on other people's dancing, were you able to enjoy your own?
3. Why do you think looking at others affected your own experience?
4. How do you think your experience of dancing can be improved?

Round 2: Dancing with Blindfolds

Now, have each student put on a blindfold so they can no longer see others. Before dancing, tell the students to dance while consciously feeling joy and excitement in their own body's movement. Now, there is no way to pay attention to anyone else because of the blindfold.

Play the music again for one to two minutes and ensure that everybody is dancing with blindfolds on.

Once the music stops, remove the blindfolds and discuss as a group:

1. When we focused on our own body and movement, how did the feeling of dancing change? How did the feeling of the music change?
2. Did the music or setting have to change for us to improve dancing?
3. How do these two scenarios represent contentment and discontent?
4. What is a situation in our lives that can be improved just by changing our mindset to one of contentment?

Debrief: When we bring our focus to what we have (our own body, enjoyment of music, and movement), and take away attention from what we do not have (other people's ability to dance better or worse), we are able to stop comparing

ourselves with others and “walk our own path.” When that happens, we are able to be content and at ease with ourselves. Whenever we are in a scenario that feels less than ideal, we should investigate to see if the dissatisfaction comes from us ignoring what we have and focusing on what we do not. These are the takeaways from today’s lesson.

Conclusion 5 min

Summary: Go around the room and ask students to share one of three things: (1) what they are grateful for, (2) what their svadharma is to them at this stage in life, or (3) what is a unique strength of theirs that they want to focus on.

Sūtra:

Appreciate what
we have, accept
what we don’t

Sāadhanā: Spend five minutes daily reflecting on personal growth by asking, “How am I better today than yesterday, and how will I be better tomorrow than today?”

Conclude with closing prayers.



Qualities of a Bhakta: Free from Disturbance

This lesson is about understanding how a devotee is free from disturbance — free from disturbing others and also free from being disturbed by the world.

12.15 



yasmān-nodvijate lokaḥ
lokān-nodvijate ca yaḥ,
harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegaiḥ
mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ.

The one by whom the world is not agitated (affected), and who cannot be agitated by the world, who is freed from joy, envy, fear, and anxiety — that one is dear to Me.

Time 55 min

Materials

Watch or timer

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 12.15.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Values - 13 & 14 (Chapter 12 Verse 15).”

Qualities of a Bhakta: Free from Disturbance

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous class, we learned all about contentment. Contentment is a deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Contentment relates to two aspects of our lives: what we have, and what we do not.

	What we have	What we do not have
Contentment	Appreciation, remembrance, a feeling of fullness	Peace, acceptance
Discontent	Neglect, forgetfulness	Desire, anxiety, jealousy, comparison, a feeling of lack

We learned that in order to appreciate what we have, we should:

- Offer gratitude
- Walk our own path by discovering our svadharma



Go around the class and ask everyone to share:

- What they are grateful for
- Their unique strengths

We learned that in order to accept what we don't have, we should:

- Avoid comparison trips
- Use social media wisely



As a class, recollect:

- The story of Karṇa and Arjuna
- Some of the ways to use social media wisely

Now we are going to learn another quality of a bhakta.

Introduction 10 min

Round 1: Divide the class into groups of four and ask them to come up with the top ten most annoying things of all time.



Examples

- Someone puts their phone on speaker so we can hear every conversation or every video.
- Someone keeps interrupting conversations all the time.
- Someone is constantly late to class.

Ask the students to share their lists and how they feel about these annoyances.

Round 2: Divide the class into pairs and ask them to reflect on and share when someone got annoyed with them. They should answer these questions:

1. What did you do or say that annoyed others?
2. How do you think they felt?
3. Would you like someone to do that to you?
4. What did you learn from that experience?

Debrief: We often get annoyed by other people, but rarely do we look within to check if we do the same to others! We can be quite annoying in our own ways. A true devotee of Bhagavān doesn't disturb the world and isn't disturbed by the world. Let's explore this further in the Gītā.

Main Lesson 25 min

Devotion is not just a feeling — it is a way of living that helps us lead a peaceful and happy life. In Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad-gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa explains how a devotee expresses devotion not only through prayer, but also through everyday behavior and relationships. Each one of us interacts with many people every day — friends, classmates, teammates, teachers, and family members. Everyone has a different personality. Some people are easy to get along with, while others may be challenging. Often, when we deal with difficult people, we feel irritated, upset, or stressed. At times, our own words or actions — knowingly or unknowingly — may also upset others. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa teaches us that a devotee is one who does not disturb others and is also not easily disturbed by others. A true devotee is free from disturbance. He also says that such a person learns to manage strong emotions, such as overexcitement, envy, intolerance, fear, and agitation. In this lesson, we will reflect on how these teachings can be applied in daily life — at school, at home, and with friends — to develop calmness, respect, and inner strength.

Main Lesson

continued

Let's explore the verse:

yasmān-nodvijate lokah
lokān-nodvijate ca yah,
harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegaiḥ
mukto yah sa ca me priyah.

The one by whom the world is
not agitated (affected), and who
cannot be agitated by the world,
who is freed from joy, envy, fear, and
anxiety — that one is dear to Me.

12.15

For this class, we will focus on the first line of this verse.

yasmān-nodvijate lokah: a devotee does not disturb or upset others

Ask the class to recall all the ways that they disturb others. The teacher can write these on the board so that everyone can reflect on them.

There are three main ways we respond to situations: **Speech, Actions, and Body Language (S.A.B.)**. Every day, how we talk, what we do, and how we behave physically sends messages to others. When we learn to manage these three well, we can respond to situations calmly and respectfully. But when we do not pay attention to them, our words, actions, or body language can easily upset or agitate people around us — even if we do not intend to.

A person who practices devotion learns to master **Speech, Actions, and Body Language**, so that others feel comfortable and peaceful around them. Let's explore each one.

Speech

Speech is the physical act of expressing thoughts, ideas, and emotions using the human voice.

Speech is a direct reflection of our mind. The way we speak often reveals our personality more clearly than our outward appearance. For example, if someone speaks in a very enthusiastic manner, it reveals their dynamism. Whereas, if someone speaks in a very measured manner, it reveals their calmness. When used thoughtfully, speech can bring warmth and comfort to others. When used carelessly, it can damage friendships and relationships that may have taken years to build. It can also be used to demean others or make them feel bad about themselves.



Values





Example

A common example of disturbing speech is **name-calling**. When we call someone an offensive or insulting name, this makes them feel very uncomfortable and insecure. At first, we might do it as a joke and the other person may even laugh it off, but it's really not funny; it's harmful. When a person is called a demeaning term over and over, they begin to believe it and take it to heart.



Discussion

Have you ever been the target of a running joke, or a hurtful nickname that is continuously repeated? How does that feel? Now think about the jokes you make in your friend groups — do you think any of them could come across more hurtful than harmless?



Example

Another example of disturbing speech is **harsh criticism**. When we expect others to behave exactly as we want, and they do not live up to that, we become impatient and critical in our words. But when we see that all of us are in our own path of evolution, then we begin to understand that all of us need time and space to grow. We learn to be patient with others and become nurturing instead of complaining.



Discussion

What is the difference between helpful critiques and unhelpful criticism?

Disturbing speech also comes in the form of **paying too much attention to ourselves**. When we pay too much attention to ourselves and keep talking about ourselves, we aren't sensitive to other people's thoughts and feelings. A thoughtful person listens carefully, tries to understand others, and gives them space to express their thoughts and feelings.

Sant Kabīr gives us a beautiful teaching about how we should speak:

aisī vāṇī boliye, man kā āpa khay.
auran ko śītal kare, āpahun śītal hoy.

Speak in a way that lets go of
ego — your words should calm
others and bring calmness to
you as well.

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

1. What are some examples of speech that soothes others?
2. What are some examples of speech that agitates others?

Debrief: When our speech reflects respect for people (including refraining from name-calling), patience with other people's growth as well as ours, and openness to listen to others, then it is speech that brings peace instead of agitation.

In Chapter 17, Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs that austerity or purity of speech is when all our words are **truthful, useful, and beautiful — TUB**.



Activity

Split the class into two teams and have them line up facing each other.

Say a sentence that may or may not follow the TUB guidelines. Have the first student from each line put their thumb UP if it follows TUB and their thumb DOWN if it doesn't follow TUB. The first team to react gets to share why it is TUB or if applicable, how to reframe that statement to be more truthful, useful, and beautiful. If they do it correctly, they get a point. Then rotate to the next two players of each team and repeat with a different sentence. Allow the class to discuss and keep score.



Examples

Statement: "You have food in your teeth."

This might be considered TUB if it is shared with the right intention, the proper tone and context. Instead, a friend can pull their friend aside and whisper gently, "Hey, you have something in between your teeth."

Statement: "Be quiet, you're being annoying, I can't hear the teacher."

This might be truthful and useful but it is not beautiful. A way to reword this might be: "Could you please be quiet or talk somewhere else so I can hear the teacher?"

Debrief: Before you speak, ask yourself if your words follow this guideline. If we can't follow TUB, it is better not to speak at all. Using words that are truthful, useful, and beautiful naturally helps us let go of our own ego and reduce agitations in our own minds and the minds of others.

Actions

An **action** is a conscious effort undertaken to achieve a desired result.

Actions speak louder than words. While speech can reveal a lot about our character, actions reveal even more because they are the most direct expression of who we are. When we present ourselves well, arrive on time, and keep our surroundings clean, this sends a clear and loud message of being someone who cares about themselves, others, and the environment. When we are always in a hurry, leave everything in disarray, and don't follow through with our commitments, this sends a signal of being someone who just doesn't care.

Actions that are thoughtful and aligned with values bring joy and peace to those around us. On the other hand, careless or inconsiderate actions can disturb and frustrate people, even if we did not intend to upset them.

The following are common examples of how actions can agitate others — and how small changes can create peace instead.



Example: Online Behavior

In a class group chat, a student feels annoyed and posts a sarcastic or rude reply to someone's comment. This quickly upsets others and may turn the conversation into an argument. Messages can spread quickly, and misunderstandings can grow when responses are written in anger.

Instead, the student can **pause before replying**, choose respectful words, or message the person privately if clarification is needed. Taking a moment to think before responding can prevent unnecessary tension and keep the group environment pleasant. Just because technology is speedy, doesn't mean we have to be speedy too. **Instant communication doesn't mean instant reply.**

Notice how this example shows both action and speech. It shows the act of not thinking and not judging the situation appropriately, and it also shows disruptive speech.

Main Lesson

continued



Example: Shared Spaces

At home or school, a student uses a shared space to make their food, but leaves dirty dishes in the sink and crumbs on the counter. When others come in, they feel irritated because they have to clean up someone else's mess.

Instead, the student can rinse the dishes, wipe the counter, and **leave the space as they found it**. This small effort shows respect for others and helps keep shared spaces pleasant for everyone.



Example: Being on Time

At school, a student is constantly late to all of their group meetings, causing disruption, and asking the team members to repeat what was already discussed. This slows down the entire team and makes them backtrack instead of moving forward.

Instead, the student can **show up on time** and be respectful of everyone else's time. This will make the team more efficient in ideation and discussions.



Discussion

Ask the students to think about how many disruptions we create by being late.

For example: When we wake up late...

1. We are in a rush to go to school, so we do not care too much about where we put things in our rooms. We leave our beds unmade, our clothes all over the place, and the room in a mess.
2. Our parents may have laid out a nice meal for us, but we simply refuse it because we don't have time.
3. We may miss our bus, so one of our parents has to drive us to school and be late to work.
4. We arrive late to school. The class may have already started, and when we walk in, we disturb everyone's attention, because people are now turning their heads to look at us.

This can go on and on. We might think that it's just a small disturbance, but in reality, a small ripple can create huge waves!

By simply learning to pause before we engage with others, by leaving spaces as we found them, and by showing up on time, our actions become calming and soothing for others, instead of disturbing.

Body Language

Body language is a type of nonverbal communication in which physical behaviors, such as gestures, postures, and facial expressions, are used to convey information or express feelings.

Body language is a subtle but powerful way in which we create impressions in people's minds. Today, people often use the word "vibes." We sometimes say, "That person has good vibes — I like spending time with them." Many times, these "vibes" come from body language — how and where someone sits, walks, listens, and reacts.

If we do not pay attention to our body language, we may unintentionally upset or irritate others. Simple things like rolling our eyes, crossing our arms while someone is speaking, looking distracted, or using an impatient tone can make others feel disrespected. On the other hand, calm posture, eye contact, nodding while listening, and a relaxed tone can make others feel comfortable and respected.

It is also important to understand that body language can mean different things in different cultures. What feels normal in one place may be seen differently in another.



Example

In some cultures, making eye contact while someone is speaking shows attention and respect. Avoiding eye contact, turning away, or looking at a phone while someone is talking may be seen as disrespectful or uninterested.

Rahīmdās jī gives a beautiful doha that reminds us how rough behavior can hurt gentle people:

kahu rahīm kaise nibhai,
ber ker ko saṅg.
ve ḍolat ras āpane,
unke phāṭat aṅg.

Rahīm says: How can a thorny
berry tree and a soft banana tree
live together peacefully? When the
berry tree moves about, its thorns
tear the soft banana tree.

Main Lesson

continued

The cultured
give happiness
wherever
they go.
The uncultured
whenever
they go.

Swami
Chinmayananda

This is a beautiful example, because the berry tree doesn't intend any harm to the banana tree. It sways and moves according to its own nature. Even without knowing, it hurts the banana tree that is right beside it.

This means that when someone behaves in a rough, careless, or harsh way, they may hurt people who are gentle or sensitive without knowing it. Even small gestures — tone, posture, or expressions — can affect others deeply.

Therefore, a true devotee is conscious of their speech, actions, and body language and the effects that they can have on others. They live their life with awareness and sensitivity to all beings because they know that everyone is a manifestation of Bhagavān.

lokān-nodvijate ca yaḥ: a devotee does not get easily upset or disturbed by others

This does not mean that difficult situations or people are avoided. Instead, it means we should learn to stay calm even when challenges arise.

Forbearance is an important quality that helps bring out our inner strength. In Saṁskṛtam, this quality is called **titikṣā**, which means patiently handling discomfort or difficult situations without reacting impulsively.

A devotee develops strong forbearance and learns to respond thoughtfully rather than reacting emotionally. The beauty of a devotee is that even when situations arise that could cause irritation, frustration, or anger, they are able to stay calm and balanced. The triggers may still be present, but the devotee learns not to be controlled by them.

How does a devotee not get upset or disturbed by the world?

Acceptance

One important way a devotee stays calm is through acceptance. When we accept that people have different personalities, it becomes easier to respond calmly instead of reacting with frustration.



Example

Think of visiting a garden. In a garden, you might see a cactus, a rose, and a jasmine plant. Each plant is different. We do not expect the cactus to smell sweet like a rose, or the jasmine to have thorns like a cactus. We simply accept each plant as it is.

In the same way, people around us have different personalities, habits, and ways of thinking. When we accept these differences, we are less likely to feel irritated or upset. Instead of expecting everyone to behave the way we want, we learn to understand that everyone is growing and learning in their own way, just like different plants in a garden.

When it is hard to accept others, we can first reflect on our own thoughts and actions. It is important to look at ourselves in the mirror and accept that we also have flaws! We are also annoying to others. Maybe we talk too much and interrupt our friends, or we are picky about the kind of food we like. Since we all want to be accepted, we must first take the step to accept others.

In moments where you are frustrated, also remember that you have the power to accept. **Lower your expectations of others and raise your expectations of yourself to be more adaptable and accepting.**

In this world, we need all kinds of plants, animals, and beings. Imagine if we were all the same! Think about a sports team. Each player has different strengths. There are some who are better at offense, others excel in defense. There are some who are great runners and others are wonderful scorers. When we recognize everyone's unique strengths, then we become grateful for their unique personalities instead of complaining about them.

Higher Altitude

A devotee doesn't sweat the small stuff. If we think about our lives, most of the things we stress about are small things. Pūjya Gurudev gives this beautiful example. Imagine sitting on an airplane right before takeoff. When we look out the window, the roads and fields seem vast and wide. But after takeoff, as the altitude increases, those same roads and fields seem very small. After some time, they disappear completely. In the same way, things tend to bother us only when our minds are kept in a lower place. When our minds are shifted to a higher place, like the soaring airplane, the things that seemed so huge all of a sudden become trivial. **Altitude determines attitude.** By keeping our minds in Bhagavān, our minds are always kept in a higher place. When we keep our minds in such a place, we will naturally find ourselves maintaining high expectations for ourselves while forgiving mistakes made by others. Right now, we do the opposite; we make excuses when we stumble, yet find it hard to forgive other people's mistakes.

Thus, in the very first line of this verse, we see how a true devotee is free from disturbance. They don't disturb anyone, nor do they get disturbed by anyone.

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

Think about a time when you were with others who were complaining, yet you were content. Maybe your friend was cold, but you felt fine with the temperature. Maybe your sibling didn't like what was prepared for dinner, but you ate it joyfully.

How did it feel to not mind? How did it feel to be just content with the situation? When our minds are focused on Bhagavān and His grace, naturally we find ourselves to be more content with all the circumstances in our life.

Story: The Real Protection

Once there was a king who lived in a very rocky kingdom. Everything around the kingdom was strewn with sharp stones, jagged rocks, uneven boulders, and odd-sized pebbles. The roads were rough and rugged, making every journey uncomfortable and difficult. At that time, everyone walked barefoot because no shoes were invented yet.

One day, the king was in a huge dilemma. He wanted to fix this problem once and for all. He called all of his ministers together and said that he wanted to smoothen out all the roads and make them flat so that people could walk easily. They all told him that it would take years to do so since the kingdom was so vast.

Then, one person came forward and said, "We can definitely start working on these roads and try to smoothen them out. But instead of waiting for years to build smooth roads, why don't we create something to protect our feet?" He worked on a few iterations and created shoes. When the king wore his new shoes, he could walk on any road, it didn't matter how rocky, sharp, or jagged the stones were because his feet were always protected.

In the same way, we can work to alter the external environment, but the best and easiest thing to do is protect ourselves with bhakti. The shoes protected the king's feet from the rough roads. **Bhakti protects our minds from uneven circumstances.**

Activity 10 min

Divide the class into four small groups. Adjust the groups as needed based on the class size. Explain that they will act out how Speech, Actions, and Body Language (S.A.B.) can either disturb others or keep them calm, connecting this to the part of the verse that teaches us to not disturb others.

Read the following four situations aloud to the class. Assign one situation to each group.

1. Situation 1: Group project idea ignored

During a group project, one student shares an idea, but another student immediately dismisses it and pushes their own idea without listening. Show how speech, actions, and body language can either agitate the situation or soothe it.

2. Situation 2: Mistake in a class group chat

A student posts an incorrect answer or misunderstanding in the class group chat. Others notice the mistake. Show how speech, actions, and body language can either embarrass and upset the student or correct the mistake respectfully.

3. Situation 3: Mess in a shared space

A student leaves a mess behind in a shared space (such as a classroom table, lunch area, or kitchen at home), and another student notices it. Show how speech, actions, and body language can either create conflict or solve the problem calmly.

4. Situation 4: Being corrected by a teacher

A teacher corrects a student's mistake in front of the class. The student reacts to this correction. Show how speech, actions, and body language can either make the situation tense or respond respectfully and calmly.

For each situation, the group should show the “agitating version” and the “soothing version” in a short role-play (two to three minutes). Give students about four minutes to prepare.

Their role-play should clearly show:

- Speech: What they say
- Actions: What they do
- Body Language: Tone, posture, facial expressions

Activity

continued

Debrief: Circumstances in life are unpredictable. We don't always have control over what's going to happen outside, but we can control what's happening inside. When we master our speech, actions, and body language, we become people by whom the world is not disturbed.

In this lesson, we learned that devotion is not just about prayer — it is about how we live and interact with others every day. Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches us that a true devotee is one who **does not disturb others and is not easily disturbed by others**. This requires mastering our **Speech, Actions, and Body Language (S.A.B.)**, practicing acceptance of different personalities, and learning to lift our minds higher.

When we speak kindly, act thoughtfully, and carry ourselves with respect, we create peace around us. When we develop acceptance and the ability to immerse ourselves in something deeper, we build peace within us. By practicing these qualities in daily life — at school, at home, and with friends — we move closer to becoming steady, confident, and compassionate individuals who bring calmness wherever we go.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Go around the class and ask each person to share which non-disruptive practice they will incorporate this week. For example, they can say, “I will ensure to keep my room clean to avoid creating a mess in the house.”

Sūtra:

**S.A.B. Speak kindly,
Act wisely, Behave
respectfully**

Sāadhanā: This entire week, pick any sāadhanā to practice either at the speech, action, or body language level. This can be the practice that you mentioned during the group summary.



Examples

- Speech: respectfully call people by their names
- Action: keep the room clean
- Body Language: make eye contact when speaking to people instead of looking at devices

Conclude with closing prayers.

Qualities of a Bhakta: Cleanliness

In this lesson, we will focus on cleanliness. This lesson will take students on a journey from outer cleanliness (keeping their surroundings neat and organized) to inner cleanliness (keeping their minds clear and pure).

12.16 



anapekṣaḥ śucir-dakṣaḥ
udāsīno gatavyathaḥ,
sarvārambha-parityāgī
yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ.

One who is free from wants, pure, alert, unconcerned, untroubled, renouncing all undertakings (or commencements) — one who is (thus) devoted to Me, is dear to Me.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	A collection of desk clutter (see Activity for details)
10m	Introduction	One card labeled “DD” and one card labeled “ND”
25m	Main Lesson	 Messy Rooms slides
10m	Activity	 Cleanliness photos
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 12.16.

 Chinmaya Mission Mumbai. “Sadhana 41 - Cleanliness.”

Rudite Emir. *At Every Breath, A Teaching: Stories about the life and teachings of Swami Chinmayananda*. Discipline.

 Marie Kondo. “Marie Kondo | The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up.” 13:28 - 42:19.

 Laura Larson. “What is the KonMari method? - An Introduction to Marie Kondo’s method for tidying.” 1:02 - 5:11.

Qualities of a Bhakta: Cleanliness

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we discussed how a bhakta is one who is free from disturbance. A bhakta doesn't disturb others nor is disturbed by the things around them. Let's test ourselves to see how we do.

Give the students a situation prompt and hold up a card that says either:

- DD: Definitely Disturbed or
- ND: Not Disturbed

For example, the teacher says, "Your best friend stopped talking to you," and then holds up a card that says either DD or ND. If the teacher holds up DD, then the students should share how they would react to the situation, feeling disturbed by it. If the teacher holds up ND, then the students should share how they would respond to the situation, keeping their speech, actions, and body language in check.

Introduction 10 min

Today we're going to see the next quality of a bhakta.

 Messy Rooms slides



Discussion

Let's take a look at these pictures.

1. What do you see in the pictures?
2. How many of us have been in such a mess?
3. What did it feel like?

Debrief: In all the pictures, we find a mess! Most of us have probably been in a mess like this before where things are left all over the place. Some of us may be in this situation now. What happens when things are in a mess?

When things get messy:

1. **Mess makes it hard to find things.** Have you ever tried to look for something buried in a messy backpack or room? We know it's there, but we just can't seem to find it because there's too much stuff, or we have forgotten where we put it. Sometimes, we waste so much time just looking for things.

2. **Mess causes stress.** Clutter acts as visual noise, signaling to our brains that there is work to be done constantly. It makes our minds feel like we always have something to do.
3. **Mess is a sign of tamas.** A messy environment is often a sign of tamas, signaling that one is lazy and unmotivated. Sometimes, it can also be a sign of anxiety and depression.
4. **Mess causes injury and sickness.** People who study or work in messy areas are prone to tripping or falling over clutter or having objects fall on them. Mess also accumulates dust which aggravates conditions like asthma.
5. **Mess makes it hard to relax.** When the bedroom is messy, it can be very difficult to relax. This leads to trouble falling asleep, which then causes fatigue and irritability the next day.
6. **Mess causes tension in relationships.** When living with other people, it's important to show respect by keeping spaces clean, especially the common areas. When people do not do this, it creates tension in the household or among roommates, resulting in unnecessary arguments.

As we can see, mess can cause a lot of stress! A clean environment doesn't only make it easier for us to work, but also it makes our minds calm and focused.

Main Lesson 25 min

Let's see the quality of cleanliness in this verse of the Bhagavad-gītā:

anapekṣaḥ śucir-dakṣaḥ
udāsīno gatavyathaḥ,
sarvārambha-parityāgī
yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ.

One who is free from wants, **pure**,
alert, unconcerned, untroubled,
renouncing all undertakings (or
commencements) — one who is
(thus) devoted to Me, is dear to Me.

12.16

In this verse, the word **śuciḥ** means one who is pure or clean.

While thinking about qualities of a devotee, we tend to neglect the most basic one, which is cleanliness.

Main Lesson

continued

Cleanliness refers to the state or practice of keeping oneself, one's surroundings, and objects free from dirt, germs, and impurities.

Outer Cleanliness involves maintaining hygiene, orderliness, and a visually appealing environment. This promotes health, safety, and well-being for all. Inner cleanliness means keeping the mind pure — free from negative or disturbing thoughts.

Outer Cleanliness

Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene means taking care of one's body, clothes, and personal belongings. It means bathing and grooming oneself regularly and wearing clean and appropriate clothing. It also means keeping hands, nails, and teeth clean. When we present ourselves neatly, it signals to others that we respect ourselves and others. When we dress in a sloppy and messy manner, it shows that we do not care. If we don't care about ourselves, it is unlikely that we will care for others. This doesn't mean that we should be overly concerned about our appearance. Pūjya Gurudev always took care to present himself neatly because he didn't want any attention to be brought to his body! He always made sure that his kurta matched his dhoti because he didn't want any unnecessary attention to go to his clothing while he was delivering talks on the scriptures.

Therefore, the purpose of being neat is not for people to focus on our looks, but for them to focus on the deeper things we have to say. Maintaining personal hygiene also keeps us free from disease. When we do not clean ourselves well, bacteria, viruses, and parasites enter our bodies.

Personal Spaces

The spaces we live and learn in strongly influence how we feel and think. That is why temples and even traditional homes are designed to create a sense of peace and joy. The first step in making any space beautiful is keeping it clean.

Spaces don't become cluttered all at once — it usually happens through small, incremental, unnoticed actions. A towel left on the bed, books staying on the table long after we've finished with them, or snack wrappers forgotten in a backpack — these are simple examples of how mess slowly builds up.

Example

After a long hike, if we do not take care to clean ourselves well, we may not notice ticks on our clothing or bodies.

Outer cleanliness begins with paying attention to these little habits. When we notice how we use objects and whether we put them back in their place, we begin to create an environment that feels more open and pleasant.

For high schoolers, this can mean:

- Folding clothes instead of tossing them aside.
- Putting away notebooks and pens after study.
- Cleaning up after lunch in the school cafeteria.
- Keeping the study desk free from distractions.

Outer cleanliness is not only about looking tidy — it creates an atmosphere that helps us feel calm, focused, and even more motivated. Just as a messy room makes the mind restless, a neat space helps the mind feel lighter.

Cleanliness is listed as a spiritual value in the Bhagavad-gītā because **only when we are aware of how we interact with outer objects can we also become aware of how we interact with our inner world — our thoughts and feelings.**

Types of Cleanliness

1. Cleanliness in a room

Pūjya Gurudev was the picture of discipline on all fronts: always punctual, His dhoti and kurta freshly washed and pressed, the few belongings that travelled with Him from place to place always neatly arranged. Even His desk, though covered with piles of letters and various categories of documents, still spelled immaculate order.

Pūjya Gurudev was described by many as a person of elegance, of élan. The way He did things, dressed, and walked — nothing escaped His scrutiny. He was so intellectually alert that even the crease in His kurta had to be just right.

Story: Gurudev's Temple Visit

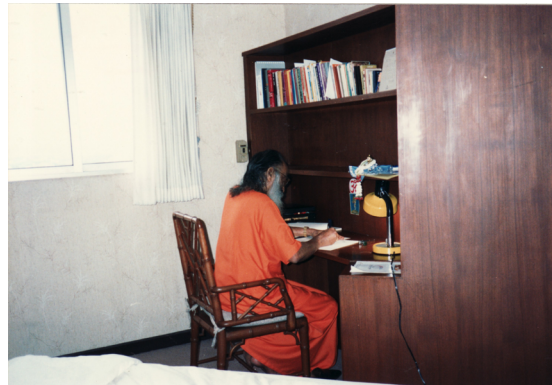
Once Gurudev was visiting a Gaṇapati temple in Chinmaya Nagar in Chennai. Knowing that His standards of discipline and cleanliness were very high, the Yuva Kendra there took up cleaning the temple, compound, garden, lawn, and the kalaśa on top. They also got the temple painted. Everything in and around the temple including the doors, lights, fans, and chairs was cleaned. As Gurudev entered, He looked around and observed everything was clean and perfect. The CHYKs were very happy that nothing could be spotted and they had done their job perfectly. Later the āraṭi was shown to Bhagavān and as Gurudev was coming out of the temple, He called the secretary there and said

“Do you have tamarind at home?” The secretary didn’t know what to answer and was wondering why Gurudev was asking about tamarind. He slowly said “Yes Swamiji, but why?” Then Gurudev said, “Give it to the priest and ask him to keep the ārati plate clean.” The ārati plate had stains of vibhūti and camphor and had not been cleaned. Except for that, everything else had been cleaned and polished.

Pūjya Gurudev emphasized doing things well and helped those around Him to bring that quality to everything they did.

📌 Share the cleanliness photos with the students, if possible. It helps to see a good example visually.

📎 Cleanliness photos



Pūjya Gurudev’s room and desk

2. Cleanliness in a home

suci sundara āśramu nirakhi
haraṣe rājivanena,
suni raghubara āgamanu
muni āgeṁ āyau lena.

Seeing the clean and beautiful hermitage, the lotus-eyed Rāma rejoiced. Hearing of Raghunātha’s arrival, the sage came forward to welcome Him.

Rāmacaritamānasa Ayodhyākāṇḍa 124

The first quality Śrī Rāma noticed in Vālmīki Ṛṣi's āśrama was cleanliness. When we walk into anyone's home, the first thing that draws our attention is the cleanliness of the space. When the space is orderly, it feels very inviting to walk into. Śrī Rāma felt the same way at Vālmīki Ṛṣi's āśrama. This is why, whenever we invite guests to our homes, we always clean beforehand so that they feel welcome. This is the same reason we clean before Dīpāvalī, so that we can welcome Goddess Lakṣmī to our homes. If the house needs cleaning, invite a guest! That's the surest way to clean it.



Mahatma Gandhi's room at Sabarmati Ashram, Gujarat



Discussion

Ask students to reflect and share their thoughts on this picture. Emphasize simplicity and cleanliness.

Something might be very expensive and attractive, but its beauty only shines when it is clean. In the same way, a classroom, a phone, or even a pair of shoes looks and feels better when it's clean — because cleanliness is the foundation that makes everything else appealing.

Example

We don't feel like wearing a stylish new shirt if it's dirty, no matter how costly it is.

3. Cleanliness in serving and eating food

prabhu prasāda suci
subhaga subāsā,
sādar jāsu lahai nita nāsa.

One who offers food that is clean, nicely presented and whose house is filled with the aroma of naivedya, Śrī Rāma resides in their heart.

Rāmacaritamānasa Ayodhyākāṇḍa 129.1

The first quality mentioned for a devotee preparing or serving food is cleanliness. Only after that comes fragrance and taste. No matter how beautifully a dish smells or how good it tastes, if it is not clean, no one will feel like eating it. Imagine what would happen if we found a piece of hair or

Main Lesson

continued

an insect in a plate of food? We would discard it right away! Even at school, a lunch packed neatly in a clean box is far more inviting than the same food served carelessly. **Cleanliness is the base of every other quality — like appearance and taste.**

Story: Serving Tea

Once, a devotee was hurrying across to serve Pūjya Gurudev some tea in a cup and saucer. On the way, the devotee spilled a few drops of tea on the saucer. When Pūjya Gurudev was served the tea, He reprimanded and said, “You are not serving on a railway platform!”

The devotee understood what Pūjya Gurudev was trying to convey — always work with full concentration and devotion, everything should be clean and precise, no shoddiness and casual attitude even while performing simple mundane tasks. The devotee immediately rushed and brought back the tea in an immaculately clean saucer and served Him.



Traditional Indian meal



Discussion

Ask students to observe this picture of a simple traditional Indian meal and share their reflection.

The traditional Indian thālī is a nutritionally balanced meal. It has the perfect combination of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Each food item is placed in a separate bowl with the rice in the middle. This makes it more pleasing to the eye and at the same time, it stimulates appetite. While it is presented neatly, it's also important to eat neatly. The key is to use the fingertips instead of the entire hand. This prevents food from spilling all over the place and it keeps the rest of our hands clean.

The KonMari Method: Tidying with Joy

Having discussed the meaning of outer cleanliness and some examples, we now move on to some practical ways of implementing cleanliness.

The KonMari method, created by Marie Kondo, is a popular way to declutter your space. Instead of asking, “Do I need this?” you ask, “Does this spark joy?” If it doesn’t, you thank the item for its use and let it go.

This method isn’t just about cleaning your room — it’s about creating a space that makes you feel good and supports the kind of life you want to live.

Here are the six steps of KonMari tidying explained in a way that connects with daily life:

1. **Commit to tidying up:** Think of it as a one-time reset, not just another chore. Like a big “refresh” button for your room.
2. **Imagine your ideal lifestyle:** Picture the kind of space you’d love to hang out or study in — clean, organized, and peaceful. Use that vision to guide your choices.
3. **Finish discarding first:** Before organizing what you keep, get rid of what no longer serves you. For example, if old notebooks from years ago are just collecting dust, let them go before arranging your desk.
4. **Tidy by category, not by room:** Instead of doing one room at a time, do one category at a time — like first all your clothes, then books, then papers, then miscellaneous stuff, and lastly sentimental things.
5. **Follow the right order:** Start with the easy stuff (like clothes) and leave the toughest (like old letters or gifts) for last.
6. **Ask if it sparks joy:** Hold each item and check how it makes you feel. If it brings joy or is genuinely useful, keep it. If not, thank it and let it go.



Example

Imagine your backpack stuffed with old worksheets, snack wrappers, and broken pens. Cleaning it KonMari-style means emptying everything out, keeping only what sparks joy (or is useful), and putting it back neatly. Suddenly, your bag feels lighter and less stressful.

We should be
choosing what
we want to
keep, not what
we want to get
rid of.

Marie Kondo

Cleaning is also very therapeutic. Cleaning our outer environments makes us feel lighter and freer on the inside.

Main Lesson

continued

Not Being a “Neat Freak”

While it is good to keep our surroundings clean, it is also important not to overdo it in a way that it bothers others. Cleanliness should make life easier, not stressful.

We also need to remember not to judge people who are not as neat as we are. Constantly criticizing or comparing can create unnecessary tension in relationships.



Example

Imagine your sibling or roommate isn't as particular about tidiness as you are. While you can encourage and set an example, nagging or complaining all the time will only create friction. Everyone has their own pace of learning and growing — the best we can do is focus on our own habits and inspire through action.

Inner Cleanliness: The Other Half of Cleanliness

Just as outer cleanliness is important, inner cleanliness is equally essential. A person cannot truly feel happy sitting in a spotless, beautifully decorated room if their mind is cluttered with worries or negativity. What makes the mind impure are thoughts driven by the six “predators” of inner peace: *kāma* (selfish desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (arrogance), and *mātsarya* (jealousy). These emotions sneak in and disturb our balance if we're not watchful.

Pūjya Gurudev gave a practical formula for keeping the mind clean:

“Introspect daily, detect diligently, negate ruthlessly, substitute wisely, grow steadily.” This means regularly checking our own thoughts, spotting what is unhealthy, letting go of it, replacing it with something better, and steadily growing into a clearer, happier version of ourselves. Many of these points were covered in earlier lessons, so we will just touch upon a few practical points.

Practical Tips for Inner Cleanliness

Just as we keep our rooms neat, we can keep our mind clean with a few simple habits.

1. Begin the day with a prayer like “*tan me manaḥ śiva-saṅkalpam astu*” — “May my mind have noble thoughts.”
2. Choose to speak kindly and only what is useful and uplifting. Remember the TUB analogy in the last lesson.

3. Always try to look for the good in others. While it is true that others may have some negative habits, so do we! Remember that each and every one of us is walking our own path. There is something beautiful in everyone and we should learn to focus on that.

When we think noble thoughts, speak positively, and see the best in others, our inner world stays light and peaceful.

Activity 10 min

Arrange the following collection of items neatly on a table at the front of the class so that students can see them:

Pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, highlighters, markers, post-it notes, notebooks, textbooks, loose papers or worksheets, paperclips, ruler, calculator, scissors, stapler, glue stick, keys, water bottle, headphones or earbuds, empty wrappers of snacks or granola bars, and a phone charger or USB cable.

Round 1: Clutter

- Invite two to three students to come forward.
- Give them thirty seconds to make the table messy — scattering items, stacking them randomly, mixing them up.
- Let the rest of the class observe.

Search

- Call up another student and ask them to find a specific small item (like a paperclip or key) within ten seconds.
- They will most likely struggle or fail to find it quickly because of the clutter.

Round 2: Order

- Now invite two to three different students to organize the table neatly within two minutes (grouping similar items, arranging them in order, etc.).
- Let the class watch the transformation.

Search

- Call up another student and ask them to find the same item (paperclip or key) in ten seconds.
- This time, they should be able to find it much more easily.

Discussion

1. Which situation made it easier to find things — cluttered or organized?
2. How does this relate to our own study desk, backpack, or even our mind?
3. What happens when our thoughts are cluttered versus organized?
4. Create an acronym based on the word “clean.”

Activity

continued

Debrief: A cluttered space slows us down and frustrates us, while a clean and organized space makes us faster, calmer, and more focused. The same applies to our minds. An example of an acronym could be the following:

C: Calm. A clean environment creates a calm mind. It makes us feel relaxed, instead of feeling stressed, which in turn prompts us to constantly engage in action.

L: Light. A clean environment makes us feel lighter, because we only carry or have what we need, instead of holding on to stuff we don't use or that doesn't spark joy.

E: Easy. A clean environment makes it easier to find things, instead of wasting time searching under piles of stuff.

A: Accident-free. A clean environment is safe in comparison to clutter, which can become a hazard to others.

N: Nurturing. A clean environment nurtures a harmonious relationship with others, instead of a messy space that can cause household tension between people.

Alternate Activity

Ask the students to tidy up the space that they are currently occupying and/or their belongings. Alternatively, the teacher can identify a space in the center or premises where the classes are held and use this time to clean it up. It can be a closet, desk, etc.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Go around the room and ask each student to share a step that they will take to practice cleanliness.

Sūtra:

Keep it
C.L.E.A.N.

A clean environment creates a calm mind, a light heart, an easy life, an accident-free space, and a nurturing home.

Sāadhanā: Commit to these four habits. Practice them for one week and share your reflections in the next class.

1. Make your bed first thing in the morning — set a positive start to your day.
2. Fold and put away clothes daily — no more piling up.
3. Keep things in their right place — don't leave them lying around.
4. Clear your desk before bed — so you are ready for a fresh start tomorrow.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Qualities of a Bhakta: Equanimity (Part 1)

Change is the changeless law of the universe. Without learning how to remain equanimous, we are carried away by the changes and left adrift in life with no control. The key to equanimity is to detach from the lower and anchor ourselves in the Higher.

12.17  12.18 



yo na hr̥ṣyati na dveṣṭi
na śocati na kāṅkṣati,
śubhāśubhaparit̥yāgī
bhaktimānyaḥ sa me priyaḥ.

One who neither rejoices, nor
hates, nor grieves, nor desires,
renouncing good and evil, full of
devotion, is dear to Me.

samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca
tathā m̥nāpamānayoḥ,
śītoṣṇa-sukhaduḥkheṣu
samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ.

One who is the same to a foe
and friend and also in honor and
dishonor, who is the same in cold
and heat and in pleasure and pain,
who is free from attachment...

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Sāttvika music

Chairs

 **The Most Beautiful Moment of Rio 2016 | Fair Play**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 12.17 and 12.18.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Values- 25-26- Expecting nothing and renouncing good and evil.”

 Swami Chinmayananda. “BhagavadGita (Values : 27- 29) Being Equal- Part-1.”

 Swami Chinmayananda. “#BhagavadGita - Values - 27-31- Being Equal - Part 2.”

Qualities of a Bhakta: Equanimity (Part 1)

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we learned how to keep it C.L.E.A.N. Ask the class to recall the acronym.

C: Calm. A clean environment creates a calm mind. It makes us feel relaxed, instead of feeling stressed, which in turn prompts us to constantly engage in some action or the other.

L: Light. A clean environment makes us feel lighter, because we only carry or have what we need, instead of carrying or having so much stuff we don't use or that doesn't spark joy.

E: Easy. A clean environment makes it easier to find things, instead of wasting time searching under piles of stuff.

A: Accident-free. A clean environment is safe in comparison to clutter, which can become hazardous to others.

N: Nurturing. A clean environment nurtures a harmonious relationship with others, instead of a messy space that can cause household tension between people.

After this, ask the class to look around the room and check if everything is clean and in order. If not, everyone should take a few minutes to tidy up the place to create a pleasant space for learning.

Introduction 10 min



Activity

Emotional Rollercoaster

Label one side of the room as “Highest of Highs” and the opposite side of the room as the “Lowest of Lows.” Have all students gather in the center. Call out the following scenarios and have students move to the part of the room that reflects how they would feel in that situation. Imagine the room to be a spectrum of emotions — they do not have to choose the extreme end of high or low.

Scenarios:

- You wake up in the morning to your parent yelling at you to get up.
- Your parent makes you your favorite breakfast.

- You end up being tardy for your first class because you left late and the drop-off line just wasn't moving.
- You find out you got a 76% on your Calculus test.
- Your friend compliments you on your looks.
- You trip in the hallway in front of several other classmates.
- You make a team that you tried out for.
- You find out you did not get the summer internship you spent days researching and applying for.

Discussion: We only covered a few scenarios, but hundreds more happen each day in our lives.

1. How many emotions do we feel each day?
2. Is it possible to stay emotionally balanced no matter what?
3. Do we drive our emotions or do our emotions drive us?
4. How much of our emotions are driven by what happens outside of ourselves?

Debrief: During the debrief, the teacher can draw different emojis on the whiteboard resembling people's emotional cycles in a day. As we reflect on our daily lives, we begin to understand that we go through so many emotions each day! We move from calmness to stress, from patience to hurry, from acceptance to anger or vice versa. Many times, we find ourselves off balance. We let our emotions drive us, instead of us driving them. Life will always have ups and downs, but there is a way to be grounded. That will be explored through the Bhagavad-gītā.

Main Lesson 25 min

Today, we will cover two verses from the Bhagavad-gītā that teach us about equanimity.

yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi
na śocati na kāṅkṣati,
śubhāśubhaparitāgī
bhaktimānyaḥ sa me priyaḥ.

One who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, is dear to Me.

samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca
tathā mānāpamānayoḥ,
śītoṣṇa-sukhaduḥkheṣu
samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ.

One who is the same to a foe and friend and also in honor and dishonor, who is the same in cold and heat and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment...

Main Lesson

continued

Being Equal:
Part 1Being Equal:
Part 2

Equanimity means maintaining one's inner peace regardless of what happens outside — not because life is perfect, but because our mind is steady.

As long as we're alive, experiences keep coming to us through our body, mind, and intellect. We're not always in control of what comes to us, but we are in control of how to respond to the world around us. How do we weather the ups and downs, successes and failures of life? The secret here is equanimity: the ability to remain balanced. **The key to equanimity is given to us at the end of verse 12.18: saṅgavivarjitah (free from attachment) — this is the description of the equal-minded one.**

Freedom From Attachment

Attachment is depending on something or someone for our source of joy.

Where there is attachment, there is dependence, and there is sorrow. When we are attached to our body, we are dependent on conducive physical or sense experiences to be happy. Being attached to the mind, we want the experience of pleasure and positive emotions or thoughts. Being attached to the intellect, we seek praise and respect. When we don't get what we want, we automatically become unhappy. How can we change this? Through freedom from attachment.

Attachment can be overcome by giving ourselves something higher to focus on. The mind on its own will not be able to detach from the lower unless it attaches to something higher. As Pūjya Gurudev would say, "Detach from the lower, attach to the higher." When we have a higher goal or purpose to work towards, we are able to detach from the lower naturally, thereby becoming happier and more balanced.

Detachment is letting go of the lower for the Higher.

The highest detachment comes when the intellect realizes that all experiences are fleeting. **By attaching ourselves to the changeless Reality rather than the changing world, we achieve equanimity.**

Let's think about life like an ocean. There will always be waves — successes, failures, joys, and sorrows. We cannot stop the waves — that is impossible and it is simply the nature of life. But we can choose whether we get tossed and turned and absolutely demolished by those waves, or stay anchored and surf those waves steadily.

Attaching ourselves to the changeless Reality is not always an easy feat. There are different steps we can take to reach there. Based on the verses of the Gītā, we're going to analyze three different levels of change and how to stay anchored in something higher at each level.

Equanimity at the Physical Level (Body)

This means staying anchored amidst outer changes. Through our body (including our senses) we experience the physical world. We are exposed to **heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and various other conditions of our environment like noise, light, or air pollution**. We are not in control of the weather or our larger surroundings, so we cannot change the weather or the physical discomfort that occurs as a result of it. However, we can stop the mental grumbling about it.

Additionally, the Gītā is not telling us to be passive in our experience of the world. If there is a change we can make to bring comfort, we can and should do so. Here, equanimity is about keeping our reaction in check when we cannot change the circumstances.

In the previous lesson on sthāne, we learned about complaining. Does complaining ever help improve any situation? If the complaint is a constructive one, which points out something that can be corrected, then it might. Mostly, we complain about things we cannot change and often that makes us feel even more helpless.

The key to detaching from bodily discomforts is keeping a higher purpose in mind. When we enjoy something so much, we often forget our hunger, thirst, and the weather outside.



Example

Think about athletes who are playing a match. The weather may be hot and humid, but when their mind is on the game, they are least bothered about it. Another example could be a dedicated athlete training in the rain. They feel the cold, but their “inner thermostat” remains steady because they are focused on a higher goal.

Example



If it's very stuffy and hot indoors, we can open a window or switch on a fan.

Main Lesson

continued

Equanimity at the Emotional Level (Mind)

This means staying anchored amidst emotional changes in the mind, like **joy and sorrow, victory and defeat**.



Example

A perfect example of this is Śrī Rāma. First, He heard that He was going to be king, and then, the very next day, He heard that He was going to be banished to the forest for fourteen years.

na vanarṁ gantukāmasya
tyajataśca vasundharām,
sarvalokātigasyeva lakṣyate
cittavikriyā.

In that Rāma, who was leaving the kingdom after having decided to go to the forest, there was no perturbation of mind in him like in an ascetic who is beyond worldly pain and pleasure.

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Sarga 19.33

Śrī Rāma was the least bit disturbed about the change in circumstances. He didn't see the situation as good or bad, but He saw it as growth. This is demonstrated in the way He told Kausalya Mātā about the change of events. Instead of focusing on the exile, He said that His father bestowed on Him the kingdom of the forest where there will be great opportunities for Him to be in the company of saints and sages. He accepted this as His dharma without any complaint or resentment towards His father or Queen Kaikeyī.

Our anchors amidst joy and sorrow can be seeing each situation as an opportunity for growth, staying rooted in dharma, and devotion to Bhagavān.

This is similar to what we learned in the sthāne lesson. Not everything will be pleasing to us: in fact, some things can be quite challenging. If we see all situations as an opportunity to grow and become better, stronger, and wiser, then we can stay steady amidst them. If we stay connected to Bhagavān, then our faith will show us that He is trying to mold us to become our best selves.

Highs Cause Harm and Lows Cause Loss

What happens when we are not equanimous? When our minds constantly fluctuate, it makes us unstable. We can easily see how having too many “highs” and “lows” can create emotional instability when it comes to sports.



Example

When a person is too attached to a certain team, this can cause them to make harsh comments to those who cheer for the other team. If their team loses, they may sink into anger and sadness and even start harming others. Because fans often form strong bonds with players and team culture, a poor performance or player injury can feel like a direct, personal letdown.

People often understand that it's not beneficial to drown ourselves in sorrow or loss, but why isn't it beneficial to rise high in joy? In fact, some people enjoy a sports match when there are so many highs and lows. That's the fun of life, isn't it? While this can be very entertaining, it can be harmful. When a team is performing well, people get overexcited. Crowds celebrating a massive victory can cause individuals to lose their sense of dharma. As a result they tend to damage public property, cause injury to others, and drive recklessly.

Being grounded while watching a game doesn't mean that one shouldn't have any reactions at all. It means enjoying the play of it and appreciating the technique, zeal, and tenacity of the players and accepting the outcome for what it is.



Discussion

Watch this clip of the Rio Olympics where Abbey D'Agostino (USA) and Nikki Hamblin (NZL) fall in the 5,000 meter heat but support each other before getting up to complete the race.

Discussion

1. At that moment, when both of them fell, what do you think was on their minds?
2. What did they "attach" to and what did they "detach" from? How did this keep them equanimous?

Debrief: At first, they were probably disappointed about falling in an Olympic race, but they regained their equanimity. They started to focus on each other's health instead of winning or losing. They started to recognize that what mattered was not a medal for a race, but one for humanity.

The Most
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Main Lesson

continued

At the emotional level, Śrī Kṛṣṇa also talks about being equal-minded towards different people: friends and enemies. What we should remember is that all relationships will change over the course of time. At some point, someone can be very close to us, and at another, they may seem very distant.

Holding on to Bhagavān as our true friend, helps us stay steady amidst changing friendships.

Equanimity at the Intellectual Level (Intellect)

This means staying anchored despite impact on the intellect, like in the face of **honor and dishonor**.

Honor and dishonor is expressed at the level of action. When someone shows us respect in the form of acknowledgment, that is honor. When someone shuns us or doesn't pay attention to us, that is dishonor. **Honor** is being respected, valued, recognized, welcomed, or given a position. **Dishonor** is being disrespected, ignored, excluded, humiliated, or treated as insignificant.



Examples

- Being chosen as a group leader (honor)
- Being deliberately left out of leadership roles (dishonor)
- Being invited to a party or gathering (honor)
- Discovering everyone was invited except you (dishonor)

We all have our own estimation of how we measure up in the world. When other people's estimation of us is higher than our own, we consider it to be praise and honor. When their estimation is lower than our own, we feel we are criticized and dishonored. Since we can't control how people think, by becoming attached to this "measure" of ourselves, we again put our happiness in others' hands. We become dependent on whether they see us as worthy of respect or not.

What is important for us to remember is that it is just an opinion, not the truth. People can never know us completely; in fact, we rarely know ourselves completely. How, then, can their opinion about us be a reliable indicator of who we are?

Here, what is also important is to attach to a higher identity to which the experience of honor or dishonor is irrelevant. A devotee is one whose sense of self is anchored to God, and therefore the only opinion that matters is that of Bhagavān. **The most important question is not whether others honor us or not, but whether Bhagavān and Guru are happy with us and whether we are happy with our own behavior and choices.**



Example

Another example of impact at the intellectual level is praise and criticism, which is expressed towards us through speech. This will be covered in the next lesson plan.

If we think about it deeply, a bhakta isn't concerned about being honored or dishonored. In fact, a true bhakta doesn't want attention. Sometimes, we have this need to be recognized. We want people to notice us and acknowledge us — that stems from insecurity. We are insecure about who we are. We feel incomplete, and we feel the need for our feelings and emotions to be validated by others. We change our hairstyle, clothing, or obtain certain possessions, because we need attention and acknowledgment. A bhakta, on the other hand, would never want any attention, because they would rather have all attention focused on Bhagavān. All bhaktas find joy when people sing Bhagavān's name and not theirs!

At all three levels, we have seen ways to stay equanimous amidst ups and downs:

Level	Examples	Key to Equanimity
Physical Level	Heat and cold, noise and silence, hunger and thirst	• Keep the mind focused on a higher purpose
Emotional Level	Joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, friendship and enmity	• See the situation as an opportunity for growth and remember that Bhagavān always gives us what we need • Stay rooted in dharma • Have devotion to Bhagavān
Intellectual Level	Honor and dishonor, praise and criticism	• Make Bhagavān happy and act in a way that makes you happy with yourself

A great example of someone who was equanimous at all levels is Yudhiṣṭhira.

Physical Level

Hunger and Thirst: After wandering in the forest for a while, the Pāṇḍavas were exhausted and tormented by thirst. One by one, they rushed to drink from a lake, but they were warned by a Yakṣa to answer his questions before drinking the water. Despite being warned, they all drank the water without answering the Yakṣa's questions and fell unconscious. When Yudhiṣṭhira arrived, he too was extremely thirsty. Yet, unlike the others, he restrained his urge to drink, listened to the Yakṣa's warning, and answered the questions first. His discrimination prevailed over the immediate pressure of bodily thirst.

Main Lesson

continued

Emotional Level

Friend and Foe: Duryodhana had come to the forest to flaunt his wealth to the Pāṇḍavas, who were spending their years in exile. There, Citrasena, the king of the Gandharvas, imprisoned him. On hearing this, Yudhiṣṭhira asked Arjuna and Bhīma to rescue Duryodhana, even if he had committed so many injustices against the Pāṇḍavas. After all, Duryodhana was family. Yudhiṣṭhira kept dharma above all relationships.

Joy and Sorrow: During the Yakṣa Praśna episode, when it appeared that all of his brothers had died, Yudhiṣṭhira did not lose sight of dharma. Despite his grief, he continued to respond with wisdom, restraint, and respect towards the very Yakṣa who had taken his brothers' lives.

Intellectual Level

Honor and Dishonor: While serving in King Virāṭa's court, Yudhiṣṭhira, who was in the disguise of a minister, was publicly insulted by the king. This was because Yudhiṣṭhira had corrected the king regarding who was responsible for the defeat of the Kauravas. The king struck Yudhiṣṭhira with a dice piece, and even then Yudhiṣṭhira remained composed and respectful.

Yudhiṣṭhira shows us that as long as we stick to our dharma, we can be equanimous at all levels. There's one more approach that can be applied to all three levels as illustrated in the following story.

Story: The Mysterious Ring

There was once a king who was always going through highs and lows. Sometimes his body would fall ill and at other times, it would be healthy. Sometimes, his children were very happy and spent time with him. Other times, they were caught up in their own worlds. Sometimes, his people praised him. Other times, they were full of criticism. After going through so many emotions, the king decided to call a wise woman to the assembly. He sought her advice on how to remain steady amidst all of the changing circumstances. She promised to return the next day with a viable solution.

The next day, she brought a ring for the king. She told him to always wear it. If at any time he felt a high or a low, he should look at the engraving inside the ring, and it would immediately bring him to equipoise. The king curiously looked inside the ring for the mysterious message. It read, "This too shall pass."

The wise woman explained that this was the key to equanimity. This saying will make a happy person feel grounded, as it will remind them that this is just temporary excitement and everything will wind down in time. It will also make a sad person feel grounded, because it will remind them that there is light at the end of the tunnel. They just have to be patient.

Thus, another way to remain equanimous is to remember: **“This too shall pass.”**

Activity 10 min

Musical Equanimity

Tell the students that they’re going to play a round of musical chairs, keeping the lessons they learned in mind. Let the students know that they should try to be as balanced as possible throughout the game.



There will be a special catch to this game which should not be shared beforehand. The winner isn’t the one who is left seated on the last chair. The winner is the one who is able to keep a smile on their face throughout the game, whether they win or lose.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary: Go around the room and ask each student their favorite tip for remaining equanimous.

Sūtra:

**Attach to the Higher
to stay steady**

Sādhana: Pick one strong emotion you want to work on balancing (this can be anger, jealousy, desire, etc.). Whenever you feel this emotion, take a mental step back and connect with Bhagavān to stay grounded.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Qualities of a Bhakta: Equanimity (Part 2)

In this lesson, the students will learn about criticism and praise and how a bhakta remains equanimous amidst them.

12.19  12.20 



tulya-nindā-stutir-maunī
santuṣṭo yena kenaciṭ,
aniketaḥ sthira-matiḥ
bhaktimānme priyo naraḥ.

To whom, censure and praise
are equal, who is silent, content
with anything, homeless, steady
minded, full of devotion; that one is
dear to Me.

ye tu dharmyāmṛtamidaṁ
yathoktaṁ paryupāsate,
śraddadhānā matparamāḥ
bhaktāste'tīva me priyāḥ.

They indeed, who follow this
immortal dharma (law of life)
as described above, endowed
with faith, regarding Me as the
Supreme Goal, such devotees, are
exceedingly dear to Me.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Paper plates (1 per student)
Tape
Markers (1 red and 1 blue per student)

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 12.19 and 12.20.

Qualities of a Bhakta: Equanimity (Part 2)

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, the students learned about equanimity at the physical, emotional, and intellectual levels. Ask them to recollect the lesson. The teacher can provide the first column of the following table to the students, while asking them to recall the next two columns.

Equanimity means maintaining one's inner peace regardless of what happens outside — not because life is perfect, but because our mind is steady.

Level	Examples	Key to Equanimity
Physical Level	Heat and cold, noise and silence, hunger and thirst	• Keep the mind focused on a higher purpose
Emotional Level	Joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, friendship and enmity	• See the situation as an opportunity for growth and remember that Bhagavān always gives us what we need • Stay rooted in dharma • Have devotion to Bhagavān
Intellectual Level	Honor and dishonor, praise and criticism	• Make Bhagavān happy and act in a way that makes you happy with yourself

Bonus question: What was engraved in the mysterious ring?

Answer: This too shall pass.

Introduction 10 min



Activity

Ask students to pair up and tape a paper plate on each other's backs. Once they are done, hand everyone two markers: red and blue. They should go around the classroom and write on each other's plates.

With the blue marker, have them write one line of praise for the person. With the red marker, have them write one line of improvement for the person. They can leave the comments anonymous.

After the activity, ask the students to read their plates and ask them how they feel.

Discussion

1. Do they feel the comments are accurate?
2. How do they feel when they are praised?
3. How do they feel when they are criticized?

Debrief: We normally feel happy and pleased when people praise us and sad when people criticize us. How do we remain equanimous in the face of both? This is what we will see in the next verses of the Bhagavad-gītā.

Main Lesson 25 min

Before we continue with praise and criticism, let's take time to distinguish honor and dishonor from praise and criticism.

Honor (māna): Being respected, valued, recognized, welcomed, or given a high position.

Dishonor (apamāna): Being disrespected, ignored, excluded, humiliated, or treated as insignificant.

These are expressed through actions and behavior towards us. Ask the class to share examples. The following are given for reference.

Main Lesson

continued



Examples

- Being chosen as a group leader (honor)
- Being deliberately left out of leadership roles (dishonor)
- Having your ideas listened to during a group project (honor)
- Having your ideas ignored or dismissed (dishonor)
- Friends saving you a seat and making space for you (honor)
- Friends pretending not to see you or excluding you (dishonor)
- Being invited to a party or gathering (honor)
- Discovering everyone was invited except you (dishonor)

In these examples, words don't need to be spoken. The treatment itself conveys honor or dishonor.

Praise (stuti): Favorable words, compliments, appreciation, or admiration.

Criticism (nindā): Negative words, blame, fault-finding, or condemnation.

These are expressed through speech or social media reactions. Ask the class to share examples of what they received. The following are given for reference.



Examples

- "That was an amazing presentation!" (praise)
- "That was a terrible presentation!" (criticism)
- "You are so thoughtful and kind." (praise)
- "You are selfish and inconsiderate." (criticism)
- "You have such a great sense of humor." (praise)
- "You are so annoying." (criticism)

Now let's take a look at these verses in the Bhagavad-gītā.

tulya-nindā-stutir-maunī
santuṣṭo yena kenaciṭ,
aniketaḥ sthira-matiḥ
bhaktimānme priyo naraḥ.

To whom, censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content with anything, homeless, steady minded, full of devotion; that one is dear to Me.

ye tu dharmyāmṛtamidaṁ
yathoktaṁ paryupāsate,
śraddadhānā matparamāḥ
bhaktāste'tīva me priyāḥ.

They indeed, who follow this immortal dharma (law of life) as described above, endowed with faith, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, such devotees, are exceedingly dear to Me.

In this class, we will focus on how to remain equanimous amidst praise and criticism.

How to Remain Equanimous Amidst Criticism

When criticism comes to us, we often become insecure, our self-worth diminishes, and our ego deflates.

If people criticize us, the first thing we should do is analyze two things:

1. Who is it coming from?
2. Is there any truth to it?

If the criticism is coming from someone who is knowledgeable in that field, then it's worth listening to. For example, if someone is a novice in classical music and criticizes a concert, then their words don't carry much weight, as they don't know much about the field. However, if someone is a classical music connoisseur, then chances are, they are worth listening to and they might have something valuable to say.

If the criticism is true, then we should acknowledge it and use it to improve. For example, a coach or mentor can provide invaluable advice as to how we can get better in our skills or areas of study. Some feedback surveys can be helpful, because they help organizations address their mistakes or shortfalls. Criticism can actually be a wonderful thing when it comes out of love, because it helps us grow, improve, and mature. Many times, we can be blind to our own flaws or weaknesses. Sometimes criticism from people with whom we have no connection can also be true. At such times, we must engage in self-reflection to determine whether it is true or not.

Kabirdās jī says:

nindaka niyare rākhiye, āṅgana kuṭī chhavāya. bin pānī sābuna binā, nirmala kare subhāya.	Keep your critic close to you, giving him a little hut in your courtyard. Without water and without soap, he cleanses your nature (character).
--	---

Sometimes, criticism can motivate us to become better than we have ever been.



Examples

Before the first Harry Potter novel was published, J.K. Rowling was rejected by twelve publishers. However, she kept improving and resubmitting her manuscript. She used criticism as fuel to become better instead of becoming bitter.

Main Lesson

continued

A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him.

Swami
Chinmayananda

If the criticism isn't valid, then we can just let it go and focus on our growth. It is impossible for people to know entirely what is going on in our lives, so their judgments may not be 100% accurate. The best critic, as mentioned before, is Bhagavān. If Bhagavān is happy with us, then we are fine.

There's a beautiful saying from a text known as Jñānāṅkuśa:

satata-sulabha-dainye
niḥsukhe jīvaloke
yadi mama parivādāt
prītim āpnoti kaścit,
parivadatū yatheṣṭam
matsamakṣam tiro vā
jagati hi bahuduḥkhe
durlabhaḥ prītiyogaḥ.

In this world, happiness is hardly found, though sorrow is obtained very easily. In such a state, if anyone achieves happiness by maligning me, let them malign me freely in my presence or behind my back, since in this world of suffering, happiness is hard to obtain.

This is how great Mahātmās think. They are least concerned about what unwarranted critics say, because they know they are answerable to Bhagavān alone. Also, people who gossip and criticize are most likely those who have nothing better to do and waste their time examining the character of others.

How to Remain Equanimous Amidst Praise

Sometimes, criticism is not the problem, but rather, praise is the problem. When people praise us too much, the ego tends to become inflated. Our self-worth gets boosted, making us overconfident. This is what happened to Rāvaṇa. His ministers kept praising him, so he thought he was invincible and could easily defeat Śrī Rāma. But his overestimation of himself proved him wrong. At the end, he suffered defeat at the hands of Śrī Rāma.

If people praise us, the best thing to do is to truly understand that all positivity, beauty, virtue, and wisdom comes from Bhagavān. Remember what we had studied in the very beginning. Bhagavān is the one who has the six bhagas.

The six bhagas are:

- aiśvarya: power
- dharma: righteousness
- yaśa: fame
- śrī: wealth
- vairāgya: dispassion
- mokṣa: freedom

Every time we do something wonderful, it's only possible because Bhagavān's grace is shining through us. **When we become empty of our ego, we are able to draw in all of Bhagavān's virtues and wisdom.** We become His instruments and thus, the best shines forth. This understanding is best seen in Hanumān jī.

Story: Hanumān jī Burns Laṅkā

After finding Sītā Mātā in Laṅkā, Hanumān jī sets the golden city of Laṅkā on fire. He stuns the rākṣasas and accomplishes what nobody had dared to do before Him. He displays tremendous courage and valor. However, despite His immense success, He does not boast. He calmly returns to Bhagavān Śrī Rāma and offers His success unto Him.

He says that everything is only due to Śrī Rāma's grace. Thus, Hanumān jī's ego never got inflated. He remained ever in equanimity and ever in service of Śrī Rāma.

In fact, when we accept praise and attribute it to ourselves, we forget that we are mere instruments and Bhagavān alone is the doer. Instead, all praise should be directed unto Him.

Seeking Praise

Often, we do things just to get praised. We want to get “likes” or “followers,” so we post certain pictures, make friends with certain people, or advocate for something that we may not really believe in. However, we must remember that, in life, we are not here to be liked; we are here to do what's right. When we constantly seek praise from others, we compromise on our dharma. How others may want us to behave may not be aligned with how we should be or what is natural to us.



Activity

Ask the class to form a circle and then give them questions with prompts that start with “Have you ever...?” If the question applies to them, they should move towards the center of the circle. If not, they can remain where they are. For each round of questions, all participants must start in a circle.

Prompts

- Have you ever bought branded clothing because you saw others wearing the same brand?
- Have you ever laughed at jokes that you didn't find funny or didn't understand?
- Have you ever tried to hang out with the popular crowd?
- Have you ever tried to make everyone laugh just to be noticed?
- Have you ever posted photos or reels to get more likes?

Main Lesson

continued

After the class has warmed up with this exercise, ask them this question: If nobody could see us do these things, like us, or praise us, would we still do it?

Debrief: When we look at our lives, most of us actually do things because we want to be liked or praised, not necessarily because they are right. **A true bhakta values what is right over what is liked, and lives their life to please Bhagavān and no one else. This is what keeps them equanimous.**

Impossibility of Pleasing All

No matter what we do, we cannot please everyone. Have you ever been to a wedding or party where everything is beautifully laid out and planned; the food is delicious, the music is sublime, the ambience is grand, and yet people complain? Unfortunately, the truth is, people always find something to complain about! We can never please everyone completely. Therefore, it's not worth trying to do so. People even criticize the omniscient, omnipresent, and all-powerful Bhagavān!

It's very rare to find everyone praising or criticizing something, because people have different mindsets. They praise what matches their mindset and criticize what doesn't. This is why we rarely see 100% ratings for a movie, restaurant, or product. It can be very good, but if it doesn't match the critic's mindset, then it might not get the appropriate rating. Many critics are also paid or influenced by others to praise or criticize objects and experiences. As such, it's always best to stick to Bhagavān, since Bhagavān has the purest mind.

Pūjya Gurudev's First Talk in Pune

At the start of the first jñāna yajña Pūjya Gurudev gave in Pune, there was extensive preparation and hope. However, on the day of the talk, only few people attended — including Gurudev Himself! Despite the low turnout, Gurudev did not feel discouraged or frustrated. He remained deeply anchored in Bhagavān and His mission to spread knowledge. With patience, perseverance, and unwavering faith, His talks gradually attracted larger audiences. Over the years, His jñāna yajñas grew tremendously, touching tens of thousands. Through every stage — from a handful of people to thousands — His mental balance remained steady. He stayed deeply rooted in the scriptures and His devotion, which allowed Him to inspire people consistently with the same warmth and wisdom. Some people praised Him. Whenever they

did, He always acknowledged that everything was the grace of Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa. Others criticized Him because He was speaking in English when the Hindu scriptures were traditionally taught in Saṁskṛtam; but He still carried on because He believed in what He was doing. For Him, it was an offering to Bhagavān. Whether people praised Him or criticized Him — the numbers, the applause, or the silence — none of it shook Gurudev’s inner peace. His anchor was devotion and knowledge of Bhagavān, which gave Him true strength.

In this example, we can clearly see that Pūjya Gurudev’s eyes weren’t focused on the number of people attending or what people said, but they were solely focused on Bhagavān. When He had the stamp of approval from Bhagavān, other opinions didn’t matter. He just continued on with enthusiasm and fervor. Later on, people began to see His glory. **Keeping Bhagavān as our ultimate source of validation makes us steady amidst all the comments that people express.**

In the last verse of this chapter, Bhagavān concludes by saying that the one who practices all these qualities such as freedom from hatred, contentment, freedom from disturbance, cleanliness, and equanimity, that bhakta, is very dear to Bhagavān. This is because the bhakta recognizes Bhagavān’s presence in everyone and everything, so they strive to live a pure and simple life and avoid harm or disturbance to themselves and others.

Activity 10 min

Emerging as a Bhakta

As a class, recollect all the qualities of a bhakta that have been studied so far:

1. Free from hatred
2. Contentment
3. Free from disturbance
4. Cleanliness
5. Equanimity

Divide the class into five groups and assign each of them one of the qualities.

Ask them to come up with the following:

1. Definition of the quality
2. How to practice it
3. Benefits of practicing it
4. Any questions they have about the specific quality

Activity

continued

Give them about eight minutes to complete this activity. Once they are done, each group can present to the class. The teacher can address any questions that students may have. This will serve as a good review of all of the qualities of a devotee that have been covered. The following page contains a bhakta cheat sheet.

Conclusion 5 min

Self-Reflection: Now that the students have recollected all the qualities of a bhakta, let them reflect on the last one once more — equanimity. Ask the students to take their paper plates from the beginning of class and look at all the comments written by their fellow classmates. For all the criticism they received, ask them to analyze which comments are true. Then, ask them to close their eyes and be grateful to have received them so that they can become better. For all the praise they received, ask them to gently close their eyes and be grateful to Bhagavān — the source of it all.

Sūtra:

Instead of looking for
people's reactions, seek
Bhagavān's recognition

Sāadhanā: For the entire week, try not to seek validation from people, irrespective of whether they react or not to what you say or post. Always turn within to see how Bhagavān would respond.

Conclude with closing prayers.

QUALITIES OF A BHAKTA: EQUANIMITY (PART 2)

Quality	Definition	How to Practice	Benefits
Free from hatred	The absence of ill will, dislike, and hatred towards others	• Put ourselves in others' shoes to understand them better • Shine like a hero • Cultivate the vision of oneness	Being compassionate towards others and learning how to grow stronger amidst difficult people
Contentment	A deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment	Appreciate what we have and accept what we don't have	A sense of gratitude for all that we have and being free from comparison for what we do not have
Free from disturbance	• Learning to master S.A.B.: Speech, Actions, and Body Language, so that others feel comfortable around us • Not being disturbed by others means having forbearance	Not disturbing others: • Speech: TUB • Actions: Be mindful of how one disturbance leads to more • Body Language: Be sensitive Not being disturbed by others: • Acceptance • Higher attitude	One causes less disturbance to others and is also not disturbed by them, and lives a more peaceful life
Cleanliness	• The practice of keeping oneself, one's surroundings, and one's objects free from dirt, germs, and impurities • Cleanliness of the mind is equally important	• The KonMari Method — asking ourselves if something sparks joy • “tan me manaḥ śiva-saṅkalpam astu” — May I entertain only noble thoughts • Introspect daily, detect diligently, negate ruthlessly, substitute wisely, and grow steadily	Keep it C.L.E.A.N.: A clean environment creates a calm mind, a light heart, an easy life, an accident-free space, and a nurturing home. Thinking noble thoughts, speaking positively, and seeing the best in others makes us peaceful
Equanimity	Maintaining one's inner peace regardless of what happens outside — not because life is perfect, but because our mind is steady	• Seeing the situation as an opportunity for growth • Staying rooted in dharma • Devotion to Bhagavān • Seeking validation from Bhagavān instead of others	A peaceful mind and adherence to dharma amidst all circumstances

Closing

Bhagavad-gītā for Teenagers: Bhakti Yoga Curriculum Summary

1. Recognize the Higher Power

Whether or not you believe in God, you cannot deny that there's a Higher power. There's something that governs the world from the rising and setting of the sun, the motion of the planets, the tides in water to the physiological systems in all our bodies. **That is Bhagavān.**

2. Open Yourself to Grace

Once that Higher power is recognized, open yourself to It. The same power lies within us, but we aren't able to tune into it because of all our impurities. By worshiping a form of Bhagavān as our Iṣṭa Devatā, we open ourselves up to the shower of grace. **That is Bhakti.**

3. Be an Instrument

When we start offering our love and devotion unto Bhagavān, we become empty of our ego and filled with Divine Love. The only thing that comes out of us is sublime music, melodious harmony, and captivating symphonies — full of love for all beings and equanimity amidst all circumstances.

That is a Bhakta.

May we rest at the feet of **Bhagavān**, open ourselves up to **Bhakti**, and live life as a **Bhakta**.

Key Takeaways

- 1 Open yourself to Īśvara.
- 2 The Whole World is God.
- 3 Focus on one string rather than many gems.
- 4 A sāttvika mind releases the bind.
- 5 Pray in your own special way.
- 6 Discover your Iṣṭa Devatā.
- 7 My Iṣṭa Devatā is My _____.
- 8 yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham (YKV).
- 9 The best offering is LOVE.
- 10 Make life an offering, not a suffering!
- 11 Tune into Grace.
- 12 Turn Bitter into Better.
- 13 na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati — Bhagavān's devotee never perishes!
- 14 See the Divine Vibhūti!
- 15 Do Japa!
- 16 You are Unshakable.
- 17 Silence reveals Secrets.
- 18 Awaken the Cosmic Eye.
- 19 Be an Instrument.
- 20 Sthāne hr̥ṣīkeśa — Everything is as it should be.
- 21 Body in karma, mind in bhakti, and intellect in jñāna.
- 22 Worship with form to prepare for the formless.
- 23 Love strengthens; hate weakens.
- 24 Appreciate what we have, accept what we don't.
- 25 S.A.B. Speak kindly, Act wisely, Behave respectfully.
- 26 Keep it C.L.E.A.N.
- 27 Attach to the Higher to stay steady.
- 28 Instead of looking for people's reactions, seek Bhagavān's recognition.

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BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ FOR TEENAGERS

Bhakti Yoga

There is one thing that is the remedy for all sickness and disease — the love for God. For generations, this has proven to be not only a cure to all maladies, but the breath to all life. Those who have been immersed in this sacred love have shone with joy, brilliance, and compassion for all beings. Those who lack it find themselves astray without a guiding light to illuminate their path.

This curriculum for high school students aims to bring out that love for the Divine through lesson plans based on the Bhagavad-gītā Chapters 7-12, the Bhakti Yoga section. Through thoughtfully designed lesson plans with interactive discussions, engaging activities, multimedia links, real-life examples, and practical applications, this curriculum aims for each teacher and student to not only learn the Gītā but to live it in their daily lives.

As we reflect on the Bhagavad-gītā, may we learn to rest at the feet of **Bhagavān**, open ourselves up to **Bhakti**, and live life as a **Bhakta**.

