

BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ FOR TEENAGERS

Karma Yoga

PURPOSE
GRATITUDE
DYNAMISM
LOVE
FEARLESSNESS
STRENGTH
GROWTH
CLARITY
VISION
FREEDOM
RELAXATION
PURITY



BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ FOR TEENAGERS

Karma Yoga

A comprehensive curriculum specially designed for
teenagers who want a happy and fulfilling life.

Chinmaya Mission West
An offering for 50 Years of Chinmaya Yuva Kendra





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SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA



July 16, 2025

MESSAGE

Hari Om!

I am very pleased to learn that in the 50th year of Chinmaya Yuva Kendra, CHYK West has brought out a special curriculum on “Bhagavad Gita for Teenagers”.

On the threshold of a life of greater discovery and responsibility, the Bhagavad Gita is the best guide that one could have. We have heard of the term GPS being Global Positioning System. Our true GPS is the Gita Positioning System, which gives us the direction to navigate the twists and turns of life with the tools of right thinking, right values and the right attitude. With such a GPS, each instruction is an inspiration, guiding the way to happiness and harmony.

Invoking the grace and blessings of Bhagavan Shri Krishna and Pujya Gurudev, I wish the students and teachers of this curriculum a wonderful journey with the Gita. Hearty congratulations and best wishes to the entire team of CHYKs, Brahmacharins, Sevaks and Sevikas who have worked on the project.

With Love & Om,

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	द्ध	ḍh	adhesive*
आ	ā	fa <u>th</u> er	ण	ṇ	under*
इ	i	di <u>ff</u> erent	त	t	ta <u>b</u> la
ई	ī	fe <u>el</u>	थ	th	th <u>u</u> mb
उ	u	fu <u>ll</u>	द	d	th <u>i</u> s
ऊ	ū	bo <u>o</u> t	ध	dh	Gan <u>d</u> hi
ऋ	ṛ	rh <u>yth</u> m*	न	n	no <u>s</u> e
ॠ	ṝ	**	प	p	pe <u>n</u>
ऌ	ḷ	**	फ	ph	ph <u>an</u> tom*
ए	e	ev <u>a</u> de	ब	b	bo <u>i</u> l
ऐ	ai	de <u>l</u> ight	भ	bh	ab <u>h</u> or
ओ	o	co <u>r</u> e	म	m	mi <u>n</u> d
औ	au	no <u>w</u>	य	y	ye <u>s</u>
क्	k	ca <u>l</u> m	र	r	ri <u>g</u> ht
ख	kh	kh <u>a</u> n	ल	l	lo <u>v</u> e
ग	g	ga <u>t</u> e	व	v	ve <u>r</u> y
घ	gh	gho <u>s</u> t	श	ś	sh <u>u</u> t
ङ	ṅ	an <u>k</u> le*	ष	ṣ	sug <u>a</u> r
च	c	chu <u>ck</u> le	स	s	si <u>m</u> ple
छ	ch	wi <u>ch</u> *	ह	h	ha <u>pp</u> y
ज	j	ju <u>st</u> ice	ॠ	m̐	im <u>p</u> rovis
झ	jh	jh <u>a</u> nsi	:	ḥ	**
ञ	ñ	ban <u>y</u> an	क्ष	kṣ	ac <u>t</u> ion
ट	ṭ	ta <u>n</u> k	त्र	tr	th <u>re</u> e*
ठ	ṭh	**	ज्ञ	jñ	gn <u>o</u> sis
ड	ḍ	do <u>g</u>	ऽ	ʼ	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.

Swami Swaroopananda

FOREWORD

CHYK West has made a commendable effort in designing a curriculum that brings the transformative knowledge of the Bhagavad Gītā to the intellect and minds of today's youth in a clear and accessible manner.

Today's youth are searching for direction, and the Gītā guides us to achieve our highest potential by teaching us how to overcome our own limitations and shortcomings. Though the challenges faced by the youth today may appear new, the intrinsic obstacles remain the same. Introducing the Gītā during one's formative years instills values that serve as a steady anchor through life's ebbs and flows.

To the sevaks, teachers, and youth who have contributed to this noble vision, I invoke the grace of Shri Krishna and Pujya Gurudev. Bhagavan Shri Krishna directly taught one Arjuna, and through this scripture, generations to come. Pujya Gurudev dedicated his entire life to the propagation of the Bhagavad Gītā and reached out to millions during his lifetime.

Blessed are we to have received this knowledge from Pujya Gurudev and now to have the opportunity to reflect upon it and pass it on to the next generation. May His presence be felt in every classroom, every conversation, and every contemplation that arises from this curriculum.

Love

At His feet,

Swaroopananda

Swami Swaroopananda
Global Head, Chinmaya Mission
Chancellor, CVV
20 July 2025



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To the youth today who search for answers

To those who long for purpose

To those who yearn for Truth

YOU are our inspiration



Excerpts from Gītā Māhātmyam

Glory of the Gītā

dharovāca
bhagavan parameśāna bhaktir-avyabhicāriṇī,
prārabdham bhujiyamānasya katham bhavati he prabho. | 1 |

The Earth said: O Bhagavan, the Supreme Lord! How can unflinching devotion arise in one who is immersed in their prārabdha karmas (worldly life), O Lord?

śrīviṣṇuruvāca
prārabdham bhujiyamāno hi gītābhyāsarataḥ sadā,
sa muktaḥ sa sukhī loke karmaṇā nopalipyate. | 2 |

Lord Viṣṇu said: Though engaged in the performance of worldly duties, one who is regular in the study of the Gītā becomes free. They are happy in this world. They are not bound by karma.

gītāyāḥ pustakaṁ yatra yatra pāṭhaḥ pravartate,
tatra sarvāṇi tīrthāni prayāgādīni tatra vai. | 4 |

All the sacred centers of pilgrimage, like Prayag and other places, dwell in that place where the Gītā is kept, and where the Gītā is read.

sahāyo jāyate śīghram yatra gītā pravartate,
yatra gītāvicāraśca paṭhanam pāṭhanam śrutam,
tatrāham niścitam pṛthvi nivasāmi sadaiva hi. | 6 |

Help comes quickly where the Gītā is recited and, O Earth, I always dwell where it is read, heard, taught, and contemplated upon.



Vision behind *Bhagavad Gītā* for Teenagers

It's Sunday morning and Diya, a fourteen-year-old teenager, lies in bed awake and yet pretending to sleep. "Do I really have to go to Bala Vihar today?" she questions as her mom knocks on her door. "I have so much school work to do!" Her mom gently gives her a nod, "Why don't you give it a try?" Diya rolls over and gets dressed.

At first she is hesitant. She listens to her mom but doesn't resonate. She hears but doesn't understand. She goes to Bala Vihar because her mom asked her but not because she feels for it.

Sound familiar? This is what many teenagers have faced and this is exactly what we are trying to address. There are so many books out there based on the Bhagavad-gītā but what makes this different? The edge in this curriculum book is that it is written by those very teenagers who questioned, rebelled, and rolled their eyes. **This comes from their lens, from their shift of questioning to understanding, feeling a disconnect to resonating, and from being asked to do something to being inspired to act on their own.**

It comes from thoughtful reflection of many minds who have gone through these teenage motions and finally realized that there is clarity, wisdom, and depth in our scriptures. There's a solution for everything that we experience — stress, anxiety, insecurity, procrastination, and a roller coaster of emotions. There's also a solution beyond what we experience — we are actually more than what we see, feel, and think.

It comes from a place of maturity, reverence, and most of all, it comes from a place of love to all the great Masters who have preserved, protected, and shared this wisdom and made it available, timeless, and transformative.

*May we remain an instrument of Your Divine Hands
May our thoughts vibrate with Purity
May our words speak only Truth
May our actions shine with Love*

The *Bhagavad Gītā* for Teenagers Team



Gratitude

We offer our gratitude to our entire Guru paramparā whose love and silent sacrifices paved the way for us to learn the most sacred knowledge here and now. We offer this to all those who have made these teachings relatable and easy for us to understand and apply.

The seeds of the past were nurtured in the present by the entire team of CHYKs, Brahmacharins, Sevikas, and Sevaks, who served tirelessly from drafting lesson plans, to transliterating, editing, proofreading, illustrating, and designing. Each one took up the task with an attitude of dedication and love.

The seeds of the present were inspired by the future. We offer our gratitude to the teens of today who keep us going. It is your energy, dynamism, and sincerity that makes our hearts melt.

Most of all, **our deepest gratitude to our Mother, the Bhagavad-gītā**. Her words come to life every time we read them. We are being moved every moment by Her grace.





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Connecting with JCHYKs as a Teacher

CHYK Reflection

Children Aren't Vessels To Be Filled, But Lamps to Be Lit

Over the last few months, I have been reflecting on Gurudev's seminal quote on Bala Vihar, "Children are not vessels to be filled, but lamps to be lit." This quote gets brought to the forefront for Bala Vihar teachers at the beginning of every school year and is one I didn't fully understand for the longest time. In talking to teachers of various ages over a few years, I have encountered a sentiment that a teacher's age may become a hindrance to teaching youth, because of differences in their upbringing. After reflecting more on Gurudev's quote, I have come to disagree with this sentiment. Any Bala Vihar teacher can deeply connect with their students — it just requires remembering to view children as lamps to be lit!

To light a lamp, all we need is a single spark or flame. Analogously, perhaps only a single moment of inspiration is needed for the students to begin a lifetime journey of spirituality. It is beyond our control to choose what cuts through to students and starts them on their spiritual quests. That is a result of their own *vāsanās* and God's grace. But we can prepare the field for this kindling to occur to the best of our ability. In fact, that may be the highest duty that we have as Bala Vihar teachers. A spark is not lit by the metaphorical pouring of oil onto the lamp, nor by engulfing the lamp in flames. Neither approach will result in a steady burning flame. **Our job is to be careful in how we approach teaching, so that when the match of inspiration is cleanly struck and applied to the student, the wick will catch the flame!**

Tips for Teaching Students

Meeting Students Where They Are

There is one main mistake a teacher may make that would lose their students' attention and trust. Simply put, if a teacher talks condescendingly to their students, either consciously or unconsciously, they will strain the teacher-student relationship in a way that might potentially douse the lamp. Here is a simple example to illustrate the point: how many teachers take the time to learn and understand the newest generation's slang and lingo? My own gut reaction to slang I have encountered has been to treat these newfangled terms with judgment, as a sign of my own age and how different the youth are from me. If the gut reaction can be ignored and the terms embraced (at least in understanding, usage is not mandatory), the potential for connection can appear even in a small way. In its own way, the youth lingo is not unlike a new language. Attempting to learn to speak a native speaker's language usually goes a long way



in connecting with them, as it garners the native speaker's appreciation and starts to establish a rapport. Younger teachers may have more of an upper hand in being able to learn the slang quicker than older Bala Vihar teachers, but everyone is capable of learning these terms. A few years back, my co-teacher had to explain the meaning of some slang to me that I was previously unfamiliar with. (I shall not share the word in question for I am sure it is already outdated with the youth!). Our students (kindly) laughed at me when they saw my bafflement and doubly so when they heard me try to use it. The moment was certainly humorous, but I think my willingness to embarrass myself in front of the students, which in turn showed a level of vulnerability to them, allowed for a connection to form. They became just a bit more comfortable showing vulnerability back towards me. From there, the start of a connection developed.

Dealing With Doubts Deftly

A more powerful example: how does one meet a student who expresses doubts in the existence of God? This is either a common discussion JCHYK classes have faced or will face. As a former Bala Vihar student and a former doubter, I can sincerely say that the most helpful thing that Chinmaya Mission provided me was a space to doubt without judgment, and gentle guidance which led me from my initially skeptical conclusions to understanding the meaning of the Bhagavad-gītā much more thoroughly. But I know from personal experience, as a former student and teacher, that the guidance I received from my teachers was not universal. Sometimes a student's doubt was met with stern corrections. Sometimes the doubt was met by a volley of powerful arguments, silencing the doubter without actually clarifying their initial doubts. In the face of a wave of differing perspectives, a young student often withdraws and shuts down. On the surface it may look like the student has been convinced; in reality, they were just silenced. This doesn't stem from malicious intentions from the teacher's perspective — they genuinely seek to address doubts. The arguments the students present are painfully immature at times, and teachers may see the flaws in the students' perspective immediately. However, the way one addresses doubts is almost as important as what is said to address them.

Many times, young students need to be slowly walked from their own conclusions to the lessons being taught. It may be hard for teachers to look at young students' arguments and treat them as well-developed. But to these students, who are thinking critically and talking about these topics seriously for the first time, these are their genuine conclusions. It can be discouraging to them to have these genuine attempts to formulate their own perspective dismissed. To answer their openness with dismissal only serves to widen the gap between teacher and student. Thus, perspective needs to be applied gently as well. Some time ago, in my Mahābhārata class, a student of mine shared that he was a passionate follower of popular financial content and harbored a strong desire for wealth. Chastising the student, by simply decrying greed and envy, would not address the student's feelings and thus would go unheard. As it is, discussing the impermanence of material pleasures isn't wrong, but the glut of financial content on TikTok

and YouTube prioritizes the gathering of wealth would have drowned out any single lecture I gave. Instead I led him through a reflective exercise, using examples of greed and envy like Duryodhana, which had him question his own nascent belief system. After he made a few good points to himself, I let the matter rest so he could reflect and question further on his own. I did not fully change his mind that day, but future discussions on this topic showed me that he had listened and integrated what he had learned.

Meeting Apathy With Grace

One last example: how do we meet students who present apathy to the lessons presented in class? Truthfully, we have to meet this apathy with sincerity, even if it may feel wasted. Sometimes those students we think are not listening are, in reality, carefully listening, and may not be participating for a variety of reasons ranging from confidence issues to confusion. They might seriously ask two or three questions over the course of the year, but those handful of questions are where that student's passion for Vedānta can be kindled. Over the years, former students, whom I never believed paid attention during my class, wrote lovely messages thanking me for those very lessons, as I am sure many teachers have experienced. A student's spiritual lamp can be lit unbeknownst to us. We should remind ourselves not to be offended when it seems like students aren't paying attention to what we feel we work so hard to teach. We must assume good intent from students, sometimes almost unreasonably. We must remind ourselves, it's not in our hands who receives the message and which messages are received. One trick I have found useful to remove myself from my own frustrations is to remind myself of all the benefits of teaching that I receive. **By understanding the material well enough to teach it, we are transforming ourselves positively. Thus, the opportunity to teach is a blessing for our own spiritual development, whether or not students pay attention.**

Developing a Lesson Plan

Earnestness is something that is best conveyed in person; however, teaching begins at the lesson plan. Trying to create a lesson plan that connects with every student is a challenging task, especially considering that there is a specific lesson that needs to be conveyed regardless of the students' interests. I have drawn a lot of inspiration for approaching lesson plan building from a Vedānta Teacher at my local center. To him, the great beauty of Sanātana Dharma as a religion is that every experience at every level is intended to point the seeker higher. Every mode of interaction has a deep meaning, whether it is through ritualistic pūjās, the most basic nature worship, or the recitation of stories. Once this meaning is discovered by a reflecting seeker, they are guided upwards, as if they were climbing a ladder. Therefore, it is vitally important that when developing a lesson plan, we teach the core lesson in a way that connects to a level below and a level higher.



Back to Basics

When I say that a lesson plan should connect its core lesson to a level below, I am referring to tying the current lesson to what they learned when they were younger. I, personally, love connecting lessons back to common stories, aphorisms, and values that students have heard as children. As an example, since the students have been hearing the Chinmaya Pledge week after week since the start of their Bala Vihar journeys, I find it very useful to connect some Bhagavad-gītā lessons to the Pledge. When teaching the Wheel of Action from Chapter 3, I would directly quote lines from the Pledge such as “... producing more than what we consume and giving more than what we take.” Doing so provides validation on both ends. At this point in a Bala Vihar student’s education, they may have started taking the Pledge for granted as they have been regularly reciting it from a young age. Connecting the Gītā to the Pledge unfolds a whole new level of understanding to the Pledge and makes them reconsider their former perceptions of it. Making this connection can also validate the current Gītā lesson to them because of their long term relationship with the Pledge, transferring a preexisting acceptance and connection to this Chapter 3 Gītā lesson. By harnessing this two-way connection, we are making the most of the different lessons intended for different levels developed by the Gurus of our paramparā.

Taking it Higher

When we teach a Bhagavad-gītā lesson at an introductory level, it is important to also gesture to the highest Truth. It is certain that teaching at too high a level can confuse students. But while we teach at their current level, it is vitally important that students understand that the Bhagavad-gītā contains even deeper depths. **If a student graduates from Bala Vihar remembering nothing else but that there is depth to the Bhagavad-gītā which they can turn to in their times of need, then all of the lessons have been worth it.** It is important to prime the students for further exploration. We cannot control what they do with that feeling, but it is important to inculcate it.

Many Vedānta teachers like to structure answers to Q&As by addressing the question at the highest, middle, and practical levels, while spending the most time addressing the question at the seeker’s level. This approach needs to make it into our lesson plans for high schoolers. When Vedānta Teachers teach about dharma and svadharma to youth, they talk about Dharma first at the highest levels by teaching the concept of dharma as meaning “our essential Nature, that supreme Self.” On the practical level, Vedānta Teachers will talk about how it is the essential nature of a student to study and therefore remind students about the concept of dharma as their roles and responsibilities in life. But a majority of the lesson may be spent on talking about how a student can figure out their personal dharma, or svadharma, especially as they move towards college applications and develop a lifelong career for themselves. This approach ties

where the students are now, expands the breadth of their current thinking, and signifies there is a deeper understanding for them to uncover in time.

Making the Connection

The goal of making these connections is to impart to students that the system of Sanātana Dharma is greater than the sum of its parts. They should see the strands that connect every part of Sanātana Dharma even if they cannot grasp it all at this moment. There are definitely going to be parts which appeal more to them than others, whether it is a preference for a certain iṣṭa-devatā or a certain path of seeking. A student may reject the more ritualistic practices while loving bhakti-oriented singing or dancing. But it is important to show how they are both connected to one another and to the same higher Goal. When they can see that it is all one system, they can feel comfortable approaching Sanātana Dharma as they are, even if they cannot interact with everything with the same enthusiasm. Where they might have felt rejected or at odds with certain practices that had once spoken to them before, they might now feel more at peace with interacting at whatever level they are at.

At the end of the day, there are many ways to go about creating a lesson plan, but if the lesson plan conveys openness to the students, and the teachers meet the students with open-mindedness in class, students will find themselves embraced by their culture. The rest is in God's and Pūjya Gurudev's hands.



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 Mitrananada 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 \(individual verses\)](#)



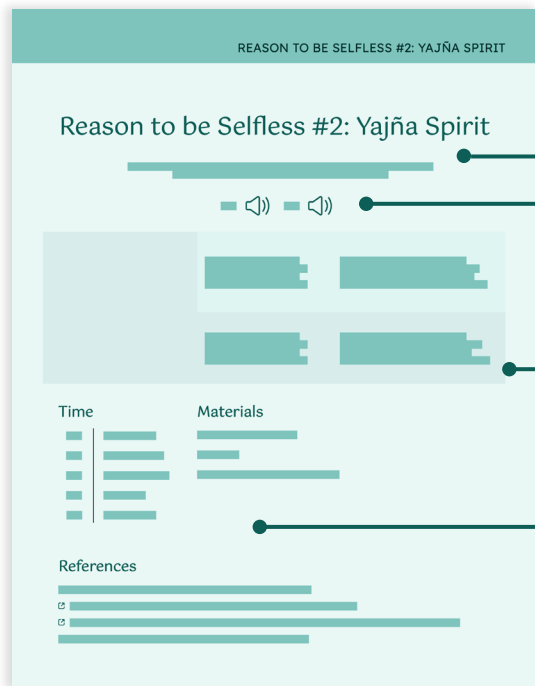
Please note the playlist displays only 200 videos at a time. When you click on a later verse, the succeeding verses will appear. This is constantly updated by Central Chinmaya Mission Trust (CCMT).

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 Slogan

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

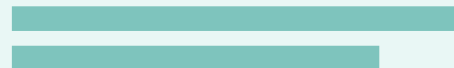
Sādhanā

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



Teacher Guidance

Specific instructions and suggestions for teachers to effectively facilitate learning.

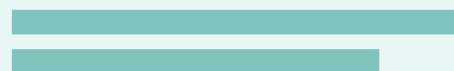


Micro Activities

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



Activity



Clickable Links

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

Recall [lesson 13: “Acting with Surrender”](#)

In this 1984 interview given in Melbourne, Australia, Śrī Gurudev...

Modules

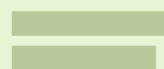
Insightful discussions, relatable examples, and further reading for both students and teachers who wish to delve deeper.



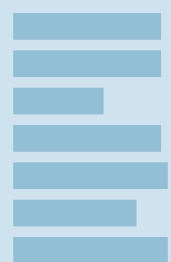
Further Reading



Example



Discussion



A Peek into the Life of A Great Master

Swami Chinmayananda was born as Balakrishnan Menon on May 8, 1916 in a pious, aristocratic family in Ernakulam, along the bountiful coast of Kerala. Parukutty Amma, who gave birth to him, passed away by the time he was just five years old. He was brought up in Poothampalli House, in a joint matriarchal family, by his aunt Kochu Narayani Amma and by his father, Śrī Kuttan Menon.

When Balan was only a baby, a great Mahātmā named Chattambi Swamigal used to regularly visit their home and he would lay Balan on his chest and prattle away with the child. The child used to prattle back and long periods of quiet communication happened between them. Though this event seemed very ordinary, it left a great impression on Balan. “It seems that I had a secret initiation at the hands of the Swamigal, who accomplished this marvel in a tiny baby, perhaps only a thousand days old in the world.”

As a young boy, Balan grew up in a very religious household that would perform worship for about two hours every evening. During these times, Balan tried to find imaginative ways to entertain himself. Swami Chinmayananda later recalled his childhood, “What attracted Balan and suited his temperament the most was the picture of the Chandrakalādhara — bust only, with Śrī Gaṅgā jī flowing out of his jaṭā so beautifully gathered into a heap on His crown; the crescent and the serpent; the broad forehead; the smiling eyes of mercy; the beaming mouth that seemed to talk of tenderness and affections from behind His mustache! In short, Śiva was the picture after Balan’s own heart.” It was then that Swami Chinmayananda was born in the heart of Balan.

Balan received his primary education in Sree Rama Varma High School in Ernakulam and then moved to Vivekodayam Boys High School in Thrissur. He grew up to be a bright and smart young man who loved English literature. He was fond of dressing well and looking impeccable. He loved tennis and swimming as well as playing pranks and bringing laughter to everyone’s hearts. In and throughout all of this, he was very caring especially to his Kochu Amma, and his sisters, Kanakam and Padmini. Balan eventually completed his undergraduate studies in St. Thomas College in Thrissur and then joined Lucknow University to study literature and law.

Loving. Fashionable. Playful. Critical. Questioning even the existence of God. Balan was a typical young rebel and, like most youth, a mixture of opposites too. While a part of him distanced himself from God, he still did his japa before going to bed. While his extroverted personality seemed to have answers for any and every question, Balan’s mind was on an insatiable quest for purpose and meaning.



He soon found himself in the freedom movement and his life took unexpected turns. Joining the Quit India Movement, being chased by British police, imprisonment, illness, working as a journalist, death of a close friend ... all made him ponder over the purpose of his existence. He made up his mind and set off to Rishikesh to discover answers to many pressing questions. In Rishikesh, Balan met Swami Sivananda, a karma yogī in the true sense of the word, whose philosophy was to Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realize. He kindled Balan's genius, eloquence, inquisitiveness, and spiritual quest to such an extent that on the holy Śivarātri day of 1949, at the age of thirty-three, Balan joined the ascetic order and was named Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati, "He who revels in the Bliss of Pure Consciousness."

Seeking to learn more, Swami Chinmayananda studied under Swami Tapovanam, an austere sannyāsī, who was known for his strictness and discipline. When he arrived, Swami Chinmayananda stayed in a very simple hut, adjusting to the frigid weather and meager lifestyle, not to mention the testing methods of Swami Tapovanam. He spent time in deep study and meditation with Swami Tapovanam until the depth of realization echoed in this heart, "Unless you are ready to take a plunge into your own within and move up beyond the mind and intellect to the very source of light, power, and wisdom, I know not how to make you know what I know."

In 1951, while sitting on a boulder in Gangotri, in deep contemplation on the banks of the gushing Gaṅgā, Swami Chinmayananda wondered: "Can I do it? Can I face the educated class of India and bring to their faithless hearts a ray of understanding of our wondrous culture?"

As he was plagued with doubts about his own ability to awaken the masses, the answer emerged from the thundering and ever-flowing Mother Gaṅgā, "Son! See me born here in the Himalayas, I rush down to the plains, taking with me life and nourishment to all. Fulfillment of any possession is in sharing it with others."

He felt encouraged and reinforced. The urge became irresistible. He set out for the plains and resolved to reveal the true Essence and "convert Hindus to Hinduism," and "awaken Indians to India." This "afternoon dream" became his "Gangotri Plan" and translated into the Chinmaya Mission, a global spiritual movement. The vision is to provide individuals with the wisdom of Vedānta and practical means for spiritual growth and happiness, enabling them to become positive contributors to society.

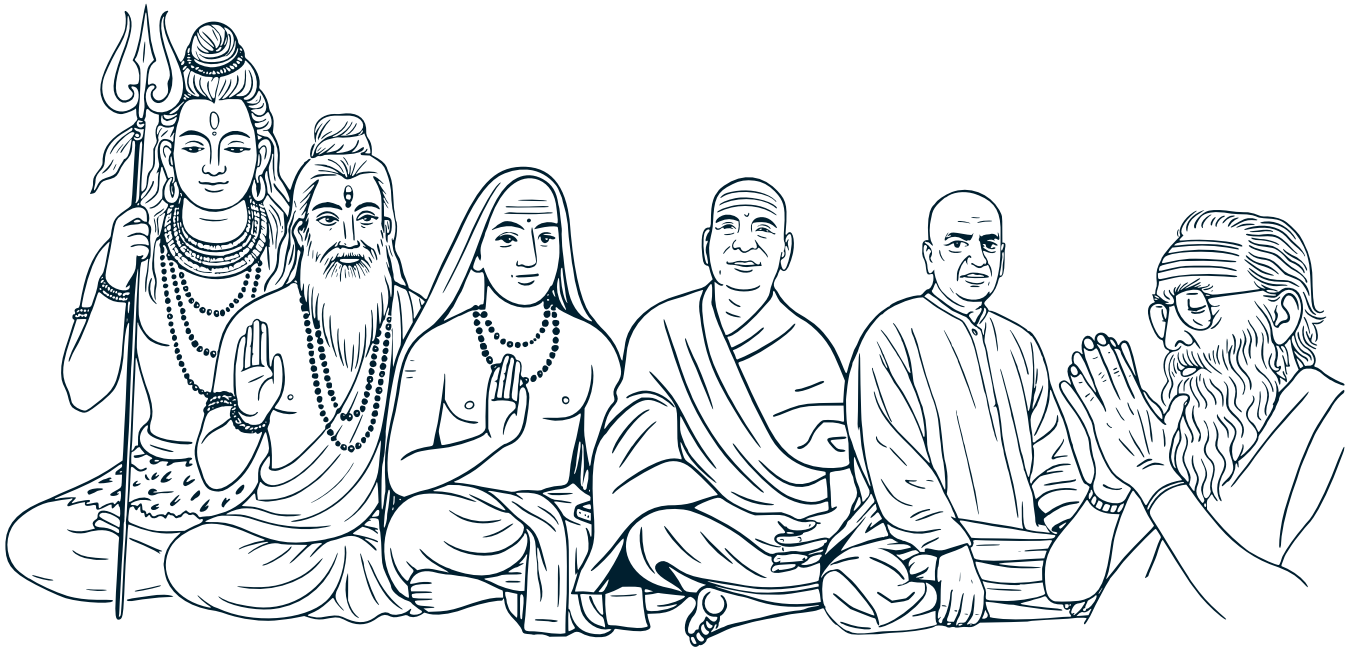
Swami Chinmayananda started his first jñāna yajña (discourse series) in a small Ganesh temple in Rasta Peth, Pune on December 31, 1951 with only a few. This eventually led to the formalization of the Chinmaya Mission in 1953 in Chennai. From his lips, Goddess Sarasvatī thundered the wisdom of the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-gītā all over the world.

INTRODUCTION

The devotee and the detractor, the critic and the compassionate, the scholar and the seeker, the young and the old, the individual and the institution, the artist and the scientist, Indians and people from all over the globe were inspired by Him.

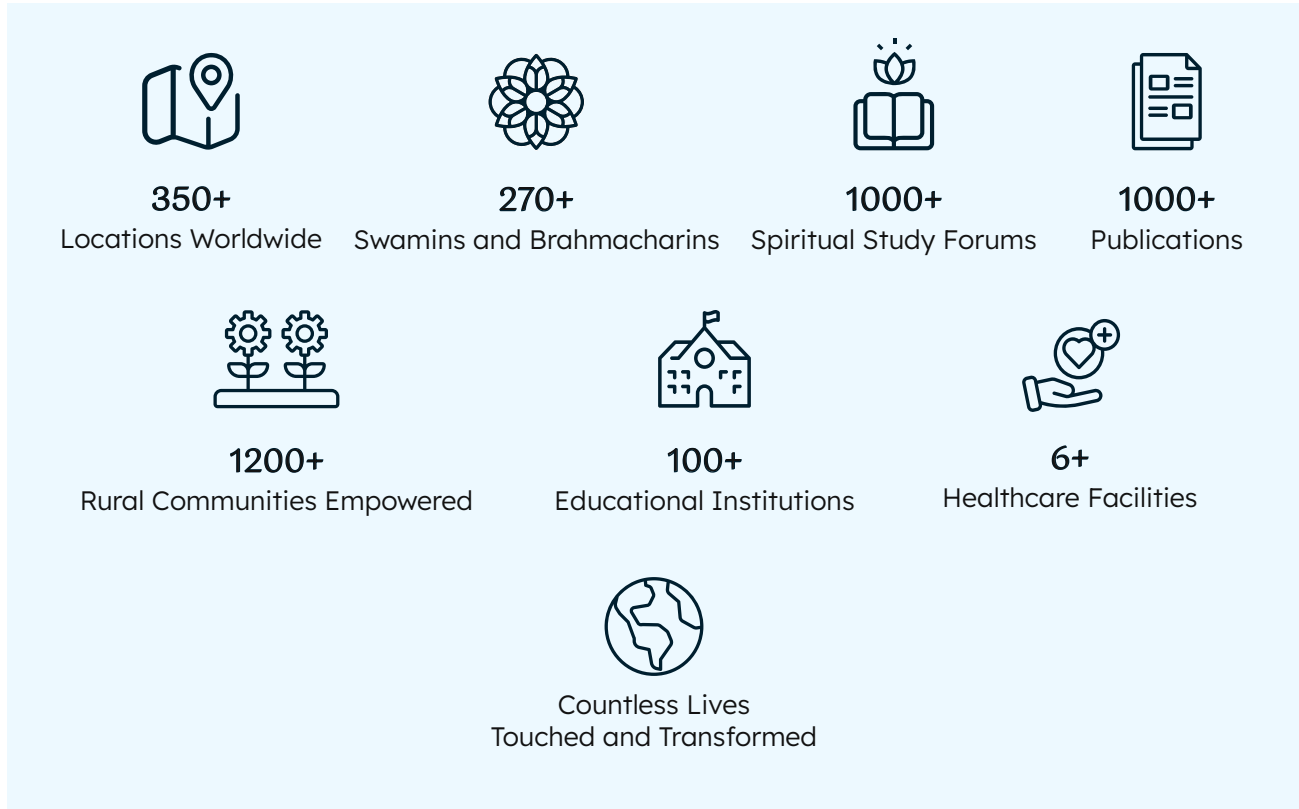
In His inimitable voice sparkling with clarity and spiced with humor, He unlocked Vedānta for the world to listen, love, and practice.

The initial initiation of Chattambi Swamikal (Yamunā), the dynamic service of Swami Sivananda (Gaṅgā), and the glorious Brahma-vidyā from Swami Tapovan Maharaj (Sarasvatī) — the confluence of these three Mahātmās gave birth to Swami Chinmayananda, and these are the sacred waters in which we are blessed to bathe in today.





He roared until His last breath on August 3, 1993. Though He isn't physically present, His **presence** pervades the entire Chinmaya Mission family.



We feel His thoughts, words, actions, and most of all, we feel His love. He is the reason we are here today. We are ever surrendered unto His lotus feet.

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.

sarasvatī namastubhyaṁ varade kāmarūpiṇi,
vidyārambhaṁ kariṣyāmi siddhir bhavatu me sadā.

O Goddess Sarasvatī, my humble prostrations unto you, who is 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 vācālaṁ paṇḍuṁ laṅghayate girim,
yatkṛpā tam ahaṁ vande paramānanda-mādhavam.

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



Closing Prayers

sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ,
sarve santu nirāmayāḥ,
sarve bhadraṇi paśyantu,
mā kaścīd duḥkha bhāgbhavet.

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 pūrṇamidaṁ 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!

brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma haviḥ brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam,
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ 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! Hari Om!

Watch the following to learn
the Opening Prayers and
their significance



Watch the following to learn
the Closing Prayers and
their significance



Gītā Dhyānam

- 1 om̐ pārthāya pratibodhitām bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam
vyāsenā grathitām purāṇa-muninā madhye mahābhāratam,
advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm
amba tvām anusandadhāmi bhagavadgīte bhava-dveṣiṇīm.
- 2 namo'stu te vyāsa viśālabuddhe phullāravindāyata-patra-netra,
yena tvayā bhārata-taila-pūrṇaḥ prajvālito jñānamayaḥ pradīpaḥ.
- 3 prapanna-pārijātāya tottravetraika-pāṇaye,
jñānamudrāya kṛṣṇāya gītāmṛta-duhe namaḥ.
- 4 sarvopaniṣado gāvaḥ dogdhā gopāla-nandanāḥ,
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīrbhoktā dugdham gītāmṛtam mahat.
- 5 vasudeva-sutam devam̐ kām̐sa-cāṇūra-mardanam,
devakī paramānandam̐ kṛṣṇam̐ vande jagadgurum.
- 6 bhīṣma-droṇa-taṭṭā jayadratha-jalā gāndhāra-nīlotpalā
śalya-grāhavatī kṛpeṇa vahanī karṇena velākulā,
aśvatthāma-vikarṇa-ghora-makarā duryodhanāvartini
sotīrṇā khalu pāṇḍavai raṇanadī kaivartakaḥ keśavaḥ.
- 7 pārāśarya-vacaḥ-sarojam-amalaṁ gītārtha-gandhotkaṭam̐
nānākhyānaka-kesaram̐ harikathā-sambodhanābodhitam,
loke sajjana-ṣaṭ-padairaharahaḥ pepīyamānam̐ mudā,
bhūyād-bhārata-paṅkajam̐ kalimāla-pradhvaṁsinaḥ śreyase.
- 8 mūkam̐ karoti vācālam̐ paṅgum̐ laṅghayate girim,
yatkṛpā tam aham̐ vande paramānanda-mādhavam.
- 9 yaṁ brahmā-varuṇendra-rudra-marutaḥ stuvanti divyaiḥ stavaiḥ
vedaiḥ sāṅga-pada-kramopaniṣadaiḥ gāyanti yaṁ sāmāgāḥ,
dhyānāvasthita-tadgatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ
yasyāntam̐ na viduḥ surāsuragaṇāḥ devāya tasmai namaḥ.



- 1 *Om, O Bhagavad-gītā, with which Pārtha (Arjuna) was enlightened by Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself and which was incorporated in the Mahābhārata by the ancient sage Vyāsa — the Divine Mother, Who is perennially showering the nectarine philosophy of advaita in the form of eighteen chapters, upon Thee, O Blessed Mother, I constantly meditate. You are the sure antidote to the rocking experience of change — the destroyer of saṁsāra (rebirth).*
- 2 *Salutations unto thee, O Vyāsa of broad intellect and with eyes like petals of a full-blown lotus, by Whom the lamp of knowledge, filled with the oil of the Mahābhārata, has been lighted.*
- 3 *Salutations to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Pārijāta tree or Kalpataru or the bestower of all desires for those who take refuge in Him, the holder of the cane (to drive cattle) in one hand, the wielder of the symbol of Knowledge, and the milker of the nectar of the Bhagavad-gītā.*
- 4 *All the Upaniṣads are cows; the milker is Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd's son; Pārtha (Arjuna) is the calf; those of purified intellect are the enjoyers; the milk is the supreme nectar of the Gītā.*
- 5 *I salute Lord Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva, the destroyer of Kaṁsa and Cāṇūra, the supreme bliss of Devakī, and the world teacher.*
- 6 *The river of battle, whose banks were Bhīṣma and Droṇa, whose water was Jayadratha, whose blue lotus was the King of Gāndhāra, whose shark was Śalya, whose current was Kṛpa, whose breaker was Karṇa, whose terrible crocodiles were Aśvatthāma and Vikarṇa, whose whirlpool was Duryodhana, was verily crossed by the Pāṇḍavas, with Keśava as the helmsman.*
- 7 *May the spotless lotus of the Mahābhārata, born in the lake of the words of Vyāsa, sweet with the fragrance of the meaning of the Gītā, with many narratives as its stamens, fully blossomed by the stories of Hari, and joyously drunk day after day by six-footed honey bees of good people in the world, become the bestower of good to us who are eager to destroy and safely come out of the inner imperfections of the Kali age.*
- 8 *I salute that Mādhava, the source of supreme bliss, Whose grace makes the mute eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.*
- 9 *Salutations to that God, whom Brahmā, Varuṇa, Indra, Rudra, and Marut praise with divine hymns. Who is invoked by singers of Sāma Veda, by singing Vedas and Upaniṣads, following the word sequence. Whom the yogins see with their minds absorbed in meditation. Whose end is not known even by the devas and asuras.*



Mahābhārata Review

This lesson is a review of the Mahābhārata and how it was passed through our Guru paramparā.



Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
30m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

A board and writing utensils to draw a diagram

☞ **Story of Mahābhārata** — printed, cut up and placed in plastic bags (See Part IV: Activity for more details)

References

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. “Australian Interview of Swami Chinmayananda.” 17:50 - 21:10.
Swami Chinmayananda. *Self Unfoldment*. Chapter 15 and Appendix 1.

Mahābhārata Review

Opening Prayers 5 min

On the first day, take some time to chant the opening prayers in a lead and repeat format to ensure that all students are aware of them. The teacher should ensure that all of them have copies for their reference.

Introduction 5 min

With this being the first lesson of the year, the introduction period should be used to get to know the students. Teachers should engage in icebreakers with the students as such. A common one: students should share their name, grade, and their answer to a generically fun question. One example could be: what was the last good piece of media (TV show, YouTube video/channel, book, comic, movie, game) you recommend?

Main Lesson 30 min

What is the Mahābhārata?

Religious texts or scriptures (śāstras) in Hinduism generally fall under two categories, **Śruti** and **Smṛti**.

Śruti literally means “**that which has been heard**” and consists of the revelations of the ṛṣis and their teachings about the eternal Truth they discovered during their meditation or tapas. Śruti refers to the Vedas, the source of all the knowledge we call Sanātana Dharma.

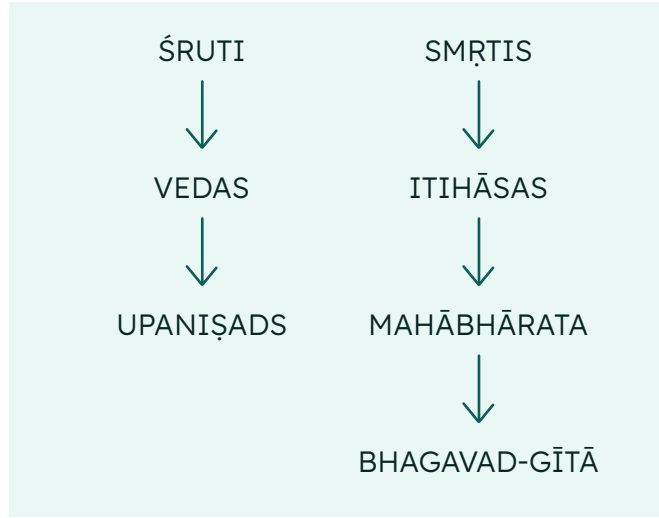
Veda means “knowledge.” **Anta** means “the end.” Thus the term **Vedānta** means the **conclusive teaching of the Vedas**. Vedānta is also known as the Upaniṣads. They contain declarations of the highest spiritual truths and rationally explain the supreme Reality and the means for attaining Self-realization or Mokṣa, freedom from all bondage through knowledge of the Self.

Smṛti is “**that which has been remembered**” and consists of auxiliary scriptures which teach the practical application of eternal principles. Unlike Śruti, Smṛti is written or crafted according to the needs of the time.

Among the **Smṛti**, there are categories of texts, including **Dharma Smṛtis** (which consist of codes of social, ethical, moral, and domestic laws of conduct), **Purāṇas** (which are mystical stories that dramatize the scriptural truths of the Upaniṣads) and **Itihāsas**.

Itihāsa means “**history**.” Itihāsas relate interesting historical stories to illustrate the teachings of the Upaniṣads. The two most famous itihāsa epics are the **Mahābhārata** and **Rāmāyaṇa**.

Found in the **Mahābhārata** is the **Bhagavad-gītā**. This eighteen-chapter poem composed by Śrī Veda Vyāsa constitutes the central portion of the great epic and contains the cream of the Upaniṣads.



Further Reading

Swami
Chinmayananda.
Self Unfoldment.
Chapter 15 and
Appendix 1.

Guru Paramparā and Us

All of our scriptures have been preserved and passed down through a lineage of teachers. This lineage of teachers is known as the **Guru paramparā**.

According to Purāṇas, historical time is divided into four ages called yugas:

Satya/Kṛta, **Tretā** (Rāmāyaṇa), **Dvāpara** (Mahābhārata), and **Kali** (us).

Dharma (righteousness) and **jñāna** (spiritual knowledge) have declined as the ages progress. But thanks to the various **Hindu paramparās**, we still have access to the wisdom our predecessors had.

In this 1984 interview given in Melbourne, Australia, Śrī Gurudev discusses how different Gurus revived Hinduism across history.

1. When the Vaidika age was decaying, Sage Veda Vyāsa arose and compiled the Vedas and brought forth knowledge through the Purāṇas.
2. When the Paurāṇika age began to decay, Buddha rose as a great teacher.
3. As Buddhism became fractured and lost sight of its original purpose, Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya emerged and revitalized the Vaidika tradition, followed by other teachers.

Australian Interview



Main Lesson

continued

4. During British rule, when Bharat had nearly lost all hope once again, Swami Vivekananda answered the world's call on behalf of his country.
5. And finally, in a post-independence setting, when Bharat needed a vision for the future and the world's knowledge, traditions, and philosophies needed expounding and harmony, Swami Chinmayananda came.

Each time there was a decline in dharma, the great teachers of the time adapted the teachings while maintaining the core philosophical principles and keeping true to the revealed Śruti.

Gītā and the Paramparā

Śrī Veda Vyāsa was one of these great teachers, a ṛṣi of utmost importance to our paramparā. He collated the Vedas by gathering all the knowledge previously taught and remembered solely through verbal instruction and memory and put it to paper. He also wrote many Purāṇas as well. He is famous for being a part of the events of the **Mahābhārata**, events that he ended up recording with the assistance of Śrī Gaṇeśa, who physically wrote down the verses.

Śrī Veda Vyāsa made a deal with Śrī Gaṇeśa. Śrī Gaṇeśa said he would only keep writing as long as Śrī Veda Vyāsa kept speaking, as Śrī Gaṇeśa didn't want to sit around waiting for the next verse to come. Knowing that he needed time to compose, Śrī Veda Vyāsa asked that Śrī Gaṇeśa only record a verse once Śrī Gaṇeśa fully comprehended what Śrī Veda Vyāsa had spoken. When Śrī Gaṇeśa contemplated, Śrī Veda Vyāsa took the time to compose. Thus the Mahābhārata came about.

The **Bhagavad-gītā is a part of this greater Mahābhārata epic**. It contains eighteen chapters and has seven hundred verses across them. The Bhagavad-gītā is the product of Śrī Veda Vyāsa and Lord Kṛṣṇa's vision for both the future of spirituality, and how to meet the problems of their time. It emerges as a gem on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the deliverer of the Bhagavad-gītā. From his mouth, the bounty of wisdom and knowledge flowed forth.

Let us reflect on how knowledge flows to us.



Discussion 1

Tracing the Source

Ask the students to think about their favorite subject or topic. What is their favorite fact in that particular subject or topic? (Give them about 2 minutes).

Now follow through this discussion:

- How did you learn about that favorite fact?
- How did your teacher learn about it?
- How did those researchers and artists discover these facts?

Debrief: All knowledge exists because a previous guide led the next person to discover the next truth. This is true for sciences both external and internal. The science of spirituality has had a lot of teachers along the years, and these Gurus come to guide us age after age.



If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Sir Isaac Newton



Discussion 2

Solving a Problem

As high schoolers, students will become more and more responsible for solving their own problems as they gain more independence.

Ask the students:

- Who or what source would you go to for help with a moral quandary?
- Who or what would you go to if that source was not able to help?
- Who or what would be the next in line? How about after that?

Debrief: Students may ask their parents or their Swamin/ Brahmacharin/Vedānta Teacher. If they cannot turn to them, they might ask other respected elders or maybe their friends. If none are available, or if their doubt still persists, the student may easily feel lost or dejected. By reading and reflecting on the Bhagavad-gītā, students may begin to be able to solve these problems for themselves. If they cannot turn to anyone else, they can turn to the Gītā for guidance.

Main Lesson

continued



The Gītā is a source of power and wisdom. It strengthens you when you are weak, and inspires you when you feel dejected and feeble. It teaches you how to resist unrighteousness and follow the path of virtue and righteousness.

The Gītā is not merely a book or just a scripture. It is a living voice carrying an eternally indispensable and vital message to mankind. Its verses embody words of wisdom coming from the infinite ocean of knowledge, the Absolute Itself.

Swami Sivananda

Activity 10 min



After the above discussion, students will refresh themselves on the sequence of events that lead to the Bhagavad-gītā.

Story of the Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata is the tale of the times and troubles of the Kuru dynasty, a powerful imperial family that ruled Bharat in ancient times.

The Bhagavad-gītā is a self-contained part of the Mahābhārata, that occurs towards the end of the main conflict, just before the climactic war between two factions within the lineage of Kuru.



Story of Mahābhārata



Print several copies of the following list of events and, for each list, cut it up so each event is in its own section. For each resulting pile, mix them up and place them in a bag. There should be enough bags so that groups of 3-4 can take the events and then rearrange them in chronological order. Give them 5 to 7 minutes to try to put them in order. Afterwards, confirm the sequence of events with the students. The team with the most events in the correct place wins.

1. The King of Hastinapur, King Śantanu, falls in love with a beautiful woman named Satyawatī. Satyawatī's father agrees to the marriage with the condition that only his daughter's children be allowed to take the throne. To appease his demands, Śantanu's son agrees to renounce his claim to the throne, swears to not have kids, and to serve the throne his entire life. For

taking such a punishing oath, he goes on to be called Bhīṣma (one who has taken a terrible oath and fulfills it). Bhīṣma is blessed by his father for this sacrifice with a boon that he can choose the moment of his own death.

2. Over time, Satyawatī's sons with King Śantanu died, leaving no heirs. Bhīṣma held to his vow not to take the throne though many asked. Finally, Satyawatī called on her other son Śrī Veda Vyāsa for help in securing an heir through Ambā and Ambālikā. Two sons are born this way, the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra and younger Pāṇḍu. Pāṇḍu is eventually chosen to become king as he is considered more fit physically, mentally, and spiritually.
3. When Pāṇḍu dies in exile, his sons, the Pāṇḍavas, return to Hastinapur where their uncle, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, promises to raise them as his own. Despite this promise, discord develops between the Pāṇḍavas and their cousins the Kauravas, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's hundred sons. The five Pāṇḍavas are Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva. The prominent actors of the hundred Kauravas are Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana.
4. The young Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas participate in an exhibition to show off their martial skills. Suddenly, a young outsider named Karṇa comes in and matches the best of the warriors — the third Pāṇḍava, Arjuna. When it is revealed to the audience that Karṇa is of non-royal blood, he is mocked heavily by everyone, including by the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana, leader of the Kauravas, responds by making Karṇa a king himself and calls him a friend.
5. The oldest of the Pāṇḍavas, Yudhiṣṭhira, is then declared the heir to King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Jealous, Duryodhana, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's oldest son, listens to his advisors and plots to burn his cousins alive in a palace made of wax. The Pāṇḍavas, with help from Vidura (Dhṛtarāṣṭra's half brother and Prime Minister), escape and go into hiding. While in hiding, the brothers marry Draupadī, the royal princess and daughter of King Drupada. Only after this, they leave hiding and return to Hastinapur.
6. Seeking to avoid war between his sons and his nephews, king Dhṛtarāṣṭra splits the kingdom between them, giving the worst land to his nephews. But with the assistance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas turn that land bountiful and worthy of a kingdom.
7. After saving Bharat from its strongest king, the tyrant Jarāsandha, the Pāṇḍavas decide to unite the rest of Bharat through conquest. At the end of this, they conduct the Rājasūya Yajña. During the event, Duryodhana is deeply insulted and swears to tear them down again.

Activity

continued

8. The Pāṇḍavas are invited to a dice game rigged by the Kauravas. During this gambling, the land they conquered is gambled away along with their freedoms. Draupadī, the Pāṇḍavas' wife, is deeply humiliated during the process. The Pāṇḍavas are forced into thirteen years of exile, with a condition that, for the last one, they must be incognito. If they succeed, they will get back their kingdom; if they fail, they need to repeat their exile.
9. In the year of exile when they need to remain incognito, the Pāṇḍavas hide in a kingdom where they each take a hidden role. By the end of the year, rumors of their presence lead the Kauravas to wage war on that kingdom. Though Arjuna defeats them all in combat, Duryodhana refuses to give back their kingdom.
10. As it looks like war is going to occur between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is sent to Hastinapur to negotiate a last attempt at peace. Lord Kṛṣṇa promises Duryodhana that if he gives the Pāṇḍavas just five villages out of his huge empire, war can be avoided. With a lifetime's resentment built up inside him, Duryodhana isn't even willing to give the Pāṇḍavas that much. So war must take place.
11. Arjuna and Duryodhana both compete to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa's help for the next battle. Śrī Kṛṣṇa offers them both two options: either they can get His help in battle with the caveat that He won't fight in that war, or they can get His armies, which are the strongest in the world. Arjuna, who had first pick, chooses Śrī Kṛṣṇa, even if He will not fight. Duryodhana happily takes the armies.
12. At the start of the final war between the cousins, Arjuna takes stock of the armies belonging to the Kauravas. He isn't intimidated by its much larger size, but he does see some of his beloved relatives, friends, teachers, and more among the arrayed forces. He begins to wonder if justice is worth it, if it comes at the cost of having to fight and kill his loved ones...

Arjuna's Confusion

Right before the battle starts, the main hero of the Mahābhārata looks out onto the opposing battlefield and doesn't see enemies, but instead sees his family, friends, teachers, and respected elders. In that moment, his desire for justice is replaced by a sense of confusion and despair; he no longer knows what is right and wrong, or if justice is worth pursuing when his enemies are his own loved ones. As he verbalizes his fears and confusion, the Bhagavad-gītā begins.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students for their key takeaways from class (one line each without any repetition).

Slogan

**Salutations to our GPS,
our Guru Paramparā System!**

The Guru Paramparā System exists to guide us through our most confusing times. One example of the guidance of ancient Gurus is the Mahābhārata, composed by Śrī Veda Vyāsa, and the Bhagavad-gītā, sung to us by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If we study their words, we can understand the same spiritual truths revealed to the most ancient ṛṣis in our Vedas.

Sāadhanā

Reflect on how much knowledge you have only because a guide or teacher has guided you to it. Show gratitude to those teachers in your heart. During the upcoming week, write down three most important or favorite lessons you learned from any teacher in your life and bring them to class. Send any one of these teachers a gratitude letter or email for the lesson letting them know how much that lesson meant to you.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



The Song of Bhagavān

In this lesson, we will explore the first verse of the Gītā Dhyānam and why the Bhagavad-gītā is relevant in our lives today.

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 1 

om̐ pārthāya pratibodhitām
bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam

Om, O Bhagavad-gītā, with which Pārtha (Arjuna) was enlightened by Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself

vyāsena grathitām purāṇa-muninā
madhye mahābhāratam,

And which was incorporated in the Mahābhārata by the ancient sage Vyāsa —

advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm
aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm

The Divine Mother, who is perennially showering the nectarine philosophy of advaita in the form of eighteen chapters,

amba tvām anusandadhāmi
bhagavadgīte bhavadveṣiṇīm.

Upon Thee, O Blessed Mother, I constantly meditate. You are the sure antidote to the rocking experience of change — the destroyer of saṁsāra (rebirth).

Time 55 min

Materials

5m | Opening

🔗 **The Gita in My Life: Perspective** printout for each student

10m | Introduction

🔗 **How well do you know the Bhagavad-gītā? Pop Quiz/Trivia**

30m | Main Lesson

Pens, pencils, markers, and some crayons for each student

5m | Activity

Instrumental background music of choice

5m | Conclusion

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Bhagawad Geeta Chapters 1 and 2*.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “The Geeta: her special charm.”

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Logic of Spirituality.” 1:13:54 - 1:20:09.

🔗 Swami Prakashananda: “NIGHT 1 of 108 Nights Maha Jnana Yajna.” 15:20 - 17:35.

The Song of Bhagavān

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Reflect on the importance of the Guru Paramparā System and the meaning of Śrutis and Smṛtis.

Debrief on the previous sādhanā: Ask students to share the three most important or favorite lessons they have learned from any teacher in their lives.

Introduction 10 min

What comes to mind when you hear the word “Bhagavad-gītā”? What do you think the Bhagavad-gītā is going to teach YOU?



The Gītā
in My Life:
Perspective



Activity

Hand out the worksheet **KY Lesson Plan 2: The Gītā in My Life: Perspective**, and give students five minutes to fill it out. Feel free to play some instrumental music in the background as they work on their creative expression.

Allow students to share reflections on their individual answers.

Ask the students: “How did you get to those answers?” Highlight how there are stereotypical notions associated with the Gītā, and that this class will help us work through those assumptions and see for ourselves what it really is all about.

Main Lesson 30 min

How much do you know about the Gītā?



Discussion

The first part of the main lesson can be delivered via a Pop Quiz, stopping to reflect after each question.

- Please see **How well do you know the Bhagavad-gītā? Pop Quiz/Trivia** for questions and reflections.
- Questions can be presented virtually, verbally, or on paper.
- Pop quiz can be answered individually or as a friendly group competition.

After completing the pop quiz, introduce the students to the Gītā Dhyānam.

How well do you know the Bhagavad-gītā?



The Bhagavad-gītā means **“Song of God.”** The Gītā Dhyānam is an invocation to the Gītā composed by the revered sage Madhusūdana Sarasvatī of the 16th century. We chant this before we start our study of the Gītā to meditate on this great text, with the hope that this year, Mother Gītā will reveal Her secrets to us! In this class, we will chant the first verse.

om pārthāya pratibodhitām
bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam

vyāsena grathitām purāṇa-muninā
madhye mahābhāratam,

advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm
aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm

amba tvām anusandadhāmi
bhagavadgīte bhavadveṣiṇīm.

Om, O Bhagavad-gītā, with which Pārtha (Arjuna) was enlightened by Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself and which was incorporated in the Mahābhārata by the ancient sage Vyāsa — the Divine Mother, who is perennially showering the nectarine philosophy of advaita in the form of eighteen chapters, upon Thee, O Blessed Mother, I constantly meditate. You are the sure antidote to the rocking experience of change — the destroyer of saṁsāra (rebirth).

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 1

Each verse contains four sections or quarters. Let us see each quarter and learn the wonder of Bhagavad-gītā.

Main Lesson

continued

Quarter 1:

om̐ pārthāya pratibodhitām
bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayam

Om, O Bhagavad-gītā, with which
Pārtha (Arjuna) was enlightened by
Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 1

The Gītā is narrated by Bhagavān (Lord) Kṛṣṇa Himself to the student Arjuna, called here by the name Pārtha. Pārtha means the one for whom “Pa” (Parameśvara or Bhagavān) is the true “artha” (wealth). This is very apt for Arjuna.

When the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas were going to war, both Arjuna and Duryodhana visited Śrī Kṛṣṇa for help while the Lord was sleeping. Duryodhana stood waiting arrogantly at the head of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s bed while Arjuna stood at His feet with devotion and humility.

Upon waking, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s eyes fell naturally first on Arjuna. He agrees to help both but gives a choice: do you want Me, who will not pick up a weapon and fight, or do you want My entire army and cache of weapons? The Lord asks Arjuna to choose first, as he is the youngest.

Arjuna immediately chose Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which made Duryodhana very happy to receive all the military support of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s vast army and weapons.

This episode demonstrates Arjuna’s devotion and wisdom, seeing the Lord as the true wealth of life. His steady mind was not lured by any amount of material treasure. Because of this, Bhagavān Himself became Arjuna’s charioteer (Pārtha-sārathi) and led him to victory. Additionally, in our culture, whenever we want to learn anything from anyone, we always sit humbly at their feet. Thus, Arjuna shows he is also a fit student to grasp the knowledge that he is going to be taught.

Quarter 2:

vyāsena grathitām purāṇa-muninā
madhye mahābhāratam

incorporated in the Mahābhārata by
the ancient sage Vyāsa

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 1

The Bhagavad-gītā is a portion which comes in the vast Mahābhārata epic composed by the great sage Veda Vyāsa, who also compiled all of the Vedas and composed the Purāṇas and Brahma-sūtras.

The Bhagavad-gītā: A Manual for Life, Here and Now!

Did you know?

This knowledge is imparted in the middle of an immense battlefield. This is an instructive implication about the Gītā's practical application in the midst of all challenges in life.

This is the same knowledge that our ṛṣis gave to seekers who wanted to understand the metaphysical truths about this universe, but it caves up in the mountains. People (including Arjuna) started getting the impression that this was only for people who want to give up living in the world and want to retire to meditate. At this watershed moment in history, right before a battle of almost four million warriors, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa imparted this teaching.

As we study the Gītā, we will see clearly how we are all Arjunas and the battlefield represents the field of life. Life is full of situations, dilemmas, and challenges, and Gītā reveals the art of applying spiritual knowledge relevant in the here and now — this saves us from collapsing like Arjuna.

The Gītā is not meant for the decaying or dying. It is meant for you who are on the threshold of life bubbling with enthusiasm to plunge into the field of action, to struggle, to sweat, to strive, to succeed.

Swami
Chinmayananda

Quarter 3:

advaitāmṛta-varṣiṇīm bhagavatīm
aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīm

The Divine Mother, perennially showering the nectarine philosophy of advaita in the form of 18 chapters

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 1

Gītā comprises eighteen chapters consisting of seven-hundred verses and contains the Highest spiritual teaching of non-duality and eternal bliss. Let's expound on this further.

What is, and is not, in the Bhagavad-gītā?

There are four parts of every religion:

1. **Rituals:** These are systematic practices meant to bring discipline to our personality. For example: pūjā, havan, and sandhyā-vandanam.
2. **Stories/Legends:** These are stories meant to bring out spiritual values and teachings. For example: Purāṇas and Itihāsas.
3. **Moral and ethical principles:** These are values followed in a religion which contain information on how to live a pure life and perform one's dharma effectively. For example: Dharma śāstras and Yoga sūtras (yamas and niyamas).

Main Lesson

continued

4. **Metaphysical principles:** These are fundamental laws governing the universe and individuals beyond the physical realm (i.e., beyond the senses and beyond the empirical/measurable things like atoms, quarks, the law of gravity, etc.). For example:
 - What is the fundamental cause of the universe?
 - What is the purpose of life?
 - What is the source of life, happiness, or beauty?
 - What principle upholds all the laws (e.g., law of gravity) of the universe?
 - Who am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go after?
 - How am I to live in harmony with all beings? Science is still trying to grasp this!

Ask students: Of these four, which do you think the Bhagavad-gītā deals with?

The Bhagavad-gītā deals only with the last two. You will not find ritualistic injunctions or stories in the Bhagavad-gītā (see lesson 1, “Mahābhārata Review”). Simply put, the Bhagavad-gītā teaches us about dharma (how to live a pure life, making us fit to seek the ultimate Truth) and Brahman (the ultimate Truth or Reality). The poetic beauty, logic, devotion, and wisdom of Gītā is why it has persisted across millennia and continues to appeal so much to the modern intellectual mind.

Quarter 4:

amba tvām anusandadhāmi
bhagavadgīte bhavadveṣiṇīm

Upon Thee, O Blessed Mother,
I constantly meditate. You are
the sure antidote to the rocking
experience of change — the
destroyer of saṁsāra (rebirth).

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 1

Now, the final line of the first verse. In our culture, we don’t see Bhagavad-gītā as a book. She is our very own mother. She is Ambā. And as we learn more and more about Her, She blesses us with Her grace and removes all the confusions and sorrows of life like stress, fear, peer pressure, anxiety, dejection, and insecurities. She is there for us no matter what, and we can turn to Her at any time.



Logic of
Spirituality

1:13:54 - 1:20:09



Activity 5 min

At this moment, have the students open their mini Bhagavad-gītā to any random page. This is Bhagavad-gītā's message for them today. Ask a few of them to share.

If at any time, we are feeling down or low, turn to Bhagavad-gītā, our very own mother, and She will tell us exactly what we need to hear.

Recall this quote from the first lesson:



The Gītā is a source of power and wisdom. It strengthens you when you are weak, and inspires you when you feel dejected and feeble. It teaches you how to resist unrighteousness and follow the path of virtue and righteousness.

The Gītā is not merely a book or just a scripture. It is a living voice carrying an eternally indispensable and vital message to mankind. Its verses embody words of wisdom coming from the infinite ocean of knowledge, the Absolute Itself.
Swami Sivananda

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students for their key takeaways from class (one line each without any repetition).

Slogan

**Whenever I have a problem,
the Gītā has the solution.**

Sādhana

Before you go to bed each night, open the Gītā and read out a verse and reflect upon it. Feel free to do this with your family and friends.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Dharma — Introduction

This lesson will give a broad overview of the concept of dharma so students can conceptualize and understand the depth, potency, and application of this principle (from personal to social to universal), so they can live a life of harmony from inside-out.

1.1 



dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre
samavetā yuyutsavaḥ,
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva
kimakurvata sañjaya.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, after gathering on the holy field of dharma called Kurukshetra and desiring to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do?

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	None required
5m	Introduction	
25m	Main Lesson	
15m	Activity	
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 1.1.

↗ Swami Chinmayananda. “What is Dharma?” 2:22 - 5:29.

Chinmaya Mission. *Dharma Shastra*.

Chinmaya Mission. *Gita For Me*. Chapter 4.

↗ Dr. D.C. Rao. *Understanding Hinduism*. Chapter 6, Dharma.

Dharma — Introduction

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Chant the first verse of Gītā Dhyānam as a class and review the meaning of each line.

If the students are not that familiar with the Gītā Dhyānam, the teacher may have a slide with the verses for the first few times and then try it without the slide.



After chanting once, divide the room into two teams (group Pārtha and Nārāyaṇa). Start chanting again on your own and stop chanting at random times and point to a team to continue chanting where you left off.

Repeat this chanting activity a few times. The team that is able to continue chanting the verse seamlessly the most number of times wins.

Introduction 5 min

When faced with challenges in life, we are expected to act righteously, but sometimes we don't understand what that means or why we even should! What are the benefits of acting "the right way" and what would that even look like? Does it change as we age and take on new roles in life?

By understanding our dharma (nature) and the dharma (expected duties) regarding our circumstances or stage in life, we can learn how to execute our roles, while staying true to our core personality. Thus, ultimately, we can conquer every challenge on the battlefield of life and evolve to the highest version of ourselves.

Main Lesson 25 min

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre
samavetā yuyutsavaḥ,
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva
kimakurvata sañjaya.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, after gathering on the holy field of dharma called Kurukshetra and desiring to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do?

At this point, both the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas were gathered in the field known as Kurukshetra — the field of the Kuru dynasty — in preparation for battle. This was no ordinary field. It was also known as dharmakṣetra or the field of dharma, the unifying principle, the essence of righteousness, and morality. This was the field where dharma was to be defended, protected, expounded upon, and lived in action.

What exactly is dharma?

Dharma = Dhāraṇāt dharma

Dharma is that which nourishes, integrates, and supports
(etymological meaning).

How?

It prevents us from **falling**... to a lower “animal nature.”
It lifts us **up**... to our Higher nature!

Understanding Dharma: Dharma has been reflected upon, discussed, and explained in countless ways by countless masters. Understanding dharma means learning about the deepest essence of our existence, and applying this principle to the way we think, live, and act. Let us explore different ways to look at dharma.

1. Dharma as the Essential Nature of a thing

From the highest standpoint, dharma means the nature of a thing or that essential nature which makes a thing what it is. For example: the dharma of sugar is sweetness. Sugar can be white or sometimes brown. It can be powdered or cubed. These qualities can change from time to time. However, what doesn't change is that sweetness is inherent in sugar. No matter where sugar is, what shape, size, or form it may take, it must be sweet to be considered sugar!



Activity

Ask the students to identify the dharma (nature) of the following everyday objects. Provide hints from the nonessential list as needed.

What is
Dharma?
2:22 - 5:29



Main Lesson

continued

Everyday Item	Dharma (Essential Nature)	What is not Essential
Fire	Heat	Size of flame, color (sometimes very hot can be white, orange, yellow, or red)
Water	Make wet	Dirty or clean; river, ocean, or lake
Ice	To cool	Shape, size
Flower	To bloom	Color, forms, types of flowers
Student	To study, to learn	Name, age, wealth, status

Now, ask students to come up with some of their own.

Debrief: Similarly, OUR essential nature is the Self or Ātman (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), regardless of form, age, body, gender, or status.

The purpose of this activity is to just give them a hint that there is a higher meaning to “dharma.”

2. Dharma as Truth

The real name of Hinduism is actually Sanātana (eternal) Dharma (Truth). The Truth by its very nature is eternal, infinite, and one. Therefore, it is called Sanātana Dharma.

This was revealed to the ṛṣis at the seat of meditation, compiled into the Vedas, and taught to all of us.

While Hinduism is usually termed as a religion (saṁpradāya), it is not limited to that. Here are some differences between a traditional religion and a dharma.

Religion (saṁpradāya)	Dharma
Associated with a founder who had direct, exclusive access to God	Based on the direct realization of many saints and sages in all time periods and passed on through Guru-śiṣya paramparās
Associated with one book (Ex: Bible, Quran)	Library of books derived from the Vedas (Bhagavad-gītā, Upaniṣads, Prakaraṇa granthas)
Founded at a particular time	Eternal
Has a particular code of conduct	Has a code of conduct leading to spiritual unfoldment for each mindset

Further Reading

🔗 Dr. D.C. Rao.
Understanding
Hinduism.
Chapter 1,
Introduction.

3. Dharma as Duty

Dharma also means our duties in our daily lives. Performance of our duty becomes the path to the Truth, our Self. It is doing the **right thing** (RT) at the **right place** (RP) at the **right time** (RT).

Let us practice a simple, fun way to remember it always and in all situations (ask students to practice repeating a few times, almost like a rhyme). Try saying this five times without stumbling!

Dharma = RTRPRT

Right thing (**RT**) + Right Place (**RP**) + Right Time (**RT**)

If we don't follow this principle, we are not following dharma! Meaning, if we do the **wrong thing** (WT), in the **wrong place** (WP) at the **wrong time** (WT), then this is adharmā.

Not only that, but if any part of the formula is “W” then it is **adharmā**.

For example:

- RTRPWT — right thing, right place, wrong time
- RTWPRT — right thing, wrong place, right time
- WTRPRT — wrong thing, right place, right time

Example

Studying for a test (RT) at your desk (RP) after you get home from school (RT) is RTRPRT!

Example

Eating too much candy (WT) in your bed (WP) scrolling videos before sleeping (WT) is WTWPWT!

Main Lesson

continued



Activity

Go through the examples below and ask the students to identify the combination and determine if it is dharma or not.

Scenario	Combination	Is it dharma?
Practicing soccer (thing) in the school gym (place) at gym time (time).	RTRPRT	Yes — we are doing the right thing, at the right place, at the right time!
Practicing soccer in the school gym at midnight	RTRPWT	No — midnight is the WT (wrong time)!

4. Dharma as Values

Dharma also means values. In the smṛtis, there are ten values enumerated as dharma:

dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo'steyaṁ
śaucam indriya-nigrahaḥ,
dhīrvidyā satyaṁ akrodho
daśakāṁ dharma lakṣaṇam.

Fortitude, forgiveness, control over the organs of action, non-stealing, inner and outer cleanliness, control over the organs of perception, discrimination, knowledge, truthfulness, mastery over anger are the ten virtues which constitute dharma.

Chinmaya Mission. *Dharma Shastra*. Chinmaya Prakashan, 2022.

Essential Nature of a thing, Truth, Duty, Values: Why is dharma so multifaceted? Is there one core foundation to the concept of dharma which unites all of its aspects?

Dharma is **The Universal Divine Constitution** which supports the world and brings integration to its beings.

Activity 15 min

Let's reflect a little deeper on dharma as duty.

Divide the class into various teams (3-4 people per team). Give each team a combination of right/wrong thing (RT/WT), right/wrong place (RP/WP), and right/wrong time (RT/WT). For example: RTWPRT, WTRPRT, RTRPWT.

Ask each team to come up with different scenarios to demonstrate their assigned combination through a short role play. Give the teams about 3 minutes to plan and rehearse.

After rehearsing, ask each team to demonstrate their combination without revealing what it is. Then ask the rest of the class to guess the combination. Follow up by asking students how the combination can be converted to RTRPRT.

Debrief: Why would we want to follow dharma (RTRPRT)?

When we perform **dharma**, this leads to **puṇya** (merit) which leads to **sukha** (happiness). This makes us want to perform the same dhārmika action again.

When we perform **adharma**, this leads to **pāpa** (demerit), which leads to **duḥkha** (sorrow). If we are able to get out of this, that is the best. However, due to habit, we may keep on performing adharma just like Duryodhana.



Here's how it works in our lives:

When we perform a dhārmika action, like completing all of our chores at home, this leads to puṇya (accumulation of merits), which can be in the form of acquiring the habit of discipline and caring for others, this then leads to sukha (happiness) which gives us peace in our own minds as well as harmony in our homes. Once we start feeling this happiness, this then leads us to want to perform dharma again.

When we perform an adhārmika action, like constantly waking up late, this leads to pāpa (accumulation of demerits), which can be in the form of acquiring the habits of laziness and procrastination. This then leads to duḥkha (sorrow) which makes our minds disturbed and guilty and also creates chaos in our homes. We try to get out of it but if it becomes a habit, we can't help but get sucked into it again.

Therefore, as far as possible, it is in our best interest to live a dhārmika life so that we acquire positive values and experience peace in our own minds and with the people around us. This peace will help us turn inwards to pursue our spiritual quest.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Go around the class and ask each student to share an insight or interesting point that resonated with them from today's session.

Slogan

RTRPRT

Sāadhanā

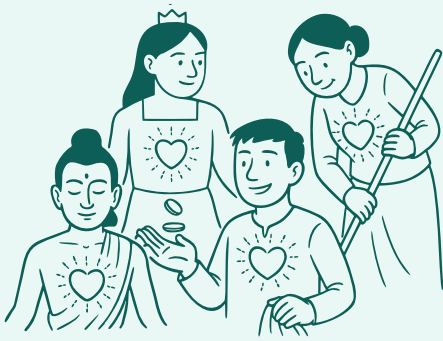
Start each day with the acronym RTRPRT and check to see if all of your actions are aligned with dharma.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Dharma — Varṇa and Āśrama

This lesson is about understanding dharma in terms of varṇa (inner color) and āśrama (stage of life). When this is done, everyone adjusts to their roles effortlessly, smoothly, and happily throughout life and makes their way to discover their essential nature.

1.1 



dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre
samavetā yuyutsavaḥ,
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva
kimakurvata sañjaya.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, after gathering on the holy field of dharma called Kurukshetra and desiring to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do?

Time 55 min

Materials

5m | Opening

Art supplies — markers or colored pencils, paint, and brushes

5m | Introduction

Poster paper (1 for each group of 4 students)

25m | Main Lesson

15m | Activity

5m | Conclusion

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 1.1.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Swadharma.” 0:00 - 2:37.

Dharma — Varṇa and Āśrama

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Review: What is Dharma?



Discuss this as a class. Have the students give their individual answers.

Summarize it with “Doing the **Right Thing (RT)** at the **Right Place (RP)** at the **Right Time (RT)**, or **RTRPRT!**” What is adharmā? The opposite of dharma! If any part of the formula is “W” then it is **adharmā**. For example: RTRPWT, RTWPRT, and WTRPRT.

Let’s chant the verse from the previous class:

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre
samavetā yuyutsavaḥ,
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva
kimakurvata sañjaya.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, after gathering on the holy field of dharma called Kurukshetra and desiring to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do?

1.1

Introduction 5 min

We all learned about the various meanings of dharma. Today, we’re going to explore more about dharma as our special duties in life.

How do we know what exactly is the right thing to do for us at this point in our lives? Could something be right for us but wrong for others? Could something be right for us at this point in time but wrong for us later or vice versa? Is dharma the same for every single being?

Dharma tells us that our **essential nature is the supreme Self (Ātman)**, which is the same in all beings. However, our duties are different because we all have varying personalities and are going through different stages of life. **Essentially we are one, experientially we are different.** A clay pot, pitcher, and glass are all essentially one since they are all made up of clay. However, each of them have different names, sizes, shapes, and usages.

Dharma guides every being to discover the true “inner color” of their personality (varṇa dharma) and how to live their best life by applying that

harmoniously as they transition through the changing seasons of life (āśrama dharmas). When this is done, everyone adjusts to their roles effortlessly, smoothly, and happily throughout the “fields” of life (dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre) and makes their way to discover their essential nature.

Main Lesson 25 min

Discovering One’s Unique Dharma

Everyone has varying degrees of sattva, rajas, and tamas. That’s what determines our personalities. Understanding our dharma as individuals with our own unique personalities requires tuning in to discover our roles in this world.



Discussion

The teacher should provide the information from the the first three columns and then ask the students to share their thoughts on the fourth column (“Roles Best for My Personality”).

Note: In the table “Sattva > Rajas > Tamas” indicates a mind that has primarily sāttvika tendencies, rājasika tendencies to a lesser degree, and minimal tāmasika tendencies. And so on.

Svadharmā
0:00 - 2:37



Sattva:

clear mind

Rajas:

active mind

Tamas:

dull mind

Varṇa Dharma

Quality of Mind (Generally)	My Personality (Predominant Traits)	Varṇa (color of my character)	Roles Best for My Personality
Sattva: clear, calm, balanced Sattva > Rajas > Tamas	Ability to introspect, reflect, and think upon deeper things in life.	Brāhmaṇa	Thinker, Researcher, Teacher, Philosopher, Doctor
Rajas and Sattva: clear and yet dynamic Rajas > Sattva > Tamas	Ability to lead, administer, protect and rule.	Kṣatriya	Leader, Administrator, Ruler
Rajas and Tamas: dynamic and resourceful Rajas > Tamas > Sattva	Ability to create and sustain resources.	Vaiśya	Entrepreneur, CFO, Economic Advisor
Tamas: supportive Tamas > Rajas > Sattva	Ability to follow and support others towards a greater cause.	Śūdra	Skilled Worker, Laborer

Key Takeaway: Life is beautiful when we understand our dharma!

Main Lesson

continued

The topic of varṇa dharma as well as its proper understandings and misunderstandings will be studied in further depth in future weeks.

When our personality is not in line with our duties and roles in life, there is always conflict. However, by examining and understanding the qualities of our personality (distribution of sattva, rajas, and tamas), we come to realize what our varṇa currently is (the “color” of our character) and thus discover the roles or duties we can take up, which leads to the most harmonious life. In such a life, our inner personality matches our outer roles and responsibilities.

It is important to note that there are many misunderstandings associated with the word varṇa. These misunderstandings imply that our capabilities in life are determined by the family and bloodline we belong to, and that the capabilities we get from our family are what we are for the rest of our lives. But the truth is that our inner personality is unique to our situation. Additionally, our personality is not static and can evolve over time with proper study and reflection. As we evolve our inner personality, our appropriate outer role will evolve as well. Some political leaders (kṣatriya), after a lifetime of fighting for causes, move to educational roles at university (brāhmaṇa) to teach others how to lead and administer.



Discussion

Have students discuss the questions below in groups of 2-3 students and then come back as a class to debrief.

Question: What would happen if the wrong personality took up the wrong type of job? What if someone told Einstein that he had to become a CFO instead of a scientist? What would happen?

Possible answer: He would be miserable and we would miss out on his great scientific discoveries!

Question: Can you think of other examples in today’s world?

Question: Can you see why following our inner varṇa dharma is so important, not only for our own happiness and comfort, but for the good of the wider society?

(This section will also be elaborated on in lesson 10, “Secret of Success — Svadharma.”)

Now let’s talk about the dharmas for the different stages of life.

Āśrama Dharma

Average Age	Stage of Life	Duty	Fun Way to Remember
0 — 25 years	Brahmacarya	Student life for discipline and study	LEARN
25 — 50 years	Gṛhastha	Household life for support of family and society	EARN
50 — 75 years	Vānaprastha	Retired, introspective life for deeper spiritual sādhanā	U-TURN
75+ years	Sannyāsa	Renunciate life for Self-realization	NO RETURN

These are the traditional ages based on our smṛtis. The exact age cutoffs vary nowadays as people's lifespans and lifestyles have changed. So, focus on understanding the responsibilities in each stage of life rather than the precise age ranges.

Each āśrama has a main duty even though there may be other auxiliary duties as well. In brahmacarya, while the student may have family responsibilities, their main duty is to learn. Similarly, for a gṛhastha, while they should also study scriptures, their main duty is to take care of their family and serve the society. For vānaprastha, while they can help their families, their main focus should be to turn inward and practice spiritual sādhanā.



Discussion

Recall the acronym for dharma (RTRPRT). Discuss each scenario, and determine which form of the acronym is present. Remember to identify the thing, place, and time. The class can also come up with their own scenarios.

1. **Brahmacārī (Student):** Focusing on relationships instead of studying while at school during class. (Answer: WTRPRT)
2. **Gṛhasthī (Householder):** Focusing too much on other classes and hobbies when you are at home and your children need you. (Answer: WTRPRT)
3. **Vānaprasthī:** Thinking too much about the business of kids and grandkids instead of spiritual reflection at an āśrama during a spiritual retreat. (Answer: WTRPRT)

Main Lesson

continued

Discuss: Explore such scenarios with the students, allowing one group to come up with scenarios and the other to point out the flaws. Ask the students to reflect on when it is okay to have exceptions to these scenarios (i.e., a student from a lower income family may need to work a part time job to support their education).

Objective: By this point they should come to understand the importance of the “varṇa-āśrama-dharma guidelines” and how they can make or break our happiness in life.

Why is Dharma Important (The Goal of Dharma)?

To integrate and prosper (Balance — internally and externally)

The best way to live a balanced, healthy, well-rounded life in tune with our personality and the world around us, is to live a dhārmika life. When we are integrated internally, we can integrate with those externally, with ease and finesse. This integrated personality provides us with the peace of mind to pursue the path of Truth.

yataḥ abhyudaya-
niḥśreyasa-siddiḥ
saḥ dharmaḥ

That noble and correct
method of living which
leads to outer prosperity
and secures the Highest
good is known as dharma.

Vaiśeṣika-sūtra 1.1.2

Activity 15 min

Seasons of Life

We can liken the four āśramas to the four seasons of life (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) in succession from brahmacarya to sannyāsa respectively.

Ask the students to draw parallels between the various seasons and their comparative āśrama. Let them think on their own. The example is only for the teacher’s reference.

Break the students up into groups (3-4 students each) and ask each group to

pick a stage of life and what season they think it would be. Let them creatively depict “the season of that stage of life” through drawing, painting, poetry, dramatization, etc.

After all groups have completed their depiction, ask the students to label their diagram/creative expression with a phrase or adjective to answer this debrief question: If that particular āśrama was executed well according to the guidelines of dharma, what should it produce? Have students share their response with the class.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Go around the class and ask each student to share an insight or interesting point that resonated with them from today’s session.

Slogan

Stay true to
your dharma

Sāadhanā

Reflect on one thing that you do which undermines the dharma of your brahmacarya stage of life (maybe something that unnecessarily dissipates your energy from study). For the next week, take a resolve to conquer that adharma in your life.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Example

Brahmacarya = spring. Spring is predominantly a time of birth, growth, and freshness. Similarly, a young student in the brahmacarya stage is initiated into knowledge, has a fresh and curious mind, and is open to growth.



Attachment Obstructs Dharma

In this lesson, we discuss attachment, the source of much of our sorrow and the reason why attachment leads us to performing adharma.

1.1  1.21  1.26  1.27 

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre
samavetā yuyutsavaḥ,
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva
kimakurvata sañjaya.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, after gathering on the holy field of dharma called Kurukshetra and desiring to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do?

arjuna uvāca

senayor-ubhayor-madhye
ratham sthāpaya me'cyuta.

Arjuna said:

In the midst of the two armies, place my chariot, O Acyuta.

tatrāpaśyat-sthitān pārthaḥ
pitṛn-atha pitāmahān,
ācāryān-mātulān-bhrātṛn-
putrān-pautrān-sakhīms-tathā.

Then, Partha saw stationed there in both the armies, fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, and friends too.

śvaśūrān-suhṛdaścaiva
senayor-ubhayor-apī,
tān-samīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ
sarvān-bandhūn-avasthitān.

(He saw) Fathers-in-law and friends also in both the armies. Then, the son of Kuntī, seeing all these kinsmen standing arrayed...

Time 55 min

Materials

5m | Opening

5 Post-it notes for each student

5m | Introduction

🔗 **Attachment Obstructs Dharma** (slides)

20m | Main Lesson

20m | Activity

5m | Conclusion

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 1.1, 1.21, 1.26, 1.27.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “What is Attachment?” 2:48 - 6:25.

Attachment Obstructs Dharma

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we learned about varṇa and āśrama dharmas. There are qualities of the mind which are suited to certain types of roles in society. Can you recollect them?

Quality of Mind and Varṇa	Roles Best for My Personality
Sattva: Brāhmaṇa clear, calm, balanced (SRT = Sattva > Rajas > Tamas)	Thinker, Researcher, Teacher, Philosopher, Doctor
Rajas and Sattva: Kṣatriya clear and yet dynamic (RST = Rajas > Sattva > Tamas)	Leader, Administrator, Ruler
Rajas and Tamas: Vaiśya dynamic and resourceful (RTS = Rajas > Tamas > Sattva)	Entrepreneur, CFO, Economic Advisor
Tamas: Śūdra supportive (TRS = Tamas > Rajas > Sattva)	Skilled Worker, Laborer

We also learned that there are different dharmas for each stage of life. Recall the fun way to remember the four āśramas.

Stage of Life	Fun Way to Remember
Brahmacarya	LEARN
Gṛhastha	EARN
Vānaprastha	U-TURN
Sannyāsa	NO RETURN

Introduction 5 min



Facilitate this as a whole class discussion to get the students' initial thoughts. You can note these down on a board, PowerPoint slide, etc. to return to at the end of the lesson.

As a class: Discuss some of the students' individual dharmas in their everyday lives.

Ask the students: Sometimes it is hard for us to uphold our dharma. What are some reasons that we fail to uphold our dharma?

Main Lesson 20 min

The Problem — Attachment

Today, we will focus on the first verse of Bhagavad-gītā, a question from King Dhṛtarāṣṭra to his minister Sañjaya:

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre
samavetā yuyutsavaḥ,
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva
kimakurvata sañjaya.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said:

O Sañjaya, after gathering on
the holy field of dharma called
Kurukshetra and desiring to fight,
what did my sons and the sons of
Pāṇḍu do?

1.1

Open question to class: Does anyone see anything wrong with what King Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked?

If we look carefully, he asked “What did the sons of Pāṇḍu and also **my people** do...” The word to notice here is “my” (in Saṁskṛtam, mama). As soon as one says “my” we are **attaching** ourselves to that object/person/circumstance (e.g., if we said “a bike” vs. “my bike,” how does it make us feel?). Suddenly, once we are attached, it becomes hard to do our duties and follow our dharma. We become blind like Dhṛtarāṣṭra.



Brainstorm the following together as a class and supplement with the bullet points below if not mentioned.

Main Lesson

continued

What was Dhṛtarāṣṭra's dharma?

1. As a **king**...
 - To uphold justice and protect the nation
 - To make decisions that create harmony for society
 - To establish the rightful heir to the throne
2. As a **brother** to Pāṇḍu...
 - To take care of the Pāṇḍavas upon his brother's passing
 - To ensure that the Pāṇḍavas have their rightful place in the kingdom
 - To treat Pāṇḍu's sons as his own
3. As a **father** to Duryodhana...
 - To guide his son correctly and stop him from doing wrong things
 - To be a role model
 - To ensure that Duryodhana treats the Pāṇḍavas as his own brothers
4. As an **uncle** to the Pāṇḍavas...
 - To guide and advise them correctly
 - To protect them from harm
 - To nourish and support them
5. As a **father-in-law** to Draupadī
 - To treat her with love and respect
 - To protect her from any injustice
 - To ensure she is comfortable and safe

Did he succeed in his dharma? Share the five points below.

1. As a **king**, he failed to uphold justice in his kingdom by letting the Kauravas get away with cheating the Pāṇḍavas in the game of dice, thus winning over the kingdom through unfair means.
2. As a **brother** to Pāṇḍu, he didn't take care of Pāṇḍu's sons as his own and he didn't ensure that there was a rightful heir to the throne.
3. As a **father** to Duryodhana, even when he knew Duryodhana was in the wrong, he let his son get away with everything. Dhṛtarāṣṭra fell prey to all of Duryodhana's tactics, failing to correct him.
4. As an **uncle** to the Pāṇḍavas, he didn't guide them correctly nor did he protect them from harm.
5. As a **father-in-law** to Draupadī, he didn't stand up for her when she was mistreated.

He failed miserably! Why?

Attachment means depending on something or someone for our source of joy.

ABCD: Attachment **B**linds us from **C**learly doing our **D**harma

What was the reason for Dhṛtarāṣṭra's failure? He was attached to Duryodhana.

Ask the class: Can we think of other examples from the Mahābhārata of someone who was blinded by their attachment?



Share the story of Arjuna's Confusion from Chapter 1. You may use the following verses to help in telling the story.

Arjuna asks Lord Sri Krishna to place **his** chariot so that he can survey the battlefield in Kurukshetra. There he sees both armies are filled with **his** fathers, grandfathers, teachers, etc. In seeing all of **his** relatives, teachers, and friends, he freezes.

arjuna uvāca

senayor-ubhayor-madhye
ratham sthāpaya me'cyuta.

Arjuna said:

In the midst of the two armies, place
my chariot, O Acyuta.

1.21

tatrāpaśyat-sthitān pārthaḥ
pitṛn-atha pitāmahān,
ācāryān-mātulān-bhrātṛn-
putrān-pautrān-sakhīms-tathā.

Then, Partha saw stationed there in
both the armies, fathers, grandfathers,
teachers, maternal uncles, brothers,
sons, grandsons, and friends too.

śvaśūrān-suhṛdaścaiva
senayor-ubhayor-apī,
tān-samīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ
sarvān-bandhūn-avasthitān.

(He saw) Fathers-in-law and friends
also in both the armies. Then, the son of
Kuntī, seeing all these kinsmen standing
arrayed...

1.26 - 1.27

The realization that he needs to fight **his own** relatives causes Arjuna to collapse into a stupor. He breaks down completely with **his** body and nerves failing him. He is unable to even hold up the Gāṇḍīva bow!

What is
Attachment?

2:48 - 6:25



Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

What happened to Arjuna here? Why did such a mighty warrior suddenly freeze? What was his source of attachment? His attachment was particularly strong towards his teachers, Bhīṣma and Droṇa, who taught him everything that he learned. Even if he knew that they were on the side of adharma, he didn't want to fight them.

Reiterate that attachment means depending on something or someone as our source of joy. **Attachment** doesn't mean that we have to let go of the person; it means we have to let go of the **DEPENDENCE** on the person.

Let's see what happens when we become attached to a person or an object.

Attachment means:

1. I see you/that as a source of joy, instead of knowing I am the source of joy — **DELUSION**
2. I depend on you/that as a source of joy — **DEPENDENCE**
3. Therefore, I will do whatever you want or whatever it takes to keep you/that — **HELPLESSNESS**
4. Because I don't want to lose you/it — **FEAR**
5. And I will do what you want, even if it's wrong — **ADHARMA**
6. I know this is wrong but what can I do? — **GUILT/SORROW**



Activity

Trace how this applies to both Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Arjuna.

Have the students match the attachment definitions (DELUSION, DEPENDENCE, HELPLESSNESS, FEAR, ADHARMA, and GUILT/SORROW) with the statements in each of the following scenarios. Write the statements on one side of the board (in order) and the attachment definitions on the other side of the board (out of order). Then, match the statements and definitions as a class.

Scenario 1: Dhṛtarāṣṭra

1. He saw Duryodhana as a source of joy. (DELUSION)
2. He felt he needed Duryodhana to be happy for him to be happy. (DEPENDENCE)
3. He did whatever Duryodhana wanted and felt powerless. He let Duryodhana become king even though he wasn't the rightful heir. (HELPLESSNESS)

4. He didn't want to lose Duryodhana so he let him do whatever he wanted. (FEAR)
5. He knew Duryodhana was wrong but he still didn't speak out when there was injustice in the game of dice and in the mistreatment of Draupadī. (ADHARMA)
6. As a result, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was always full of regret. He couldn't even sleep at night. (GUILT/SORROW)

Scenario 2: Arjuna

1. He saw his revered grandfather Bhīṣma and his teacher Droṇa as a source of joy. (DELUSION)
2. He wanted both of them to stay alive, so that they could continue to guide him and be a part of his life. (DEPENDENCE)
3. He wanted to do whatever it took to keep them alive. (HELPLESSNESS)
4. He didn't want to lose them and preferred to run away from the battlefield instead of harming them. (FEAR)
5. He knew that by running away from the war, he wouldn't uphold dharma and would allow injustice to prevail, yet, he still wanted to run. (ADHARMA)
6. As a result, Arjuna was shattered and he broke down. (GUILT/SORROW)

Now, what does detachment look like?



Ask the students to brainstorm on what detachment would look like step by step mirroring the opposite of attachment.

Detachment means:

1. I do not see you/that as a source of joy — **WISDOM**
2. I do not depend on you/that as a source of joy — **INDEPENDENCE**
3. Therefore, I will NOT do whatever you want or whatever it takes to keep that/you if it's wrong — **STRENGTH**
4. It's okay if I lose you/it — **FEARLESSNESS**
5. And I will stick to what's right — **DHARMA**
6. I end up doing what is right — **PEACE/ŚĀNTI**

Main Lesson

continued

Attachment	Detachment
Delusion	Wisdom
Dependence	Independence
Helplessness	Strength
Fear	Fearlessness
Adharma	Dharma
Guilt/Sorrow	Peace/Śānti

Activity 20 min



Give each student 5 post-its and one pen. Set aside five different spaces or five tables in your classroom where they will be able to let go of each post-it. Describe the activity below (Give them 5-7 minutes to do this).

It's your dying day. But this type of dying will be a little bit different. It's the death of attachments. You have been given 5 sheets of paper. Write down 5 of your biggest attachments (one on each sheet). Then, sort them in order with the strongest attachment being 1 and the weakest attachment being 5.



Now, lead them on a walk through the classroom. It will be good if they stand up and move around. Describe the activity below.

As we are walking to the first space, I want you to let go of your weakest attachment. (Give them a few moments to process). On the second space, let go of your second weakest attachment... Do this until you get to the last space. Now, this is the last space. This is where you will have to let go of your strongest attachment. Close your eyes for a moment and think about this. Remember letting go of this attachment doesn't mean that you have to let go of this person or object, rather it means letting go of the **dependence** on that person or object for your source of joy. Now, slowly open your eyes and just LET GO.

Debrief: Ask the students how they feel as you walk back together to a few spaces (time-permitting). Be sure to visit the space of their strongest attachment last.

- What was your attachment in this space?
- How did it feel to give up your attachment here?
- What made this attachment weak or strong (depending on the space)?
- How did this attachment prevent you from performing your dharma?

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Now, bring them back to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Arjuna. Dhṛtarāṣṭra wasn't able to come out of his attachment and that's why he suffered until the end. However, Arjuna was able to come out of his attachment and fulfill his dharma through the guidance of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. How do we come out of our greatest attachments?

Solution: By attaching to the Higher. When we attach to the Higher in life such as:

1. **Bhagavān** — by doing our spiritual sādhanā
2. **Guru** — by performing sevā towards the Guru's vision and practicing the Guru's teachings
3. **Śāstra (scriptures)** — through svādhyāya or studying and reflecting upon our scriptures

Then, we are able to let go of our worldly attachments. When we start seeing joy in Bhagavān, Guru, and Śāstra (scriptures), this leads us, like Arjuna, to better perform our dharma in daily lives.

Slogan

ABCD:
Attachment Blinds
us from Clearly
doing our Dharma

Sādhanā

Think about your most used apps, websites, etc. Pick one of them and try to go without using it for 3 days this week. Reflect on how it feels. Did it get easier as the days passed? Do you feel any more or less happy? Is your relationship with the app any different after the 3 days? Share your thoughts with the class next time.

Conclude with closing prayers.



Arjuna's Breakdown

In this lesson we will explore Arjuna's breakdown, driven by delusion and attachment. The lesson will emphasize how delusion clouds judgment, leading to pessimism, escapism, and failure to act, thus showing how attachments can obstruct the path of dharma.

1.28  1.29  1.30  1.31 

arjuna uvāca dṛṣṭvemaṁ svajānaṁ kṛṣṇa yuyutsum samupasthitam.	Arjuna said: Seeing my kinsmen, O Kṛṣṇa, arrayed, eager to fight,
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati, vepathuśca śarīre me romaharṣaśca jāyate.	My limbs fail, and my mouth is parched, my body quivers, and my hair stands on end.
gāṇḍīvaṁ sraṁsate hastāt tvak caiva paridahyate, na ca śaknomyavasthātum bhramatīva ca me manaḥ.	The Gāṇḍīva bow slips from my hand and my skin burns all over; I am also unable to stand and my mind is whirling round, as it were.
nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava, na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajānamāhave.	And I see adverse omens, O Keśava. I do not see any good in killing my kinsmen in battle.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	Large paper or whiteboard for group activities
5m	Introduction	A quiet space for meditation/reflection activity
25m	Main Lesson	🔗 “Inside Out 2 Riley Has An Anxiety Attack Full Scene.”
15m	Activity	🔗 Self-Check Quiz
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 1.28 - 1.31.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Why Gita?”

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Art of Man Making - Part 1*. Chapter 10-13.

Arjuna's Breakdown

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min



Start with a prayer to seek clarity in understanding the nature of attachment and dharma.

Briefly recap lesson 5: “Attachment Obstructs Dharma.”

Recall the definition of dharma: “Doing the right thing at the right place at the right time.” **RTRPRT!**

Why did Dhṛtarāṣṭra fail in his dharma? Because of his attachment. Why did Arjuna lose sight of his dharma? Because of his attachment.

Recall the effects of attachment through a diagram on the board. How does it all start?

Attachment means:

1. I see you/that as a source of joy, instead of knowing I am the source of joy — **DELUSION**
2. I depend on you/that as a source of joy — **DEPENDENCE**
3. Therefore, I will do whatever you want or whatever it takes to keep you/that — **HELPLESSNESS**
4. Because I don’t want to lose you/it — **FEAR**
5. And I will do what you want, even if it’s wrong — **ADHARMA**
6. I know this is wrong, but what can I do? — **GUILT/SORROW**

Detachment means:

1. I do not see you/that as a source of joy — **WISDOM**
2. I do not depend on you/that as a source of joy — **INDEPENDENCE**
3. Therefore, I will not do whatever you want or whatever it takes to keep that/you if it’s wrong — **STRENGTH**
4. It’s okay if I lose you/it — **FEARLESSNESS**
5. And I will stick to what’s right — **DHARMA**
6. I end up doing what is right — **PEACE/ŚĀNTI**

Attachment	Detachment
Delusion	Wisdom
Dependence	Independence
Helplessness	Strength
Fear	Fearlessness
Adharma	Dharma
Guilt/Sorrow	Peace/Śānti

Detachment means letting go of the lower by attaching to the Higher such as:

1. **Bhagavān** — by doing our spiritual sādhanā
2. **Guru** — by performing sevā towards the Guru's vision and practicing the Guru's teachings
3. **Śāstra (scriptures)** — through svādhyāya or studying and reflecting upon our scriptures

Then, we are able to let go of our worldly attachments. When we start seeing joy in Bhagavān, Guru, and Śāstra (scriptures), this leads us, like Arjuna, to better perform our dharma in daily lives.

Introduction 5 min

Play the video from the movie "Inside Out 2" where the main character Riley has a panic/anxiety attack.

Ask the class to take 5 minutes to reflect on the video clips they just watched.

- What did they notice about Riley's situation?
- What symptoms did Riley experience?
- What caused her incident?

Afterwards, ask the students to reflect and write about their own experiences in similar situations. We will revisit this reflection later on in the lesson.

Inside Out 2 



Main Lesson 25 min

After seeing his loved ones on the battlefield, Arjuna experienced a similar breakdown because he didn't want to fight them.

Let's chant the following verses.

arjuna uvāca dṛṣṭvemaṁ svajānaṁ kṛṣṇa yuyutsuṁ samupasthitam.	Arjuna said: Seeing my kinsmen, O Kṛṣṇa, arrayed, eager to fight,
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati, vepathuśca śarīre me romaharṣaśca jāyate.	My limbs fail, and my mouth is parched, my body quivers, and my hair stands on end.
gāṇḍīvaṁ sraṁsate hastāt tvak caiva paridahyate, na ca śakno myavasthātum bhramatīva ca me manaḥ.	The Gāṇḍīva bow slips from my hand and my skin burns all over; I am also unable to stand and my mind is whirling round, as it were.
nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava, na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajānamāhave.	And I see adverse omens, O Keśava. I do not see any good in killing my kinsmen in battle.

1.28 - 1.31

Now, let's revisit Riley's anxiety attack from the earlier clip. As a class, come up with a direct comparison between Arjuna's and Riley's symptoms.

A sample table may look like:

Arjuna's Breakdown in Gītā	Riley's Breakdown in Inside Out 2
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi My limbs fail, mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati, My mouth is parched, vepathuśca śarīre me My body quivers, romaharṣaśca jāyate. My hair stands on end.	• Riley's legs shake. • Riley struggles to breathe. • Riley's heart is beating very fast. • Riley is grabbing her hair. • Riley is clenching her fists.

gāṇḍīvaṁ sraṁsate hastāt

The Gāṇḍīva-bow slips from my hand,

tvak caiva paridahyate,

My skin burns all over;

na ca śaknomyavasthātum

I am also unable to stand,

bhramatīva ca me manaḥ.

My mind is whirling round, as it were.

- Riley drops her hockey stick.
- Her mind is racing — the anxiety is causing a tornado in her mind.
- Riley hunches over and falls forward on her knees.
- She clenches her jersey around her heart.
- Riley starts crying.

nimittāni ca paśyāmi

viparītāni keśava,

And I see adverse omens, O Keśava,

na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi

hatvā svajanamāhave.

I do not see any good in killing my kinsmen in battle.

- Riley loses sense of reality. Her anxiety thinks it is trying to protect her, but in reality, it has lost all sense of control.
- Riley didn't even realize that she hurt her friend (Grace) in the process of scoring the goal.
- As she's having the attack, Riley is at a loss for what to do. Riley hits herself with a hockey stick.

Now that we've seen Arjuna's breakdown as a historical example and Riley's breakdown as an example from modern animation, ask the class to think about and share their own experiences.



Discussion

Can you think of a time you experienced panic/anxiety? Why? Were your symptoms similar? How did you get out of it? (Students may refer to their self-reflection from the "Introduction" activity).

Some examples may include:

- Before a big dance performance, basketball game, etc.
- During a final exam
- Having to give a presentation in front of the class
- Asking someone out to homecoming or prom
- Reading negative comments about yourself
- Negative self-talk

Main Lesson

continued



Why Gita?



Exploring Delusion, Pessimism, and Escapism in Arjuna's Psychological Breakdown

This verse shows how Arjuna's attachment to his loved ones led to delusion, pessimism, and escapism — all symptoms of the Arjuna Disease.

Delusion: In this situation, delusion means seeing something as other than what it is. Instead of seeing the war as a duty and responsibility, he saw it through the lens of his personal attachments and emotions.

The role of delusion in Arjuna's mental state is crucial to understanding his breakdown. His feelings of pity and compassion for his family, teachers, and friends made him believe that avoiding the battle was the virtuous thing to do. However, this wasn't true compassion — it was emotional overload clouding his judgment. He believed his reluctance to fight was a sign of moral goodness, but in reality, it was a sign of mental confusion.

- As Arjuna surveyed the battlefield, his eyes swept over the vast array of warriors lined up for war. On both sides, he saw faces he knew intimately — fathers, grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, and friends — all poised to fight each other. The overwhelming realization that these were his own kinsmen, his beloved family, and friends, ready to clash in a fratricidal war, struck him deeply. This sight, so full of personal and emotional turmoil, triggered a profound mental collapse within him.

Pessimism: When Arjuna reached this state of confusion in the mind, his discriminative power and rational thinking all went away. His mind fell into superstition and false imagination. **This is called pessimism — a tendency to see the worst aspect of things or believe that the worst will happen — a lack of hope or confidence in the future.**

- In his state of despair, Arjuna's intellect became clouded, and his mind, divorced from reason, began to entertain superstitions. He saw omens of doom — adverse signs that only deepened his confusion and despair. He could no longer perceive victory as a possibility. All his ambitions, dreams of kingdom and glory, evaporated as the enormity of the situation struck him. The mental and emotional strain overwhelmed him, rendering him powerless to continue. He desired neither victory nor pleasure, and in his mind, even the thought of success was meaningless, for how could he win in a war that would pit him against his own loved ones? His sense of self-confidence shattered.

Escapism: This is the desire to run away from things instead of facing them. When someone believes the worst will happen, they tend to want to run

away from the situation. This can be expressed in the form of inaction and/or distraction. The desire to run away from the battlefield and avoid facing the inevitable conflict shows Arjuna's mental retreat from reality.

- His body responded immediately to the weight of this grief. His limbs began to tremble, unable to hold the strength they once had. His mouth went dry, as if the very breath of life was being drained from him. A chilling sensation spread throughout his body, and his skin burned with a strange heat. His hair stood on end, a visible sign of the fear and confusion rising within him.
- Arjuna's mind, once sharp and resolute, now felt unsteady, chaotic, and detached from any logical thought. It was as if his entire being — his mind, his body, his spirit — had disconnected from its usual purpose. The Gāṇḍīva bow, which had always felt like an extension of his arm, slipped from his grasp. He was unable to stand properly, and his thoughts began to whirl uncontrollably, spiraling into confusion. He could no longer recognize his place in this battle, his duty, or even the meaning of the fight itself. The intense mental anguish left him unable to act and wanting to retreat from the battlefield.

Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda described this experience of symptoms that many of us can relate to as **Arjuna Disease**.

Overcoming Arjuna Disease



Now that we thoroughly understand the Arjuna Disease and its symptoms, brainstorm as a class about how to overcome this. Ask the class to come up with their own suggestions. Then, review the following tips to THRIVE with the class.

1. **T — Take action, even if it's small** — Start with little steps to make progress, instead of overthinking.
2. **H — Hold onto the Higher** — Don't get attached to small results in the moment. To overcome attachments, attach yourself to the Higher (Bhagavān, Guru, and our scriptures) as this will help you perform your dharma with clarity and purpose.
3. **R — Relinquish perfection** — Shift your focus from worrying about winning or losing to doing your best, no matter what.
4. **I — Inquire, introspect, and talk it out** — If you're feeling overwhelmed, try talking to someone you trust. Sometimes just getting your thoughts out helps clear the fog.

Main Lesson

continued

5. **V — Value the present/Vow to be present** — Don't get too caught up in what might happen later. Focus on what you can do right now.
6. **E — Everyone feels this way sometimes** — You're not alone! Even the greatest warriors (like Arjuna) have moments of doubt, but what matters is getting back up and continuing the fight.

Activity 15 min

Activity 1: Māyā's Case Study

The Danger of Delusion, Pessimism, and Escapism:

The real-world impact of **delusion** can be profound, especially when it leads to a **pessimistic view of life**. Delusion, when fueled by negative emotions or unrealistic expectations, clouds our judgment and prevents clear thinking. When we are overwhelmed by fear of failure or anxiety about outcomes, we become paralyzed, which ultimately leads to missed opportunities, regret, and unfulfilled potential. This often results in **escapism**, such as inaction, avoidance of responsibilities, and an inability to seize opportunities.

Case Study: Imagine a high school student named Māyā, who dreams of becoming a professional dancer. She has a natural talent for dance and has received encouragement from her teachers and peers. However, Māyā has become super worried about whether she's good enough and doesn't know if she can become a professional dancer like she has dreamed of. Should she even pursue this? She constantly compares herself to other dancers, believing that she will never be as good as they are. She starts talking down to herself. She decides not to participate in the upcoming dance competition or apply to her dream school. When she sees her friends dance, she is filled with regret. Instead of soaking herself in dance, which she loves, she stays inside her room and drowns herself in reading novels.

As a class (or in small groups), work together to identify how delusion, pessimism, and escapism arise in Māyā's dilemma above. The teacher can have an interactive discussion with the students for the first two columns and then ask them to fill out the third column.

Question: How should Māyā manage each of these situations? Using the THRIVE acronym for overcoming Arjuna Disease, what can you advise to help Māyā? And then think about how it applies to each of you.

Step	What Happens in Māyā's Story	Advice for Māyā
Delusion Seeing something as other than what it is.	Although Māyā's family and friends encourage her dancing because they see potential in her, she sees self-doubt and fear and begins to question her dream of becoming a professional dancer. Should she even think of such a thing? There's too much competition out there.	(H) She shouldn't get so attached to the results of her auditions but instead attach herself to Higher and audition as an offering to Bhagavān.
Pessimism Discouraging oneself from higher pursuits by believing that they will fail.	Māyā starts thinking there's no point in trying and participates in negative self-talk.	(R) Māyā shouldn't worry so much about the negative voices in her head and instead let go of the pressure of perfection.
Escapism: Inaction Not acting or avoiding the situation.	Māyā avoids participating in dance competitions and auditions and stops dancing altogether.	(V) She shouldn't let fear stop her from trying. (T) She can start small by dancing for fun in her room just for herself.
Escapism: Regret Feeling like one has made the wrong choice.	Māyā feels regret for missing out on opportunities.	(V) She shouldn't worry so much about the missed opportunities of her past and instead should focus on the choices she can make in the present.
Escapism: Distraction One distracts themselves with something else to forget about their fear and self-doubt.	Māyā distracts herself and starts reading novels, avoiding her dreams and fears.	(I) Instead of distracting herself to avoid her fears, Māyā should talk about her worries with someone she trusts to help her stop escaping.

Activity

continued

Extend the analysis of Māyā's predicament to our daily lives! How does this apply to us?

- **Delusion:** Do you ever convince yourself that you can't do something before even trying?
- **Pessimism:** How often do you focus on the worst possible outcome instead of seeing the possibilities?
- **Escapism:** When you feel stuck, do you sometimes choose to do nothing because you're scared?
- **Escapism:** Have you ever looked back and wished you had done something differently?
- **Escapism:** Do you ever avoid facing your challenges by escaping into other activities?

Now, conclude this activity with the following discussion topics:

- Discuss how this cycle not only affects the individual but also those around them. In Arjuna's case, his inaction on the battlefield impacts his family, his army, and his kingdom. If he runs away from the battlefield, then adharma will prevail and everyone will suffer.
- In Māyā's case, who does this affect? It affects all of her friends and family — the time and effort they put into encouraging and supporting her — even helping her get auditions.

Conclusion 5 min

Arjuna's breakdown was rooted in attachment, which blocked his ability to perform his dharma.

Because of his attachment, he became deluded (fighting the war was perceived as wrong), pessimistic (no sign of victory), and fell into escapism (he refuses to act).

Delusion, pessimism, and escapism are destructive and prevent personal growth. The key to overcoming this downfall is thoughtful action.

Final Thought: We can avoid experiencing Arjuna's breakdown by THRIVE-ing!

Group Summary

Briefly recap the lesson in the group, emphasizing that emotional balance is crucial not only for personal peace but also for effective action in challenging situations.

Slogan

T: Take action, even if it's small
 H: Hold onto the Higher
 R: Relinquish perfection
 I: Inquire, introspect, talk it out
 V: Value the present/Vow to be present
 E: Everyone feels this way sometimes

Sādhana

Practice taking small actions. Every day this week, tackle one thing on your to-do list that you have been avoiding and keep a tally of how many items you were able to conquer!

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Additional Content

Do I Have Arjuna Disease? A Self-Check Quiz

Answer each question honestly! For each question, rate yourself from 1 to 5:

1: Never true for me

2: Rarely true for me

3: Sometimes true for me

4: Often true for me

5: Always true for me

1. **Emotional Overload:** When you face big decisions or problems, do you often feel overwhelmed by your emotions (like stress, fear, or worry)?
2. **Fear of Failing:** Do you get so nervous about failing that it stops you from even trying?
3. **Loss of Confidence:** When you're in a tough situation, do you sometimes feel like you can't handle it, like you're not good enough?
4. **Confused Feelings:** Do you find it hard to figure out the right thing to do when you're emotional? Like, your feelings confuse you, and you can't make a clear decision?
5. **Focusing on the End Result:** Do you often think too much about what will happen at the end (like winning or losing) and forget to focus on the actual process or what you can control?

Self-Check Quiz



This quiz should be taken at the beginning of the next class.

Additional Content

continued

6. **Overthinking and Not Acting:** Do you ever get so caught up in overthinking something that you don't take action or make decisions?
7. **Wanting to Avoid Tough Situations:** When you face something difficult, do you find yourself wanting to avoid it instead of facing it head-on?
8. **Negative Self-Talk:** Do you ever tell yourself, "I'm not good enough" or "I can't do this" when you're facing a challenge?
9. **Always Expecting the Worst:** Do you sometimes expect things to go badly, even when there's no real reason to think that way?
10. **Inner Struggles:** Do you often feel torn between what you want to do and what you know is the right thing to do?

Scoring

- **10-20 points: You're in the clear** — You're handling challenges pretty well and don't let your emotions get in the way. Keep up the good work!
- **21-35 points: A few signs of Arjuna Disease** — You might feel overwhelmed sometimes, but you're still able to push through. Take note of any negative thoughts or fears and try to stay focused on the task at hand.
- **36-50 points: Arjuna Disease Alert** — Looks like you're experiencing some strong symptoms of Arjuna Disease. Fear of failure, emotional overload, and overthinking are making it hard to act or make decisions. It's time to take a step back, breathe, and find ways to handle the situation calmly. Remember: action is key to breaking the cycle.

Arjuna's Surrender

In the build up to this verse, we see the shift in Arjuna's resistant attitude to one of full surrender. Rather than continue down a path of avoidance and rationalization, he chooses to surrender to the Lord. Through this, we can learn the ideal characteristics of a good student.

2.7  4.34 



kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-
svabhāvaḥ
prcchāmi tvāṁ dharmā-
sammūḍha-cetāḥ,
yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṁ
brūhi tanme
śiṣyaste'haṁ śādhi
mām tvāṁ prapannam.

My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity; my mind is confused as to duty. I ask Thee. Tell me decisively what is good for me. I am Thy disciple. Instruct me, who has taken refuge in Thee.

tadviddhi praṇipātena
paripraśnena sevayā,
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ
jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ.

Know that by long prostration, by question, and service, the wise who have realized the Truth will instruct you in (that) Knowledge.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

- Whiteboard for class participation
- ☑ **Self-Check Quiz** printout for each student
- ☑ **“Legend of Bagger Vance - The Woods.”**

References

- Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 2.7, 4.34.
- ☑ Swami Chinmayananda. “Arjuna Seeks Refuge!”

Arjuna's Surrender

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Take the self-check quiz from the previous lesson. After the students take the quiz, ask them how they scored. How many of them are willing to accept their Arjuna Disease? How many of them are open about it? This is exactly the first step to being a great student.

Introduction 5 min

kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ
prcchāmi tvām dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ,
yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṁ brūhi tanme
śiṣyaste'haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam.

My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity; my mind is confused as to duty. I ask Thee. Tell me decisively what is good for me. I am Thy disciple. Instruct me, who has taken refuge in Thee.

2.7

Understanding Arjuna

Who is Arjuna? A Pāṇḍava prince, a kṣatriya, practicing a lifetime of discipline and adherence to dharma.

What was he feeling? Arjuna feels that war will lead to the killing of a whole generation of people. He feels that the war will lead to the destruction of the family unit. Without the family unit, family traditions will collapse and the entire religion and society will collapse. All of this is a logical argument — the problem is that the argument is misplaced.

Why is Arjuna's argument misplaced? Without fighting, all of the traditions and culture will still be lost in the tide of adharma brought on by the Kauravas in leadership, leading to the moral decay of the entire society long-term.

It is important to remember that the Pāṇḍavas worked very hard to avoid the war, knowing that war is not the ideal solution.

1. They first fully completed the agreement for thirteen years of exile (twelve years in the forest and one year incognito).
2. They formally requested their kingdom back but were refused.

3. They finally sent Lord Kṛṣṇa to negotiate on their behalf. Lord Kṛṣṇa even proposed that the Pāṇḍavas would be happy with five villages instead of their kingdom. It was then that Duryodhana refused to give them even enough land that would fit on the tip of a needle, without a fight. Therefore, it was Duryodhana who forced the war and thus it was the Pāṇḍavas' responsibility to fight against him to establish dharma.

What is Arjuna's confusion? Arjuna states that killing his respected teachers, grandfather, and cousins is too high a price for kingdom and wealth. Here too, we see Arjuna placing higher value on the lives of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, etc. over his own comfort and power. We can also relate to this sentiment — we would rather choose our family and respected loved ones over material wealth, which comes at their expense. But in the present situation, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Kṛpa have all chosen the side of adharma (albeit unwillingly, as they felt their various vows compelled them to fight for Duryodhana even though they disagreed with him). It is therefore Arjuna's dharma to fight them in this war regardless of his personal attachments. Arjuna has to put aside these feelings, as he is not fighting to win a kingdom and riches, he is fighting to uphold dharma.

What is the stage he reaches? Though he states these reasons to not fight, it doesn't feel right to him. Arjuna recognizes that he actually does not know what to do, that he is confused about his dharma, and needs help.

Arjuna thinks: I can solve many things, I have done great feats, I am the greatest archer of the Kuru dynasty, but right now I am helpless!

The greatest strength is to acknowledge our weakness. When we feel despondent, we all have to know how and to whom we must surrender. This is what we can learn from Arjuna.

Main Lesson 25 min

Arjuna's Surrender

By the end of chapter 1 of the Bhagavad-gītā, Arjuna is plagued by doubt and has fully decided not to fight, even though moments before, he was the one urging Lord Kṛṣṇa to take him into the center of the battlefield to survey the enemy. Now in chapter 2, Arjuna is still not willing to fight, but instead of quitting, he is asking Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Guru, for help.

The Guru is the one who will open our minds and stretch our thinking beyond what we first thought was possible, but this can only happen by surrendering to the Guru. When the student surrenders, the student should allow the Guru

Arjuna Seeks
Refuge!



Main Lesson

continued

to guide them, even if the methods don't immediately make sense. The Guru has more knowledge and experience and has often walked the same path as the śiṣya (student). Thus, the Guru knows how to guide the śiṣya properly. The Guru also has a broader perspective and can therefore identify the gaps in the student's knowledge, logic, or application, and thus can properly teach the student.

How to Surrender to Our Guru

PROSTRATION → QUESTIONING → SERVICE

Gītā beautifully illustrates how to approach and seek the guidance of our Guru, the only one who can rid us of our deepest doubts and confusions.

tadviddhi praṇipātena
paripraśnena sevayā,
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ
jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ.

Know that by long prostration, by question, and service, the wise who have realized the Truth will instruct you in (that) Knowledge.

4.34

There are three steps to this process: **prostration**, **questioning**, and **service**. Let us see these one by one, beginning with prostration.

1. **Prostration — Recognizing Our Limitations and Emptying Ourselves**

What is prostration? To prostrate means to bow fully. In the language of Vedānta, it takes on deep meaning and significance.



...all that is meant here is that the student must have an intellectual attitude of surrender and meekness, respect and obedience, when he approaches the teacher who has to instruct him upon the secret of life. Regarding the world within and the methods of its control, ordinarily, the students are completely ignorant, and therefore, they must approach the teacher with a readiness to understand, grasp and follow his instructions.

Swami Chinmayananda
The Holy Geeta. 4.34.

In Arjuna's case, this was his way of prostrating:

kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ

My heart is overpowered by the
taint of pity.

2.7

Accepting Our Weakness

Arjuna had a great body of knowledge. Growing up, Arjuna's teachers were Kṛpācārya and Droṇācārya. Kṛpācārya taught him about dharma and politics, and everything he and his brothers needed to know to rule the kingdom. Droṇācārya taught him warfare, turning him into the greatest archer in the world.

Arjuna now recognizes his limitations. He may have learned many things in life, but he has not learned this — **the way out of his delusion and confusions**. When he realizes that he is helpless, he surrenders to the Lord and seeks help. It is important to note that no one can help us if we feel like we know, pretend to know, or think that we don't need any help.



Discussion

1. Have we had this feeling? Have we ever felt completely helpless? Who did we turn to for help?
2. Given the above, why do you think Lord Kṛṣṇa taught Arjuna and not Duryodhana?

Debrief: As mentioned above, accepting that we are helpless, weak, and confused is actually a great sign of strength. This is the first step to getting better and out of our own delusion and confusions. Lord Kṛṣṇa taught Arjuna because he admitted his weakness and surrendered fully. Duryodhana, on the other hand, felt that he knew everything. Duryodhana failed to acknowledge his weakness and thus was never open to receive any teaching from anyone.

Emptying Ourselves

Before asking any question, as students we must empty ourselves. **We must empty ourselves of preconceived notions so that we can open our minds to new and different ideas.** With open-mindedness, we can learn from others and grow, even if the knowledge is new, unusual, or unclear to us. If we stay closed-minded, we cannot learn because we cannot broaden our thinking to include others' perspectives.

Main Lesson

continued

In Advaita Vedānta, we accept the Upaniṣads as the source of Truth. The scientific method is valid, but it is not the only way to learn. We should all open our minds to accept there is knowledge beyond what we see and experience as limited beings. There are many ideas in the Bhagavad-gītā and in Sanātana Dharma that go beyond the world of observable matter. We should strive to be open-minded enough to accept them, as they will be borne out in experience eventually.

Prostration means accepting our weakness and emptying ourselves of our preconceived notions so that we are open to receiving knowledge.

**Discussion**

Let's take a look at closed Arjuna in chapter 1 versus open Arjuna in chapter 2. As a class, discuss and compare Arjuna from chapter 1 and Arjuna now in verse 2.7. The following is a sample table and points that should be discussed.

Closed Arjuna (Ch. 1)	Open Arjuna (Verse 2.7)
Arjuna makes bold claims: "It's better for Duryodhana to kill me than for me to kill him." "This war will lead to the destruction of the fabric of society."	Arjuna admits his weakness: "My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity."
Arjuna is stubborn in these beliefs and is not willing to listen to anything else at this time. Lord Kṛṣṇa does not interrupt this rant because Arjuna is displaying closed-mindedness.	By replacing stubbornness and resistance with admitting his weakness, Arjuna demonstrates the open-mindedness required to be a good student. He is now ready to hear different ideas and grow his mindset. Eventually, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives him the teaching.



Activity

Have all students stand up and bow at the classroom altar. Teachers can show how to bow properly.

There is a Saṁskṛtam śloka on how to properly bow down out of reverence and surrender. It is commonly practiced during ritual worship at homes, in temples and in front of spiritual Gurus.

urasā śirasā dṛṣṭyā
manasā vacasā tathā,
padbhyāṁ karābhyāṁ jānubhyāṁ
praṇāmo'ṣṭāṅga ucyate.

The bowing with the chest,
head, eyes, mind, speech,
feet, hands and knees, is
called the eightfold salutation.

For men, the proper way of bowing is **sāṣṭāṅga namaskāraḥ** (bowing with eight limbs).

They are:

- Chest
- Head
- 2 Legs
- 2 Knees
- 2 Hands
- Along with the sight, speech, and mind.



For women, the proper way of bowing down is **pañcāṅga namaskāraḥ** (bowing with five limbs).

They are:

- Head
- 2 Knees
- 2 Hands
- Along with the sight, speech, and mind.

Women should not bow down with their full legs and chest touching the ground. Hence, these three limbs are excluded for them. The stomach is the part of a woman's body which gives life and the chest is the part which provides nourishment for a baby. These parts are considered holy and therefore shouldn't be allowed to come in contact with the bare ground.

Main Lesson

continued

2. Questioning with Faith

In Arjuna's case, this was his sign of questioning:

pr̥cchāmi tvām dharma-
sammūḍha-cetāḥ,
yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṁ
brūhi tanme

My mind is confused as to duty. I
ask Thee. Tell me decisively what is
good for me.

2.7

Now that the student's heart is open and filled with śraddhā (faith) that the Guru can help them, they can ask questions to clarify their doubts or deepen their understanding. A good student isn't one who questions everything a Guru says, but also isn't one who just listens without ever asking a question.

Questioning with śraddhā is trying to sincerely understand the teaching and not asking just to confuse the teacher or to "prove them wrong."

Arjuna, who used to be so sure about right and wrong, finds himself confused. When brought in front of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Kṛpācārya, he wants to be a good student and family member and show respect to his elders, not kill them. However, he knows that as a warrior and as the brother of Yudhiṣṭhira, it is his responsibility to wage war against the Kauravas to uphold the dharma of the nation. He says that his "mind is confused as to duty," exactly diagnosing his problem. He is now asking for the Guru to help clarify his doubts, "I ask Thee. Tell me decisively what is good for me."

**Discussion**

We often hear the phrase "there's no such thing as a bad question." But is that true? What makes something a good or a bad question?

Debrief: A good question is posed to increase understanding, such as clarifying a word or trying to connect back to a previous concept. A bad question is designed to distract the class or disrupt the teacher. The attitude behind a question matters more than the question itself.

**Activity**

Arjuna's question was "Please tell me, what is good for me?" Split the class into two groups, and ask them to role-play asking the question in a respectful way versus a close-minded, distracting way.

Think about how a respectful student would hold their body before asking a question. After this, the teacher can ask students to practice sitting cross-legged with their backs straight. What does this show about a student's state of mind?

Debrief: Before questioning, prostration is a prerequisite. One should only ask a question after they have emptied their mind of all distractions, sat or stood quietly, and made themselves open to receive.

Questioning with faith means asking questions to clarify our doubts or deepen our understanding, trusting the Guru's knowledge and experience.

3. Service — Tuning to the Guru's Teachings

In Arjuna's case, this was his service — the readiness to attune to the Guru's teachings:

śiṣyaste'haṁ śādhi mām
tvām prapannam.

I am Thy disciple. Instruct me, who
has taken refuge in Thee.

2.7

Once a student has emptied themselves by prostrating and then questioning with faith, they must be ready to take up the teaching and accept the Guru's authority. The śiṣya or student has to remove their own ego to align with the Guru's teachings. Service to Guru means to serve and uphold the vision the teacher has imparted. This can only happen when the student rises above their likes and dislikes, lets go of their previous notions, and embraces the Guru's words. Arjuna is now finally ready for Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings. **It is only because of Arjuna's surrender that Lord Kṛṣṇa gives him the Bhagavad-gītā for all of humanity.** Without that surrender, we would not be able to benefit from this valuable knowledge today. Who would have thought that surrender could be so powerful!

A true service of the teacher lies in the attempt of the student to attune himself to the principles of life advocated and advised to him by the Master. To live the life indicated by the ṛṣis is the greatest sevā that an imperfect mortal can offer to the man-of-Perfection.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**
The Holy Geeta. 4.34.

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

In the olden days in Bharat, the gurukula culture was the way knowledge was shared. Students would live with the Guru, serve at the āśrama and learn. Students (śiṣyas) would perform this sevā as a sign of respect for their Guru and the Guru's teachings. Today, we also attend classes led by our teachers. How do we show our teachers the respect they deserve?

Debrief: We can show our teachers respect by coming to class on time, remembering to complete homework, and bringing the required books, papers, pens, etc., as well as listening and participating without disrupting class.

We can also give our coaches and extracurricular teachers respect by being attentive and practicing (music, sports, dance, etc.) daily.



Discussion

Who are our Gurus today?

Debrief: Our Guru-śiṣya paramparā starts with Lord Śiva, then Bhagavān Veda Vyāsa, Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, Swami Tapovan Maharaj, Swami Sivananda, Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, and Pūjya Swami Swaroopananda.

Recalling the “My 24 Teachers” lesson series, we also remember that we can learn the most profound lessons from various aspects of nature, such as birds, animals, and even the five elements. We have so many teachers and coaches we can learn from as well.

Service means tuning into the Guru's teachings and sincerely attempting to live and practice them in our lives.



Legend of
Bagger Vance



Activity 15 min

Now that we have seen the three ways to surrender: **Prostration**, **Questioning** and **Service**, let's see a different take on Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna.

Watch this video clip of the Hollywood movie “Legend of Bagger Vance” that is inspired by the Bhagavad-gītā, showing how a golfer meets his mysterious caddy. Starring Matt Damon as R. Junuh (Arjuna) and Will Smith as Bagger Vance (Bhagavān).



Discussion

Can you see the three elements of surrender (prostration — questioning — service)? Explain.

Debrief:

Prostration — R. Junuh is tempted to cheat and move the golf ball during a tournament but stops as soon as Bagger Vance arrives. R. Junuh accepts his weakness: “I can’t do this.”

Questioning — After Bagger Vance advises, him. R. Junuh says, “I don’t know how.” Bagger Vance asks him to start walking and he asks, “Where?”

Service — After Bagger Vance instructs him, R. Junuh accepts the golf club, takes a stance, and strikes the ball remembering his swing (dharma).

Prompts: In groups of 3, brainstorm for 5 minutes different ways you can grow to follow 3 steps of surrender.

- As high school students?
- As Bala Vihar students?
- In our extracurriculars (sports, music, dance, etc.)

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Go around the classroom and ask each student to share which element of surrender most resonated with them and why.

Slogan

Let go of your ego —
Surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa

Sādhana

List one characteristic you need to improve on the most (prostration, questioning, or service). Try to improve on that characteristic over the next week with all the teachers you meet. Write a short paragraph of one instance of how you improved that characteristic and how that helped you be a better student.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Silent Listener

In this class, students will learn the importance of silent listening, self-reflection, and mindful communication, as demonstrated in the interaction between Arjuna and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-gītā.

2.9  2.10 



sañjaya uvāca

evam uktvā hṛṣīkeśam
guḍākeśaḥ parantapaḥ,
na yotsya iti govindam
uktvā tūṣṇīm babhūva ha.

Having spoken thus to Hṛṣīkeśa, Guḍākeśaḥ, the destroyer of foes, said to Govinda: “I will not fight” and became silent.

tam uvāca hṛṣīkeśaḥ
prahasanniva bhārata,
senayor-ubhayor madhye
viśīdantam idaṁ vacaḥ.

To him, who was despondent in the midst of the two armies, Hṛṣīkeśa as if smiling, “O Bhārata,” spoke these words.

Time 55 min

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

Materials

1 bell for keeping time

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 2.9 - 2.10.

Chinmaya Mission. *Gita For Me. Grade 10 & 11 Bala Vihar Teachers' Handbook*.

☞ Swamini Supriyananda. “Silence is... Thinking About It.”

☞ Hitendra Wadhwa. “Change Your Mindset, Transform Your Life.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Silent Listener

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Recollect the three elements of surrender — **prostration**, **questioning**, and **service**.

1. **Prostration** means accepting our weakness and emptying ourselves of our preconceived notions so that we are open to receiving knowledge.
2. **Questioning** with faith means asking questions to clarify our doubts or deepen our understanding, trusting the Guru's knowledge and experience.
3. **Service** means tuning into the Guru's teachings and sincerely attempting to live and practice them in our lives.



Ask the students if they were able to practice this during the past week. Ask them to share their reflections and examples.

Introduction 10 min

Watch this [short video](#) by Swamini Supriyananda jī. Ask the students if they can reproduce 3-5 main points from the talk.



Silence Is...
Thinking
About It



Activity

We will now see how much of the talk the students can recall. Split the class into two groups (Group A and B). We will do three rounds of listening:

Round 1 — A representative from Group A shares the top takeaways from listening to the video and a representative from Group B shares their top takeaways from listening to the video.

Round 2 — A different person from Group A should share the same takeaways from Group A from their active listening in Round 1. A different representative in Group B has to share the takeaways from their active listening in Round 1.

Round 3 — Group B now collectively has to recall the takeaways that Group A stated. Group A collectively has to recall the takeaways that Group B had shared.

Through this, the teachers can indicate the importance of silent listening and use this as an introduction to the main lesson for today.

Main Lesson 25 min

Silent Listening

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's role is a compassionate guide to Arjuna:

sañjaya uvāca

evam uktvā hṛṣīkeśam
guḍākeśaḥ parantapaḥ,
na yotsya iti govindam
uktvā tūṣṇīm babhūva ha.

Having spoken thus to Hṛṣīkeśa,
Guḍākeśaḥ, the destroyer of foes,
said to Govinda: “I will not fight” and
became silent.

tam uvāca hṛṣīkeśaḥ
prahasanniva bhārata,
senayor-ubhayor madhye
viśīdantam idaṁ vacaḥ.

To him, who was despondent in the
midst of the two armies, Hṛṣīkeśa as
if smiling, “O Bhārata,” spoke these
words.

2.9 - 2.10

Let's recall Arjuna's state of mind:

1. **Readiness** — First, Arjuna was brave and ready to fight. He asked Śrī Kṛṣṇa to place him between the two armies so he could see who he was fighting.
2. **Attachment** — Upon seeing his relatives and loved ones on the opposing side, he breaks down. His lips are parched, his body trembles and he drops his bow — the Gāṇḍīva.
3. **Surrender** — He is confused about his dharma and finally surrenders to Lord Kṛṣṇa.
4. **Now** — He says, “I will not fight!”

This seems like a contradiction. Arjuna first says, “Tell me decisively what is good for me. I am Thy disciple” (2.7). Now, he says, “I will not fight” (2.9). What Arjuna means is — until You teach me, I won't do anything! I won't fight. I will sit quietly until you tell me what to do. Now, the ball is in Your court, Oh Lord!

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been waiting for this key moment. The ball is now in His court!

Verse 2.9: This verse captures a significant turning point in the dialogue between Arjuna and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna, burdened with inner conflict and

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

Why do you think Śrī Kṛṣṇa chooses to remain silent and allows Arjuna to express his turmoil, instead of offering immediate solutions to his problems? How can silence be a powerful tool in helping others work through their emotional and psychological struggles?

paralyzed by fear and doubt, has been expressing his emotional turmoil. His words are filled with confusion and hesitation as he grapples with the morality of fighting in a war against his own relatives and mentors. By the end of this verse, Arjuna becomes silent. His silence creates space for reflection, paving the way for the guidance he desperately needs.

Arjuna's silence is significant because it shows that he has fully expressed his struggles, leaving him more open to listening and receiving wisdom. It reflects a moment of surrender, where he acknowledges the need for clarity and guidance beyond his own thoughts.

Verse 2.10: This verse marks the moment Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins to speak. Until now, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has remained silent throughout Arjuna's emotional expression. Bhagavān's choice to stay quiet is intentional and meaningful. By listening without interruption, Śrī Kṛṣṇa creates an environment where Arjuna can fully articulate his feelings, no matter how turbulent they are. This silence is not passive — it is an active and compassionate form of listening that allows Arjuna to unburden himself and reflect on his own thoughts.

Instead of rushing to provide answers or solutions, Śrī Kṛṣṇa lets Arjuna process his own emotions at his own pace. Only after Arjuna has expressed his doubts and confusion does Śrī Kṛṣṇa begin to offer wisdom. Now, Arjuna is in a state where he is ready to truly listen.

Reflections on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Silent Listening

Silent listening means creating a safe environment for a person to express their emotions so that they feel heard and understood without being judged or interrupted.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's silence is a deliberate and powerful act of guidance. It highlights the importance of listening with patience and empathy. By choosing silence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us several valuable lessons.



Write the word LISTEN on the board. Now, write the word SILENT. Ask the students: What do you notice about these two words?

LISTEN rearranged is SILENT. This means that true listening is only possible in silence.

Here's why silent listening makes such a difference.

Silent Listening is Healing: Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna the space to express his emotions, which in itself is a form of healing. Sometimes, just being heard without judgment can help a person feel validated and understood.

Silence Creates Space for Self-Reflection: By not interrupting, Śrī Kṛṣṇa allows Arjuna to explore his own thoughts and feelings more deeply. This kind of introspection helps Arjuna clarify his internal struggles.

Supportive Instead of Solving Presence: Śrī Kṛṣṇa's silence shows that offering immediate solutions is not always the most helpful response. Instead, providing a supportive presence and allowing someone to process their emotions is often more impactful.

Patience Leads to Clarity: Śrī Kṛṣṇa waits until Arjuna is ready — emotionally and mentally — to receive guidance. This patience is an essential quality of a compassionate and effective mentor.

Listening Can Actually Save Lives

Here's a true story shared by Hitendra Wadhwa, Adjunct Professor at Columbia Business School and Founder of the Mentora Institute.

This is shared by a Secret Service agent who attended one of my leadership classes. He shared: One time my wife and I were sitting outside in the backyard of our home in Washington, D.C., when a robber with a gun broke into our property and walked over to us. With the gun pointing at me, he said, "I want you to go back into your home, get all the valuables — jewelry, cash — put them in this bag and bring it to me."

As a professional security expert, I was mentally preparing myself for my next move when my wife began to speak. She looked at the burglar and said, "I can't believe you're doing this. I am concerned about you. I can only imagine what led you to take this kind of risk. You must be going through a very difficult time." After a moment, she continued, "You know, my husband and I were just having some wine and we were going to have dinner in a few minutes. Why don't you join us? I want to hear about what's happening in your life because I am really worried about you."

My jaw dropped when I heard what she was saying! But the next minute this man had put down his gun and was sitting with us, having dinner. After the dinner, as he started to leave, he reached out for the gun, but I said, "You can leave but you can't take the gun." The personal story he had shared with us at dinner was of course a very sad one, and I didn't want him to run into any more trouble with others or himself. So, he left without taking his gun.

Main Lesson

continued

The next day there was a knock on the door, and it was him. He said, “Sir, I have not come here for the gun. I just wanted to let you and your wife know that I’m deeply grateful. Thank you for what you did for me last night.”

Hitendra Wadhwa. “Change Your Mindset, Transform Your Life.”



Discussion

1. What was the difference in the response of the husband and wife?
2. How did the robber respond when he was invited inside to dinner? Would you have invited the robber to your house? How would you have responded?
3. How was the robber transformed by this experience?

Debrief: Listening can actually save lives! We don’t think about it deeply. In this very instant, because the couple ended up listening to the robber, this saved the robber from further breaking into their home and committing a crime. This also prevented the couple from being harmed.

In Arjuna’s case, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s listening saved his life. Arjuna would have made a grave mistake of running away from the battlefield if he had not surrendered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He wouldn’t have surrendered in the first place if he didn’t feel heard, understood, and comfortable enough to express his emotions.

Think of all the first responders who are among the first to arrive at the scene of an emergency to provide assistance. Think about the listening skills they must require in order to save lives daily. What if they note the wrong address down? What if they do not listen carefully and miss vital information about an injury or present danger? What if they misinterpret a situation?

How Silent Listening Applies in Real Life

When someone is upset or overwhelmed, they often need a safe space to express their feelings without fear of interruption or judgment. By being a silent and attentive listener, we can provide that space.

Silence, when used wisely, is not empty. It is a vessel for trust, growth, and emotional clarity. Just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s silence allowed Arjuna to process his doubts, practicing silence and mindfulness in conversations can help others find their own paths to solutions and self-understanding. The following are some tips to be a better listener.

SHH!

1. **Stay Present**

Let go of all distractions. Give your full attention to the speaker. Put away distractions like phones and focus entirely on their words and emotions.

Show the speaker that you are listening. This means giving visual cues of your listening, keeping your video on (for video conferencing), etc. Use non-verbal cues like nodding, maintaining eye contact, and positive body language to show you're actively listening.

2. **Heal**

Remember this is a sacred space of healing. Practice patience. Sometimes, people just need a safe space to vent and empty out their thoughts.

Listen without interrupting. Wait for a pause if you want to say something. Let the person finish what they're saying without jumping in or cutting them off. Silence creates space for their thoughts to unfold.

Avoid judging. We may have stopped talking but we may still be chattering away in our heads. Silence the mind. Listen to understand, not to reply. Listen with an open mind and empathy. Avoid forming opinions or judgments while they're speaking. This helps you truly understand their perspective. Resist the urge to jump in with solutions or advice unless asked for.

3. **Help**

Verify and check. In order to really help them, we first need to ensure that we understand clearly what they have said. Did you really understand what they shared? Reflect and clarify by paraphrasing or summarizing what they've said to ensure you've understood correctly, like: "So, if I'm hearing you right, you're saying..." Encourage the person to share more by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions: "Can you tell me more about that?" Listen to what's unsaid — pay attention to tone, body language, and emotions — they often reveal more than words.

Then see if there's anything that needs to be done. Sometimes, all they needed was a patient, kind, and caring listening ear. Other times, they may need guidance. If you are capable of it, then you can guide, but if you are not, direct them to someone who can help them best.

Activity 10 min

Activity 1: Partner Listening

Have the students in the class find a partner. If there is an odd number of students, you can form one group of 3 with that student and modify this exercise to work with the group of 3.

- One student in each pair will be a speaker and the other will be the listener.
- The speaker is allowed to talk to the listener about a topic of their choice (e.g., the lesson of the day, their hobbies, school, a topic they are passionate about, etc.).
- The listener should practice attentive, silent listening with our **SHH** acronym from above. They should check-in with themselves on if they've actually followed **SHH**.
- The speaker can then test if the other student was listening by asking questions about what they had just shared. They are also allowed to note when the listener lost eye contact or seemed to tune out.
- After about 3 minutes, the teacher should ring a bell to indicate to the students to swap roles and repeat the activity.

Debrief: Debrief with the students about how their experience was. How well did they listen to their partner? Were there places that they could improve? How can we all work on listening more attentively? How did they feel when they were listened to?

Activity 2: Silent Whispers of Wisdom

Objective: To demonstrate how silent, attentive listening and mindful communication can help preserve the accuracy and intent of a message. Students will explore how distortions occur when messages are passed without careful listening and reflection.

Preparation

- Arrange the students in a circle. Emphasize the importance of silence and focus during the game.
- Briefly introduce the purpose of the activity: This game shows us how communication changes when we don't fully listen or reflect.

The Message: Prepare a message inspired by the lesson, such as: "Listening with silence allows us to hear wisdom hidden behind emotions." Whisper this message to the first student in the circle.

The Game

- The first student whispers the message to the next student, and so on, until it reaches the last person.
- Encourage each student to focus and listen attentively but remind them they can only say the message once — they cannot repeat it or ask for clarification.
- Once the last student receives the message, they share it aloud with the group.
- **Round 1:** The student listening to the message should close their eyes to listen to the whispered message. This should help the student listen more attentively.
- **Round 2:** Do this with a new message and tell the students to keep their eyes open through the whole process.

Reflection and Discussion

- Compare the final message to the original one. Was the message preserved, or did it change? If it changed, why might that have happened? Was it easier with the eyes closed or open?
- What does this teach us about how important it is to listen mindfully, just like Śrī Kṛṣṇa listened to Arjuna?
- How can silence and self-reflection improve how we listen and communicate?
- Connect this back to the main lesson about the importance of silent listening.

Debrief: Just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa used silence and patient listening to guide Arjuna, we learned today how crucial it is to truly listen and reflect. Miscommunication can happen when we rush or don't focus, but mindful listening helps us connect better with others.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students to share their personal favorite tip of being a silent listener. It could be one that was just discussed in class or one that they come up with themselves. After this, the teacher can reiterate all the tips of being a silent listener.

Conclusion

continued

Slogan

Be a Silent
Listener

Sādhana

At least once during the week, sit in silence for 5 minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and emotions. Practice the same patient listening towards yourself that Śrī Kṛṣṇa demonstrated towards Arjuna.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

The Nature of the Self

This lesson deals with the highest teaching that Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna about Ātman. It also discusses how to deal with death, one of the greatest forms of grief.

2.11  2.20  2.22 



śrībhagavān uvāca

aśocyān anvaśocastvaṁ
prajñāvādāṁśca bhāṣase,
gatāsūn agatāsūṁśca
nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ.

The Blessed Lord said:

You have grieved for those that should not be grieved for; yet, you speak words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.

na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na
bhūyaḥ,
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ
purāṇaḥ
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.

(The Ātman) is not born, nor does It die. Nor is it that having come to exist, It will again cease to be. It is unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient. It is not killed when the body is killed.

vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naro 'parāṇi,
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī.

Just as one casts off their worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied-Self casts off its worn-out bodies and enters others which are new.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m Opening

BMI Chart

10m Introduction

Marbles in a metal can

25m Main Lesson

1 table lamp

10m Activity

3 empty cups and 3 cups filled with water

5m Conclusion

 **The Last Days of Swami Tapovanam**

References

Swami Chinmayananda, *The Holy Geeta*. 2.11, 2.20, 2.22.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Cycle of Birth And Death!”

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Wise do not grieve alone.” 0:00 - 5:05.

 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya, “Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2 Verses 19-22.” 23:02 - 35:12, 39:06 - 56:55.

 Swamini Supriyananda. “Why Me? Suffering depends upon....”

Swami Mitrananda & Yuva Veer 6th Batch, *Illustrations of the Illustrator*, 5.

The Nature of the Self

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Let's see how silently we can listen.

Marble Meditation



At this point, the teacher should ask all the students to close their eyes and then drop a certain number of marbles in a can one by one. The teacher should leave enough time for the students to hear the sound of each marble falling in the can. After dropping a few marbles, the teacher should ask the students to show their fingers, indicating how many marbles were dropped into the can. The ones who were able to guess correctly, were the ones silently listening.

In the last class, we saw that Arjuna became silent. His silence created space for reflection, paving the way for the guidance he desperately needs.

Arjuna's silence is significant because it shows that he has fully expressed his struggles, leaving him more open to listening and receiving wisdom. It reflects a moment of surrender, where he acknowledges the need for clarity and guidance beyond his own thoughts.

Now, it's time for Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa to speak and when He does, He gives the most profound lesson to Arjuna.

Introduction 10 min

śrībhagavānuvāca

aśocyān anvaśocastvaṁ
prajñāvādāṁśca bhāṣase,
gatāsūn agatāsūṁśca
nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ.

The Blessed Lord said:

You have grieved for those that should not be grieved for; yet, you speak words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.

2.11

Here Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes a remarkable statement. **The wise never grieve.**

Is this really true? Is it possible to never grieve?

First let's define grief.

Grief is the **intense feeling of suffering** for something that has happened to us or others.

Why does grief actually happen? When we look at a deeper meaning, grief happens because we wrongly analyze our experiences.



Example

Someone loses their phone in school. They try to look for it but are unable to locate it. There are three levels of how they approach this issue.

Level 1: CRISIS — Oh no! I've lost my phone! It has everything about me and I won't be able to live without it. I don't know what to do. I feel so terrible right now. I can't deal with this... HELP!!!

Level 2: PROBLEM — I've lost my phone! I can't believe I did that! Why would I do that? What was I thinking?

Level 3: SITUATION — I've lost my phone. I was quite careless but it's okay. Now, I need to pick myself up. Let me take a step back for a moment and check all the places where it could possibly be.

What happened here? All of these are direct reactions or responses to the experience of losing the phone but there's so much to learn about each level.

Level 1: CRISIS — When things happen to us in life, we tend to get in crisis mode. This is where we panic, scream, and yell; sometimes we even break down. We get overwhelmed by our emotions. Our mind becomes clouded and we aren't able to think clearly. Our mind gets shattered.

Level 2: PROBLEM — This is where we get upset and annoyed. Though we may not panic, we are still upset and because of this, instead of dwelling on a viable solution, the mind ends up dwelling again and again on the problem.

Level 3: SITUATION — This is where we take a breather. We might be a bit upset at others or ourselves, but we acknowledge that now is not the time to wallow in anger or sorrow. Now is the time to take a deep breath and calmly look for a solution to come out of this situation.

In life, no one is free from sorrow, but we can be free from intense suffering called grief by analyzing our experiences correctly.

Wise do not
Grieve alone



If you treat a given event as a situation, it is just a situation to be dealt with. Keeping your mind calm, don't let the situation grow into a problem — and then develop further into a crisis!

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

Main Lesson 25 min

SORROW



GRIEF/SUFFERING



Story of the Two Arrows

There was once a man in the forest who was shot by an arrow. It pierced his arm and he was bleeding. After this happened, he started worrying, “Will I survive? What will happen to my arm? What about my family?” These emotions were like a second arrow piercing him. The first arrow wasn’t too bad, but “wallowing in suffering or grief,” which was the second arrow, made it even more painful and more difficult for him.

In life, we are all inflicted with the first arrow which is sorrow. Nobody is free of it. Everyone either has a physical disease, mental anxiety, a feeling of loneliness, poor relationships with others, financial hardships, etc. Even great saints and sages went through bodily disease. Everyone will be inflicted with the first arrow in some way or the other, but being inflicted with the second arrow — that’s our choice. Sorrow will come, but grief or suffering is optional.

What Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa means to say in this verse, **is that the wise do not grieve for the living, nor for the dead, because they do not let themselves be inflicted by the second arrow.**

How can we get out of being inflicted by the second arrow?

If we want to get out of being inflicted by the second arrow, then we must learn to view things from the spiritual lens and this is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa tries to teach Arjuna.

One of the forms of sorrow that we experience is called death. As we take a deeper look into it, death is something that is inevitable.

The Story of Kṛśā Gautamī and the Buddha

Kṛśā Gautamī had just lost her young toddler. In her grief, she went to the Buddha, seeking a miracle. “You are a great teacher, a Mahātmā,” she pleaded. “Please, bring my baby back to life.”

The Buddha, with his deep compassion, gazed at her and said, “I can bring your child back to life, but only if you can fulfill one condition. Go and collect



Why Me?



some mustard seeds from a household where death has never touched, where no one has ever experienced the sorrow of loss.”

Desperate, Kṛṣṇā Gautamī set out on her journey. She visited many homes, each family was willing to offer mustard seeds. But every time she asked, “Has death come to your home? Has anyone you loved died?” The answer was always, “Yes.” Whether it was a parent, a child, or a beloved friend, death had touched every family she visited.

Exhausted and heartbroken, Gautamī returned to the Buddha, empty-handed. She stood before him, silent, her shoulders heavy with the weight of her realization.

The Buddha looked at her with understanding. He knew that in her search, she had already discovered the truth — that death is inevitable. It is the one certainty in life, and it touches everyone, without exception.

With that understanding, Kṛṣṇā Gautamī found peace in her heart. She no longer sought to escape death, but instead accepted its place in the cycle of life.

And in that moment, she became the Buddha’s disciple, ordained as a nun, embracing the wisdom that death is not an end, but a natural part of life’s unfolding.

Standpoint of the Body: When we view things from the physical standpoint only, we tend to grieve. When we see that there is a body dying or going to die as in the case of Arjuna, then we feel that the loss of the body is the loss of the person we love. But as we learn from this story, **the loss of the body is inevitable**. The physical body will have to die someday. Death will come to everyone at some point in time. But here’s an ever deeper reason, not to grieve, **the body is not the person!**

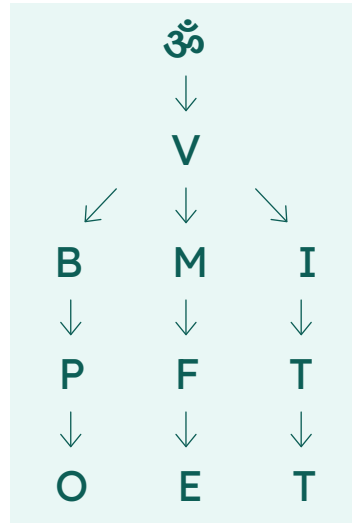
Reason Not to Grieve #1

Death is inevitable. Whatever is born shall perish.

Standpoint of the Jīva: The individual being residing in the body is known as jīva. Jīva is sometimes referred to as the individual self or ego. To better understand what jīva is, just think of your name which indicates your entire personality. That is the jīva. This is also known as the Perceiver, Feeler, Thinker (PFT) in Pūjya Gurudev’s BMI chart. According to our scriptures, although the body dies, the jīva does not. The jīva actually goes and takes up another body.

Main Lesson

continued



BMI Chart

vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naro 'parāṇi,
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī.

Just as one casts off their worn-out
clothes and puts on new ones, so also
the embodied-Self casts off its worn-out
bodies and enters others which are new.

2.22

Let's say you have a full and exciting Saturday ahead. You start the morning with an intense workout, followed by an interview at a doctor's office for a summer job. After that, you head to Bala Vihar for a special festival pūjā. Given the variety of activities on your schedule, would anything special be required to manage the day?

For everything you have planned, a few changes of clothes are necessary.

Whenever we want to enter a new field, we must dress appropriately. We need to change out of our clothes. The clothes worn previously may no longer serve their purpose.



Ask the class: what sort of attitude does one have when changing in and out of the Saturday clothes?

In the verse, **“worn out”** means **“no longer suitable for the next field of experience.”** Just as we cannot successfully work out at the gym in silk Indian clothing — the jīva can no longer function in that particular body and must move to another one. This change of body is essential to facilitate the jīva's evolution. Once the jīva's purpose is fulfilled with the given body equipment, that equipment becomes useless, and the jīva is eager to get new equipment to continue its evolution.

 Cycle of Birth
And Death!



When does this jīva go? Who determines it?

The vāsanās (past tendencies) and the karma of the jīva determine when it can no longer express through this body and has exhausted all possible expressions. Just like when you're heading to the gym, you realize that changing out of your silk Indian clothes into sweatpants and a t-shirt is necessary for a proper workout.

Note that the body being biologically old or young IS NOT the determining factor for the jīva's departure, suitability is. The jīva has many desires it must express or exhaust and must do so through suitable body equipment.

When someone young passes away, their jīva is deciding to go. We cry and weep because we do not understand. We are not looking at the whole picture.

One may then ask this question: Why should we take care of our bodies knowing that someday they will die anyway? It is because they are a gift from Bhagavān. In this very lifetime, we have the opportunity to use our bodies as instruments for sādhanā and sevā, serving all beings and progressing further on our spiritual journey. **Therefore, the jīva leaves when it can no longer express through the body it's in.**

What kind of body or environment will that jīva get next?

The jīva will get a body and environment according to its karmas and vāsanās.

So, if we look at our own lives:

- Why is it we got this body?
- Why are we in this environment?
- Why are we in this place right here and now?

At some point we desired this, we wanted it. That is why we are here. That is what is pushing us birth after birth — our vāsanās (unmanifest) are expressed as desires (manifest) and actions. This is how the jīva gets into a new body.

Some people may not believe in rebirth or reincarnation. But it's only through rebirth and reincarnation that we can explain how people are born as child prodigies or how twins in a certain household with the same parents, the same lifestyle, and the same food can have very different personalities. Even if their environments are the same, their vāsanās are different due to their past lives.

Reason Not to Grieve #2

The jīva has to leave the current body because it can no longer express through it. It needs to take up another body to move further on its spiritual journey.

Further Reading

Dr. Brian Weiss,
*Many Lives,
Many Masters.*

Main Lesson

continued

Sometimes, people try to bring back or hold back their loved ones from leaving the body, actually this isn't helping them because they are preparing for their next journey. The best thing we can do is let them go peacefully with a deep understanding that they are ready for their next journey.

Now, here's an even deeper insight. We saw that the body is not the person but guess what? **The person is not the person.**

Standpoint of Ātma: The Bhagavād-gītā tells us that in all actuality we are not the body which dies nor the jīva that transmigrates. We are actually the Ātman that is never born and never dies.

na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ,
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇaḥ
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.

(The Ātman) is not born, nor does
It die. Nor is it that having come
to exist, It will again cease to be.
It is unborn, eternal, changeless
and ancient. It is not killed when
the body is killed.

2.20

Here Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that actually **our essence is Ātman.**

Here are key words to keep in mind:

- **Unborn** — Ātman is never born
- **Eternal** — Ātman never dies
- **Changeless** — Ātman never changes
- **Ancient** — Ātman is always as it is

The **body** may go through so many changes. Your body as a baby, child, teenager, and young adult all seem very different.

Among all of these bodies — baby, childhood, teenager — which body are you?

None. Throughout the changes of the body, YOU remained the same, aware of all of them.

The **mind** also goes through many changes. The mind is the seat of emotions. The emotions that you had yesterday may be different from today. The emotions you have later on tonight might be different from now.

Among all of these emotions — joy, sorrow, anxiety, peace, nervousness, calmness — which one are you?

None. Throughout the changes of the mind, YOU remained the same, aware of all of them.

The **intellect** goes through many changes. This is the seat of all ideas and intelligence. The knowledge that you had in first grade is very different from the knowledge that you have now. There are some pieces of knowledge we remember and some we forget. Sometimes, we forget what we learned last year or even last week!

Among all of the forms of knowledge that have come and gone — history, chemistry, calculus, language — which form of knowledge are you?

None. Throughout the remembering and forgetting of knowledge, YOU remained the same, aware of all of them.

That YOU is called the **Ātman**. No weapon can destroy It, no fire can burn It, no water can wet It, no wind can dry It.

One way to remember our real nature as Ātman is **Indestructible, Changeless, Eternal (ICE, ICE baby)**.

Reason Not to Grieve #3

Our true Self is the Ātman, which is never born, and It never dies.

Sometimes the next step is not forward, it is out of the frame entirely.

Unknown

We have seen three reasons why we shouldn't grieve:

1. Death is inevitable. Whatever is born shall perish.
2. The jīva has to leave the current body because it can no longer express itself through it. It needs to take up another body to move further on its spiritual journey.
3. Our true Self is the Ātman which is never born and It never dies.

How does this relate to Arjuna? Arjuna was grieving because he felt that in the battlefield he would “kill” Droṇa, Bhīṣma, and his relatives. However, Bhagavān was trying to tell Arjuna, that actually nobody can be killed and nobody can kill anyone. Because our real nature is the Ātman!

Every body dies,
NOBODY dies.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

Activity 10 min

This demonstrates the indestructibility of the Self (Ātman), when the jīva changes bodies during the process of death.

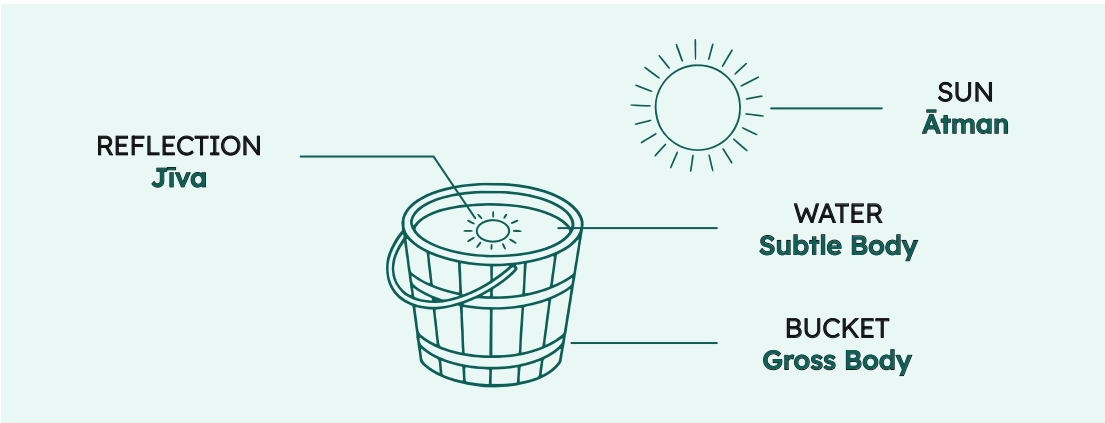
Supplies needed:

- 1 table lamp
- 3 empty cups
- 3 cups filled with water

Activity
continued

Instructions: Turn the table lamp on and place it above the cups filled with water.

Ask the class: What do you notice? Let’s try to label each part.



Breaking the cup: Now, the teacher should pour the water from the cups that are filled into the empty cups. Have the students crumple and throw away the old cups.

Questions: What happened to the old cups? What happened to the water? What happened to the light? Discuss, and try to connect to the concepts from the diagram.

What happened when the cups were crumpled and water transferred?

TABLE LAMP “SUN”	CUP	WATER	REFLECTION
Pure, Unchanging Consciousness (Ātman)	Gross Body	Subtle Body (mind and intellect)	Individual self (jīva)
The table lamp symbolizes the sun, by whose light everything is illuminated, but which remains untouched by anything it illumines. Notice that the light did not change, waver or get affected. It did not die or modify in any way: It is ICE (Indestructible, Changless, and Eternal).	Breaking the cup represents the death of the gross body. The cup crumpled and died, like the gross body.	Transferring the water represents the subtle body traveling to the next body. The water didn’t die or change either. It moved, flowed into another cup.	The reflection appears to go into unseen state when the water is being changed, then reappears in the new cup!

Discuss the following questions with the class.

When does the cup break (i.e., when does death occur)?

When the jīva can no longer express through the current body, then the cup breaks. The cup breaks for EVERYONE! There's no exception to this rule.

What exactly travels to the next body?

The mind and intellect equipment along with the jīva goes to the next body.

What happens to the light?

The light is completely unaffected. When the cup breaks (dies) and the water moves to a new cup, the **reflection of the light** shifts accordingly. But **the light itself is unaffected** — it continues to shine, unmoved by the changing reflections.

So too, the true Self (light) is unaffected by the changes in the body (cup), mind and intellect/subtle body (water), or jīva (reflection).

It remains constant, pure, and unchanging, while the body, mind, intellect, and jīva are subject to the cycles of birth, death, or transmigration.

Because we are Ātman (Self), we never die.

Just as the sun is unaffected by the bucket or its breaking, the true Self remains untouched by birth, death, or any other change in the physical or subtle world. It is **ICE (Indestructible, Changeless, Eternal)**.



Discussion

Does this mean that if someone dies, we shouldn't grieve?

For example: Aarav, a joyful 17 year-old, tragically dies in a car accident during a terrible storm. His close friends, Dev and Meera, are devastated by the untimely loss. Should they grieve or not?

Debrief: To grieve means to fully express our sadness and even wallow in it because we are unaware of our true nature (Ātman) or unable to hold on to it. Grieving may help us let everything out of our system, which in turn creates a space for healing. However, sometimes, people get so caught up in their own grief that they fail to respond to situations appropriately or help others around them. They fail to do their dharma because they get caught up in drama.

Activity

continued

It's important to note that not to grieve doesn't mean that we don't cry. We may express sadness and even sorrow, but we don't wallow in it. It doesn't mean that we become apathetic towards others' emotions. It actually means the opposite. It makes us understand and accept the situation more easily so that we are free of wallowing in sorrow and we can pay more attention to helping others heal.

Because the wise have knowledge of **ICE (Indestructible, Changeless, Eternal)**, they do not break down. On the contrary, their hearts are so big that their focus is to help others and provide comfort. They are more sensitive, compassionate, and loving than anyone else because they are the pillars upon which everyone can lean on.

Let's explore this further:

When someone passes away in the family, people respond in different ways:

1. The ones who really break down and cry because they cannot handle it, and let themselves feel and express all of their emotions. They often need special care and attention and cannot see things clearly, because they are overpowered by emotions.
2. The ones who don't break down in the beginning because they are trying to be strong for others are broken deep inside. After some time, they too will break down. Maybe they are the eldest sibling and they have to hold down the fort. They can only hold it down for a short time before they too break.
3. There are the ones who are not so identified with the person and they are generally okay, but they may get a little disturbed at death and start looking at their own lives and imagine all sorts of situations.
4. There are the wise. They understand exactly what happens. They know that they are Ātman (ICE). They feel a deep sense of compassion for others arising from their sense of oneness with all. Because they are not broken inside, they can be the pillar of support in that family setting. They can see things clearly and be most responsive to everyone's needs.

Additional Activity:



Read "The Last Days of Swami Tapovanam."



The Last Days
of Swami
Tapovanam





Discussion

From which standpoint was Pūjya Swami Tapovanam speaking to Pūjya Gurudev? Did he think that he was the body, jīva or Ātman?

- Was he afraid of death?
- Was he inflicted by two arrows or one arrow?
- How did he respond?

Debrief: Swami Tapovanam knew he was truly the Ātman — Indestructible, Changeless, Eternal (ICE) Self. He knew that nothing could destroy him and therefore he was absolutely unafraid. He was inflicted by one arrow — death was coming to him. However, he didn't let that cause any fear or grief in him. He didn't view it as a crisis or a problem, but he viewed it as a situation and he responded from the deepest spiritual vision.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students for their key takeaways from this session.

Slogan

Says Kṛṣṇa, ICE, ICE Baby

I am Indestructible,
Changeless, Eternal

If we truly imbibe this, then we need not fear death or even grieve.

Sādhana

Reflect on the below through a journal entry on “The Changeless Core of Who I Am.”

- Reflect on how you've changed over the years — physically, emotionally, or mentally. Now think about the part of you that has stayed the same. It might be your values, beliefs, or inner strength, or deeper — the Ātman.
- Write down: What has stayed the same about you through different phases of life? How does the idea of your inner self being changeless bring you comfort?

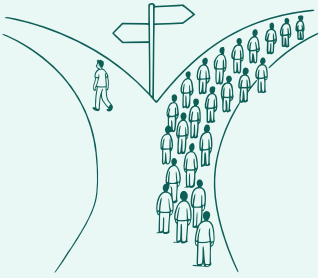
Conclude with the closing prayers.



Secret of Success — Svadharma

In this lesson, we discuss the types of actions we should engage in according to scriptures and how to explore one's purpose by understanding svadharma.

2.31  3.35 



svadharmam api cāvekṣya
na vikampitum arhasi,
dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreya'nyat
kṣatriyasya na vidyate.

Further, looking at thy own duty, thou ought not to waver, for there is nothing higher for a kṣatriya than a righteous war.

śreyān svadharma viguṇaḥ
paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt,
svadharma nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ
paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ.

Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is fraught with fear (is productive of positive danger).

Time 55 min

Materials

5m | Opening

Whiteboard

5m | Introduction

3 papers for each student

20m | Main Lesson

☑ **My Vision Statement** printouts for each student

20m | Activity

☑ **Svadharma** (slides)

5m | Conclusion

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 2.31, 3.35.

Swami Chinmayananda. *Self-Unfoldment*.

☑ Swami Chinmayananda. "Svadharma."

☑ Swami Chinmayananda. "Key to Prosperity and Peace!"

☑ Swami Chinmayananda. "Follow your Dharma: Don't be a Copycat."

☑ Swami Swatmananda. "2 Steps Closer - Discover your Svadharma." 28:00 - 1:52:33.

☑ Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. "Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2 Verses 29-33." 28:07 - 42:02.

☑ Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. "Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3 : Verses 32 - 35." 42:18 - 57:00.

☑ Jim Carrey. "Jim Carrey on Choosing fear and love."

Secret of Success — Svadharma

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min



Draw two arrows on the board. Ask the class to recollect the previous lesson using the two arrows.

SORROW



GRIEF/SUFFERING



Can we avoid being inflicted by the first arrow? No. Because this is inevitable. Everyone goes through some form of sorrow or the other, either in the physical level (disease, bodily pain), emotional level (heartbreak, anxiety, loneliness), or intellectual level (self-doubt, insecurity, criticism).

Can we avoid being inflicted by the second arrow? Yes! How? By understanding that we are beyond all of these levels. Our true Nature is Ātman (ICE — Indestructible, Changeless, Eternal).

Knowing that, one doesn't grieve or suffer; one isn't affected by the second arrow.



Give each student a sheet of paper and ask them to draw one or two arrows depending on their experiences during this past week. Were they inflicted by one arrow or two arrows? After drawing, ask them to share their thoughts.

Now that we learned how to handle experiences like death, let's take a deeper look at how to handle life.

Introduction 5 min



Ask the class: have you ever thought about what success means? List their ideas and answers on the whiteboard.

Many people feel that success is earning a lot of wealth, attaining a lot of power, or having a lot of followers. However, in the Bhagavad-gītā, success has a very different meaning.

Success is upholding dharma without compromising — leading to an inner fulfillment and total contentment, as well as outer benefit to society at large.

Recall the definition of dharma from **lesson 3: “Dharma — Introduction”** — **RTRPRT** — the right thing at the right place at the right time. The right thing is based on the color of one’s character (varṇa) and one’s stage of life (āśrama).

Today, we’re going to take a deeper look at the color of our character by analyzing svadharma. In the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to follow his svadharma in order to attain success.

Main Lesson 20 min

Svadharma — One’s Own Path

Lord Kṛṣṇa was in the process of explaining to Arjuna that he should not grieve from different standpoints. He addresses this from the standpoints of the Ātman, jīva, and body. Now He realizes that Arjuna still doesn’t understand, so He decides to address Arjuna’s problem from the standpoint of **svadharma**. He wants Arjuna to understand he must play his role and purify his mind so he can realize who he is.

svadharmam api cāvekṣya
na vikampitum arhasi,
dharmyāddhi yuddhācchreya’nyat
kṣatriyasya na vidyate.

Further, looking at thy own
duty, thou ought not to waver,
for there is nothing higher for a
kṣatriya than a righteous war.

2.31

What is svadharma?

Svadharma is your inner calling, a unique path that can be applied to various aspects of your life, including:

- **Social life**
- **Career**
- **Relationships**
- **Subjects to study**
- **Goals to set**

Be yourself;
everyone else is
already taken.

Oscar Wilde

Svadharma is not a predefined blueprint or magic formula — it is a personal journey that evolves over time. It is an ongoing **exploration**, and the key to this journey lies in **asking the right questions**.

Main Lesson

continued

Sva — one's
Dharma — essential nature

1. **Svadharmā vs. Talent**

A **talent** is something you may have, but it doesn't necessarily mean it's your passion or life's calling.

For example: you may have a natural ability to solve mathematical equations, but that doesn't mean mathematics is your passion or that it defines your purpose in life. Talent is something you may be good at, but **svadharmā** goes beyond just ability — it connects to what truly resonates with you and brings you fulfillment.

2. **Svadharmā vs. Hobbies**

Hobbies are activities that you enjoy doing in your leisure time, but they often change depending on mood, season, or circumstance.

For example: during COVID, people developed new hobbies like learning a new instrument, cooking and baking, even sewing and crocheting, because they spent so much time at home. But that doesn't really mean that's your **svadharmā**.

3. **Svadharmā vs. College Major**

Your **college major** is an academic subject or field of study that you pursue, often influenced by personal interest, societal expectations, or future job prospects. However, choosing a college major doesn't necessarily mean it's your **svadharmā**.

Many students choose majors that are practical or in demand, which may not always align with their deeper inner calling. **Svadharmā** is more than just an academic or professional path — it's the natural expression of who you are and what you are meant to do in the world, beyond just acquiring knowledge or preparing for a job.

4. **Svadharmā vs. Professional Career**

Your **professional career** refers to a specific occupation or field of expertise you work in. It is the long-term trajectory of your working life, involving various roles, experiences, and professional growth over time. It often includes choices based on financial stability, societal norms, and personal ambitions. It might be something you excel in, such as being a doctor, lawyer, or teacher. While **svadharmā** is sometimes translated to mean a profession or career, it's much deeper than simply the job you do for a living.

Svadharma is the work you do when it aligns deeply with your soul's purpose — fulfilling a calling beyond the limits of a job or career. For some, their professional career simply supports the thing they truly love. But when your professional career is your svadharma, it brings a deeper sense of fulfillment.

Svadharma is your natural aptitude and intrinsic duty, the path that comes to you effortlessly and aligns with your true essence. It's not something you choose because others tell you to do it, but because it's your authentic expression. **Svadharma** is your natural field of **expression** and **evolution**.

- **Expression:** It's how you authentically express yourself in the world — what brings you the deepest sense of fulfillment and authenticity.
- **Evolution:** It's the path that allows you to grow, evolve, and fulfill your potential — not just in the material world, but personally and spiritually.

Svadharma is one's unique internal nature expressed through work in alignment with your highest purpose and passion. It transcends external roles, talents, hobbies, and professions, and is about living a life that resonates with who you truly are.



Example

There is a person who is deeply passionate about healing the body through natural means. They enjoy reading and learning about natural remedies, different foods, herbs, and spices that promote health in the body and mind. They are very open and curious, as well as loving and giving.

Their svadharma is healing through nature. This person would be well-suited to being a teacher or healer in that field, like caregivers, physical therapists, homeopathic/ayurvedic doctors, etc. Healing and helping others brings them peace, contentment, and closer to their spiritual nature.

Svadharma
0:00 - 2:37



Main Lesson

continued



Svadharna



Discussion

Give your students the following facts. Let them then discuss what the svadharna of each individual is.

Albert Einstein

- He didn't speak until he was four years old.
- When he was five, his dad gave him a pocket compass and that became his favorite toy.
- From age seven, he started loving mathematics and science.
- By sixteen years old, he had published his first scientific paper.
- One of his favorite things to do was to head out onto a lake in a boat and take his notebook with him, to think and write everything down.

Based on these facts and what you know of Albert Einstein, what do you think his svadharna is?

- Curiosity, relentless pursuit of knowledge, dedication to using his scientific insights to benefit humanity, sense of humility, and reverence toward the mysteries of the universe, etc.

Follow-up: What if Albert Einstein became a businessman?

Amanda Gorman

- Gorman is the youngest inaugural poet in American history.
- She had difficulty with speech, so she turned to poetry to express herself. Gorman began writing poetry to help her find her voice. In high school, she began reciting her poetry out loud. This helped her improve her speech.
- In 2017, she was named the nation's first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate.
- She has founded a nonprofit to support youth education and expression.
- She is a United Nations Youth Delegate.
- She was inspired by her mother, a single Black mother and teacher, and later by Malala Yousafzai, a female education activist in Pakistan and a Nobel Prize Laureate.

Based on these facts and what you know of Amanda Gorman, what do you think her svadharna is?

- Poetic expression

Follow-up: What if she succumbed to her speech impediment and became a computer programmer?

Kalpana Chawla

- While everyone else was drawing mountains and rivers, she drew airplanes.
- One of Kalpana's school teachers remembers the question the inquisitive and sensitive girl had once asked her, "How can people be divided into classes, sects, and religions, when they all look alike from the sky?"
- She faced strong resistance from her father and also in the Punjab Engineering College. She faced all of them and continued to follow her dream.
- She was the only girl who chose aeronautical engineering in Punjab Engineering College.
- She was the first Indian woman to travel on a space shuttle.
- "For me it was very far-fetched to think I would get to fly on a spaceship because I lived in a very small town in India. Forget about space. I didn't even know if my parents were going to let me go to the engineering college."

Based on these facts and what you know of Kalpana Chawla, what do you think her svadharma is?

- Exploration, science, discovery

Follow-up: What if Kalpana Chawla became a carnatic vocalist?

Arjuna

- He was born with an extreme talent in archery and warfare generally.
- He found himself extremely passionate about archery and studied the practice with dedication from a young age.
- He used these skills to heroically defend the world from evil his entire life, leading up to the current moment.
- Arjuna's time in exile was filled with spiritual growth which allowed him to truly understand dharma, and his hardships and intense austerities led him to receive divine weapons like the Pāśupatāstra from Bhagavān Śiva.

Based on these facts and what you know of Arjuna, what do you think his svadharma is?

- Warrior/kṣatriya

Follow-up: What if he left the war and became an ascetic?

Main Lesson

continued



Refer back to the verse in discussion of this final example.

Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna very clearly to perform his **svadharma**. If Arjuna were to try to abandon his duty as a warrior, which comes to him most naturally and is something he expressed throughout his life, he wouldn't find peace. He would feel frustration at constantly acting counter to his inner nature. If he took the path of the ascetic, he would find that the duties of an ascetic are not ones he was suited for, in either talent or temperament. Most importantly, he would not be inspired to perform the duties of an ascetic the way he was inspired to fight for dharma his entire life. The world would suffer, for the hero who fought for justice would not have fought when the world needed him the most.

Why should one follow their svadharma?

- One enjoys life, and life becomes beautiful.
- Society benefits when you do what you are good at.
- Success is natural when your heart is in it.

What if one doesn't follow svadharma?

- One doesn't find joy in their field of study/work.
- One doesn't end up serving in the best way, in the best capacity they can.
- The world may lose out on a great person!

Perils of Paradharma

śreyān svadharmaḥ vighṇaḥ
paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt,
svadharmaḥ nidhanaṁ śreyāḥ
paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ.

Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is fraught with fear (is productive of positive danger).

3.35

Paradharma is what we pursue which is opposed (para) to our natural abilities (dharma). We do this because of FEAR — which manifests in many ways.

1. **Uncertainty** — We may be afraid that pursuing our passion may not bring financial success or security in life. Due to concerns about this uncertain future, we may choose a different path. For example: school teachers and social workers provide vital roles to society but are often not paid in



Key to
Prosperity and
Peace!



Follow your
Dharma: Don't
be a Copycat



alignment with the importance of the roles they serve. Considering this, people may choose something more financially secure instead.

2. **Pressure** — We may be afraid of being judged for the profession we pick. Society has deemed some roles to be lesser than others. A plumber or an electrician may outearn certain “more well-respected” careers like some types of engineers, but those careers can be wrongly judged by society as lesser and have a social stigma attached to them. Therefore pressure is built for us to avoid those paths.
3. **Worry** — We may feel that certain careers have a higher risk and that embarking on them is less safe. For artists or actors, success can be hard to achieve, and they may focus on frightening scenarios of less successful performers struggling to pay bills. Due to increasing worries, they may avoid even pursuing their natural aptitude.

When we follow paradharma, what happens?

We find that the career or profession we follow leaves us unfulfilled at the end of the day, rather than inspired. Work exhausts us mentally instead of invigorating us. We long for something else, something different, something that makes us happy. We wake up dreading the next workday, instead of becoming excited to face the day. We develop resentment in the long term.

Instead of falling into this cycle, it’s in our best interest to discover our **svadharma**.

Svadharma is not always easy to follow:

- It often requires **making difficult choices**.
- The courage to **overcome personal desires**.
- The possibility of **enduring painful consequences** for the sake of **fulfilling one’s higher purpose**.

Students can watch this clip of Jim Carrey’s speech on Choosing love over fear.

Reflect on these quotes from the video.



You can fail at what you don’t want, so you might as well take the chance on doing what you love.

How will you serve the world?

The effect you have on others is the most valuable currency there is.

Jim Carrey

Choosing love
over fear



Main Lesson

continued

Following svadharma can make us:

- Inspired
- Enthusiastic
- Fulfilled
- Have a zest for life



Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself. Do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it.

Bruce Lee

Activity 20 min

Svadharma and Vision Discovery Exploration

This exploration can be a simple, yet reflective way to guide teens to think through their strengths, passions, and values. Each question can encourage them to consider who they are, what excites them, and what brings them fulfillment. Here's a possible list of prompts:

Age	What was/is your favorite hobby/toy/game?	Who was/is your role model?	What did/do you want to become?	What were/are your most inspiring moments?
0 - 5				
6 - 10				
11 - now				

If time permits, discuss some open-ended questions.

When do I feel most energized and alive?

(Is it when you're creating something, helping others, learning, or playing a sport?)

What skills do I feel most confident about?

(This could include communication, problem-solving, artistic abilities, leadership, etc.)

Who do I admire, and what qualities do I admire in them?

(Think about role models or people who inspire you. What do they do, and what do you respect about their actions or values?)

What challenges or struggles have I overcome in my life?

(What did you learn from these experiences, and how have they shaped you?)

What would I do if I wasn't afraid to fail?

(This question helps teens think about their deeper interests and desires without the fear of judgment or failure.)

What makes me feel fulfilled or peaceful?

(Is it helping someone, creating something beautiful, solving problems, or being in nature?)

Once they've answered these, guide them to identify patterns or connections to help pinpoint potential areas of their **svadharma**.

With this new information, have them visualize their future.

Create a Vision Statement

Ask yourself two questions:

1. What is my svadharma?
2. In what way can I best serve the world?

Guidelines for a Vision Statement

WHAT innate qualities will you use and what field will you use them in?

FOR WHOM is your target audience/market/community?

WHY is this path right for you? What is the positive difference you will make?



Example Vision Statement

WHAT innate qualities will you use and what field will you use them in?

Innate qualities: creativity, imagination, story-telling

Field: writing books

FOR WHOM is your target audience/market/community?

Target audience: children of Indian background (ages 8 – 15)

WHY is this path right for you? What is the positive difference you will make?

Right path: It's a way to express my innate qualities to benefit others.

Positive difference: Children can learn about our culture and tradition and feel a sense of pride.

Activity

continued

Short vision statement: Inspire young readers to connect with their heritage, fostering pride in India's diverse history through writing engaging books for children.

Explanation:

"I will use my creativity and storytelling skills to write engaging books for children, introducing them to the richness of Indian culture and traditions. My goal is to inspire young readers to connect with their heritage, fostering pride and understanding of India's diverse history, values, and customs, so they grow up with a deep respect for their cultural roots."

Now have the students create their own vision statement looking at the trends that stood out to them in the earlier part of the exploration. This can also be made more colorful. Use construction paper, colored markers, pencils, and maybe have them even draw an image of the vision statement.

Have them write down answers to the provided guidelines, and then come up with a one or two sentence vision statement followed by an explanation.



My Vision Statement



My Vision Statement

WHAT innate qualities will you use and what field will you use them in?

FOR WHOM is your target audience/market/community?

WHY is this path right for you? What is the positive difference you will make?

Short Vision Statement

Explanation

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

- **Svadharmā** is an individual's natural calling that can serve the greater good.
- Arjuna's internal conflict in the Mahābhārata highlights the importance of fulfilling one's svadharmā, even when facing difficult or uncomfortable situations.
- Pursuing **paradharma** leads to confusion and suffering.
- When we work in the field of our svadharmā, we find the greatest joy and everyone benefits.

Slogan

Live YOUR
Svadharmā

Sādhana

Meet a Mentor

Arjuna took the guidance of Lord Kṛṣṇa who knew him so well. Who are the people that know you the best? Working with someone who knows you well — like a mentor, teacher, or family member — can help you explore your svadharmā some more. Here are a few questions you can explore with them:

- "What do you think I am good at?"
- "In what ways do you see me contributing positively to those around me?"

This will allow the student to identify areas where they may be best suited to fulfill their responsibilities.

Also, you can share the role models you listed in class and discuss the qualities of these role models, so you can further understand how those figures align with your own sense of purpose.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Time Management

This lesson deals with understanding the different kinds of action, how to perform the right action, and how to manage time when faced with distractions and challenges.

2.47 



karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe
mā phaleṣu kadācana,
mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi.

Thy right is to work only, but never
to its fruits; let the fruit of action
be not thy motive, nor let thy
attachment be to inaction.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
10m	Introduction
15m	Activity
20m	Main Lesson
5m	Conclusion

Materials

1 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper for each student

 **Time Management from the Bhagavad Gita** (slides)

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 2.47.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Do All Your Duties!"

 The Divine Life Society. "Savasana."

Time Management

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous lesson, we learned about **svadharma**. Svadharma is your natural aptitude and intrinsic duty, the path that comes to you effortlessly and aligns with your true essence. It's not something you choose because others tell you to do it, but because it's your authentic expression.

Svadharma is your natural field of **expression** and **evolution**.

Svadharma really helps us unfold and grow when we use it to serve the world at large. Ask each student to share vision statements from last week's class. Also ask them to share their experience meeting a mentor. Did they learn anything new about themselves?

Introduction 10 min

Ask the students to sit in a circle and then ask this question: What challenges do you have in time management? Ask each student to share their personal challenges.

After this, provide each student with a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to draw a big clock (one that covers the entire page) and put the numbers on it (just like a clock).

Now, ask them to make appointments with each other for each o'clock. They have to find someone for their one o'clock, two o'clock, etc. without double-booking anyone.

Students should make appointments with one another by writing each other's names for their appointed time. Give them about 3-5 minutes. It is okay if they do not have appointments for all their numbers after the allotted time.

Activity 15 min

karmaṇyevādhikāraste
mā phaleṣu kadācana,
mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi.

Thy right is to work only, but
never to its fruits; let the fruit of
action be not thy motive, nor let
thy attachment be to inaction.

If there are fewer than 12 students, write fewer numbers on the clock (e.g., 6 students means only numbers 1-5 on the clock).

Today, we are just going to focus on the first part of the verse:

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “Your right is only to perform action.” The first part of karma yoga is actually all about **performing the right type of action and managing our time.**

In this verse, the word “karma” means action. Sometimes karma may mean reincarnation or the results of actions, but in this case, it means action. **There are four types of actions according to our scriptures:** nitya, naimittika, kāmya, and niṣiddha karma, applied to our equipment: body (physical), mind (emotional), and intellect (knowledge/convictions).



Define each one for the class and ask them to come up with their own examples. Some examples are given for the teacher’s reference.

1. **Nitya karma** — daily duties

- **Body:** showering, eating, sleeping, doing chores, cleaning the room, making the bed
- **Mind (something to make it quiet and calm):** doing japa, saying a prayer, chanting, singing/listening to bhajans, listening to soothing music, meditating, connecting with family
- **Intellect (something to make us think deeper):** doing homework, studying scriptures, reading good books, listening to inspiring talks

Weekly duties also come in the category of nitya karma.

- **Body:** shopping for essentials (grocery), doing laundry
- **Mind:** visiting a temple, going to Bala Vihar
- **Intellect:** going to Bala Vihar

2. **Naimittika karma** — occasional duties

- Attending to a sick family member, going for an important wedding or funeral, visiting the doctor.
- These must be done as part of our family obligations.

3. **Kāmya karma** — desire-prompted actions (not duties), which should be done in free time AFTER duties are completed

- **Body:** eating a special meal
- **Mind:** hanging out with friends, scrolling on phone, watching a movie or show
- **Intellect:** reading a fun book or learning a new hobby

Do All Your Duties!



Activity

continued

For the “appointments,” if there are fewer students in your class, make sure you only use the assigned o’clock numbers. The numbers given are only as an example.

Because the number of students may vary for each class, not all of them may have a partner for that specific time. In that case, teachers can assign the student without a partner to a group.

4. **Niṣiddha karma** — actions that are against the law or against scriptural injunctions
 - **Body:** impure acts like smoking or drinking
 - **Mind:** unkindness towards others, bullying, shaming others, etc.
 - **Intellect:** cheating, lying, tricking, or acting against our convictions/what is right

On the same sheet of paper where you drew the clock, flip it over to the back. Fold it so that you get four quadrants. Name each quadrant after a type of karma. Each student will have a few minutes to write down all of their personal karmas in the appropriate quadrant. Give them about five minutes to think this through.

Now, flip your paper back to the clock. Find your 2 o’clock partner and discuss your nitya karmas with them. (Give them a few minutes)

Now, find your 5 o’clock (any number is fine) partner and discuss your naimittika karmas with them. (Give them a few minutes)

Now, find your 9 o’clock partner and discuss your kāmya karmas with them. (Give them a few minutes)

Don’t worry, you don’t have to disclose your niṣiddha karmas. It’s good that we are acknowledging them, and maybe later, if people are comfortable, we can share them.

After this point, the teacher can go through each karma again and ask the students for their personal examples.

Main Lesson 20 min

Now that we have understood all the types of karmas, let’s see how to manage our time with these actions.

What happens if we perform kāmya karma before nitya karma?



Ask the students to share some examples of when this happened to them.

This is what happens. We look like this (teacher should show slide 16 from Time Management from the Bhagavad-gītā slide deck, or make a really stressed out and anxious expression).

Have you ever looked like this? Do we actually have fun in this case?



Time Management from the Bhagavad-gītā



**Example**

Instead of studying for an upcoming test first, we go out and hang out with our friends. Usually, when we do *kāmya* karma before *nitya* karma, we don't really get to have fun because all the while when we are with our friends, we are thinking of all the things that we need to get done.

Someone once asked Swami Tejomayananda: How does one have fun in life?

He replied: Be serious!

**Discussion**

Fill out a similar table together as a class. Think about what happens

- If you perform *kāmya* karmas before *nitya* karmas.
- If you perform *nitya* karmas before *kāmya* karmas.

The following table is for teacher reference:

Kāmya Before Nitya	Nitya Before Kāmya
Stress	Ease
Regret	Peace
Anxiety	Calmness
Worry	Relaxation
Guilt	Enjoyment
Procrastination	Timeliness
Forgetfulness	Remembrance

Main Lesson

continued

Time Management Tip 1: NBK (Nitya Before Kāmya) — Always do nitya karma before kāmya karma

Always do what we **have** to do before things that we **like** to do. Always fulfill our daily dharma before our pursuit of desire-prompted actions.

1. **Even in nitya karma, prioritize the most important and urgent task first.** While many things seem like they are important and urgent, and have to be done right away, take a few minutes to analyze exactly what is truly important and work on that first. We should prioritize things that take us towards our greater goal in life along with our daily duties. For example: if one has to decide between coming to Bala Vihar or finishing homework due on Monday, we should know the value of self-development enough to prioritize our spiritual development in Bala Vihar over our academic requirements. Give up a kāmya karma that day to accommodate both.
2. **Tackle tasks one by one — single task instead of multi-task.** Give all your time and attention so that our minds are where our hands are. **Remember, you can only do one thing at a time well.**
3. **Wake up early instead of staying up late.** In our culture, the most efficient time of the day is known as brahma muhūrta (creator's hour). This is usually between 3:30 - 6:00 AM. During this time, our minds are completely fresh because we have just woken up from a long period of relaxation (deep sleep). The mind is charged and easily able to focus on anything. During this time, the atmosphere around us is also very quiet. There is the least amount of distractions, making it very conducive for us to study.
4. **Practice japa.** Those who practice japa as a sādhanā train themselves to have a very focused mind.

What if we need to take breaks? When there are so many nitya karmas to do, what if we just need a break from all of it? Can we do our kāmya karmas?

Time Management Tip 2: Take Breaks that Gain and Not Drain

Breaks are required. However, it's important to take the right kind of break.

**Example**

Playing video games, going on social media, or eating lots of junk food.



What are some of the things you do when you take a break? Ask the class to share.

How do we feel when we do this? Usually, this **drains** our energy instead of recharging us with relaxation and calmness. Usually, this gets us more agitated and disturbed, and we feel more tired.

On the other hand, when we take breaks that **recharge** us, or breaks that energize us, we feel much more relaxed and ready to face the next set of responsibilities.

If we feel really tired, one of the best things we can do is lie on the floor in śavāsana. Do this for just 10-15 minutes, and this will really help both the body and mind relax. This is much safer than taking a nap on the bed or couch, where we end up sleeping for hours!



Example

Taking a shower, going for a walk, eating a healthy snack, reading a good book, or lying in śavāsana.

Śavāsana



What if there's a conflict between nitya karma and naimittika karma?

Which one would you decide to go to first?

- Doctor's appointment or school?
- Family emergency or school?
- Very important family wedding or school?

Time Management Tip 3: Accept the Unexpected

When there's a conflict between nitya and naimittika, choose naimittika. This is assuming that the naimittika is very important.

While it's important to focus on our nitya karmas first, sometimes unexpected things occur in our lives. For example: someone gets sick in our household. Suddenly, we may have to adjust our routine to take care of them. We may have to miss our sports or dance practice that day, but it's completely okay. Instead of complaining about the unexpected, accept it. Know that there are certain things in our lives that happen and are beyond our control. Instead of fretting about them, adjust your schedule and adapt easily. This will make you more efficient and able to help with the given situation. Once the situation is handled with love and care, come up with a plan as to how you are going to catch up with what's required.

What if we had to attend our best friend's birthday bash? Would that fall under naimittika karma?

Being with friends and attending these events are valuable, however, this does not fall under naimittika karma. This is part of kāmya karma and should be done once the nitya karmas have been completed because the nitya karmas

Main Lesson

continued

are what sustains our body, mind, and intellect. Therefore, a friend's birthday party is not an excuse to miss out on nitya karmas, such as Bala Vihar, as these parties will continue to happen. If we start to prioritize our kāmya karmas, we will not have any time and energy to devote to nitya karmas.



Ask the class: Can you think of examples where you had to pick naimittika karma over nitya karma?

What happens when we get out of control with things that we like to do (kāmya karma)?

Have you ever binge-watched a TV show? Scrolled on social media for hours? Stayed up with friends beyond curfew time? Opened a huge bag of potato chips and ate the whole thing?

Time Management Tip 4: Discipline your Indiscipline

If you like to watch movies, play video games, and hang out with friends, then what should you do?

- Set aside time to be indisciplined. Set aside time AFTER your duties are completed, to watch a particular show that you just feel like watching or to use social media.
- Use it ONLY at that scheduled time.
- Plan to be with friends and be home at a certain time.



At this point, teachers can also ask students to share if they have any tips to discipline their indiscipline.

What about niṣiddha karma?

Time Management Tip 5: Stay on the Path of Dharma

When we do something that is immoral or that breaks the law, we tend to feel guilt, regret, uneasiness, and always on the edge. These thoughts take up so much mental energy that we can't focus on our daily duties. They take away our time and attention from the things that matter most because we end up wallowing in guilt and regret and sometimes even shame.



Example

For the next 30 minutes, I'm just going to watch my show. After that, I will go to sleep.



Ask the class: Does anyone want to share a niṣiddha karma?

At this point, the teacher can be the first one to share. Surely, we have all gotten a speeding ticket at some point or other! This will break the ice in the classroom and give the teens comfort and ease in sharing. When they do share, just acknowledge and move on. There's no need to praise or criticize the action. The main point is just for all of us to acknowledge that these are niṣiddha karmas and become aware of them, so that we do not repeat them now that we understand their consequences.

Ask the students to recap the time management tips:

1. NBK (nitya before kāmya)
2. Take breaks that gain and not drain
3. Accept the unexpected (naimittika over nitya)
4. Discipline the indiscipline
5. Stay on the path of dharma

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Now meet your 2 o'clock buddy and share a time management tip that you resonated with and your own personal time management tip.

Slogan

NBK
(Nitya Before
Kāmya)

Sāadhanā

Instead of taking DRAIN-ing breaks (going on social media, binging a show), take one of the GAIN-ing breaks discussed in class between your nitya karmas.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Acting with a Higher Vision

This lesson explores the difference between karma and karma yoga through the concept of Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi, or acting with a higher vision rather than acting with a lower or more selfish vision.

2.47 



karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe
mā phaleṣu kadācana,
mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi.

Thy right is to work only, but
never to its fruits; let the fruit
of action be not thy motive,
nor let thy attachment be to
inaction.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	None required
10m	Introduction	
25m	Main Lesson	
10m	Activity	
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 2.47.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Real Growth is in Striving for the Goal.”

🔗 “Transforming Indians to Transform India.”

Acting with a Higher Vision

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous lesson, we learned about managing our time to live a more peaceful and stress-free life. Can you recall the five time management tips?

1. NBK (Nitya Before Kāmya)
2. Take breaks that gain and not drain
3. Accept the unexpected (naimittika over nitya)
4. Discipline your indiscipline
5. Stay on the path of dharma

Were you able to take breaks that gain instead of drain this past week? Can you give examples of them?

Recall the verse we did last week.

karmaṇyevādhikāraste
mā phaleṣu kadācana,
mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi.

Thy right is to work only, but
never to its fruits; let the fruit of
action be not thy motive, nor let
thy attachment be to inaction.

2.47

Today, we are going to go deeper into this part of the verse: **mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ**.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “let the fruit of action be not thy motive.” Last week, we learned how to perform the right action and manage our time. Today, we are going to learn about the **attitude with which we act**.



Discussion

What do you think of the janitor's response? What if he said, “I'm just sweeping the corridor?” How would that be different?

Introduction 10 min

Story: John F. Kennedy Jr. and the Janitor

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy was visiting the NASA space station. During his tour of the facility, he met the many men and women working at the facility and asked about their work. There, he met a janitor cleaning in the hallway.

The President stopped, and casually inquired from the janitor about who he was and what his job was. The janitor replied, “Mr. President, I'm helping put a man on the moon.”

His response marks the difference between **karma yoga and karma**. The first part of karma yoga is **Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi**, which means acting with a higher vision or dedicating our actions unto God. This is different from karma, which is merely acting for one's own selfish agenda.

It's not about the profession or the action itself. One can even be a janitor. It's all about shifting the attitude with which we act. We can either be motivated by purely selfish desires on one end of the spectrum or selflessness at the other.

Main Lesson 25 min



Activity

Divide the class into groups. Each group should have about 3-4 people. Ask them to come up with a profession of their choice (e.g., lawyer, entrepreneur),

Ask them to divide their sheet of paper into three columns. Give them the "Category" prompts and ask them to complete the other two columns themselves.

A sample table is filled out below only for the teacher's reference. Do not give this out. Encourage the students to think on their own. After they fill out the table, ask them to share their responses for each profession and each category. The teacher may then add insights given below.

Profession: Doctor

Category	Karma (selfish vision)	Karma Yoga (higher vision)
Vision What would their vision be?	Driven by the need to gain material wealth and sense-pleasures at all costs.	Seeks the welfare of their patients.
Attitude What would their attitude be towards their own work?	May not enjoy their work and just see it as something that they have to do.	Will be inspired to come to work every day.

Main Lesson

continued

Work What kind of work would they do?	May overcharge, rush through, cheat, or cut corners with patients to accumulate more.	Work selflessly: healing, relieving pain and suffering, and advocating for healthy practices in society.
Quality of mind What would the quality of their mind be?	A mind which is constantly tensed, filled with numerous desires, and thinking of profits or pleasures. A mind easily consumed thinking about what others may have, jumping between feelings of inferiority and superiority, and prone to jealousy and envy.	A mind that is filled with noble thoughts, sees the bigger picture, reflects on how personal actions impact society, seeks the welfare of all, and is free of selfishness and ego.
Interaction with people What would people think of them?	People may not want to come back to this doctor, because they find that they aren't getting what they need.	Many people will be drawn to this doctor and want to be their patient, because they see the care and attention they receive from the doctor.
Success Will they find success in the long term?	This doctor may make a lot of money in the short term, but that doesn't mean they are successful, because they will not find fulfillment in their work.	Will truly find fulfillment in the work, which is inner success. As a result of this, more and more patients will be drawn to the doctor, which may lead to outer success.
Happiness and Peace Will they find happiness and peace?	No.	Yes.



Debrief: Ask the students which doctor (chosen profession) they would like to be? Would they like to be the one with the selfish vision or with the selfless vision?

When we act with selfish motives, out of personal desires, and focused only on personal results, we have strong expectations for the outcome of our actions. We get disappointed if things do not go the exact way we wished, no matter how much effort we put in. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the above verse that we should “let the fruit of action be not thy motive.” **Instead of being motivated by our desired expectations, we should let the higher vision inspire us to act.**

The majority of the world works from a selfish perspective and is therefore experiencing bondage. **Bondage means being tied to sorrow, pain, and suffering when the results we wish for deviate from our expectations.** A selfish mind is always bound to its attachments. It is always thinking about personal aggrandizement and is full of craving, lust, and passion — all of which are forms of suffering. Selfishness causes tunnel vision, so that we only see what we care about, while ignoring the larger context of life.

When we act out of a spirit of dedication to a higher goal or vision, this is called Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi (attitude of dedicating our action to God).

Such a spirit brings out the best in the individual, and also has the best possible outcome. The action performed with this attitude also benefits society at large which is none other than a living form of God. Hence, acting with this spirit is truly offering our actions to God.

Such a person is inspired to act not because of any specific result they wish for, but because the action they perform is righteous in and of itself. No task is too small for them, because the cause is grand. A janitor, therefore, contributes to putting a man on the moon! They work and give because that itself brings satisfaction to them, regardless of the result. For them, there is no attachment or bondage to expectation. There is no anxiety over the results. And so sorrow, pain, and suffering do not develop for them.

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

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

Do you think anyone can last throughout their lifetime performing selfish actions or actions with a lower vision?

Debrief: Selfishness cannot satisfy us. In the beginning, we might think that many people are acting selfishly in order to make a lot of money, so why not join the crowd? Many wealthy people still remain unsatisfied and greedy for more. This is because money, while important, is still just a tool. Money can purchase goods and services. For someone in poverty, money can provide vital support that will improve the quality of life. A monetarily successful person may find that, once their **needs** are met, they are left satisfying their **wants**. When people spend money on simple pleasures of the world, it may bring temporary joy and happiness. As soon as the experience ends, the pleasure fades, and sorrow returns.

To spend one's time and money in service of the world brings a different sort of joy. It is a joy that uplifts oneself and the world around them. Whether one is wealthy or poor, to give one's energy to others with the spirit of dedication brings a sense of peace and satisfaction that is more sturdy and long-lasting.



Real Growth is
in Striving for
the Goal



Acting with a higher vision is very inspiring.

It not only transforms us; it also transforms the world at large.



Discussion

Now watch Pūjya Gurudev's video: "Real Growth is in Striving for the Goal."

Discuss this quote: "Reaching the goal is not the goal; striving to reach there is the goal."

What does he mean by this?

Now, reflect on the video Transforming Indians to Transform India.

What do you notice about the examples given? How high did they strive?



Transforming
Indians to
Transform
India





Share the following anecdote about Ratan Tata.

When Indian billionaire Ratan Tata was asked by the radio presenter in a telephone interview: “Sir, what do you remember when you were the happiest in life?”

Ratan Tata said: “I have gone through four stages of happiness in life, and I finally understood the meaning of true happiness.

The first stage was to accumulate wealth and resources. But at this stage, I didn’t get the happiness I wanted.

Then came the second stage of collecting valuables and items. But I realized that the effect of this thing is also temporary, and the luster of precious things does not last long.

Then came the third phase of getting a big project. That was when I had 95% of the diesel supply in India and Africa. I was also the owner of the largest steel factory in India and Asia. But even here, I did not get the happiness that I had imagined.

The fourth step was when a friend of mine asked me to buy wheelchairs for some disabled children. About 200 children. At the behest of my friend, I immediately bought the wheelchairs. But the friend insisted that I go with him and hand over the wheelchairs to the children. I got ready and went with him. There, I gave these children the wheelchairs with my own hands. I saw a strange glow of happiness on the faces of these children. I saw them all sitting in wheelchairs, moving around, and having fun. It was as if they had reached a picnic spot, where they were sharing a winning gift.

I felt real happiness inside me.

When I decided to leave, one of the kids grabbed my leg. I tried to slowly release my legs, but the child looked at my face and held my legs tight. I leaned over and asked the child: do you need anything else? The answer this kid gave me not only shocked me but also completely changed my outlook towards life.”

This child said: “I want to remember your face so that when I meet you in heaven, I can recognize you and thank you once again!”

Further Reading

 Global TV.
“Tata.”



Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

Discuss in groups: What are some ways you can transform yourself to transform your friend groups or sports teams, families, community, and nation?

Example: If I transform my mindset/actions to be environmentally conscious, I can transform my family's mindset and introduce sustainable practices like composting to serve our Mother Earth.

Example: If I can transform the attitude I have when going to school or sports practice, I can boost team morale and spread positivity, helping my entire team grow as athletes.

Avoiding Inaction: We have now discussed the differences between the two types of action, selfish and selfless. But there is another category that is even worse than selfish action. In the above verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa warns us that we should be wary of a natural human tendency that can be found in all of us — laziness or inaction. The fourth quarter of the verse says: **mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi** which means **nor let thy attachment be to inaction**. If selfless action is action dedicated to a higher vision, and selfish action is action motivated by a lower, shortsighted vision; inaction has no guiding vision. **Inaction is idleness, unproductivity, and a waste of all the potential God has given to each and every person.** We must be careful to avoid letting ourselves become too comfortable with this sort of laziness.

There is a difference between relaxation and inaction. If one has worked all day long, then, naturally, a recuperation time is needed for the body to heal and the mind to recover. If someone has not worked, spending time being lazy and procrastinating only dissipates their natural energy and motivation — without benefiting themselves or the world around them.

Thus, the discerning factor here is that of a higher vision. If we keep with us a higher vision for which we wish to dedicate ourselves, and we remain inspired by that vision at all times, moments of relaxation also become dedicated to that same higher vision. If we do not keep that vision with us, we may let our worst tendencies take over us and waste our gifts through inaction.

Activity 10 min

We don't have to wait to be finished with school or to be in any particular profession to bring karma yoga into our lives. We can do it here and now!



The teacher should keep the same groups of 3-4 students in each. Give them the small sheets of paper and ask them to write 1 thing they really don't like to do, something they consider to be a burden. Collect all the sheets of paper and mix them together.

They may write things like: waking up early, sleeping early, doing homework, taking state exams, doing household chores, etc.

The teacher will pick any random sheet and read it out loud. Once the teacher reads it out loud, the first team to change the action to have a higher vision wins. Do this for maybe 4-5 rounds until they get the idea of how to transform their own personal actions to have a higher vision.



Example 1

If the student writes down "doing homework" as something that's a burden to them, ask them to change the lens and see how doing homework can actually be a blessing to others. If we do our homework, we will gain knowledge, which in turn may help us serve the world at large.



Example 2

A student may not like doing mathematics homework at all. But if they learn this skill, they will be able to transact in the world and use this knowledge of numbers to understand how much they really need in life and how much they can give away to those who need it more.



Example 3

A student may not like doing household chores. But if they do their share of chores, then their parents can also get the required rest they need, and the parents can also perform their duties to society and serve others in a greater capacity.

Activity

continued



Example 4

A student may not like to wake up early. But if they wake up early, then they are able to do things in a timely manner without rushing. They can have a full breakfast, reach school on time, and develop the discipline needed for a peaceful life.

The teacher can also share something they didn't like to do — something that was a burden to them. However, after much analysis, they shifted the action to a higher vision and made it a blessing to others.

Debrief: We don't have to wait for a certain time to practice karma yoga. We can do it here and now in our day-to-day life. It's not about the action; it's about the attitude.

It is simply taking our current duties and acting with a higher vision. Changing our attitude keeps us inspired, gives us so much joy while working, and benefits all those around us.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask each student to share a line or thought that really stood out to them during this lesson.

Slogan

Act with a
Higher Vision

Sādhana

Ask each student to commit to transforming one action they dislike to have a higher vision and share it with the class. For example: taking out the trash, doing the dishes, doing laundry.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Acting with Surrender

This lesson is about what it means to act with surrender. When we act focusing on the outcome instead of the action, this leads to distraction, stress, anxiety, insistence, and worry. However, when we act focusing on the action instead of the outcome, this leads to concentration, relaxation, acceptance, and surrender. This is known as prasāda buddhi.

2.47 



karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe
mā phaleṣu kadācana,
mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi.

Thy right is to work only, but
never to its fruits; let the fruit
of action be not thy motive,
nor let thy attachment be to
inaction.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	Whiteboard/Markers
5m	Introduction	3 sheets of paper (about post-it size)
25m	Main Lesson	A hat or bowl
15m	Activity	
5m	Conclusion	

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 2.47.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Act And Forget.”

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “As The Action, So The Result!”

Acting with Surrender

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min



Ask the students to recall the story of the janitor. How did he respond when he was asked what he was doing?

When we act with selfish motives, out of personal desires, and focus only on personal results, we have strong expectations for the outcome of our actions. We get disappointed if things do not go the exact way we wished, no matter how much effort we put in. As a result, we experience pain and suffering.

When we act out of a spirit of dedication to a higher goal or vision, this is called **Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi** (attitude of dedicating to God). Such a spirit brings out the best in the individual and has the best possible outcome. The action performed with this attitude also benefits society at large, which is none other than a living form of God. Hence, acting with this spirit is truly offering our actions to God.

Acting with a higher vision not only transforms us but also transforms the world at large.

Now, recollect Pujya Gurudev's quote; Can you fill in the missing blanks:

"Reaching the goal is _____ , _____ there is the goal."

Answer:



Reaching the goal is not the goal,
striving to reach there is the goal.
Swami Chinmayananda



Ask the students for their reflections on this quote.

Introduction 5 min

Recall the verse we did last week.

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe
mā phaleṣu kadācana,
mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi.

Thy right is to work only, but
never to its fruits; let the fruit of
action be not thy motive, nor let
thy attachment be to inaction.

2.47

In the last class, we saw: “let the fruit of action be not thy motive” and “nor let thy attachment be to inaction.” This means that we should act with a higher vision. Acting with a higher vision keeps us inspired, gives us so much joy while working, and benefits all those around us.

Today, we are going deeper into the following part of the verse:

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe
mā phaleṣu kadācana

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “Your right
is only to perform action, but
never to its fruits.”

2.47

Main Lesson 25 min

Does the Bhagavad-gītā tell us that we shouldn’t think about the results of our actions? Is this actually possible? Every action will yield a result. No one ever undertakes an action without envisioning the outcome. What the Bhagavad-gītā tells us is that **it’s okay to envision an outcome but not to stress, insist, or worry upon it**. Why? Because insistence and worry are illogical.

Crafting a Higher Vision

Before we take any action, we first think about the **vision** for that particular action. For example: if a team is working on a school project, the team might have these questions:

- What is the vision of the project?
- What should the outcome look like?
- What’s the project timeline?
- Who should be assigned to particular tasks?
- What are the resources available?

Crafting a vision is an essential part of any project or assignment. It’s essential for any type of action, whether it’s for our own lives, our school, or our nation at large. This requires clear, resourceful, and creative thinking. In the spirit of karma yoga, the vision should always be something higher.

Act and Forget



Main Lesson

continued



**As The Action,
So The Result!**



Focusing on Action Instead of the Outcome

The next step after crafting a higher vision is to focus solely on the action because that's the only thing in our control. We can choose to keep thinking about the outcome: What's going to happen? Will it turn out okay? Will we get what we asked for? But that really doesn't help the situation.

Focusing on the Action	Focusing on the Outcome
Concentration	Distraction
Relaxation	Stress and Anxiety
Acceptance	Insistence
Surrender	Worry

Concentration vs. Distraction

When we are focused entirely on the action, 100% of our attention is on the action. Our minds are exactly where our hands are. Therefore, the quality of the action is much more beautiful and divine. On the other hand, when we are focusing partially on the action and partially on the outcome, our attention is dissipated and distracted. Instead of giving 100% to the moment, we only give 50 - 60% because the rest of the mind is thinking about the unknown over which we have no control at that point in time. The quality of this kind of action is inferior and often needs to be reworked, redone, and reexamined. This takes so much more time and effort.

Relaxation vs. Stress and Anxiety

Because one is so fully engaged in their work, they actually lose themselves in it. A well-known saint known as Swami Rama Tirtha said that work is actually rest.

To focus our energy on what we are doing right now is the highest creative act in the world.

**Swami
Chinmayananda**



When a thinker, philosopher, poet, scientist or any worker attunes himself to a state of abstraction and rises to the heights of resignation to such a degree that no trace of personality is left in him... then only does God, the Master Musician, take up in His own hands the organ or instrument of his body and mind and send forth grand vibrations, sweet notes, exquisite symphonies out of him.

Swami Rama Tirtha

This means that when someone is so focused on their work, they lose themselves in it. The singer loses themselves in the song; the athlete loses themselves in the game; and the writer loses themselves in the writing. When the individual ego gets lost in the action, God now has space to work through them, and the best and most beautiful things come out of them.

However, when we are distracted by the action itself, a part of the mind is under stress and anxiety, often thinking about what will happen, what will be, and if everything will turn out okay. What if we get a bad grade? What if we lose? What if the other person does better than us? What will people say? The mind gets drained quickly because instead of spending its full energy on work, it is draining itself on imagining outcomes, which creates unnecessary stress and anxiety. The stress and anxiety also affect the health of the physical body.

Acceptance vs. Insistence

When one is completely relaxed, they experience so much joy in the action itself that they need not wait for the result to feel fulfilled. An artist who has lost themselves in the painting experiences such thrills, heights of creativity, beauty, and serenity. The whole process is one of joy! Therefore, the result is actually in the action itself! Whatever happens is just a bonus. **Because one feels so much joy during the action itself, one doesn't even crave the result.**

On the other hand, when we are filled with stress and anxiety driven by selfish action, we like to insist on a particular result. We want things to be a certain way. It's either my way or the highway! However, when we think about it a little deeper, **insistence on any result is actually illogical.**

Let us say you are coming to Bala Vihar on the weekend. In order for you to get to Bala Vihar on time, how many factors need to come together?

- The weather has to be pleasant
- The roads shouldn't have too much traffic (not too many accidents)
- Parents should be feeling well in order to drive the teens to Bala Vihar
- Bala Vihar should be open on time
- One should be feeling physically and mentally well
- One should wake up early, take a shower, eat breakfast, and leave on time

Now, how many of these factors are truly in your control? We will notice that in life, only our effort and our attitude are in our control. We can wake up early, eat breakfast, and be ready on time, which we should always do. However, we cannot control if all of a sudden, there is a snowstorm or a traffic jam due to an accident. We cannot control if one of our family members suddenly feels unwell. We cannot control if for some reason, our body starts feeling unwell.

Discussion

Can you think of times when you lost yourself in an action?

Can you think of times when you felt stressed or anxious?

Main Lesson

continued

Now, let's think of a different scenario.

**Discussion**

A school team project is due in a week. What are all the factors that need to come together for your team to complete it on time?

- All team members should meet for the project
- Each one should do their assigned part in a timely manner
- Each one should do the work clearly and completely so that it all ties in together
- Each one should do thorough research before submitting their part, and not just ChatGPT it
- All should come early on the day of the presentation to rehearse

Can you think of how many factors are in your control for this one? We can only control **our attitude and our effort**, but we cannot control what others do. We can only inspire them to do their best by doing our best ourselves! When we raise ourselves to be the best versions of ourselves, this inspires others to do the same. This works way better than nagging team members constantly to do their work.

Here's one more anecdote to reflect upon:

There were two neighbors who had nice gardens outside their homes. One was just hanging clothes on the clothesline, praying for the sun to dry the clothes soon, since they had to leave for a vacation in a few hours. The other neighbor was planting new seedlings and praying for rain so that they would start blooming soon.

Whose prayer would be answered? Which of them should get what they want? Can neighbor A control the sun? Can neighbor B control the rain?

This shows that there are many things which are out of our control, so it doesn't make sense to insist upon them. The only thing we can do is put forth our best effort.

Therefore, to insist strongly on any particular result is actually illogical because there are so many factors out of our control. In fact, 99% of the things are out of our control!

Surrender vs. Worry

Because a true karma yogī understands that what matters most is their effort and attitude, and the result is beyond their control, they operate from

an attitude of surrender. Surrender here doesn't mean that one doesn't do anything. It means that one does the action fully and surrenders distraction, stress, anxiety, insistence, and worry.

Surrendering doesn't mean surrendering the action — in fact, one acts dynamically with full effort and cheer, but one surrenders the distraction, stress, anxiety, insistence, and worry about things which are clearly beyond their control.

When we choose to worry instead of surrender, it creates a lot of agitation in our minds. It keeps our minds focused on something that we are unsure about at the very moment. It zaps all of our energy and leaves us tired and exhausted.

Surrender also comes with trust in God. We surrender the distraction, stress, anxiety, etc., because we know in life we will not always get what we want. But we will get what's best for us at that point in our lives. This is a true karma yogī, one who truly believes that whatever comes is neither good nor bad, but it is exactly what is supposed to happen according to God's plan for their growth and evolution.

Worrying is like
a rocking chair,
it gives you
something to
do, but it gets
you nowhere.

Glen Turner



Discussion

Reflect on the story of the Zen farmer below.

The Zen Farmer

There once was an old Zen farmer. Every day, the farmer used his horse to help work his fields and keep his farm healthy.

But one day, the horse ran away. All the villagers came by and said, "We're so sorry to hear this. This is such bad luck."

But the farmer responded, "Bad luck. Good luck. Who knows?"

The villagers were confused, but decided to ignore him. A few weeks went by, and then one afternoon, while the farmer was working outside, he looked up and saw his horse running toward him. But the horse was not alone. The horse was returning to him with a whole herd of horses. So now the farmer had 10 horses to help work his fields.

All the villagers came by to congratulate the farmer and said, "Wow! This is such good luck!"

But the farmer responded, "Good luck. Bad luck. Who knows?"

Main Lesson

continued

A few weeks later, the farmer's son came over to visit and help his father work on the farm. While trying to tame one of the horses, the farmer's son fell and broke his leg.

The villagers came by to commiserate and said, "How awful. This is such bad luck."

Just as he did the first time, the farmer responded, "Bad luck. Good luck. Who knows?"

A month later, the farmer's son was still recovering. He wasn't able to walk or do any manual labor to help his father around the farm.

A regiment of the army came marching through town, conscripting every able-bodied young man to join them. When the regiment came to the farmer's house and saw the young boy's broken leg, they marched past and left him where he lay.

Of course, all the villagers came by and said, "Amazing! This is such good luck. You're so fortunate."

And you know the farmer's response by now...

"Bad luck. Good luck. Who knows?"

Follow-up questions:

- What were the "good" things that happened in the farmer's life?
- What were the "bad" things that happened?
- Why didn't he consider them "good" or "bad"? What was his attitude?

Debrief: Things that normally look "good" on the outside may actually have a deeper meaning to them — this is the same with things that normally look "bad" on the outside. Therefore, a true karma yogī accepts and trusts that whatever happens is for their own growth and evolution.

This attitude of acting with surrender is known as **prasāda buddhi**. It means the attitude of cheerfully accepting the results of action as a prasāda or gift from God. When we visit temples or holy places, right before we leave, someone from the temple will usually offer us a physical prasāda, which can sometimes be a sweet or savory treat. No matter what it is, we accept it and eat it with gratitude.

In the same way, when we act with a higher vision, we automatically have prasāda buddhi. When we act with a vision to transform ourselves and help others, we automatically feel inspired. We are more focused and relaxed in action. Without acting with a higher vision, it is very challenging to maintain inspiration, concentration, relaxation, and surrender.

These two attitudes: **Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi (attitude of dedicating actions to God) and prasāda buddhi (attitude of cheerfully accepting results as a gift from God) are the key elements of karma yoga.**

Activity 15 min



Split the class into 2 teams and form 2 lines behind 2 whiteboards (if only 1 whiteboard, then draw a line in the center of it). Give the first kid in each line a dry erase marker and share a slightly complex scene for them to draw — as an example, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the battlefield. Share that both lines will be competing against each other, and the team that draws the entire scene the best will win.

Round 1: Start a timer and ask the first kid in each line to start drawing. While they are drawing, allow/ask the students to continuously critique both drawings. As the teacher, you can also make comments like “looks like Team 1 is further ahead” or “Team 2’s tree has a lot more detail.” Every 30 seconds, switch to the next student in the line for both teams. Keep doing this for 4-5 minutes.

After 4-5 minutes, take a picture of both drawings and erase the whiteboards.

Round 2: Give the students a new scene to draw. This time, place the 2 whiteboards away from each other or hold a divider between both halves. Have all the students stand in their 2 lines again and start chanting “Om Namo Nārāyaṇāya” with their eyes closed. Instruct that the only time they are allowed to open their eyes is when the teacher rings a bell every 30 seconds. When the teacher rings the bell, the teacher will select the next person to draw. Start the timer and repeat the activity for 4-5 minutes.

Discussion: Compare the 2 drawings with the class and discuss the following as a class.

- What were you thinking during Round 1?
- What was the state of your mind during Round 2?
- Which round was more enjoyable? Which round produced a more pleasant result?
- Which round made you feel more focused and calm?

Activity

continued

Debrief: When our mind is distracted by comparisons and competition, we get anxious. We can't focus on what we are doing, and we can't enjoy the activity. When we focus just on the activity, engaging our mind in Bhagavān, we are calm, and the outcome is more fulfilling.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask each student what acting with surrender means.

Slogan

Act with
Surrender

Sādhana

Ask each student to choose an action, class, or extracurricular activity that they are going to be completely focused on this whole week, while surrendering the outcome.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Reason to be Selfless #1: Freedom

Our journey is one to mokṣa or liberation from all sorrow. Selfishness takes the world of jīvas backward on this journey, burying us under the weight of desires and a host of ills — anger, greed, jealousy, and arrogance. Selfless work, devoid of attachments, frees one from the tyranny of desires and creates a well of ever-fresh inspiration and joy to meet every situation in life and finally goes beyond to reach our own Self.

3.9 



yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra
loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ,
tadarthaṁ karma kaunteya
muktasaṅgaḥ samācara.

The world is bound by action other than those performed for the sake of yajña; therefore, O son of Kunti, perform action for the sake of yajña alone, free from all attachments.

Time 55 min

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

Materials

- 1 clementine for each student
- 1 small paper plate for each student
- Cleaning materials for the table
- 4-6 blindfolds
- ☑ “**Lightning McQueen Helps the King! | Pixar Cars.**”
- ☑ “**Jonny Brownlee helped over line by brother Alistair.**”
- ☑ “**The moment two champions shared Olympic Gold!**”

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.9.

☑ Swami Chinmayananda. “Work in the Yajña Spirit!”

Reason to be Selfless #1: Freedom

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we learned about acting with surrender. When we act focusing on the outcome instead of the action, this leads to distraction, stress, anxiety, insistence, and worry. However, when we act focusing on the action instead of the outcome, this leads to concentration, relaxation, acceptance, and surrender. This is known as **prasāda buddhi**.



Ask the students if they were able to focus on one action, class, or extracurricular activity throughout the whole week, while surrendering the outcome. What did that feel like?

Remember, surrendering doesn't mean surrendering the action — in fact, one acts dynamically with full effort and cheer — but one surrenders the distraction, stress, anxiety, insistence, and worry about things which are clearly beyond their control.

Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi (attitude of dedicating actions to God) and prasāda buddhi (attitude of cheerfully accepting results as a gift from God) are the key elements of karma yoga.

Introduction 5 min

We have seen that karma yoga brings us a great deal of inspiration. It not only benefits us but also the world at large. It also brings an attitude of relaxation, acceptance, and surrender.

In karma yoga, we feel:

- The joy of doing something inspiring.
- The joy of doing what must be done.
- The joy of being present.
- The joy of doing things well with full attention and effort.
- The joy of doing something for the benefit of all.
- The joy of using our potential for the greater good.

In addition to this, there are **five** more reasons why one should practice karma yoga. We will see the **first one in this lesson — it is the joy of improving ourselves and freeing ourselves from bondage.**

Main Lesson 25 min

Actions are external expressions of our internal motivation. The Bhagavad-gītā says that no one can exist without action. Even for the maintenance of our body, we have to perform action. However, when we perform action after action, we often remain unfulfilled.

Why do we perform actions?

Due to the ignorance of our real nature, not knowing that we are the ever complete Self, we desire things in the world to complete us. This desire then pushes us into action. We then act, hoping to gain a permanent result, hoping to feel permanent joy, but that's logically impossible because **impermanent actions cannot give permanent results**. Actions themselves are time-bound. They start and end at a certain time. For example: we start studying at a certain time and we end studying at a certain time. We can't physically study all day. To expect that by studying for one hour, we will be smart forever is absolutely illogical, isn't it? But this is what we expect. We expect our impermanent actions to give us permanent results, and this never happens, so we remain dissatisfied and unfulfilled.

If actions give rise to temporary results, what is the problem with that?

The problem is, it makes us perform the action again and again — this is what it means to be bound.

When the result ends, the joy ends, but the longing continues.

If the result of an action is joy, then we want to do it again and again. We bind ourselves to that particular action because we want to keep experiencing that joy. It's like eating a single potato chip. It gives us so much joy that we want to keep eating more and more so that we can feel more and more joyous. But eventually, that joy will stop, and we will desire something else.

Karma (action) is addictive in nature. We keep doing it again and again, and it leaves us with a sense of incompleteness. We think many of us have a social media addiction, but we actually have an addiction to action. One performs action for enjoyment and then enjoys performing action again. Therefore, we are caught up in a cocoon of our own actions. We spend all our lives in search of permanent joy in the world but do not find it there.

So when we perform an action (for joy), we may get it or we may not get it. The experience stops, but the longing continues. We long for more because we didn't get that satisfaction.

Main Lesson

continued



Example 1

We went to watch our favorite musician's concert, we were so excited, and after it ended we longed for more... and longed for more... We want to watch another concert again. So we perform actions to enjoy the results. And when we enjoy the results, it leaves a longing, so we want to do the action again. Or if we didn't get to enjoy it, then we want to find some other means to enjoy it. If not that same thing, then we want to do something else to fulfill our longing.



Example 2

Traveling to another country for vacation. Everything was wonderful there, and the trip was really amazing! And then what happens because we enjoyed it so much? We put forth the effort to do that again. It makes us perform the action again and again, and it's so much effort that all of our time and energy go into it.

What are we basically doing every day? Pursuing the world of duality to get sucked into pursuing it again. **When the result ends, the joy ends, but the longing continues — this is the real bondage.** And the longing doesn't leave us.

The industry knows this so well. When we go to buy something, they say: 20% off your next purchase! This is because they want to give us that longing to return. Or if we go to an ice cream shop, they give us a card that says the 11th ice cream is free. This is because they want us to come back again and again. They are creating a *vāsanā* or deep impression. They want to make sure the longing remains.



Discussion

What experiences have left us with a deep sense of longing? Is there anything wrong with having a "longing?" What's wrong if the longing continues?

Debrief: When the longing continues, we cannot think about anything else. All our time and attention go into what we long for and crave. It goes into planning to get tickets for the next concert, to travel to the next destination, or to attend the next party. Our mind gets caught up in the world of objects, trying desperately to find lasting fulfillment, but to no avail.

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #1: FREEDOM

If we get what we desire, we become proud and greedy. We become so full of ourselves and want more and more of it.

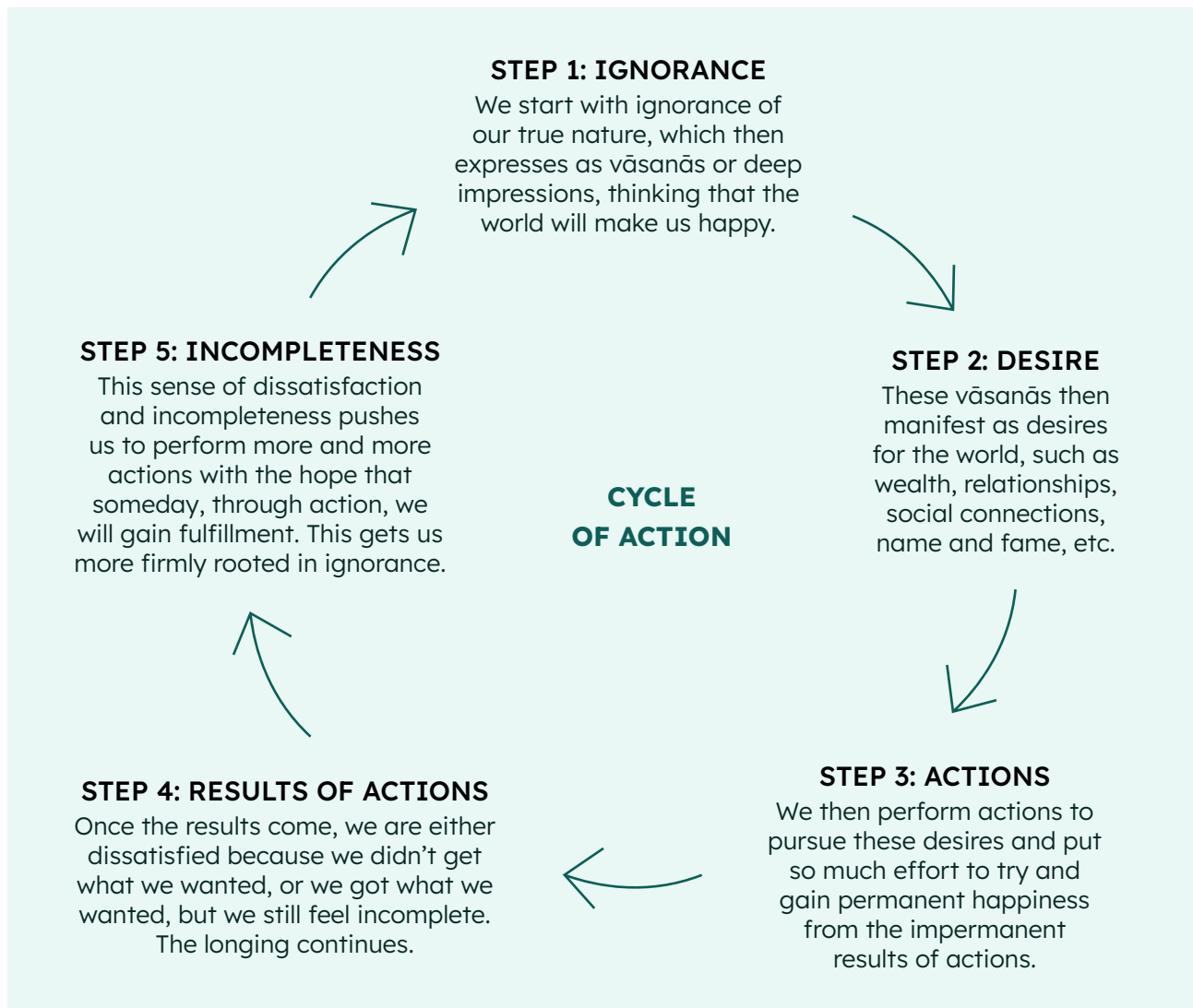
If we don't get what we desire, we become angry.

If someone else gets it, that's worse. We become incredibly jealous and angry. The entire time, we are deluded, thinking that the particular object, experience, or person can actually give us lasting happiness.

As a result, we are locked up in petty ambitions and so many negative emotions and ups and downs, which prevent us from pursuing anything meaningful in life.

For more explanation, see Lesson 22:

[🔗 The Fire of Desire](#)



Main Lesson

continued

We might then think that the best thing is not to do anything, because when we don't do anything, we don't get any results. And if there are no results, then there is no longing. So, let us stop doing anything. However, as we saw in the previous lessons, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa clearly says “nor let thy attachment be to inaction.”

Let's recap:

1. By performing an action, we get a result.
2. The result is impermanent.
3. We get bound because the longing continues.
4. We are pushed into action again, going through the same cycle but not finding lasting fulfillment.

What's the solution?

Freedom FROM action is not possible. So, we aim for freedom IN action.

Now let's explore this verse:

yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra
loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ,
tadārthaṁ karma kaunteya
muktasaṅgaḥ samācara.

The world is bound by action other than those performed for the sake of yajña; therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform action for the sake of yajña alone, free from all attachments.

3.9

Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that those who perform actions with selfishness are constantly bound. However, those who perform them with selflessness, with the yajña spirit, become free. Even if action binds, attitude liberates — the yajña spirit liberates.



Work in the
Yajña Spirit!



Yajña means selfless, dedicated service. Acting in this spirit is known as the yajña spirit. This is also synonymous with **karma yoga**.



Yajña is any social, communal, national or personal activity into which the individual is ready to commit themselves entirely in a spirit of service and dedication.

Swami Chinmayananda

The Holy Geeta. 3.9.

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #1: FREEDOM

Selfish actions — Actions whose intentions are only about, and for the benefit of, the individual. These are only about the individual's needs and wants. These keep us in bondage.

Selfless actions — Actions whose intentions are all-inclusive, about totality. These actions take into account the needs and wants of all those who are involved in a particular situation. These have the ability to free us.



Discussion

Let's see the effects of selfless and selfish actions in a sports setting.

Watch the attached videos on yajña in sports, which shows different examples of how our selfless vs. selfish actions affect a greater outcome.

Lightning McQueen Helps The King! — A clip from the animated movie Cars. Lightning McQueen (a young prodigal rookie) is on the verge of winning the Piston Cup — the ultimate goal in racing. However, at the last moment, he sacrifices his chance to win in order to help a hurt competitor complete the race.

Jonny Brownlee helped over line by brother Alistair — Jonny Brownlee begins to suffer in the last kilometer of a marathon (as part of a triathlon) and is on the verge of collapse. His older brother, Alistair, catches him and arm-in-arm helps him across the finish line.

The moment two champions shared Olympic Gold! — Mutaz Essa Barshim and Gianmarco Tamberi are competing in the Olympics in the high jump. They have been going back-and-forth in a jump-off, until eventually, they decide to share the gold medal!

Discuss as a class:

- How does being selfless affect us and others? What would these scenes look like if the characters decided to act selfishly?
- Which type of action leads to more happiness?
- Have you ever experienced the yajña spirit in your life? How did it make you feel?

When watching sports, we are able to more easily identify a higher vision versus just scoring a goal or making a basket. We are working together for the team's victory. This same yajña mentality applies to how we can live our entire life.

Pixar: Cars 



Jonny Brownlee 



Shared Olympic Gold 



Main Lesson

continued

We have watched clips about being more selfless. But what does that do to us internally? Let's take a closer look.

Acting selflessly means acting in the yajña spirit or karma yoga. How does this purify our minds?

Step 1: Acting with a higher vision (Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi)

- **Alive** — This makes us feel alive, and it makes us use our potential in doing something for the greater good.
- **Divine** — It makes our actions so much more divine because we become aware that we are actually serving the visible body of God (e.g., our friends and our community) and that every single action has the power to affect so many in a positive way.
- **Energetic** — It gives us so much energy because we are inspired by a higher vision.
- **Selfless** — It gets rid of our likes and dislikes. In karma yoga, instead of thinking about what we want and what we like, we always have to keep the higher vision above all. We think less about ourselves (individuality) and more about others (totality).

This makes our mind more expansive. It makes us see God in everyone.

Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi → inspired and expansive mind

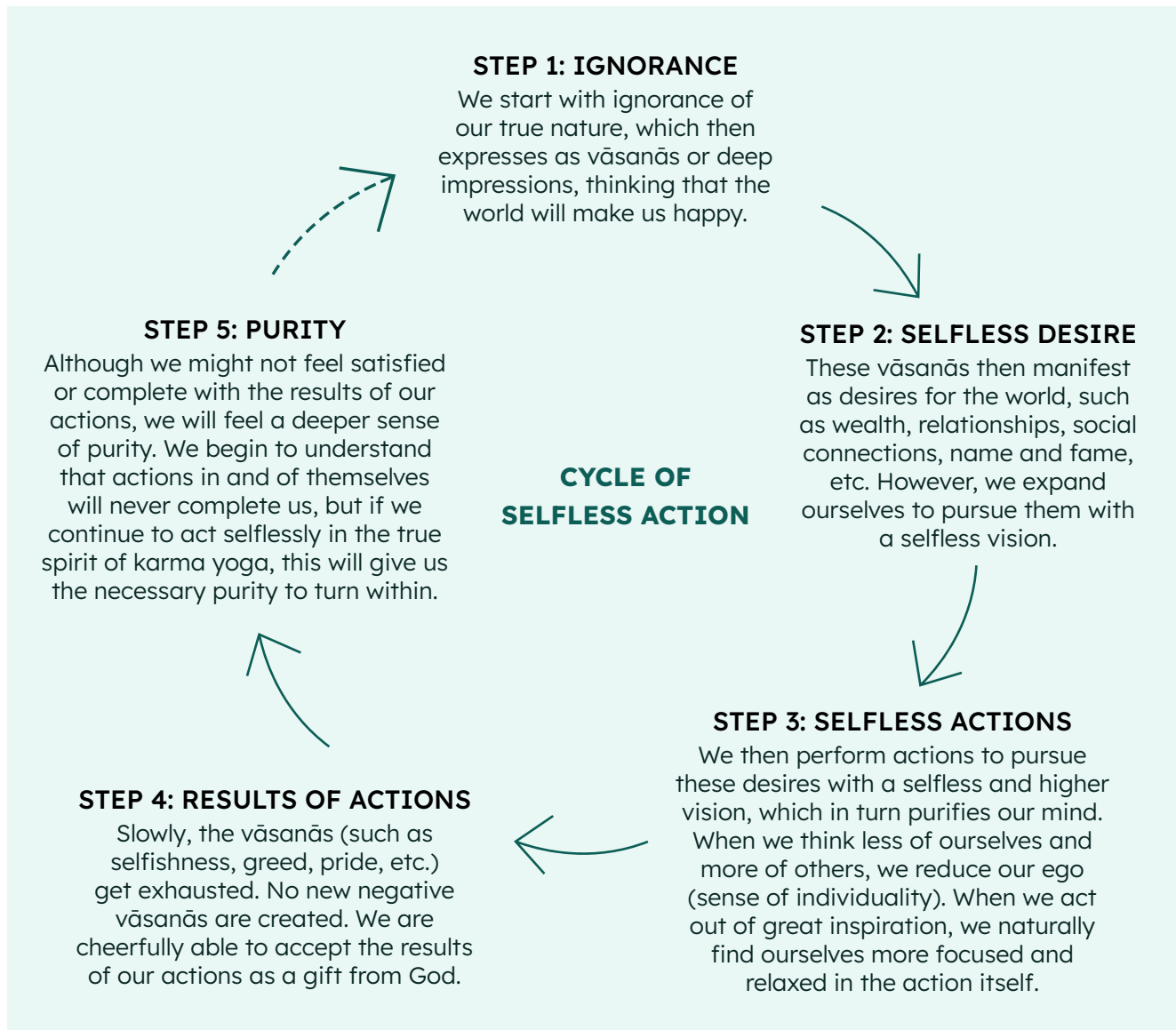
Step 2: Acting with surrender (prasāda buddhi)

- **Focused** — Because we love and are inspired by what we do, we find ourselves naturally focused on the action (as opposed to the outcome).
- **Relaxed** — We are relaxed in performing the action and find so much joy in the act that we lose ourselves in it.
- **Acceptance** — Because we find so much joy in the act itself, we don't even crave for the result. We accept whatever the outcome will be without insisting on it because we know it's beyond our control.
- **Surrender** — We engage with a spirit of surrender, knowing that whatever happens is for the best.

This makes our mind more focused, relaxed, and cheerful.

Prasāda buddhi → focused and cheerful mind

Now, let's visit the **cycle of selfless action**.



What happens when the mind becomes pure?

As the mind becomes pure (inspired, expansive, focused, and cheerful), we start to desire less and less of the world and more and more of God. We find ourselves pursuing action not to get results but to grow and to become more purified so that we can attain God-realization. When we finally attain God-realization, then we become fulfilled and attain permanent happiness.

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

Have you met someone who has found permanent, lasting happiness in the world?

Debrief: Nobody has found permanent, lasting happiness in the world. There are only two things: the world (object) and the Self (subject). **If we have spent year after year trying to find lasting happiness in the world, and haven't found it yet, that means only one thing — it's not there.** Permanent, lasting happiness is not found in the world. If it is not in the world (object), then it must be in the Self (subject). It must be within us already. But we are unable to turn inwards to find it. That's why karma yoga plays a vital role. When we act with the yajña spirit, this helps us to purify our mind and turn within (instead of outside in the world) to find the real source of permanent, lasting happiness.

When a sincere seeker is performing action, they ask themselves these questions:

1. Will this action benefit others?
2. Will this purify my mind?
3. Will this take me nearer to my goal — God realization or, in other words, will it help me be the best version of myself?

In this way, selfish action binds and selflessness frees.

If we continue with selfish actions, we remain unfulfilled and trapped in the cycle of action. However, if we take on selfless actions, then we are able to purify our minds, attain knowledge, and break free from the cycle of action, realizing our true nature, which is ever full, complete, and infinite.

Activity 10 min



First, ask the students to wash their hands. Once they come back, divide them into two groups. Give each student an unpeeled clementine with a paper plate.

Objective: Each member of the team has to eat a whole clementine (peeled), but they have to follow these rules.

Rule 1: No student is allowed to bend their arms.

Rule 2: Each student can only use their right hand.

Rule 3: Two of the students in each team have to be blindfolded.

Ensure to check that there are no allergies in class. If there are allergies, find an alternative fruit or food.

The team in which each member is successfully able to eat a whole clementine first wins.

After the activity, make sure to clean the activity area. Then, ask the students what they thought the point of this activity was. Some might have tried eating on their own, but without much success. Either the clementines fell on the floor, or they made a really big mess. But if they tried the secret method, which was feeding each other, then everyone would have eaten their fair share!



This is an activity based on the following story of the devatās and asuras. Share the story with them after the activity.

Once, the devatās and the asuras were called for a feast by Kubera. Everyone was happy to be invited; they all knew that Kubera was the keeper of wealth and that a feast at his house would be the most lavish one ever. So both the asuras and the devatās went to Kubera's house.

Kubera appeared before them and said, "Dear powerful devatās and asuras, I have made sure that a fantastic feast has been prepared. Additionally, there are some special sweets which have never been prepared before. I am sure all of you would love to partake in that. But there is a condition. The ones who are able to eat without bending their arms are the only ones who can eat those sweets. Remember, you have to eat your fill without bending your arm."

The asuras went to one side of the room and sat down to eat. The devatās went to the other side. Everyone was puzzled. No one was able to take the food to their mouth with a straight arm. There was great commotion as the guests thought that Kubera was just mocking them. The guests were getting hungry and angry. Soon, the asuras started losing their patience and started quarrelling amongst themselves.

The devatās, on the other hand, were trying to think up a solution. Then Indra came up with a very good solution. As per his advice, every devatā fed the devatā sitting opposite to them. That way, they did not have to bend their arm at all. Soon, everyone had eaten their meal and was satisfied.

The asuras were surprised that the solution to the problem was such a simple one and that they had unnecessarily fought with each other. Kubera, who was watching the whole episode, declared that the devatās were the winners and that they would get the special sweets.

Activity

continued



Discussion

1. How did your team decide to eat the clementines? What were the factors for your decision?
2. What if everyone was just concerned about their own selves? How do you think they would feel?
3. How did you feel when you started to think about others?

Debrief: When everyone is just concerned about themselves, this is very binding because it brings about so much agitation, unease, stress, anxiety, and loss. But when we start to work with others, and become expansive, it leads to a more stable solution where everyone can benefit. This replaces all the agitation and anxiety with peace and fulfillment. This is liberating.

Conclusion 10 min

Group Summary

Ask the students to recap the cycle of action and how to break free from it.

Slogan

**Selfishness binds and
Selflessness frees**

Sādhana

Before the end of class, have each student make a list of ten bullet points on a piece of paper titled “Random Acts of Kindness.” During the week, each student must do ten things in their daily lives that help other people in need, without being asked. They need to keep an eye out for what kind of help the people around them need and provide assistance. These must be acts of assistance outside of regularly assigned chores or responsibilities.

The students should bring their ten acts of kindness to the next class and should be ready to discuss how the process made them feel, from the steps of watching for appropriate moments, to giving their time, and to actually performing the action.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Example

You might go out of your way to assist a classmate with an assignment they are struggling with in class without being asked. Or you might help your siblings with their chores if they are in need of help.

Reason to be Selfless #2: Yajña Spirit

This class is about understanding how we are created in the spirit of yajña (sacrifice); and therefore, it is our duty to live in the same spirit. Our lives should be an offering to help, nourish, and sustain other beings just as we have been helped, nourished, and sustained.

3.10  3.11 



sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā
purovāca prajāpatiḥ,
anena prasaviṣyadhvam
eṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk.

Prajāpati (the Creator), having in the beginning (of creation) created mankind together with the spirit of yajña, said, “By this shall you propagate; let this be your kāmādhuk” (the mystical cow which yields all desired objects).

devānbhāvayatānena
te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ,
parasparam bhāvayantaḥ
śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha.

With this, nourish the devas and may those devas nourish you; thus nourishing one another, you shall attain the highest good.

Time 55 min

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

Materials

Offering bowl (container to hold small sheets of paper)
1 piece of paper for each student (large enough to trace both their hands side-by-side)
Art supplies – markers and colored pencils in a wide variety of colors

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.10 - 3.11.

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. “Experience The Joy of Serving.”

☞ Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “The Meeting with Swami Tapovan Maharaj & Chinmaya Movement | Chinmaya Mahima.” 7:13 - 12:40.

☞ “Concentration (#19).”

Reason to be Selfless #2: Yajña Spirit

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous class, we have learned that selfishness binds and selflessness frees. When we act with a spirit of selfishness and experience the results, it often leaves us dissatisfied and unfulfilled. The result ends, and yet, the longing continues. We engage in more and more action with the hope that maybe we will get permanent happiness someday or at some point in time, but this will never happen. The impermanent world will never be able to give us permanent happiness.

When we perform selfless actions instead, they free us.

Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi → inspired and expansive mind
Prasāda buddhi → focused and cheerful mind

To experience this, the students were asked to perform random acts of kindness this past week. These had to be acts of assistance outside of regularly assigned chores or responsibilities. Ask the students to share their random acts of kindness and how it made them feel.

Introduction 10 min

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains that we have been created with the spirit of yajña. As we have seen in the previous lesson, yajña means sacrifice or selfless dedicated action. This means that we were created because of the sacrifice of so many others.

sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā
 purovāca prajāpatiḥ,
 anena prasaviṣyadhvam
 eṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk.

Prajāpati (the Creator), having in the beginning (of creation) created mankind together with the spirit of yajña, said, “By this shall you propagate; let this be your kāmādhuk” (the mystical cow which yields all desired objects).

3.10

devānbhāvayatānena
te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ,
parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ
śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha.

With this, nourish the devas and
may those devas nourish you; thus
nourishing one another, you shall
attain the highest good.

3.11

Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains that He established the principle of yajña — sacrifice or selfless dedicated action — as the foundation of life. Every being was created with this spirit of offering, meaning that our actions should not be centered around our own selfish desires, but rather dedicated to the benefit of the world, since we have received so much!



Discussion

Can you think of how many people or beings have contributed to you coming to class today?

The students might say:

- My parents drove me to Bala Vihar
- The roads were built so I could come to Bala Vihar
- The sun was shining, the air was blowing
- Swami Chinmayananda has inspired this entire Chinmaya movement, and it's because of Him that I am here today in Bala Vihar
- My friends encouraged me to come to Bala Vihar



Discussion

Can you think of how many people or beings have contributed to your life today?

Note: If the class is a less enthusiastic group, discussing the topic can make it more engaging. This could also be an index card activity where everyone writes their thoughts on the different beings who have sacrificed for them. At the end, they put the cards together, and as a class, try to split them into categories.

Introduction

continued

There are five categories of beings who have sacrificed so much for us to live in this world:

Deva yajña — The sacrifice of Bhagavān Himself.

Ṛṣi yajña — The sacrifice of all our ṛṣis, ṛṣikās, Gurus.

Pitṛ yajña — The sacrifice of all of our ancestors.

Nṛ or **Manuṣya yajña** — The sacrifice of our community.

Bhūta yajña — The sacrifice of nature, plants, and animals.

In Sanātana Dharma, we offer 5 yajñas — a life of gratitude to pay it forward because we have received so much. Let us see how all of these different categories have contributed to the way we live.



Activity

1. Form a gratitude circle.
2. For each category, each student should say something they are grateful for from that particular group without repetition, without pausing, and without any “umms” or “ahhs.” If anyone pauses, or says “umm” or “ahh” or any such word, they lose their turn.
3. They can do 1-2 rounds for each category, depending on the number of students. After each category, pause for a moment and list key contributions on the board.
4. Alternatively, if the class is more competitive and responds better to games, this could be turned into a **concentration hand clap game**. The class will divide itself into teams and then stand in one giant circle. The teacher will provide the yajña, and the students will go around the circle, playing the concentration game, giving examples of contributions in that category. If a student cannot come up with an example, they will step out of the circle, and the teacher will provide another yajña, and the game will continue. If there are still students left after going through all the yajñas, the teacher can repeat the yajñas. When there is only one person left in the entire circle, that person’s team is the winner.

After the game, go through the contributions of each category with the students’ collective responses.



Concentration Game



Main Lesson 25 min

Yajña means sacrifice or selfless dedicated action. This is the foundation of all our lives. Sacrifice means that someone whom we may not even know has joyfully given their time, attention, love, and knowledge so that we can benefit from it. They may not even be alive to see how we are benefiting from it today, but they still gave everything they had in the hope of a better future. Whether it was protecting the future of the highest wisdom, culture, tradition, or language, they did whatever they could because they felt that this was going to uplift our lives.

Let's now explore each of the five yajñas in detail.

Deva yajña — sacrifice of Bhagavān

Life — The eyes to see, the ears to hear, the nose to smell, the tongue to taste, the hands to feel, and the mind to think. We have all been given a beautiful gift of life. We are still here today. We are able to breathe, walk, and live. Not only that, but each of us has been given our own unique abilities and gifts.

Family — God didn't send us into this earth alone, but He gave us a family to help nurture, support, and shower us with love. He gave us a family to teach us how to live and raise us with values and ideals.

Earth — As God has given us this body, He has also given us a place, an abode for this body to reside in. Imagine this beautiful earth filled with sunlight, air, trees, mountains, rivers, and valleys. He gave us a sky filled with stars, the planets, and the moon. He gave us a home like no other, where every necessary thing is free. Air, the most vital thing without which we cannot live, is free. Sunlight, that which keeps us warm and filled with energy, is free. Water, that which nourishes our body every day, is free. Plants and herbs, including the plants that grow in forests, are free.

Cosmic Law and Order — He has set in motion various laws so that everything functions seamlessly. The sun will always rise and set, the wind will always blow, and water will always flow. Fire will always be hot. Everything will remain in its dharma or essential nature so that the order of the cosmos is maintained.

Main Lesson

continued



Discussion

What's the best thing that we can offer to God?

1. **Sevā or Karma Yoga** — Using our abilities and talents for the service of others, since the world is a visible form of God.
2. **Sādhana** — Engaging in spiritual practices like pūjā, japa, and contemplation. This keeps us grounded. The more grounded we are, the better choices we make, the better we are able to serve the world. This also helps us to reduce our ego or our sense of individuality.
3. **Svādhyāya** — Reading and listening to works of God and Truth. This will always keep us connected to God.

Ṛṣi yajña — sacrifice of the ṛṣis

Vision and Preservation of our Scriptures (Vedas, Bhagavad-gītā, Upaniṣads, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, Purāṇas, etc.) — Imagine, our Bhagavad-gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, and Mahābhārata are at least 5,000 years old. Our Gurus have carefully passed them on from generation to generation, ensuring that we too get the deepest knowledge, and that wasn't easy. They didn't have a computer back then. The knowledge was passed down orally and then written in palm leaves, and then put on paper. Each scripture was carefully preserved and passed on. These are not just a few verses but hundreds of thousands of them, just so that you and I can have access today.

When we think about preservation, we do it for selfish pursuits — we preserve cards, pictures, or letters that make us feel good! But look at someone who took such a mammoth task of preserving the Vedas.

Explanations of our Scriptures — Our scriptures were orally given in Saṁskṛtam and other native languages. If they remained that way, many people would not be able to read and learn them today. Imagine the effort it took to write detailed explanations on the scriptures, translate them into a language that people can understand, and effectively present and communicate them so that they are relevant for us today.

Our Guru paramparā is part of the Ṛṣi yajña.

Share this śloka with the class:

sadāśiva-samārambhāṁ
śaṅkarācārya-madhyamām,
asmadācārya-paryantām
vande guru paramparām.

Salutations to the lineage starting
with Bhagavān Śiva, with Ādi
Śaṅkarācārya in the middle and
continuing up to our teacher.



Discussion

What if we didn't have access to the Bhagavad-gītā or the Upaniṣads? What if there were no temples or places where we could learn about God? What if we didn't even have Bala Vihar or JCHYK? What if Gurudev didn't come down to the plains? Where would we be?



At this point, the teacher can also reflect back on Pūjya Gurudev's story on how he left the Himalayan ranges to come to the plains just for you and me.

The Meeting with Swami Tapovan Maharaj & Chinmaya Movement

The Meeting
with Swami
Tapovan
Maharaj



Discussion

What's the best thing we can offer to our ṛṣis, to our Guru paramparā?

1. **Study** — We can study and learn the scriptures that they have written and preserved especially for us. We can also pay attention in class to show our appreciation for their teachings.
2. **Share** — We can share with others what we have learned so that the knowledge continues to inspire and touch the lives of many more.
3. **Practice** — We can sincerely start to practice what we have learned from them. This is the greatest thing that we can do; practice what they have taught us.

Pitṛ yajña — sacrifice of the ancestors

Love and Compassion — The greatest thing we need in the world is love. The minute we were born, we all wanted to be held, cuddled, and embraced. Our parents have nurtured and nourished us with so much love and warmth. This love paves the way for us to learn how to love ourselves and others.

Main Lesson

continued

Discipline — Imagine how many times we fell before we learned how to walk. How many times did we spit out food before we learned how to chew? How many times did we dirty ourselves before we knew how to take a bath? How many times did we snooze the alarm before our parents came to wake us up? Walking, eating, taking a bath, and waking up on time might seem like very simple and mundane things, but these are things that parents spend so much time and effort to teach us! Because they have done so, we are able to do these things seamlessly today and slowly live a life of discipline.

Family Traditions, Language and Culture — Our families are filled with such beautiful traditions, language, and culture. There are so many beautiful hymns, prayers, and practices that bring so much peace to the mind. Our parents have also taught us our native languages and preserved them through generations. Without them actually practicing and passing these on to us, our traditions, language, and culture would be lost.

Food, Clothing, Shelter, and Education — Not to mention, our parents have given us all the necessities in order to build our lives, like food, clothing, a safe home, education, etc.

**Discussion**

What's the best thing we can offer to our parents?

1. **Do our dharma** — The best thing we can do for our parents is fulfill our dharma at home by being good students and teens, so that they don't have to keep worrying about us.
2. **Serve** — We can also help them at home by taking part in the household chores. We also serve them by taking care of them as they grow older. They have taken care of us, so it is our duty to take care of them.
3. **Pass it on** — Whatever good things we have learned from them, it is our responsibility to pass it on to the next generation.
4. **Connect** — We can also make an effort to connect and spend time talking to our parents and grandparents to show them our love and care.

Nṛ or Manuṣya yajña — sacrifice of the community

Freedom — Our freedom fighters faced many challenges. We may think that some of them lost and some won; but actually, all of them won. Each one of them played such a pivotal role. Each one helped the other to rise higher and gain the freedom of our country. They knew that they wouldn't live long, but

that didn't stop them from fighting. They fought even if they knew they were going to die, just so that we could live.



At this point, the teacher can also share some examples of our Indian freedom fighters and their sacrifices (e.g., Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, etc.).

Assistance and Facilities — Our communities provide us with so much support and assistance, from medical care to different kinds of aids in terms of housing, food, etc. They also create beautiful facilities for us, such as parks and beaches. During COVID, many of our first responders risked their lives and sacrificed their personal comforts just for our safety and well-being.

Roads, Bridges, and Buildings — Our communities have built so many roads, bridges, and infrastructure just so that we can get from place to place safely. They have established traffic control so that everything runs smoothly.

Friendships — Friendships also fall under this category. Imagine what life would be without a friend? A friend is someone who is there for us, accepts us for who we are, and helps us to walk on the right path.

Chinmaya Mission Community — Our Chinmaya Mission community is also an integral part of our lives. There's a saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." Our aunts, uncles, and friends' families also take care of us. They invite us to their homes, patiently guide us, and shower us with so much affection.



Discussion

What's the best thing we can offer to our community?

1. **Follow rules** — Our community has worked so hard to establish a system of law and order that benefits all. It is our dharma to follow rules so that the system that they have developed runs seamlessly. We can ensure to arrive on time for all of our classes, respect our teachers, keep the environment clean, and inspire others to do the same.
2. **Do our part** — As they have contributed to our well-being, we should also think of ways to contribute back to them, like volunteering, tutoring, or being a well-informed community member. We can also offer a part of our savings to support the community, local temple, or āśrama.
3. **Be a good friend** - Give our friends attention and inspire them to walk on the right path.

Main Lesson

continued

Experience The
Joy of Serving**Bhūta yajña — sacrifice of nature**

Animals Help Humans Exist — Animals in an ecosystem, like bees, pollinate plants, essential for food production and biodiversity. Predators keep prey populations in check, preventing overgrazing and promoting plant growth. Scavengers and decomposers recycle nutrients, enriching the soil.

Plants — Plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, improving the overall quality of air. Plants also provide habitats and food sources for a wide range of animals, insects, and microorganisms, promoting biodiversity.

Space — Space provides us a place to exist, move, and roam freely. Imagine if there was no space and if everyone was just jam-packed in one place, what would we do? Imagine going to a place and there's no space for car parking, how troublesome can that be? Or if we go to a place and there's no more space to sit and eat lunch or dinner? Or if we want to watch a show or a concert, but it's sold out because there's no more space?

Think about all the things that are in space, from the tall skyscraper buildings, to cars, houses, trees, and planets — a multitude of things are in space. Space accommodates all. It does not choose who it wants or does not want; it just lets everything be.

Air — Air provides us with oxygen, which is vital for us to live. Imagine if there was no air. Have you ever been inside a stuffy room? What do we do? Open the window. Air is also a great purifier; everywhere it goes, it leaves people feeling fresh. Air provides us with the most important thing and leaves us feeling fresh, but never says a word about it. Never does air say, “Hey, I did this sevā and I did that sevā...” It just serves silently. We all may do five random acts of kindness, but if your nature is kindness, should you count? No. Air never boasts about what it does — and without it, we can't even live!

Sun — The sun provides us with light, warmth, energy, and vitamin D. It makes life possible on Earth. Its gravitational pull keeps all the planets in order. Because of sunlight, plants can grow and photosynthesize, and all beings are nourished. Does the sun ever call and say: “Hey, I'm taking a day off?” The sun keeps on giving.

Water — Water sustains life. It is also very purifying because it cleanses and takes away dirt. We drink water to flush out toxins from our system. We use water to shower, cook food, wash our dishes, and do laundry. Without water, we wouldn't be able to live, and everything around us would be dirty and unhealthy. It constantly purifies us.

Earth — Earth accommodates all of us and ensures that we have a place to live. It provides an environment for all types of beings, from the tiniest ant to the largest human. Mother Earth constantly yields crops and produce just so that our bodies can be nourished.

In addition, when we look at nature, we feel relaxed. Just a stroll or a walk in nature can be calming and soothing and can help us heal.

Nature also inspires creativity. Think about how many artists have been inspired by watching nature and animals.



Discussion

What's the best thing we can offer to our plants, animals, and nature?

1. **Live simply** — We can show our gratitude to all of our animals, plants, and nature by living a simple life and not over-consuming, which causes so much waste that it, in turn, pollutes the environment in which they live. Plants and animals can happily exist without us, but we cannot exist without them.
2. **Practice composting** — Instead of throwing food waste in the garbage, a simple way we can reduce waste in our landfills is composting. Check our community for opportunities to compost or build our very own compost bin.

Having received so much from all of these beings, what should our attitude towards the world be?

It is a life of gratitude. In Sanātana Dharma, each day is supposed to be a life of gratitude. A life of offering unto these five entities (Deva, Ṛṣi, Pitṛ, Nṛ, Bhūta).

Instead of happy Thanksgiving, we celebrate a happy thanksLIVING every day! This is what it means to live in the yajña spirit.

If we behave like all of these five, if we keep giving, will we ever receive anything in return?

When we act with a spirit of offering instead of selfish desires, we become more peaceful and fulfilled in our lives, and we contribute to the harmony of the universe. In return, the world supports us, just like nature functions through giving.

Main Lesson

continued

devānbhāvayatānena
te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ,
parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ
śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha.

With this, nourish the devas and
may those devas nourish you; thus
nourishing one another, you shall
attain the Highest Good.

3.11

Have you ever seen the sun shine just for itself without giving light to others?
Have you seen the rivers hold water only to themselves without nurturing everyone along the way?
Have you ever seen a tree eating its own fruit?
Have you ever seen the air withholding oxygen from us?

The sun shines without asking for anything in return, the rivers flow to nourish all living beings, and trees give fruits, flowers, shade, and oxygen selflessly. There is absolutely no selfishness in nature. Each entity lives to give. **There is no worry about how they will receive because each one naturally nourishes each other.**

The sun nourishes trees, and trees in turn nourish the sun. The sun nourishes trees through photosynthesis, where trees use sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide to create sugars as food, and trees nourish the sun by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Trees then release oxygen, which helps to maintain the Earth's atmosphere and support life.

In this verse, Swami Chinmayananda explains **deva as the productive potential in a given field.**



When we apply our true and sincere work in any situation, the efforts and sacrifices made, as it were, invoke the 'productive potential' in that situation, which comes to manifest and bless the worker.

Swami Chinmayananda
The Holy Geeta. 3.10.



Example 1

When students make an effort to really learn a subject in school and study hard, then the teacher in turn is able to provide them with a good recommendation letter.



Example 2

When people in a community pay taxes honestly and give back to the system, then the system in turn provides safety (police force, fire department), public transportation, and recreational facilities.

When we act in the yajña spirit, it's important that we take into account the welfare of nature as well. In the Hindu culture, nature is not something to be exploited for one's enjoyment or benefit. Nature is regarded as Mother, something that we have to take care of and nourish and one who nourishes us in return. When we take care of nature, nature takes care of us by providing enough sunlight, clean air, water, and food. But when we exploit nature, we feel the effects of it through climate change, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc.



Discussion

What happens when we don't perform yajña?

Scenario 1: What if you are eating your favorite slice of pizza, and then you decide to just keep it in your mouth? What if you decided not to swallow it, not to digest it, not to pass on nutrients to the body, not to let go of waste...what would happen? You would get sick!

Scenario 2: What if everyone is part of a team but only one person does all the work — does the research, types up the paper, and presents it — while the others just show up and get credit? What would happen? The key person would get exhausted, and the others wouldn't learn anything. The team spirit would be lost.

Discuss: Have you ever experienced the above? What was it like?

When you focus on **“I”** you get **Illness**

When you focus on **“We”** you get **Wellness**

What is yajña? Sacrifice or selfless, dedicated action

When did yajña happen? We were born in the spirit of yajña! And, the entire world is sustained by the spirit of yajña.

Where can we see examples of yajña? Just look at nature — sun, trees, and air.

Why should we perform yajña? Because we have received so much from everyone, especially the 5 entities (Deva, Ṛṣi, Pitṛ, Nṛ, and Bhūta), now it is our dharma to give back so that the world functions in harmony and order.

Main Lesson

continued

Now, how can we live in the spirit of yajña or sacrifice?

Remember this acronym:

Y — You are not separate; you're connected to everything in the universe.**A — Acknowledge** all the beings that have brought you to where you are today.**J — Joyfully give and trust** that life is a cycle. As you nourish others, others will nourish you too.**Ñ — Notice nature,** our teacher. Look at how everything selflessly gives.**A — Act** with the yajña spirit!

The easiest way to act with the yajña spirit is to offer our work, talents, and service to the altar of Bhagavān or to a higher vision. In this way, we not only serve others, but we also purify our own hearts and minds (citta śuddhi). As we have previously seen, selfish actions lead to many anxieties, such as stress and dissatisfaction, whereas selfless actions bring peace, contentment, and calmness.

Activity 10 min

Now that we have explored the five different types of yajña, each student will have the opportunity to internalize this through a creative drawing.

Give each student a sheet of paper with markers, colored pencils, and other coloring materials.

Ask the students to trace their left hand and right hand side by side on the sheet of paper. Now, inside the outline of their left hand, write or draw the things that they are most grateful for receiving. Color code them according to the five different yajñas and place one in each of their 5 fingers (extending to the palm if needed). Be as specific as they can.

After they have completed reflecting on what they have received in their left hand, switch to their right hand. Write one concrete way that they can contribute to each of the five different types of yajñas. Use the same colors and fingers they chose to represent each yajña.

Once they have completed their drawings, discuss this as a class. Finally, have them fold their paper down the middle between the two hands, reminding them to always be grateful for what they have received and show that gratitude by giving!



Example

(I am grateful for) learning how to make idli sāmbar from my grandma. This would fall under piṭṛ yajña, and this can be assigned a specific color, such as purple, and placed on your thumb.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students to share the yajña that they are most grateful for and why.

Slogan

Happy
ThanksLIVING!

Sādhana

For each weekday, offer something to the five entities (Some ideas are given in the parentheses).

Monday — offer something to Bhagavān for Deva yajña (Pray).

Tuesday — offer something to the ṛṣis for Ṛṣi yajña (Read two verses of the Gītā).

Wednesday — offer something to the ancestors for Pitṛ yajña (Spend quality time with grandparents).

Thursday — offer something to the community for Nṛ yajña (Smile to those who take care of you: school bus driver, worker at the canteen, teacher, mailman).

Friday — offer something to nature for Bhūta yajña (Eat all the crumbs on the plate for every single meal).

Saturday — write down all that you have received from all five entities.

Sunday — come to Bala Vihar and share your experience.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Reason to be Selfless #3: Wheel of Action

In this section, Lord Kṛṣṇa seeks to teach Arjuna about how the world operates, through the wheel of action. This metaphor teaches that only through sacrifice, people live and thrive. Behind this sacrifice is the Lord, who sanctifies and divinizes it. Students will then learn that to live a life selfishly is ungrateful and unhelpful to their fellow people. Instead, they should live with the yajña spirit to give more to the world than what they take.

3.14  3.15 



annād-bhavanti bhūtāni
parjanyaḍ-anna-sambhavaḥ,
yajñādbhavati parjanyaḥ
yajñaḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ.

From food come forth beings;
from rain food is produced;
from sacrifice arises rain, and
sacrifice is born of action.

karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi
brahmākṣarasamudbhavam,
tasmāt sarvagataṁ brahma
nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam.

Know that action comes
from Brahmā (the Creator)
and Brahmā comes from the
Imperishable. Therefore, the
all-pervading Brahman (God-
principle) ever rests in sacrifice.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
30m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

A simple prize such as candy
 **The Cosmic Cycle of Life** (slides)

References

- Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.14 - 3.15.
 Swami Chinmayananda. "Use Your Gift: Lord Is Present In The Field of Work."
 National Geographic, "Wolves of Yellowstone."
 United Nations. "Global Issues: Food."
 University of Nebraska. "How Does Drought Affect Our Lives?"

Reason to be Selfless #3: Wheel of Action

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Recall the five yajñas discussed in the last class along with examples.

1. **Deva yajña** — The sacrifice of Bhagavān Himself.
2. **Ṛṣi yajña** — The sacrifice of all our ṛṣis, ṛṣikās, Gurus.
3. **Pitr yajña** — The sacrifice of all of our ancestors.
4. **Nṛ or Manuṣya yajña** — The sacrifice of our community.
5. **Bhūta yajña** — The sacrifice of nature, plants, and animals.



Ask the class: Were you able to perform these yajñas in the past week?
In what way?

What is the best way we can give back to each of these yajñas?

Introduction 5 min

Think of the different cycles in life. We have a water cycle, a planetary cycle, and many more. In every cycle, the previous step affects the performance of the next step.



Example 1

Deforestation caused by humans reduces soil moisture which in turn reduces evaporation, then rainfall and snowfall; at a grander scale, that can cause larger temperature changes.



Example 2

In the food chain cycle, each level of predator and prey actually depend on each other. When predators like wolves or tigers are killed excessively by hunters, nature is set out of balance. Species like deer, in turn, experience out-of-control population growth, which leads to deer overeating their favorite plants, and in doing so, take more than their share of plant life from other species that consume the same resources.

In short, nature is put out of balance when any step is impacted. This pattern holds true for all the cycles of science and philosophy. To impact one step is to impact all steps.

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #3: WHEEL OF ACTION

In this class, we're going to talk about another cycle — **the cycle of life** according to the Bhagavad-gītā. This is also known as the **wheel of action**.

Let's explore these verses.

annād-bhavanti bhūtāni
parjanyaḍ-anna-sambhavaḥ,
yajñādbhavati parjanyaḥ
yajñaḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ.

From food come forth beings; from rain food is produced; from sacrifice arises rain, and sacrifice is born of action.

karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi
brahmākṣarasamudbhavam,
tasmāt sarvagataṁ brahma
nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam.

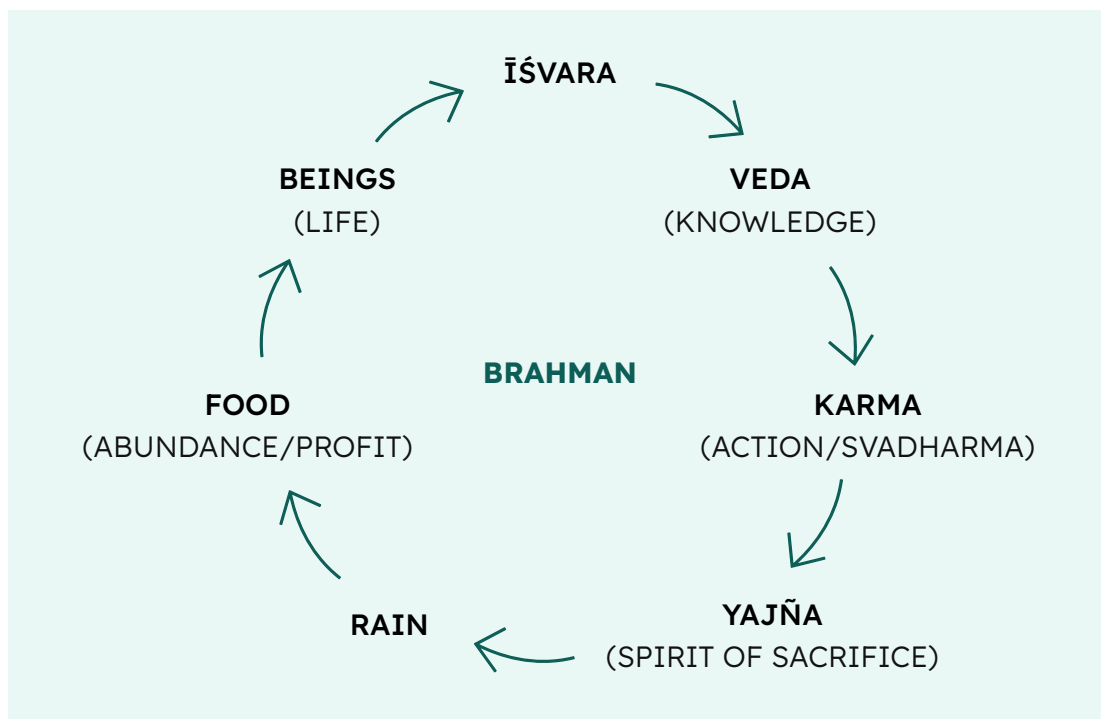
Know that action comes from Brahmā (the Creator) and Brahmā comes from the Imperishable. Therefore, the all-pervading Brahman (God-principle) ever rests in sacrifice.

3.14 - 3.15

Note: In Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's commentary, karma is said to have arisen from the Vedas (also termed as Brahma). This is indicated in step 6.

How many things are given here?

1. Beings
2. Food
3. Rain
4. Yajña
5. Karma
6. Veda
7. God (Īśvara)



Main Lesson 30 min

 This should be an interactive section with the students. As each step is explored, ask them two key questions:

 Within a machine, a cog is a mechanical part that contributes to the greater system's operation. Despite seeming small, a cog is vital to the machine's operation.

For each step in the cycle of life, how can we become an efficient cog?

 If a cog somehow gets stuck by a piece of gum, the entire machine starts to slow down. As the clogged section slows down, everything else around it does too.

For each step in the cycle of life, how might we become a clog?

The following explanations are given for the teacher's reference.

Step 1: Beings come from food.

Beings are produced from food, which means the bodies of all living beings come from food. Through the seed of the father and the ovum of the mother, which is nothing but the essence of food, a baby is produced. This baby is nourished and sustained by food and eventually gets old and decomposes into food itself when the body dies. Without food, we wouldn't be able to sustain life.

What if the step was clogged? Even though today's global food production is enough to feed everyone on the planet, hunger continues to increase in some parts of the world. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have studied the total food production and the total needs of the world and they have found that there is so much surplus that nobody needs to starve. Our greatest problem is not the lack of food, but the lack of proper distribution or sharing. In some places, people are dying of starvation. In other places, people are dying of obesity.

How do we become a cog?

 Paying attention to the way we eat and what we eat without overconsuming so that we keep our bodies healthy enough to serve the world.

 Not wasting food which could have been otherwise used for someone else.

 Composting our leftover food scraps/waste so that the food remnants can be used for nourishing the soil, which in turn allows more food to grow in the future.

Further Reading

 "Global Issues: Food," United Nations.

How do we become a clog?

- ⚙️ Overeating and making ourselves sluggish and unproductive.
- ⚙️ Overconsuming and eating more than what we need, not leaving enough for others.

Step 2: Food comes from rain.

The seeds that are planted in the fields only yield crops when they are showered by rain. Therefore, when it rains, there is enough water supply and abundance in food production, but when there is a drought, there is a shortage of water and less food production.

What if the step was clogged? Let's take a peek into the economic impacts.

1. Farmers may lose money if a drought destroys their crops.
2. If a farmer's water supply is too low, the farmer may have to spend more money on irrigation or to drill new wells.
3. Ranchers may have to spend more money on feed and water for their animals.
4. Businesses that depend on farming, like companies that make tractors and food, may lose business when drought damages crops or livestock.
5. People who work in the timber industry may be affected when wildfires destroy stands of timber.
6. Businesses that sell boats and fishing equipment may not be able to sell some of their goods because drought has dried up lakes and other water sources.
7. Power companies that normally rely on hydroelectric power (electricity that's created from the energy of running water) may have to spend more money on other fuel sources if drought dries up too much of the water supply. The power companies' customers would also have to pay more.
8. People might have to pay more for food.

- ⚙️ Being very mindful about the way we use water can help us save this resource so that there is enough water for everyone.
- ⚙️ Using water excessively and letting the tap run even if it's not being used for anything.

Step 3: Rain comes from yajña (sacrifice).

What does this mean? Basically, when people come together in the spirit of yajña (sacrifice or selfless dedicated service), everyone prospers and not just one individual or one unit. Rain symbolizes overall prosperity because rain falls on everyone, it doesn't single anyone out. When prosperity showers on

Further Reading

🔗 "How Does Drought Affect Our Lives?"
National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska.

Example

⚙️ Turning off the tap while brushing teeth or soaping dishes, taking quick showers, washing fruits and vegetables in a pan instead of running water.

Main Lesson

continued

everyone, then there is abundance. Food symbolizes abundance. Therefore, yajña brings forth rain (prosperity) and rain brings forth food (abundance).



Selfless dedicated activities (yajña), when performed in a given field of endeavor, will be creating therein conditions necessary for the field to smile forth (rain) in a luxurious crop of profit (annam), which will be enjoyed by society.

Swami Chinmayananda
The Holy Geeta. 3.14-15.

In other words, many beings must work together selflessly to build a system that benefits all. This sacrifice requires the community to act for the world.

What if the step was clogged? If no one can agree on helping one another with a higher vision, for the welfare of all, then society falls apart. Some may prosper but others may suffer hardships. There may be abundance in one area and poverty in others. This creates a huge imbalance in society just like what we are experiencing today.

⚙️ Putting our individual likes and dislikes aside for the greater good and always feeling grateful for whatever we have received thus far will help us live in the yajña spirit and contribute towards the welfare of all.

⚙️ Only wanting to work for ourselves and fulfill our needs will create a deep sense of selfishness within us and will result in a greater disparity in the world at large.

Step 4: Yajña (sacrifice) comes from karma (action).

For collective action to happen, individual action is required. The power of the systems is large and manifold, but to completely forget the individual is a problem.



A community is made up of its individuals. However we may glorify the achievements of the community as such, we cannot totally ignore the contributions made by the units constituting the community...

Swami Chinmayananda

Each individual has to do their actions correctly and to the best of their abilities. In the earlier lessons, we saw four types of actions: nitya karma (daily duties), naimittika karma (occasional duties), kāmya karma (desired actions),

Example

⚙️ There are many people having luxury homes with no one staying in them, and so many homeless people on the streets without enough housing to shelter them.

and niṣiddha karma (prohibited actions). When one prioritizes their daily duties and occasional duties dedicating these to a higher vision, then that enables the yajña spirit to flow seamlessly. We also studied svadharma, one's own unique nature. When one acts according to their svadharma for the greater good, this also leads to the overall benefit of society.

What if the step was clogged? What if individuals themselves didn't fulfill their daily duties or didn't dwell deeply enough to find out the best way that they can serve the world? Then, they wouldn't even have the impetus to work in a team, in a community or for the greater good.

⚙️ Fulfilling one's daily duties and occasional duties well gives us the opportunity to expand and serve others. Discovering our innate, unique aptitude or svadharma enables us to utilize our full potential for the service of others.

⚠️ Not being disciplined and committed enough to fulfill our duties leaves us with much less energy and ability to think about others. Not understanding the depth of our potential and unique gifts prevents us from giving back to the world in a truly meaningful way.

Step 5: Karma comes from Vedas.

How would we know what type of actions we are supposed to do? We understand the kinds of actions we are supposed to perform by studying our scriptures, all of which are based upon the Vedas. Our ancestors have passed on this knowledge to us — both sacred and secular. For secular knowledge, they passed down arts, sciences, language, history, etc. that teach us the best methods to function in the world. We use this knowledge to invent and innovate and share our discoveries to future generations. The sacred knowledge passed down is more important, because it teaches us how to live, how to act, why to act, what is right, and what is God. This knowledge gives us a grand vision on how to operate in the world, in service to one another.

What if the step was clogged? If our scriptures weren't passed down to us, then we would never have this knowledge and we wouldn't know how to live and act in this world. Without the secular knowledge passed down from our ancestors, we wouldn't have language, music, art, science, and medicine. Without the sacred knowledge, we would not know what is the right action. The proper value of selfless dedicated service is also passed down from generation to generation, from teacher to student. Without this, the right action which leads to the yajña spirit will not come about.

Use Your Gift:
Lord Is Present
In The Field
of Work



Main Lesson

continued

- ⚙ Studying the scriptures, learning the depth of their meaning and practicing this in our lives, enables us to know how to live. Sharing this with others enables them to do the same.
- ✖ Not inquiring into our scriptures or not attempting to understand their true meaning leaves us often confused in life, not knowing how to live and act well.

Step 6: The Vedas come from Brahmā (Īśvara).

Knowledge arises from Īśvara. The Vedas are not man-made knowledge but they form a body of knowledge which was revealed by Īśvara, to our ṛṣis and ṛṣikās during their quiet moments of contemplation. The wisdom of the entire world is in the mind of Īśvara, or the total mind. When the individual mind is purified and tuned enough to the total mind (Īśvara), then subtle revelations, which were always existing, occur.

What if the step was clogged? If our great ṛṣis and ṛṣikās didn't silence their minds and contemplate on Īśvara, then these great truths would never be revealed to them. Then, they wouldn't be able to pass on any knowledge. We would have never found the right action, nor would we have developed a communal yajña spirit. Without the yajña spirit, we wouldn't have had any prosperity in the form of rains and without rains, we would never have abundance in the form of food supply. Without food, we wouldn't be able to sustain life on this earth!

- ⚙ Silencing our mind and tuning into the total mind (Īśvara) enables us to discover great truths.
- ✖ Getting distracted by too many pursuits in the world and becoming too extroverted keeps us disconnected from Īśvara.

The Relationship between Īśvara and Beings

Unlike other steps, if beings are removed, Īśvara doesn't stop existing. This final step is perhaps the most important. The whole reason for the cycle is for humans to live, thrive, and evolve. What are they meant to evolve towards? We are given this opportunity to thrive so that we can become closer to God, through action, faith, and knowledge. We are meant to evolve so that we end up unified with the Lord in the end.

Conclusion: The all-pervading God-Principle ever rests in sacrifice.

This means that if we want to have the vision of God, how can we see Him? He rests in sacrifice. When we see a community working together in a seamless

**Example**

Gravity had always been present, but only when the seer tuned themselves in the depths of silence, it was revealed to them.

cycle of giving, caring for the needs of others, paving the way for the next generation, and sacrificing their individuality for totality — this is the vision of God.



At this point, the teacher can now point back to the illustration of the wheel of action and recollect how each part plays such a critical role in the cycle. Without one of them functioning properly, everyone else gets affected.

Therefore, it is our dharma to act selflessly so that we contribute to the wheel of action instead of clogging it.

In this world, it is easy to find individuals clogging society. From government, to social media, to our own communities, many people seek only to serve their own base interests over working to benefit the larger community. In many cases, we can see how their greed serves to halt these complicated systems — the very systems that we owe so much to. These people can include scammers, influencers, or politicians who choose to prey on the weak and vulnerable for their wealth, ruining lives in the process. There are such people along all walks of life and in every field of work in the world.

The selfish, clogging instinct can be found within our own minds as well. We seek the instant gratification of good grades, tasty food, or praise from our peers and may commit acts that prioritize selfish gain over communal protection. This may include cheating on tests, skipping disliked chores, or participating in bullying to fit in. In this, we are also clogs that prevent harmony in the system. In a properly functioning system, everyone would be judged on pure merit, all members of a household would help each other, and everyone would lift up their peers rather than tearing them down. The clogs we cause may seem small but they add up to slowing these systems in the same way that being a smooth cog in these systems adds up to a healthy well-functioning world. Imagine a giant machine made of gears. One piece of gum may not stop a single gear but it might slow things down. Ten pieces of gum might bring things to a stop. One bit of grease won't speed up production by a lot, but a ton of grease will make sure all gears turn as efficiently as possible.

Discussion



Have you ever clogged up a system that was meant to benefit other people? If so, how?

Main Lesson

continued

Activity 10 min

Divide the students into 3 groups and ask them to write down the Chinmaya Mission Pledge from memory. Review this as a class to make sure everyone has it down correctly.

In their groups, ask them to identify all the lines from the pledge which indicate karma yoga or acting with a yajña spirit. Ask them to map this with the karma yoga lessons that they have learned so far:

- Lesson 11: Time Management
- Lesson 12: Acting with a Higher Vision
- Lesson 13: Acting with Surrender
- Lesson 14: Freedom
- Lesson 15: Yajña Spirit
- Lesson 16: Wheel of Action (current lesson)

A sample table might look like this.

Pledge	Concept
We stand as one family, bound to each other with love and respect.	We are all part of the wheel of action
We serve as an army, courageous and disciplined, ever ready to fight against all low tendencies and false values, within and without us.	Time management
We live honestly, the noble life of sacrifice and service, producing more than what we consume and giving more than what we take.	We were created with the spirit of yajña
We seek the Lord's grace to keep us on the path of virtue, courage, and wisdom.	Selflessness paves the way for freedom
May thy grace and blessings flow through us to the world around us.	Act with surrender
We believe that the service of our country is the service of the Lord of Lords, and devotion to the people is devotion to the supreme Self.	Act with a higher vision
We know our responsibilities. Give us the ability and courage to fulfill them.	Time management
Om Tat Sat	Act with surrender

Fun Fact

During the All India Chinmaya Mission Workers Conference in Abbotsbury in 1964, Swami Chinmayananda dictated the pledge, in a moment of inspiration, to serve as a guide for all Mission members.

Imagine how something that just came out of Him spontaneously illustrated the essence of karma yoga in the Bhagavad-gītā! This clearly demonstrates that His life was actually karma yoga.

He didn't just speak it. He lived it.

Further Reading

The Mananam Series, *He Did It.* 220.

Additional Activity:

If time permits, have the students watch the video or read the below article from National Geographic.

Gray wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park in 1995, resulting in a trophic cascade through the entire ecosystem. After the wolves were driven extinct in the region nearly 100 years ago, scientists began to fully understand their role in the food web as a keystone species.

In 1995, something really exciting happened in the nation's first national park, Yellowstone. 41 wild wolves are reintroduced here by scientists. After 100 years of being hunted, wolves could once again call this place home. The wolves thrived, but something else very surprising happened. Their return had a spectacular effect on the landscape, an effect that spread wider than anyone thought possible. So how did this all happen? In the past, wolves were seen as a risk to people and livestock, and they were exterminated from the Yellowstone area in the 1920s. The elk's main predator was gone, and their population more than doubled. Elk are both grazers and browsers, so they eat grass, shrubs, and trees. They overgraze the entire park, upsetting the natural balance of the ecosystem. Mammals like mice and rabbits could not use the plants to hide from predators, and their populations fell dramatically. Grizzly bears suffered as the elk munch away their berry supply, which they badly need to build up fat before hibernating. Pollinators like bees and hummingbirds had fewer flowers to feed on, songbirds less trees to nest in. Perhaps the elk's most devastating impact was how they affected the park's riverbanks. When the wolf was around, elk were vulnerable when they moved down towards rivers to drink. They would never spend too long by the water, where they could be ambushed. But with the apex predators gone, they gorged themselves faster than the shrubs could grow and gathered

Wolves of Yellowstone



Activity

continued

in great herds on the lush river banks. The massive elk's hooves eroded the riverbanks, so the rivers and streams clouded with soil. The fish inherited murky homes, and without trees and clean water, beavers couldn't build their dams to live in. Without the protection of the dams, fish, amphibians and otters suffered even more, and all because of the missing wolf. Now, with as many as 100 gray wolves in Yellowstone National Park, their reintroduction is having an effect that even surprised scientists. Wolves have contributed to bringing elk numbers down from 17,000 in 1995 to just 4,000 today. Since only the healthiest of elk survived, the population is much more robust. All of these elk kills mean more carcasses for scavengers like coyotes, eagles, and ravens. Grizzly bear numbers have increased, too. The grizzlies benefit from the wolves' elk kills, and less elk also means more berries, and just the elk's fear of wolves gives the riverbank trees, like aspen and willow, a chance to regenerate. They can grow to five times their original size in just six years. The songbirds are returning, too, and the bigger trees along the rivers means greater root structures, which means stronger riverbanks and less erosion. Clean water and big trees, beaver paradise. The return of the beaver dams creates new habitats for fish, amphibians, reptiles, and even otters. This shows just some of the trickle-down effects of the wolves' reintroduction, known to scientists as a trophic cascade. The trophic cascade doesn't stop there, though. The wolves are even helping us. In 2005, over 100,000 visitors went to Yellowstone National Park just to see the wolves, pumping \$30 million into the local economy, money for jobs and livelihoods. Factor in that wolves contribute to the health and diversity of all Yellowstone's wildlife, and its impact is staggering. The wolf's benefits also cascade down to the 106,000 residents of Billings, Montana. Their drinking water, Yellowstone River, is now cleaner. Who would've thought that just bringing back some wolves could produce such far-reaching benefits for nature and for people? From the tips of taller trees down to its cleaner rivers, these wild wolves have rebalanced and restored our nation's very first national park.



Divide the students into groups with 3 students in each. Ask them to trace what happened when the wolves were reintroduced in Yellowstone park. How did that impact the ecosystem?

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

As a class, come up with top 5 takeaways from today's lesson.

Ensure that you cover the following main idea: in this class, the students learned about the “Wheel of Action” and how civilization's sacrifices benefit the world and themselves personally. They learned that, behind it all, the Lord Himself is responsible for the positive benefits of yajña spirit, and that to dishonor that gift by living selfishly only works to hinder the benefits of the sacrifice for others.

Slogan

**In this cosmic system,
be a cog and not a clog**

Sādhana

Students should come to the next class with a prayer to any being that acts as a cog of the cosmic wheel. They should stretch their mind and be creative to think about something they feel grateful for, for their own survival and thriving.

In writing their prayer, first students should name the being they are worshipping as part of the wheel of action. Then the students should write a statement of gratitude, in the form of a prayer to the being they are worshipping. Finally, they will write a promise to the being declaring how they will be a cog of the cosmic wheel instead of being a clog, in honor of the gift the being gives.



Example

I pray to that Divine Principle, expressed through efforts of the farmers of the world, for providing me the sustenance by which I can survive and thrive. I will honor this gift by living a life of noble action and selfless service to my community with the energy provided from this food.

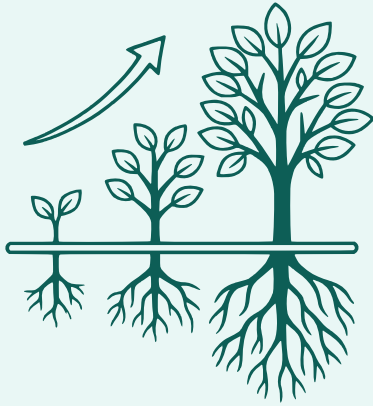
Conclude with the closing prayers.



Reason to be Selfless #4: We are not Enlightened Yet!

This lesson explores the characteristics of the Self-realized person and how it frees them from the obligation to perform karma yoga. It's important to note that even if they are free of the obligation of performing karma yoga, service for the welfare of all is still their natural expression. They do not perform it out of compulsion but out of natural expression. Hence, they work from joy and not for joy.

3.17  3.18 



yastvātmaratireva syāt
ātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ,
ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭaḥ
tasya kāryam na vidyate.

But the one who rejoices only in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self, who is content in the Self alone, for that one, verily there is nothing (more) to be done.

naiva tasya kṛtenārthaḥ
nākṛteneha kaścana,
na cāsyā sarvabhūteṣu
kaścīd arthavyapāśrayaḥ.

For that one, there is no interest whatsoever in what is done or what is not done; nor do they depend upon any being for any object.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
30m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Whiteboard/chart paper and marker pens

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.17 - 3.18.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Is there Anyone Excused from Performing Obligatory Duties?”

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “How Not to Get Entangled.”

🔗 Chinmaya Mission. “On a Quest (English)” 1:14:00 - 1:19:35.

Swami Tapovan Maharaj. *Īśvara Darśana*. Chapter 4, 168.

Reason to be Selfless #4: We are not Enlightened Yet!

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we learned about the wheel of action. Can you recall all the beings that are part of the wheel?

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 1. Beings | 5. Karma |
| 2. Food | 6. Veda |
| 3. Rain | 7. God (Īśvara) |
| 4. Yajña | |



At this point, the teacher can divide the board in two, drawing a cog on one side and a clog on the other. Ask the students to pick any step and write how to be a cog or clog in that specific step on the board. The teacher can pick a few more steps, time permitting.

We have now seen a total of three reasons to be selfless.

- Lesson 14: Freedom
- Lesson 15: Yajña Spirit
- Lesson 16: Wheel of Action

Now, let us explore the **fourth** reason to be selfless. The fourth reason to be selfless is: **we are not enlightened yet!** We haven't realized our true Nature of contentment. Until that point, we still have to serve selflessly in the world.

Introduction 5 min



Discussion

Reflect in small groups:

- When was the last time you felt totally content? How long did that feeling last?
- Have you ever met someone who is completely content in life? Where do you think their contentment comes from?

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #4: WE ARE NOT ENLIGHTENED YET!

Short story:

Once upon a time, a stonecutter found himself feeling discontented with his life. Observing the affluence of a wealthy merchant passing by, he wished to experience such prosperity. In the blink of an eye, his wish was granted.

Yet, the allure of power soon captivated his attention as he saw a king parading in grandeur. His desire shifted, yearning now for the influence and authority of a monarch. Once again, his wish was granted.

As a king, he felt powerful until he saw the sun shining brightly, unaffected by his power. Wishing to have the power of the sun, he became the sun. Yet, he felt defeated when a cloud covered him, so he wished to become a cloud.

As a cloud, he felt powerful again until he realized that the wind could push him around. So, he wished to become the wind. When he saw a mountain standing firm against his gusts, he wished to become a mountain.

Finally, as a mountain, he felt unbeatable until a stonecutter came and started chiseling away at him. Realizing the true power of a stonecutter, he wished to become one again, and finally learned to be content with his life.



Discussion

Ask students to list their top 3 short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals (desires). Then ask if they would become content if they got them all tomorrow, or would they desire more, like the stonecutter?

Main Lesson 30 min

Chant the verses and read the meanings together as a class.

yastvātmaratireva syāt
ātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ,
ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭaḥ
tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate.

But the one who rejoices only in the
Self, who is satisfied with the Self,
who is content in the Self alone,
for that one, verily there is nothing
(more) to be done.

naiva tasya kṛtenārthaḥ
nākṛteneha kaścana,
na cāśya sarvabhūteṣu
kaścīd arthavyapāśrayaḥ.

For that one, there is no interest
whatsoever in what is done or what
is not done; nor do they depend
upon any being for any object.

3.17 - 3.18

Main Lesson

continued

In the context of karma yoga and the wheel of action (3.14 - 16), Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains that there is an exception to the rule; some people are exempt from the performance of karma yoga.

Recall the two parts of karma yoga.

Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi → inspired and expansive mind
Prasāda buddhi → focused and cheerful mind

The purpose of karma yoga is to develop a pure mind.

A **pure mind** means **one that is selfless and free from likes and dislikes**. A pure mind is necessary for turning inwards and gaining Self-knowledge or knowing who we truly are. The one who has already gained Self-knowledge is therefore exempt; they have already achieved the ultimate result of karma yoga.



**Is there Anyone
Excused from
Performing
Obligatory
Duties?**



Example

We go to school every day because we have to earn our high school diploma. For someone who has already graduated from high school, there's no need to go to high school and attend those classes anymore.

The realized master has no need to work in the spirit of karma yoga. If we still see them acting, they are doing so out of joy! This is out of their own natural expression and not any compulsion.

Put simply, if we want to understand whether or not karma yoga is for us, the question we have to answer is: do I want anything? Do I have a desire to attain/experience/avoid anything?

If the answer is “yes,” then we should be performing our activities as karma yoga.



Discussion

Do you think it is possible to live without desire? What would a life without desire look like?

Is there any way to become completely free from desire? Doesn't having no desires mean living a life void of any sense of drive, fulfillment, and enjoyment? If I don't want anything, does it mean I have nothing to live for and could fall into a state of dejection?

The **Self-realized person** lives without desire to complete themselves, yet in a state of total fulfillment. What does this mean? A Self-realized being will still have hunger, thirst, tiredness, and hence have the basic desires to eat,

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #4: WE ARE NOT ENLIGHTENED YET!

drink, and rest. However, a Self-realized being will not have any desire to gain anything in the material realm (wealth, following, name, fame, etc.) in order to complete themselves, because they are already whole and complete.

1. A Self-realized person may be hungry, but they will not feel sorrow for not getting a specific food they want, nor will they only feel happiness when it's a specific food they like.
2. A Self-realized person may have a goal they act towards, but the completion of the goal does not make them feel more or less complete. They do not get dejected if there is a setback. Nor do they feel validated only if the goal is completed.

One who is ignorant	Self-realized being
Has not realized the Truth of their being	Has attained knowledge of the Self
Lives with the idea of the separateness of all beings	Has realized their oneness with all beings
Desires objects, beings, and experiences to complete themselves	Has no more desires to complete themselves
Serves society for mental purification	Serves society out of natural expression
Works for joy	Works from joy

According to the Bhagavad-gītā, there are three terms used to describe the Self-realized or Enlightened being.

1. **Ātmaratiḥ: one who revels in the Self**

To revel is to take delight in something (ask students for their own examples at three levels: physical, mental, and intellectual)

- At a physical level, we revel in tasty food for the tongue, music for the ears, scenic views for the eyes, etc.
- At a mental level, we can revel in highs of excitement, enjoyment, and pleasure, but sometimes we also revel in our sorrow.
- At an intellectual level, we revel in new ideas, convictions, and beliefs.

We tend to only revel in things that we like. The one who revels in the Self doesn't rely on object, person, or experience at the physical, mental, or intellectual level to bring them delight. They do not need tasty food to give them joy or a scenic view. They do not need emotional support or good company.

Main Lesson

continued

They do not need to dwell on any ideas or convictions. They simply turn within and take delight in the Self. They see the whole world as the expression of their own true Self.



Of all the objects of veneration, the Self is the most venerable. It is the noblest tīrtha (pilgrimage), the holiest of holies, the fairest of the fair, the dearest among the dear, priceless, unsurpassed...It is to be sought after by everybody. It shines by Itself, like the sun, in every heart at all times...Why rush here or there to enjoy the beauty of beautiful objects? Immerse yourself in happiness in this principle of Self...In the corner of his room is a hive full of honey but the fool rushes about the world frantically for a drop of it! He sees not the hoarded gold in his house and goes about begging for pieces of copper. To search for peace and happiness in external objects is in no way different from this.

Swami Tapovan Maharaj
Īśvara Darśana. Chapter 4, 168.

**Discussion**

What happens when we revel in objects of the world? Have the class discuss and then share the following downsides to revelling in physical objects/mental experiences/intellectual concepts or understanding.

Five flaws that come with every sense pleasure experience:

- **AT — Association with temporariness (all have a beginning and an end).** For example, we can watch multiple episodes of a TV show, but they all have a start and end time. We might have been so caught up in the plot and the episode ended on a cliffhanger. We can't believe it's over.
- **AP — Association with pain.** When our favorite show comes to an end, we feel sad. We like the show so much, but it has so many ups and downs. It leaves us in a rollercoaster of emotions — sometimes sad, angry, or anxious.
- **CD — Causes dependence.** If we're not able to access our streaming service and watch what we want, we become restless. We can't be happy without it. Sometimes, we even become addicted. We might need to watch a show every night before we sleep.
- **DE — Drains our energy.** We feel more tired after watching rather than refreshed.

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #4: WE ARE NOT ENLIGHTENED YET!

- **DG — Dissatisfaction is guaranteed.** We are dissatisfied either with the actual experience (unhappy with the show) or because it comes to an end, and we want more. Either way, we are left incomplete and we search for something else to make us happy.



Activity

Before the activity, teachers should write out the acronyms for the five flaws (AT, AP, CD, DE, DG) as well as their meanings on the boards.

Instructions: Students have to create an activity that doesn't have any of the five flaws. Students should then take five minutes and try to design an activity that will satisfy as many people as possible. They should try to account for as many different tastes and preferences out there in their activity design and they should try to come up with ways to mitigate any dissatisfaction or any of the flaws. For the purposes of this activity, they can imagine that they have an unlimited budget and time to prepare the activity as well, but the activity itself must be something specific.

Then break students out into groups of four. The students should share their examples with the group and, after each sharing, try to poke holes in the other three students' ideas, trying to find ways that people may be dissatisfied with the activity. Students should use the five flaws on the board as a framework for developing their critiques.

- Critiques that reference that the pizza party has a definite end can be connected to the flaw **AT** (association with temporariness).
- Critiques that are aimed towards making people unhappy, because you can't satisfy all possible desires can be connected to the flaw **AP** (association with pain).
- Critiques that are aimed at the fact that people can become dependent on the experience can be connected to the flaw **CD** (causes dependence).
- Critiques that are about how people will have enough of any experience, even if it's the best possible experience, is related to **DE** (drains energy).
- Any other critiques that show how many different types of dissatisfaction may appear would be connected to **DG** (dissatisfaction guaranteed).

Example



I think the way to make the most people happy is to throw a pizza party with every type of pizza out there, with enough pizza for the entire world to enjoy. There should be pizza for the lactose intolerant, pizza with cauliflower crust for those who want to eat healthier, and more.

Main Lesson

continued

After, as a group, the students should take what they learned and try to design a new activity which addresses those flaws. Once they have done so, the groups should present to the class as a whole, who will take turns critiquing the ideas in the exact same way as they did in the round before.

Debrief: In short, there is no external activity that can bring unending and independent joy for all people forever. To find such joy, one must look inwards. The Self, on the other hand, is free from all defects. It is not temporary — It is permanent as it is one's own nature. It is not associated with any pain — It is the abode of joy. It is not dependent on any object — It is independent. It doesn't drain energy — It is the source of all energy. Upon knowing the Self, satisfaction is guaranteed.

Now, let us see the second characteristic of an Enlightened being.

2. **Ātmatṛptaḥ: one who is satisfied in the Self**

To be satisfied is to have the experience of “alam-buddhi”: “this is enough.” Having recognized fully all the defects of all objects and experiences, they are no longer seeking joy from the world. They have had enough.

In the same way, a realized being is already satisfied with their direct experience of the Truth, so they do not find satisfaction in anything else. Even if all the enjoyments of the world were placed before them, what does it matter? They have experienced God-realization, which is far above and beyond any object of enjoyment and has no defects.

While the ignorant ones experience **FOMO** (Fear Of Missing Out), the Self-realized beings have **JOMO (Joy Of Mokṣa)** — they understand that they're really not missing anything because they are the seat of joy themselves. The ignorant ones seek to enjoy, but the **wise know that they are joy.**

To be satisfied in the Self means not to have **FOMO** but to have **JOMO.**

Recall the last time that you bought something that you were completely satisfied with. It could be a new phone, game, or new clothes. How long were you satisfied with this? How long before you wanted something else to satisfy you?



Example

When you're full, no amount of food can make you more satisfied than you already are. Even if someone gives you your favorite food or ice cream, you have had enough.

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #4: WE ARE NOT ENLIGHTENED YET!

Recall the last time you had FOMO. Why did you feel this way? Did you end up going to that particular place or event? Did your desire stop there, or did you experience FOMO again?



Discussion

Can satisfaction from objects or experiences ever be lasting? What's the fallacy in seeking satisfaction from something outside yourself?

Debrief: People, objects, and experiences come and go from our lives. They are not there permanently. Therefore, the satisfaction can never be lasting! That happiness can only be at most for a small, temporary period of time.

3. **Ātmasantuṣṭaḥ: one who is content in the Self**

To be content means that they are happy with or without.

Reflect on the following story about Nāgārjuna.

Nāgārjuna was a very knowledgeable Buddhist monk. Impressed with his knowledge, the king gave him a golden bowl as a gift. Being a monk, he used the bowl for bhikṣā. Once when he went to ask bhikṣā, a thief saw the golden bowl and stealthily followed the monk throughout the day. At the end of the day when Nāgārjuna was retiring to sleep, he called the thief and said, “I know you have been following me throughout the day and that you want this golden bowl. Here, take it.” The astonished thief took the bowl and went away, thanking his luck.

Having parted with the bowl, Nāgārjuna went to sleep peacefully. The next morning, when he woke up, he found that the thief was waiting for him at the door. Seeing the monk awake, the thief returned the bowl saying, “I couldn't sleep the entire night because I was scared that someone else would steal my bowl. Please take this bowl and give me the thing, which is more precious. What is it that gives you the ability to keep, use, and give up the bowl without being affected?”

Nāgārjuna said, “No one can take from you what you never took to be yours. I never felt that this is my bowl or that it makes me more glorious because I have it. A few days ago, the bowl belonged to the king. Then it came to me. Now it is with you. Things come and go. We should not become possessive about them.”

Main Lesson

continued

The thief asked, “How can we live in the world without having things and taking things to be ours?”

Nāgārjuna replied, “Have and use them, but don’t let them define you and your self-worth. You are never greater or lesser because of the things you have or don’t have. This is detachment — the secret of peace and happiness.”

The thief said, “You are a monk. You can be detached. But how can I be detached while I am living in the world?”

Nāgārjuna smiled and said, “In an ocean, if the boat is upon the water, the boat will float. But if the water gets into the boat, the boat will sink. Similarly, you live in the world. But, let not the world live in you. Don’t let the objects define your happiness. If you do, that is the surest way to be miserable. You should be happy with or without them. This is called WOW attitude. This is detachment.”

The thief replied, “I have been stealing, to fill my life with more and more things so that I feel worthy. But now I realize that it is not the things that can make our empty heart feel full and happy. It is the attitude of detachment and freedom.”

Nāgārjuna concluded, “Our happiness is directly proportional to our detachment and our sorrows are directly proportional to our attachment. Greater the attachment, deeper the sorrow. Be detached like a lotus leaf, which is born, grows and goes back to water but remains untouched by it. This is the way to happiness.”

The thief felt grateful, left the bowl with Nāgārjuna and returned with something much more precious. He stopped stealing and started living righteously with detachment.



Discussion

What if you posted or presented something and didn’t get enough likes or appreciation? Would you feel the same way or would you feel like you are missing something? And if people complimented you, would you feel like you gained something?



Ask the class what was the essence of Nāgārjuna’s teaching.

A Self-realized being is content, **a WOW person. One who is content with or without.** When things, people, and experiences come, they welcome them and when they go, they let them go. This is because nothing or no one can add to their self-worth. They are complete, full, and whole as they are.

- What if you had a million dollars and someone took away \$10 from you? Would that really matter? No. You have a million dollars. That’s too petty. What if someone gave you \$10? Would that really add to your wealth? No. It’s so small. You already have a million in the bank.

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #4: WE ARE NOT ENLIGHTENED YET!

- In the same way, a Self-realized person has nothing to gain or lose because they have the wealth of true Knowledge. Even if anyone gives anything to them or takes away anything from them, they are still deeply rich and content in the heart.

Summary:

One who is ignorant	Self-realized being
Viṣayaratiḥ one who revels in the world of objects	Ātmaratiḥ one who revels in the Self
Viṣayātr̥ptah one who remains dissatisfied in the world of objects (despite engaging in them again and again) (FOMO)	Ātmatr̥ptah one who is satisfied in the Self and is no longer looking for joy in the world of objects (JOMO)
Viṣayāsantuṣṭah one who is constantly dependent on the world of objects — happy with objects and unhappy without them	Ātmasantuṣṭah one who is WOW — content with or without

In conclusion, the Self-realized person revels in the Self regardless of place and circumstance. In addition, there is nothing to add to or detract from their satisfaction and contentment. Therefore, for them, neither is there anything to achieve through action, nor is there anything to lose through inaction.

The Self-realized person has nothing to gain, nothing to lose, and no dependence upon any object, person, place, or activity.

They are the infinite Self, despite appearing to others to be functioning through the BMI equipment. And yet, despite this, they still serve the world out of their own natural expression and no compulsion.

Think about Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda. After realizing the Self and studying under Swami Tapovan Maharaj, He still came down to the world to share this knowledge with others — not because of any **compulsion** but because His heart melted with **compassion** for those who did not have this knowledge. Because He came to share this knowledge with us, millions all over the world have benefited and are striving to attain this same knowledge here and now.



At this point, the students can watch the scene from *On A Quest*.

How Not to Get Entangled



On A Quest

1:14:00 - 1:19:35



Main Lesson

continued

Self Check

Do we have something to gain in this world? Do we have anything to lose? Do we have dependencies? **Are we performing action out of compulsion or compassion?**

Generally, when we are unsatisfied, it means we are looking for something and ignorant of the Self. The one who is ignorant of the Self acts:

- To gain something new.
- To keep what we already have.
- To avoid something feared.
- Out of attachment for the action/result.

When we act with any of these as our motivation, we end up getting stuck — either to the action or the result. Though we are not enlightened (yet!), we can begin practicing these principles to prepare ourselves and continue the journey.



Discussion

Refer to the short, medium, and long-term goals (desires) listed earlier: how many of them are you ready to give up, right now? Would you lose anything by giving them up? Would you want to replace them with something else?

If the answer is “yes, you feel you would lose something by giving these goals up,” then the solution for us to escape these dependencies is karma yoga.

Through karma yoga, when we practice *Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi* and *prasāda buddhi*, our mind becomes inspired, expansive, focused, and cheerful. As we learned in the previous lessons, this will help us turn inward and realize our true nature as ever complete and whole.

Therefore, the fourth reason to perform karma yoga is: **we are not enlightened yet!**

By living selflessly, we can continue to work towards enlightenment.

Activity 10 min

Split the class into 2 teams and ask them to form two parallel lines. Have the first student in each line step up. Then read them a specific scenario that relates to one of the 3 states of a Self-realized being.

REASON TO BE SELFLESS #4: WE ARE NOT ENLIGHTENED YET!



Examples

- Dancing to music alone even if no one's watching (Ātmaratiḥ)
- Baking a whole cake and enjoying one slice (Ātmatṛptaḥ)
- Watching a sunset without feeling the need to capture it on your phone (Ātmasantuṣṭaḥ)
- Getting merch from your favorite artist and happily giving it away to another fan (Ātmasantuṣṭaḥ)

If the class is particularly active, a movement component can be added to this game. For example: bring a ball and a basket and allow the student who answered correctly to make a basket for an additional point.

After reading the statement, the first of the two students to raise their hand can describe which of the 3 states it relates to and explain it. The first student to get it correct gets a point for their team. Some of these statements may overlap between two states, so points can be awarded based on the student's explanation. Then rotate and the next student of each line goes head-to-head.

Continue this until every student in line gets a chance to guess or until all scenarios prepared by the teacher have been used.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the group to recap the three key characteristics pointed out (verse 17), and the consequence for the realized person's relationship with action (verse 18).

Slogan

**Be a WOW person —
Be happy With or Without!**

Sādhana

At a time when you feel unhappy during the next week, ask yourselves the following questions, note down the answers, and bring the notes for discussion in the next class.

1. If you had gotten what you wanted, would you be happy? If so, how long do you think you would have been happy for?
2. Would you rather chase temporary happiness which will always lead to feeling unhappy or look for a permanent joy that prevents all future unhappiness?

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Reason to be Selfless #5: You are a Leader

In this lesson, we explore what it means to be śreṣṭha and the qualities of a good leader. We also explore how we can embody these qualities in our daily lives.

3.21 



yadyadācarati śreṣṭhaḥ
tat tadevetaro janaḥ,
sa yat pramāṇam kurute
lokastad-anuvartate.

Whatever a great person does,
that other people also do (imitate);
whatever one sets up as the standard,
that the world (people) follows.

Time 55 min

Materials

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

None required

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.21.

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. “You are the Role Model.”

☞ “Valmiki Ramayana.” IIT Kanpur.

☞ “Story of Gurudev’s Life.” Chinmaya Ramdoot.

Reason to be Selfless #5: You are a Leader

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous classes, we have discussed the core concepts of karma yoga: **Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi** and **prasāda buddhi**. We then learnt why it is important to act selflessly:

1. Selflessness paves the way for our freedom by purifying our mind.
2. Bhagavān created all of us in the spirit of yajña (selfless sacrifice). We have received so much from the world; therefore, it is our dharma to give back.
3. We are a part of the cycle of life so we should contribute to the wheel of action.
4. We are not enlightened yet! By living selflessly, we can continue to work towards Enlightenment.

Now let's explore the **fifth** reason to act selflessly.

Introduction 10 min



Ask the class to spend five minutes reflecting on the following questions.

1. Who are your role models? Which specific qualities in them do you admire?
2. How do your role models influence your lives? Are you inspired by your role models? Do you try to emulate them?
3. What makes someone a role model? Is it their ability, their character, etc.?

After five minutes, come together as a whole class and discuss:

- examples of role models that the students came up with.
- the qualities of those individuals that make them role models.
- the influence of the role models on the lives of JCHYKs.

Main Lesson 25 min

This week, we will talk about our fifth reason to be selfless. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues in Verse 21:

yadyadācarati śreṣṭhaḥ
tat tadevetaro janaḥ,
sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute
lokastad-anuvartate.

Whatever a great person does,
that other people also do (imitate);
whatever one sets up as the standard,
that the world (people) follows.

3.21

Who is a śreṣṭha?

One of the most important words in this verse is **śreṣṭha**, which literally translates as a great person. Śreṣṭha means someone who is lawful, noble, and pure. We can think of śreṣṭha as a role model.

Bhagavān expands further saying that whatever a śreṣṭha does, everyone tends to follow. Gurudev says that this is just a natural, psychological truth — we tend to just imitate those that we see as our idols.

This means that not only do śreṣṭhas embody these noble and pure qualities; they also have a great responsibility to all the world around them. As the saying goes, “with great qualities, comes great responsibility!”

Connection to the Verse: Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, whether he likes it or not, Arjuna is śreṣṭha, and as such, it is his dharma to take action and act in this world. Arjuna is a role model for so many and so this is why he must selflessly continue to act and take part in the battle. If he were to retreat, then everyone that looks up to him would think that retreating and shying away from action are what they should follow, which is completely improper. So, Lord Kṛṣṇa explains to Arjuna **the fifth reason to act selflessly — because others will follow his actions.**



Discussion

Ask the class: Do you follow what your parents say or what they do?
Can you share some examples?

Debrief: We tend to follow the actions that others do rather than what they say.

**You are the
Role Model**



Teachers can also share their own examples of their own parents or their own children (if the teachers are parents).

Connect to the exercise the students did in the “Introduction.” Have the students notice how they already do this in their everyday lives without even realizing it. Many of us act, buy items, follow passions, and choose our interests based on what our personal role models do and say.

Main Lesson

continued

Without even realizing it, we follow people, sometimes willingly and sometimes blindly, and imitate their behaviors and interests.

This is why we say: actions speak louder than words.

In fact, great leaders will provide advice and guidance only when they themselves follow their own words and live by what they preach (otherwise how will their words have any value or weight?).

Share the following story of “The Mahātmā and the Chocoholic.”

A little boy loved eating sweets! He loved anything that was sweet or made with sugar more than anything else in the world. You name it (e.g., gulab jamun, kaju katli, candy, chocolate) — if it had sugar, he would happily and blissfully eat it. His mother had tried many times to get him to stop: she had scolded the boy, she had hid the sweets, and so on, but nothing had worked. She was frustrated with constantly asking her son to stop eating so much sugar, so she decided to take him to a great Mahātmā that resided in a cave nearby. She prostrated before the Mahātmā and asked the Mahātmā to advise her son to stop eating sugar as it is bad for his health. The Mahātmā told the mother to come back in two weeks with her son. Two weeks later, the mother returned with her son and the Mahātmā once again told them to come back in two weeks. The mother was a little puzzled but she left. Four weeks after the initial visit, the mother and son returned to visit the Mahātmā. She prostrated to the Mahātmā and requested him to advise her son. The Mahātmā looked at the young boy and said, “Don’t eat too much sugar. It is bad for your health. Too much of anything is bad for you. Please take care of yourself.” The son nodded in agreement and expressed his understanding. Grateful, but confused, the mother asked, “Oh, Mahātmā, why could you not tell him this same thing four weeks ago? That would have saved us so much time!” The Mahātmā replied, “I was eating too much sugar myself, so I needed four weeks to control myself, before I could give such advice to another.”

Short Side-Topic: Do you ever wonder why people don’t listen to us? There is no śakti (strength) in our speech. We are lacking satyatā (truthfulness) in our words and actions. So, we must bring those qualities to our lives by living the words we speak, just like the Mahātmā (the śreṣṭha in our story) demonstrated. We must embody the idea ourselves. Think: if your leader doesn’t do anything, will you follow them or what will you think of them?

Qualities of a Śreṣṭha

Now, how do we know if we are following a śreṣṭha? Are there qualities that we can look for?

In the very beginning of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Ṛṣi Vālmīki asks Nārada Muni about who in the world possesses the sixteen great qualities of an Uttama Puruṣa, one who is the highest ideal of mankind. Nārada Muni begins by extolling the virtues of Śrī Rāma himself! There is no better example of a śreṣṭha than Lord Rāma, so let us look at some of these qualities and what we can learn about becoming a leader like Śrī Rāma! Many of these qualities are incredibly important to have in all scenarios, such as the quality of kṛtajñaḥ, one who is grateful to all, or jitakrodaḥ, one who has conquered anger. Among the sixteen, five stand out as especially important for those who wish to become great leaders.



Ask the class: What do you think those qualities are?

Leaders, like Śrī Rāma, exemplify the following five qualities (5D): **Dhārmika, Decisive, Dynamic, Daring, and Devoted**. We will now examine each of these in detail.



Introduce and teach the qualities in an interactive manner.

- Define each of the five qualities below in order.
- As you define each quality, ask the class to think about and share examples of how Śrī Rāma exemplified that quality.
- If needed, share the examples detailed below.

Dhārmika or Dharmajña (One who knows dharma) — A dhārmika leader is one who always thinks what is the best for the maximum number of people. They additionally protect dharma and make sure that their followers do the right thing, at the right place, and at the right time.



Example of Lord Śrī Rāma

Lord Rāma chose the right path over the easy path again and again. By immediately accepting His banishment from His homeland, He fulfilled His father's promise, at His own expense, without a second thought. When Lakṣmaṇa wanted to take revenge for the banishment, Lord Rāma did not let him.

Main Lesson

continued

Decisive or Dṛḍhavrataḥ (One who is resolute or firm vowed) — A decisive leader has a crystal-clear vision. They have a clear sense of direction. They know how to delegate to others. Such a leader does not procrastinate and takes proper, righteous action and stands by it. For such a person, the way an action is done is as important as the results of it.

**Example of Lord Śrī Rāma**

When Bharata visited Śrī Rāma in Chitrakoot to persuade Him to return to Ayodhya and accept the kingdom, Śrī Rāma stood firmly by His vow. Despite everyone urging Him and providing various reasons for Him to rule, He did not budge. Instead, He delegated Bharata to rule the kingdom.

**Example of Lord Śrī Rāma**

Another incident is when Vibhīṣaṇa, the brother of Rāvaṇa, sought solace at the feet of Rāma, many of the Vānaras didn't approve of this because he was the brother of Rāvaṇa. He could've been a spy! However, Śrī Rāma said to all of them that whoever surrenders unto Him will be taken care of no matter who they are.

sakṛd eva prapannayā
tavāsmīti ca yācate,
abhayaṁ sarva bhūtebhyaḥ
dadāmyetad vrataṁ mama.

If one surrenders unto Me sincerely, saying, "My Lord, from this day I am fully surrendered unto You," I always give him protection. That is My vow.

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddha kāṇḍa 18.33

Dynamic or Samartaḥ (One who is capable) — A dynamic leader doesn't shy away from work and always analyzes what society needs and delivers it. Dynamic leaders act for the benefit of the whole world. They are not just talkers — they are actual doers. There is no task too big or too small for such a leader. They see what needs to get done and are ready to do it, no matter what it is.

**Example of Lord Śrī Rāma**

Lord Rāma, throughout his life, performed many different tasks. He served as a humble forest guardian during His exile, as a general against the forces of Lanka, and as a great king of Ayodhya. In each of these roles, different expectations and attitudes were required, but He performed all with equanimity.

Knowing is not
doing, doing
is doing.

Swami
Chinmayananda

Daring or Vīryavān (One who is heroic) — A daring leader is one who is mentally strong. They are ready to make decisions at the right time and do not fear the consequences. They act boldly, with wisdom, and if difficulties arise, they remain unafraid of tackling them as well.



Example of Lord Śrī Rāma

When Śrī Rāma was not even sixteen years old, Sage Viśvāmitra asked Him to protect his yajñas (sacred rituals). When Viśvāmitra performed one of his yajñas, two rākṣasas who were highly trained in warfare polluted the sacrificial altar with flesh and blood. Therefore, he couldn't complete the yajñas. He wanted Śrī Rāma, though He was just a young boy, to be by his side and protect him.

Leaving His home as a teenager to go into the forest where He had never lived, and to go fight strong and powerful demons with just His brother's help, must have been quite scary. Śrī Rāma dared to go into the unknown and was never overwhelmed by any obstacle that came His way.

Devoted or Sarvabhūteṣu hitaḥ (One who is intent on the good of the people) — A devoted leader is dedicated to something higher (e.g., the nation, humanity, God, and Guru). A leader should not be devoted to themselves. They should not just guide people to their own potential. Rather, a true devoted leader will help take people beyond, to even higher and greater things.



Example of Lord Śrī Rāma

Lord Viṣṇu incarnated on earth as Śrī Rāma in order to preserve dharma and protect the good of the people, by defeating Rāvaṇa. Śrī Rāma, at no point, sought anything more than to bring out the best for the world. Through Him, many seekers (e.g., Śrī Hanumān, Śabarī Devī, and Bharata) found joy, peace, and even liberation. Lord Rāma aided and assisted many people in need, such as Ṛṣi Viśvāmitra, Sugrīva, and Ahalyā Devī.

Main Lesson

continued

Story of
Gurudev's Life

Discussion

Recollect the story of Swami Chinmayananda with the class. You may refer to the short biography in the introduction section of the book. Then, have the class break out into groups of 3-4 students. Ask each group to think and discuss how Pūjya Gurudev exemplified each of the 5D qualities. After 10 minutes, bring the class together and discuss the 5D qualities of Gurudev as a class. The teacher can add information if anything was missed.

The teacher can also refer to this video: [Story of Gurudev's Life](#).

5D Leader: Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda

Gurudev is the visionary monastic who brought the knowledge of the Bhagavad-gītā and Upaniṣads to the masses when He came down from the peaceful Himalayas to the plains and roared like mighty Gaṅgā Mātā.

Dhārmika

Gurudev's whole cause was for Sanātana Dharma. All the actions He took were to share the glory of Sanātana Dharma. His first ever yajña was entitled "Let us be Hindus" on December 31, 1951. This was an answer to the misunderstandings people had about Hinduism.

"At the present state of moral, ethical, and cultural degradation in our country, to totally dispose of religion would be making our dash to ruin even quicker. However decadent our religion may be, it is far better than having none at all. My proposal is that the wise thing for us would be to try and bring about a renaissance of Hinduism so that under its greatness — proven through many centuries — we may come to grow into the very heights of culture and civilization that was ours in the historical past."

The Mananam Series, *He Did it*. Let us be Hindus, 85.

All of Gurudev's teachings were based on our śāstras (the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad-gītā, Brahma-sūtras, Itihāsas, and Purāṇas). He protected dharma by always keeping the śāstras as the foundation and sharing the correct interpretation according to the needs of the time.

Moreover, He lived a life of dharma — uncompromisingly!

Decisive Throughout His life, Gurudev was always consulted by various people to make decisions about their family, career, mission activities, and more. He analyzed each situation very carefully and gave crisp and clear responses through His letters. He also knew how to delegate tasks and inspire many to become leaders.

An example decision can be seen below:

A lady by the name of Uma Jeyarasasingam wrote to Gurudev about her daughter who was attending Sunday School since she was surrounded by Christian Caucasian neighbors. She was wondering about the influence of this in her daughter's life. Gurudev asked her to start Bala Vihar and He provided step-by-step instructions for Bala Vihar and topics to be taught for each grade from kindergarten to twelfth grade. That Bala Vihar which started with 7-10 students has over 2,000 students today.

The Mananam Series, *Final Score: Love All*, 138.

Dynamic Gurudev inspired the founding of Chinmaya Mission which teaches the essence of Hindu scriptures to people from all ages, backgrounds, and cultures.

Gurudev started Sandeepany Sadhanalaya to spread this knowledge all over the globe. Today, there are over 350 mission centers and over 270 monks (Swamins/Brahmacharins).

Gurudev inspired the creation of schools, hospitals, colleges, institutes with a spiritual vision, and even a university.

Gurudev's dynamism lives on through the Mission that we are all so grateful to be a part of.

Main Lesson

continued

Daring

Gurudev decided on His own to leave the silent Himalayan ranges and come to the plains to share the knowledge with everyone. He left the peace and security of the mountains and the traditions of the Himalayan masters, who spent their lives teaching only those who came to them. Swami Chinmayananda now dared to go to the people, live amongst them, and address the problems they encountered.

"Once when I was thus quietly composed and extremely pleased with the cool waves of joy within myself, it suddenly struck me that none can argue against the Immortal Truth that "Man is essentially a God." Looking into the roaring Gaṅgā, I shivered, "Can I do it? Can I face the educated and bring to their faithless heart a ray at least of understanding of what our culture stands for?" Mother Gaṅgā in her incessant hurry seemed to tell me, "Son, don't you see Me. Born in the Himalayas, I rush down to the plains taking with Me both life and nourishment. Fulfillment of any possession is in sharing it with others." I decided. I was encouraged. I felt reinforced. The urge became irresistible. Now I must face the impediments!"

Swami Chinmayananda

"Story behind the first Jnana Yajna." Chinmaya Archives.

When Gurudev decided to come to the plains, He only knew one person and yet He wanted to start a 100 day yajña!

"The only one whom I knew there was a young Madras boy... He took up the work with a daring spirit, as noble as my own adventure. With merely a four-anna piece, I landed in Pune to conduct a 100-day yajña! This was inaugurated by Swami Chinmayananda of Uttarkashi himself in the Vinayak Temple in Rasta Peth ... On the opening day in Pune, I had an audience of eighteen to address, and therefore, my heart jumped with joy!"

Swami Chinmayananda

"Story behind the first Jnana Yajna." Chinmaya Archives.

Gurudev shared the knowledge in English, making it widely accessible, even though He was criticized in the beginning for doing this. Beyond this, He made it accessible to all ages from children (Bala Vihar) to seniors (Vānaprastha), through books, discourses, and training the next generation of monks.

Devoted

Gurudev was always devoted to the Guru paramparā and the śāstras.

“All my life is a story of my love for him,” said He in a moment of quiet reverie. In every yajñasālā, the picture of Swami Tapovan Maharaj would adorn the altar on the dais and smile His benign blessings as His disciple quoted and explained, reasoned and cajoled, proclaimed and roared the truth of the scriptures from the vyāsa pīṭha.

Swami Chinmayananda
“Love for Guru.” Chinmaya Archives.

Gurudev always wanted to lead people beyond their current limits to the highest Truth. He didn’t want them to depend on Him, but He wanted to push them beyond.

I am the pointer,
not the pointed.

Swami
Chinmayananda

Beyond these five qualities, great leaders have so many inspiring qualities that we can seek to emulate. Pūjya Gurudev showed us many more qualities, through his daily living that we should strive to attain. A few of these qualities can be seen below:

Punctuality — Gurudev was very particular about time. There is a story about how Gurudev was giving a jñāna yajña once. It was supposed to begin at 6:30 pm. The time was getting close and Gurudev was nowhere to be seen. All the attendees were confused, because they knew how much Gurudev valued punctuality. Then right as the clock struck 6:30, Gurudev walked on stage and began His satsaṅga.

Cleanliness — Gurudev was very neat and organized. If we see His desk, He would have a specific place for each item and all things would be ordered. Even when visiting temples, Gurudev would make it a point to emphasize that the temples should be clean; otherwise, people coming would not see temples as the holy places that they are.

Observant — There is a story that one time Gurudev was scheduled to visit a temple. So the CHYKS swept the floors, cleaned the area, and prepared the temple. When Gurudev came, He noted the cleanliness. When the priest was doing āratī, Gurudev noticed some black soot residue on the dīpa and thālī and asked the priest to clean it. He was so keen and observant.

Main Lesson

continued

Why should we have role models?

Role models are live examples to show us that dharma can always be followed and lived no matter what. We can look to them for inspiration and guidance. When we are in our weakest moments, they can be our pillars of strength.

When in doubt, ask: **“What Would Gurudev Do?”** (WWGD)

As we think, we become. The more we think of our 5D śreṣṭha leaders, we start to become like them and embody the 5D (Dhārmika, Decisive, Dynamic, Daring, and Devoted).

Take this moment to allow the students to reflect on what they think about during their day. Is this what they want to become? Think through the following:

- What is the wallpaper on their phones?
- What pictures do they have in their rooms?
- What are their favorite tv shows?
- Who are they trying to imitate or be like?

Values are not
taught, they
are caught!

Swami
Chinmayananda

What about my actions?

We may think that we are just JCHYKs and so there's no way that we are śreṣṭha, so we can do whatever we want. However, others still observe our actions and learn from us. We never know who is watching or looking at us as a role model — it could be a classmate, a sibling, even our parents and teachers. Beyond this, we also have our own śreṣṭha moments when we are living a noble and pure life.

So, in order to set the right and proper standards, we must always act properly and selflessly in the spirit of karma yoga, just like Gurudev and our role models.

Even if we think no one is watching us, Bhagavān is always watching us. Therefore, let all of our actions be pure and in surrender to Bhagavān. This will not only help lift us higher and become more śreṣṭha, but also help us grow on our path of realization.

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

How can we become śreṣṭha (role models)?

We can choose to follow strong role models, who themselves are śreṣṭha. By following the path and qualities they have embodied and set forth, we will raise ourselves.

Secondly, we can take a look at our negative tendencies — those that drag us down from being śreṣṭha. When we identify these qualities, we can work on removing these from our lives. Better yet, we can work on replacing them with a higher quality.

Collectively, by raising ourselves through our own role models and by removing our negative tendencies, we can help develop ourselves into better seekers and individuals. From a practical standpoint, we can begin by practicing karma yoga.

Additionally, we are students of this great Guru paramparā. It is our responsibility and dharma to protect the Guru paramparā and continue to exemplify and preserve the qualities of this lineage.

Remember: Even if we may not be śreṣṭha all the time, people are looking up to us!

The fifth reason to be selfless is: whatever we do, others will also follow.

Activity 10 min

Act it Out!

Split the class into five groups (one for each of the 5D qualities). Assign each group one of the qualities (Dhārmika, Decisive, Dynamic, Daring, Devoted).

Ask each group to pick a role model that embodies their assigned quality. The group must pick an event from their selected role model's life that exemplifies this trait. Tell the groups that they (at least a few members of the group) must act out this event/scene from their chosen role model's life. Each group must also be ready to present on why they selected this individual and this particular scene and how it exemplifies their 5D quality.

When you bring the class back together, have each group act out the scene. The rest of the class should try to guess who the group picked as their role model (like the game charades). After the class is done guessing, have the group reveal their role model and present their reasoning.

Conclusion

continued

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Recap the 5D framework and ask each one in class to pick their favorite quality and state why they picked it.

Slogan

Be a 5D Leader
(Dhārmika, Decisive,
Dynamic, Daring,
and Devoted)

Sāadhanā

1. Select your personal 5D śreṣṭha role model. This individual can cover as many of the 5D qualities as you'd like (e.g., Gurudev exhibits all of the qualities). Select one quality from your role model that you'd like to emulate. Live every day this week trying to emulate that quality. If you'd like, take this on as a resolution for the rest of the year and beyond.
2. We learnt in class this week, that even if sometimes we are not śreṣṭha, people are looking up to us. Identify one negative quality or tendency that you sometimes fall into that causes you to fall from śreṣṭha. Spend this week trying to negate this quality from your life and substitute it with a higher quality.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Dedication and Surrender

This lesson explores the key aspects of karma yoga: dedication and surrender, and living in the present.

3.30 



mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi
sannyasyādhyātma-cetasā,
nirāśīr-nirmamo bhūtvā
yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ.

Renouncing all actions in Me, with the mind centred on the Self, free from hope and egoism (ownership), free from (mental) fever, (you) do fight!

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Mini size canvas (one per student)

Art supplies (paints/pencils/pens)

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.30.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Overcome the Inhibitions of the Past to Succeed.”

Swami Chinmayananda. *Self-Unfoldment*. Chapter 8.

Dedication and Surrender

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

We have completed **five reasons to be selfless** by living a life of karma yoga.

1. Selflessness paves the way for our freedom by purifying our mind.
2. Bhagavān created all of us in the spirit of yajña (selfless sacrifice). We have received so much from the world; therefore, it is our dharma to give back.
3. We are a part of the cycle of life so we should contribute to the wheel of action.
4. We are not enlightened yet! By living selflessly, we can continue to work towards Enlightenment.
5. Whatever we do, others will also follow. If we live a selfless life, then others will do the same.



Discussion

Can you think of any other reasons on why we should act selflessly?

We also studied the 5 characteristics of a leader. Do you remember what they are?

- Dhārmika, Decisive, Dynamic, Daring, and Devoted.



Ask the class to share their role models who exhibit any or all of these characteristics. You may specify a characteristic such as: “Dynamic” and then have the class share dynamic role models. You can do a few rounds of this time-permitting.

Introduction 5 min

Have the students stand in a circle. Ask each student to think of their favorite activity that they do in their free time.

Ask each student to share why they love it so much (this is to make sure that the student really thinks about it!). If your class is large, you can select a few students to share.

Now, tell them that they are giving their favorite activity to the person on their left. Instead of the activity they were looking forward to, they’re only allowed to do the activity that was passed to them (by the person on their right).

Have the students reflect and share: “How do you feel about this?”



Example

What are they most looking forward to in the week ahead?

Takeaway: We probably felt some disappointment when our favorite activity was taken from us and given to the person to our left. Maybe, we even felt some anger or a loss of hope about our new plans.

We may have felt like we don't want to do what was passed on to us.

When we recall our karma yoga lessons on Īśvara-arpaṇa buddhi, we learnt that we should dedicate all action to Īśvara, regardless of what the activity is. From our prasāda buddhi lessons, we know that we should perform all action in a state of surrender to the Higher and focus our attention on doing the action and not on the result. So, why do we feel this way?

In today's lesson, **Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches us how we can go beyond these feelings by surrendering unto Him.**

Main Lesson 25 min

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi
sannyasyādhyātma-cetasā,
nirāśīr-nirmamo bhūtvā
yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ.

Renouncing all actions in Me, with the mind centred on the Self, free from hope and egoism (ownership), free from (mental) fever, (you) do fight!

3.30

Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents the heart of karma yoga here in just one verse. If we understand this, remind ourselves of it regularly, and live according to these guidelines, we will have the secret to efficiency and success in the palm of our hands.

The first instruction Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives here is to renounce all actions — **mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasya**

Karma is any action performed with a sense of doership (which tires us) — therefore includes even “doing nothing.”



Discussion

Ask the class to discuss the following question: is it possible to give up all actions? If we do that, can we still live? Is it possible to stop performing all actions?

Debrief: The class will likely naturally come to a conclusion that it is not possible.

Main Lesson

continued

Clearly, we can't give up all actions, so what does Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa mean when He says "renounce all actions?"

When Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says renounce all actions, he actually means renounce all actions **in Me** or **dedicate them unto Me**.

Why should we dedicate our actions to the Lord?

To understand this, let's think through our other options:

Dedicating actions to myself — performing actions whose result will benefit only me: when I get what I want, I'm happy; otherwise, unhappy. In other words, I am living very selfishly and am always subject to ups/downs of life because I will not always get what I want. I also get stuck in only being able to do actions that I like.

- When was the last time you felt freedom from your own likes and dislikes? What's your mindset when you have to do chores at home? Can you do them cheerfully or is it difficult every time?
- Does doing something for yourself always make you happy? Think about the world today. Why do you think wealthy people start becoming philanthropists or famous athletes start becoming coaches? Recall the story of the janitor and the moon in [lesson 12: "Acting with a Higher Vision."](#)

Dedicating actions to a relative totality — performing actions to benefit something bigger than myself (e.g., my family, my friend group, my sports team, my country): if the result benefits that group, I'm happy, otherwise, unhappy. This is a step up from the first attitude but has the same defects as above. My identification expands, but only to the confines of the larger group (relative totality).

- If I do something that I might not like to do for my loved ones, with no expectations, can I find joy in it? For example, a parent replacing a baby's stinky diaper or an adult who bathes their elderly, sick parents. Do I find that work too disgusting to do if it's for my loved ones?
- Does it matter who I am being kind to? Can I find myself doing this work for a random stranger?
- I can identify with a team I play for/support, but can I identify with their rivals? Can I be happy in both the success of my team and the success of their rivals?

Dedicating actions to the absolute totality — performing actions dedicated to Īśvara. The question I ask is, will this please God? When I surrender myself to Īśvara and offer all my actions to Him, then all actions I take and perform are pleasing to Īśvara. By dedicating to the Highest, I end up eliminating all negative and selfish actions from my life.

Īśvara is the embodiment of knowledge, dharma, dispassion, and virtue. To please Him is to offer happiness to others and to live a life practicing and preserving dharma.

If the action is for Īśvara, the result also belongs to Īśvara: I can be happy with whatever result comes, because I have given up ownership over the action.

- If I dedicate my work to Īśvara, then everything that I do is for Him alone. Because I feel so much gratitude for everything He has given me and done for me, I want to give Him the best. I become so focused on what I do and I enjoy every bit of it because it is an offering of love and devotion to Him. I actually experience joy in the very action itself and stop looking for any reward. I already got what I wanted, which is the joy and peace of serving my Lord. I am not concerned or interested in whatever happens after. I have lost myself in love with Īśvara, my Lord.
- There is no one who isn't a part of my Lord's Creation. So to see others happy is to see the Lord's creation prosper.



Discussion

How is it possible to develop this kind of attitude: to dedicate everything to totality?

It is possible when we have our minds turned inward (i.e., not extroverted). This is what is meant by “adhyātmacetasā.”

As a class, discuss and compare an extroverted and introverted mind. Ensure the following points are covered during your analysis.

Extroverted Mind	Introverted Mind
Always looking for what I can get (arising from a feeling of emptiness)	Thinking about what I can give (arising from a feeling of gratitude to Bhagavān, Guru, and everyone)
Comparing myself to others leading to insecurity	Clear about my own abilities and values, leading to confidence
Wanting to project myself to be greater than I am	Grounded in my current roles and responsibilities, and therefore focusing on dharma
Seeking approval, praise, recognition, and power	Seeking to serve

Main Lesson

continued

As we have studied, this is the key attitude in karma yoga: *Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi* and *praśada buddhi*. Once our altar of dedication is truly fixed unto the Highest (*Īśvara*) then automatically we become free of any worry and anxiety. This was already seen in [lesson 13: “Acting with Surrender.”](#)

Now let’s explore in detail what it means to be free from **anxieties of the future, regrets of the past, and excitement in the present**. Swami Tejomayananda often says that all these have the word “tense” in them: past tense, present tense, and future tense! Our dharma is to go beyond all of these tenses and that is truly possible when everything is offered unto *Īśvara*.



This section can be interactive. The teacher can cite the three points with basic examples and let the students share their examples and how they handled each situation.

Free From Anxieties of the Future — *nirāśīḥ* (free from hope)

Hope is the expectation of a happening that is yet to manifest and mature in a future period of time. Whatever be the hope, it belongs not to the present; it refers to a period in the future, not yet born.

Swami Chinmayananda
The Holy Geeta. 3.30.

Being free from anxieties of the future, means focusing on the action instead of the outcome. When we constantly worry about the future, all our potential in the present is wasted. Future results of our actions are not in our hands. Why worry about something that we have no control over? The future is molded by the present; it is much more effective to focus here and now!

**Example**

You have studied well for an exam, but anxious about the result, you enter into the exam hall with an agitated mind. You’re unable to read the questions clearly or comprehend them, and despite all your preparation, the result does not match your ability and understanding of the subject.

**Discussion**

Can you think of any other examples where you felt anxious about the future? What did you do to handle the situation?

Recall [lesson 13: “Acting with Surrender”](#) and review what it means to focus on the action instead of the outcome. After this, ask the class, “Who is more likely to do well in life — the one who focuses on the action or the outcome?”

Focusing on the Action	Focusing on the Outcome
Concentration	Distraction
Relaxation	Stress and Anxiety
Acceptance	Insistence
Surrender	Worry

Solution

Do your best, leave the rest.

Free From Regrets of the Past — *nirmamaḥ* (free from egoism)



Ego is the lingering memory of the dead past. To revel in the ego and hope is an attempt on our part to live either with the dead moments of the past, or with the unborn moments of the future.

Swami Chinmayananda
The Holy Geeta. 3.30.

Being free from regrets of the past means using the past as merely a place of reference and not residence. We spend so much time either regretting or reliving the past. It is over, and it can never come back for us to change. So why spend time thinking about it again and again? Instead, learn the lesson and carry that wisdom with you, so that the present and future can be even better than the past.



Example

You study well for an exam and grasp the subject matter, but it is a subject in which historically you've not done your best. Despite all your preparation, when you enter the exam room, you think about past grades and subconsciously lower your expectations. You think, "I've never done well in this subject, so I probably won't this time either." Your potential dissipates. You put in less than ideal effort on the exam. When your grade comes back, it is much lower than it could have been, since you were distracted by your past.

Overcome the Inhibitions of the Past to Succeed



Discussion



Can you think of any other examples where thinking of the past prevented you from performing in the present? How did you respond to this?

Main Lesson

continued

Solution

The past is a place of reference and not residence. Remember the important lessons and move on.



As you present the solution above, ask the class what is the difference between a place of residence and a place of reference.

Debrief: A **place of reference** is a point which we refer to every now and then to recall important lessons. We hold that thought for a moment, apply it to the present situation and then let it go. A **place of residence** is a point we keep lingering on, we keep replaying and reminding ourselves about it even long after it is gone. It's like a song that's constantly looping in our heads. This hinders us greatly from moving forward and often causes us to mess up.

Scenario: The first time we were part of a public speaking exercise, we might have been a bit nervous. We may have stuttered, we may have spoken way too fast.

- **Residence:** Replaying the incident again and again feeling bad that it happened and feeling like we may fumble again.
- **Reference:** The next time the same situation comes around, take a moment to recollect the past lessons and prepare ourselves better. Maybe take a few deep breaths and say a mental prayer before we start.

Scenario: On the other hand, what if we were really good at public speaking? What if we spoke with so much confidence, clarity, and brilliance?

- **Residence:** Replaying the incident again and again, we feel overconfident and too good about ourselves and then eventually mess up.
- **Reference:** The next time the same situation comes around, we can take a moment to recollect how we prepared the first time and maybe step it up a notch. This way, we will be able to do even better.

When we focus on the past as a place of reference, we are able to apply, succeed, and move on. However, when we focus on the past as a place of residence, we tend to become consumed by it and let our past overpower the present.

Free From Excitement in the Present — vigata-jvaraḥ (free from feverish excitement)

Being without anxieties for the future and regrets of the past doesn't automatically guarantee focus in the present. Our minds need to be trained so that we're not distracted and are able to perform efficiently. Being free from excitement in the present means being able to prioritize well and take things one step at a time.



Example

You have various assignments due by the end of the week. You have known about these for a few days. As you wonder which one to tackle first, your teachers keep assigning more work. You start on something, but then remember another assignment is due first. As you switch focus, you wonder how everything will get done. You feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work!

Discussion



Can you think of when you were so overwhelmed with the amount of work in the present? How did you handle it?

What is the solution? Make a decision on what to work on; tackle each piece one by one, and as you work on it, give it your full attention. Without allowing yourself to be distracted by anything else, you'll find that you're able to get through each assignment more efficiently.

Solution

Take it one step at a time because we can only do one thing at a time.

Recollect the first rule of time management: NBK (nitya before kāmya) in lesson 11: "Time Management." While many things seem that they have to be done right away, take a few minutes to analyze exactly what is truly important and work on that first.

By performing our duty, with dedication, surrender, and full focus in the present, we guarantee ourselves greater success in both our outer and inner lives: material and spiritual progress is sure.

To focus our energy on what we are doing right now is the highest creative act in the world.

Swami Chinmayananda



To forget oneself totally, one's mind should keep awake at every moment. A mind that has forgotten the past and the future, that is awake to the now, to the present, expresses the highest concentration of intelligence. It is alert, it is watchful, it is inspired. The actions of a man who has such a mind are exceptionally creative and perfect. Verily to forget oneself totally, is to be in perfection.

Swami Chinmayananda

Activity 15 min



This activity is a test to see whether we truly have Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi and thus are free from regrets of the past, worries of the future, and excitement in the present.

Instructions for students: Each one will receive a very special canvas. Find your own space to paint and create an image about today's lesson, in your own way, dedicating yourself to Īśvara. Take some time to think this through and paint the picture. The teacher may also want to play some soft music to create the mood.

After five minutes, announce that everyone has to swap places and take over someone else's piece of art. They can continue with it in whatever way they want to.

After two minutes, get them to swap again. Do as many iterations as time permits. Finally, ask the students to go back to their original paintings and add the finishing touches.



Discussion

- How easy/difficult was it to move on from your art the first time? The second/third time?
- Were you able to stay focused on the second/third painting or were you anxious about what was happening to your original painting?
- Did you make the second/third painting better or worse?
- Did you experience any of these emotions?
 - a. Anxiety about what's happening to your painting and who has it.
 - b. Thinking about what you wanted your painting to be like and what you could've done with it, instead of focusing on the painting you currently have.
 - c. Thinking of way too many ideas for the painting, not knowing which one to do.

Debrief: When people work on something, they often feel a sense of ownership or "I"-ness attached to it. That's why it's difficult for them to move away from it. When an individual starts working on their piece of art, they may feel it is "theirs," but now when they have to swap to go work on another piece of art, they are giving up their "original" and contributing to something else that's not theirs.

When they are working on something that is “theirs,” they often have more focus, care, and attention because they own it. They are able to be more present and aware. However, when working on someone else’s piece, they may not care as much. Instead, they may be focusing on what’s happening to their original art piece. The whole idea of Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi is to drop the sense of “I”-ness or “my”-ness and work towards doing the best and making the best possible art regardless of where they are or what they are working on because **everything** should be dedicated to Īśvara and not just one’s own personal art. **Our dharma is not to own any action but to act with total dedication in whatever comes to us.** If this was truly the case, then one would be free from the anxiety and worry of what was happening to their original painting, because they would have been so focused on the one that they are currently working on.

If we experienced these emotions of being anxious about the future of our original painting instead of focusing on the one in our hands, or getting too excited and not knowing what to do first — this means that we worked without Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi. **If we really offered everything to Īśvara, we would just be focused on what we are doing right here and right now.**

If time permits, the teacher can also move on to discussion 2.



Discussion 2

Ask each student to share their original artwork. If you have a large class, ask a few students to share depending on time. For each student, go through the following.

- What picture did you initially have in your mind when you started painting?
- Ask to see who else contributed towards that particular piece of art.
- Ask the other contributors to share what they were thinking when they were painting. How did they contribute to the artwork? Did they try to understand the original artist’s painting and make it more beautiful? Or did they just paint whatever they wanted?

Debrief: We have the wonderful ability to set our intentions and offer our lives to Īśvara with every single thing that we do. When we do

Activity

continued

something completely and fully, it has the power to make everyone's life more beautiful. We are all part of each other's paintings. We have the opportunity to beautify everyone's paintings or just carelessly interact with them.

Conclusion 5 min**Group Summary**

Pick one of the tenses (past, present, or future) and ask the students to share tips on how to handle challenges for that particular one.

Slogan

**Actions are not meant to be owned,
they are to be offered**

Sādhana

Set a daily timer, any time but if possible for 3:30 PM (this lesson covers verse 3.30). When it goes off, do a check-in with yourself:

1. To whom am I dedicating my current actions? Is it Īśvara? If not, how can I turn towards my Lord?
2. Am I focused on the present moment?

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Beyond Likes and Dislikes

In this class we will learn what likes and dislikes are, why getting bound by them is not healthy for us, and how to overcome them.

3.34 



indriyasyendriyasyārthe
rāgadveṣau vyavasthītau,
tayoṛna vaśamāgacchet
tau hyasya paripanthītau.

Attachment and aversion for sense
objects abide in sense organs;
let none come under their sway;
for they are his foes.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m | Opening

None required

5m | Introduction

25m | Main Lesson

15m | Activity

5m | Conclusion

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.34.

Swami Chinmayananda. *Self-Unfoldment*. Chapter 4.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Likes & Dislikes — Robbers on a seeker’s path.” 0:30 - 6:52.

🔗 “THE TWO WOLVES.” San Diego State University.

Beyond Likes and Dislikes

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous lesson, we learned how *Īśvara arpaṇa buddhi* means offering the action to Bhagavān whether we like the action or not, whether it is ours or not. It is being able to **offer everything to a Higher altar**. When we do this, then we are able to let go of the anxieties of the future, regrets of the past, and excitement in the present.

Can you recall tips of how we can let go of:

- anxieties of the future — do your best and leave the rest.
- regrets of the past — the past is a place of reference and not residence.
- excitement in the present — take it one step at a time.

Introduction 5 min

As human beings, we are given the ability to choose our actions in life. The highest expression is to live in dharma (living an ethical, moral life in line with a higher vision). As was mentioned in our [lesson on dharma](#), dharma can be defined as “doing the **Right Thing** at the **Right Place** at the **Right Time**” (RT-RP-RT).



Discussion

Q: What creates inner weakness in us, making living this type of life difficult?

Please discuss in groups of 2-3 students for a few minutes and then we'll come back as a class to share.

A: (Let the students share, and then give the following answer) **It is a mind attached to likes and dislikes.** We must eradicate them to reach our full potential.

Main Lesson 25 min

This week, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa discusses **where these likes and dislikes arise and how we can eradicate them to reach our full potential.**

indriyasyendriyasyārthe
rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau,
tayorna vaśamāgacchet
tau hyasya paripanthinau.

Attachment and aversion for sense
objects abide in sense organs;
let none come under their sway;
for they are his foes.

3.34

How do likes and dislikes arise?

When the sense organs come in contact with their sense objects (the sense organ of the eyes comes in contact with its sense objects of forms and colors), naturally some contacts are preferable (seeing a beautiful flower) and some are not preferable (seeing a moldy vegetable in the fridge).

Likes are things or scenarios in life that I personally prefer or am attached to.

Dislikes are the opposite — what I would prefer to avoid or not face.

Likes & Dislikes

0:30 - 6:52



Activity

Split the class into groups of 4. Have each student express (write, draw or show) their favorite hobby/activity/food/game/book and their most disliked activity/animal/chore/food/pet peeve. Ask them to share within the group and discuss:

- Is there any overlap of likes/dislikes or any disagreements?
- Why might you agree or disagree with each other?
- Why do you have that like or dislike?
- How did you feel as you were coming up with these?

Is attachment to likes and dislikes a bad thing for us?

The nature of the world is to have all types of sense experiences. To be dynamic in meeting the varied situations of life with creativity, cheerfulness, and enthusiasm is the definition of success.

If we get bogged down by constantly catering to our likes and dislikes, depending on them for our happiness, we will always be vulnerable to being unhappy when we can't get what we like or our circumstances change. Also, our likes/dislikes will begin to dictate our course of action (as we are always seeking to fulfill their demands) — this causes the quality of our actions to decrease.

Main Lesson

continued

Group Discussion



Read the principles and examples below followed by the reflection questions.

Depending on the number of students in class, engage in a full class discussion or break out into smaller groups of 2-3 students.

Time permitting, please share your discussion points before progressing to the next example with the students.

1. **The world is always changing, and we can never completely avoid what we don't like, and we cannot always get what we do like.**

**Example**

School is where I meet my friends and learn interesting subjects. But some subjects are tougher for me than others, and sometimes there are challenging tests.

- Can I have one without the other?
- Would it be healthy for me to only get what I liked? Why or why not?
- **Possible discussion points:** If we only studied what we liked, we would miss the opportunity to study things that we could possibly love, would make us develop, and would challenge our minds.

**Example**

Some days it is sunny and the weather is perfect for going outside. Some days, there will be rain or snow.

- Can I always get only one version of the weather?
- Would that be a good thing?
- **Possible discussion points:** You can't have one without the other. The world needs both to function just like the trees need rain and sunshine to grow.

As discussed in previous lessons, experiences end. Clinging to things we like and avoiding those we dislike becomes a problem when what we like ends and something else arises.

- If we only like to eat pizza, and the last slice of pizza is taken at the party, do we take another food option, or do we go hungry?

2. **Our likes and dislikes don't necessarily align with our duties in life. What we need to do should not be dictated by what we want to do.**



Example

I have to wake up early and get ready for school. If I only like staying up late/sleeping in, I will be annoyed when I have to sleep early, or I'm tired, grumpy, and disgruntled every morning when I have to wake up.

- Can you think of other duties that would be neglected if you only did what you wanted to?
 - **Possible discussion points:** If I only like staying up late/sleeping in, I will be late and rush to do my morning routine (showering, brushing, packing my backpack) and will end up doing them poorly.
3. **Strong likes and dislikes generate poorer quality of actions. Our tasks in life are usually a mix of enjoyable and less enjoyable parts. If we only try to do what we like and avoid what we don't like, it leads to poorer outcomes overall.**



Example

If I only like procrastinating by watching funny videos or texting my friends instead of spending time on my assignment, I'll rush to complete the work and it will be much less polished and well thought-out than if I had spent the required time.

- When have you gotten a score or report card that you know didn't reflect your true potential?



Example

If I only like to eat unhealthy food, then I would not be able to have restful sleep or have the energy needed to take on the school day, sports, and other activities like a fun weekend hike.

- When have I missed out on an opportunity because of my choices?

Can I always avoid what I dislike? Can I always have what I like?

Realistically, we will always be meeting situations where both personal likes and dislikes have to be overcome. We should ask ourselves:

- What was a situation where my likes and dislikes got me into trouble?
 - What is a like or dislike I wish I could overcome? What is stopping me?
- Make a list. See where my likes and dislikes are holding me back.

Main Lesson

continued

Solution

Overcome likes and dislikes.

The world is never my enemy, but the twin bandits of likes and dislikes are. They make us weak in the face of desires, rob us of our contentment, and make it hard to do what is right.

When there is a conflict between what I want to do and what I should do, my mind will always go with whatever is the stronger impulse, the habit I've cultivated over time.

Read the following story to the class.

The Two Wolves: Cherokee Parable

A young boy came to his grandfather, filled with anger at another boy, who had done him an injustice.

The old grandfather said to his grandson, "Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and hate does not hurt your enemy. Hate is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times."

"It is as if there are two wolves inside me; one wolf is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way. But the other wolf, is full of anger. The slightest thing will set him into a fit of temper."

"He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, because his anger will change nothing. Sometimes it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, because both of the wolves try to dominate my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which wolf will win, grandfather?"

The grandfather smiled and said, "The one I feed."

The only way to act at our highest ability, is to drop likes and dislikes in favor of our duties and responsibilities. We can choose to like our dharma and dislike our negative inner tendencies. This attitude will always inspire us to keep doing what we need to, and by doing so, improve ourselves.

- We are in control of our likes and dislikes rather than letting our likes and dislikes control us. We can choose when we want to indulge and when we want to pull back!
- Then we are more cheerful under all circumstances.
- Our mind is peaceful without regrets and complaints.
- When many endeavor in the same spirit, we create a healthier and nobler society.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants us to courageously meet life and live in the HERE and NOW, as Pujya Gurudev says. Weakness exists when we cannot meet the world but keep asking it to change for us, and then getting dejected or defeated when it doesn't conform to our desires and demands. Gītā guides us: the sense objects take our attention, intention, and focus either by pushing us away (dislike) or pulling us towards them (like). Don't let these robbers take our precious life! Instead, Gītā teaches us to rise above lower preferences, and meet the world as it IS, with full enthusiasm, dynamism, and fearlessness.



Once someone didn't want to go to school and his mother kept waking him up. He said, "I don't want to go to school, the kids are always teasing me! Then the mother said, "You have to go, you're the school principal!"

Swami Tejoymayananda

Discussion

Why do complaints and demands make us unhappy? Why does cheerful acceptance and a disciplined mind make us happy?

Activity 15 min

Activity 1: Dilemmatic Debate

We are going to play a game that uncovers how likes and dislikes bind us in various situations of life.

Directions:

1. Divide the class into two teams ("Hari" and "Om") by having students call off "Hari" and "Om" and then sitting with their groups.
2. Read out the following debate topic to the class.

Is it morally acceptable to continue liking or supporting a celebrity or musician if they've done something unethical?

The Hari Team will debate the affirmative (pro-support): Believes it's okay to still like the artist despite their wrongdoing.

The Om Team will debate the negative (against-support): Believes we shouldn't support artists who act unethically.

Activity

continued

3. Teams should brainstorm their debates with an introduction, supporting arguments, and conclusion, and also take questions from the teacher. Give them 5 minutes to prepare this debate.
4. Debate Time: Have each team present their introductions, then each team can present their supporting arguments (one at a time going back and forth) and finally each team can provide their concluding remarks.
5. Debrief on which team “won” the debate and discuss as a class.

Activity 2: Game: Scenarios of Likes and Dislikes**Directions:**

1. Divide the class into two teams “Hari” and “Om” by having students call off “Hari” and “Om” and then sitting with their groups.
2. Read out the first scenario to the class from the following sample scenarios.
3. Teams should brainstorm a list of consequences for each scenario. For the first scenario, feel free to share one or more sample consequence points if the students require examples. For all other scenarios, hints should only be given if students need additional context or support.
4. Call one student from each team at a time to the front of the class to state their consequences (1 minute per team).
5. Whichever team was able to come up with more consequences in the allotted time wins the round.
6. Progress to the next scenario, repeating Steps 2-5 above.

Scenario 1: I love chana bhatura and always want to eat it.

Sample Consequence Points:

- I will be bound to always having one thing, never exploring others.
- I will be bound to unhappiness if I don’t get what I like or if circumstances change (e.g., the restaurant is out of chana bhatura, the restaurant closes).
- I will inconvenience others by always demanding to go only where I can get what I want, losing friends and hurting loved ones.

Scenario 2: I went to leave a tip at the counter, but the barista wasn’t looking at me when I went near the jar.

Hint: Why is it important for them to notice what I’m doing? What do I like in this situation — the attention?

Sample Consequence Points:

- I become attached to recognition — requiring attention or validation to act for the greater good.
- I am upset that I don’t get the reaction I would expect for my actions (e.g., if the barista doesn’t respond with gratitude for the tip).

Scenario 3: I got an A+ on my last paper and was so proud of myself. I bragged to my friends, and felt so confident that I started paying less attention in class. In the next essay, I got a much poorer score, and I felt humiliated.

Hint: This is showing how likes/dislikes create poorer outcomes.

Sample Consequence Points:

- I will be bound to the highs and lows of external success — my self-worth will rise and fall based on grades or praise, making me emotionally unstable and also affect my self-esteem.
- I will become complacent, thinking one success means I don't need to keep putting in effort, which can lead to failure.
- My bragging might make others feel bad or annoyed, leading to resentment or distance from friends and damaging relationships.
- I will fear failure more intensely after experiencing "failure" — leading to avoidance, dejection, and giving up.

Activity Wrap Up: Finally, come up with your own scenarios and consequences. Split students into pairs to brainstorm and discuss.



Discussion

Come back as a class to share your personalized scenarios. Now, debrief on how this relates to the bigger picture in our own lives, community, and society:

- What were some of the implications of the consequences at an individual level? What if you added them up at the total level?
- What type of society is created when we all act exclusively in relation to our likes and dislikes?

Debrief: When we all act according to our own likes and dislikes, we can cause danger to others around us. For example: if we have a contagious flu and choose to go out just because we feel like it, we end up affecting so many people around us and spreading the illness to others.

After the students share their answers, the teachers can also add some points.

Activity

continued

Individual level: When we live up to our likes and dislikes at an individual level, these are the consequences:

- We **limit our knowledge and ability** by sticking to learning and doing what we like without exploring anything else.
- We **inconvenience others**, because we insist on getting what we like which may not always be conducive to others.
- We have **poorer quality of actions**, because we don't do what we are supposed to do, and then we end up procrastinating and rushing to get something done.

Total level: When we live up to our likes and dislikes at the total level, these are the consequences:

- We **contribute towards something that can even be adhārmika** just because we like it. For example: one may support a dishonest person because they like using that particular product.



If one can give up likes and dislikes, then the world becomes double its space for us to move about.

Swami Chinmayananda



Discussion

As a class, discuss examples of adhārmika actions that we perform and why we engage in them.

- Fast fashion/overnight delivery: prioritizing convenience over the environment.
- Driving short distances: giving into laziness, habit, and convenience, creating a larger carbon footprint.

Debrief: We fail to perform our dharma due to our likes and dislikes and as a result, everyone around us has to suffer the consequences. For example: we were part of a school team project and we just didn't feel like working on it. We went to watch a movie instead. The whole project got delayed, because we weren't able to turn in our part. We end up rushing to complete it on time but the quality just isn't good. The whole team ends up getting a lower grade.

When we live a life of dharma instead of likes and dislikes, then we are victorious. We are open to learning new things, we learn to accommodate other people's needs, and adapt to various circumstances. Our actions have a greater quality and charm, and we positively affect the world around us.

Living a life of dharma means sticking to what's right and not necessarily what we like. At some point in time, as we grow as seekers, we will start liking what is right. We will start liking dharma. **Liking dharma is a sign of growth and evolution.**

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Let everyone share the quality they want to work on and what could hold them back.

Slogan

**Dharma: Stick to what's right
and not just what you like.**

Sādhana

Write down the quality I most want to work on and identify the likes or dislikes that can hold me back from achieving it. Spend this week trying to inculcate this quality without getting bogged down by my likes and dislikes. Journal about the process.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Beyond Being Liked and Disliked

This class is about going beyond being liked or disliked by others and being comfortable with who you are.

3.34 



indriyasyendriyasyārthe
rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau,
tayorna vaśamāgacchet
tau hyasya paripanthinau.

Attachment and aversion for sense
objects abide in sense organs;
let none come under their sway;
for they are his foes.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	2 pictures of wolves on the board
5m	Introduction	2 baskets
25m	Main Lesson	2 balls
15m	Activity	☞ “The Office — Do I Need To Be Liked?”
5m	Conclusion	☞ “Rachel trying to take control of the Glee Club.”

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 3.34.

Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa, Sundara Kāṇḍa, 5.1-7.

Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa, Sundara Kāṇḍa, 8.2-10.

☞ Bhartṛhari. Nīti Shatakam, Verse 72.

Beyond Being Liked and Disliked

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min



Place a picture of one of the wolves on the left side of the board named as “likes and dislikes” and place the other picture of the wolf on the right side of the board named as “dharma.” Place a basket underneath each picture.

In the previous class, we learned about going beyond likes and dislikes. Recall the story of the two wolves.

What’s the best way to go beyond likes and dislikes? It’s by constantly feeding dharma. Have we fed dharma today or have we fed likes and dislikes?

Ask each student to come up and take a ball. Ask them to shoot towards likes and dislikes or towards dharma, depending on whom they fed most the past week. Ask them to share why they felt this way.

As a class, recall what happens when we live up to our likes and dislikes at an individual level and then at a total level.

Individual Level — When we live up to our likes and dislikes at an individual level:

- We limit our knowledge and ability because we only stick to learning and doing what we like without exploring anything else.
- We inconvenience others, because we insist on getting what we like, which may not always be conducive to others.
- We have a poorer quality of actions, because we don’t do what we are supposed to do, and then we end up procrastinating and rushing to get something done.

Total Level — When we live up to our likes and dislikes at the total level:

- We contribute towards something that can even be adhārmika just because we like it.
- We fail to perform our dharma due to our likes and dislikes, and as a result, everyone around us has to suffer the consequences.

However, when we live a life of dharma instead of likes and dislikes, then we are victorious. We are open to learning new things, we learn to accommodate other people's needs and adapt to various circumstances. Our actions have a greater quality and charm, and we positively affect the world around us.

Introduction 5 min

Now, let's take a different look at the verse.

indriyasyendriyasyārthe
rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau,
tayorna vaśamāgacchet
tau hyasya paripanthinau.

Attachment and aversion for sense
objects abide in sense organs;
let none come under their sway;
for they are his foes.

3.34

In this verse of the Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stresses that **no one should come under the sway of likes and dislikes (rāga and dveṣa).**

One way to look at this is that we shouldn't come under the sway of likes and dislikes when it comes to performing our dharma. Another way to look at this is that we shouldn't come in the sway of **being liked or disliked** because this also prevents us from doing our dharma.

Main Lesson 25 min

Being liked by others means being acceptable and pleasing to others. We enjoy being liked because when others like us, they hang out with us, invite us to their homes and gatherings, give us a thumbs up and good recommendations, or even follow and like us on social media. This makes us feel validated. It makes us feel like we are worthy of something and someone.

As a result of wanting to be liked or feeling the need to be validated, we may even pretend to be interested in a conversation which totally bores us, laugh at a joke that we didn't really understand, or say that we like something, because everyone else says so.

Being disliked on the other hand means that we are not acceptable or pleasing to others. When others dislike us, they do not hang out with us or invite us anywhere. They give us a thumbs down and do not follow or like us on social media. They might spread rumors about us. This makes us feel invalidated and unworthy. This may even lead to anxiety or depression.

Main Lesson

continued

Since we do not enjoy being disliked and we are afraid of losing people or being criticized by them, we try to please everyone around us.

What's wrong with always seeking validation from others or always wanting to be liked by others?

1. **People's likes and dislikes keep changing** according to their vāsanās or tendencies.

**Example**

One of your friends suggested you try almond milk, so you try it, because you want to keep the friendship. After three months, she now suggests that you try oat milk instead, because it's supposed to be better for you. Her likes and dislikes will keep changing. This will not be limited to just almond milk or oat milk. Who knows, cashew milk might come next.

The point is, people's likes and dislikes keep changing, and if we keep trying to please them and like what they like, we too will keep changing unnecessarily, without even really knowing why.

2. **People are just different in nature**, so they may not always like how you look or how you are.

**Example 1**

Let's say you bought a new outfit — a completely new attire for your relative's wedding. You are so happy that you bought and put the whole outfit together perfectly with matching shoes. You give yourself one glance in the mirror and feel so happy. What happens if you step out the door and no one notices you? What happens if no one compliments your attire? Your happiness goes down a couple of notches. So, what you do is you try to compliment others on their attire thinking "Hmmm... maybe if I say something about their dress, maybe they'll say something about mine." You almost try to squeeze them for a compliment and when they say something nice, your happiness goes up again. Wait a second. There's always that friend who will tell you on your face, "Gee, that color doesn't suit you." Again your happiness goes down a notch.



Example 2

Let us say you cooked an amazing Indian meal and invited some of your school friends over. Some of them may like the meal and thus, love coming to your home, and some of them may not like it, because they are not used to the taste and thus, prefer not to eat at your home. That's absolutely fine because everyone's palettes are different.

A deeper example is being over conscious of our physical appearances ("I am not muscular enough," "I am not thin enough," "I have acne."). We constantly obsess over our physical appearances, stare at the mirror, and wish that we looked different so that people would like us more. Some may even develop eating disorders due to this. We often forget that the purpose of the body is not to look perfect. The purpose of the body is actually to serve. **In fact, the most beautiful body is the one that serves humanity.**

śrotraṁ śrutenaiva na kuṇḍalena
dānena pāṇirna tu kaṅkaṇena,
vibhāti kāyaḥ karuṇāparāṇāṁ
paropakārainna tu candanena.

The ear is adorned by listening to the scriptures and not by wearing earrings. The hand is adorned by charity and not by wearing a bracelet. Similarly, the body of noble and righteous persons gets embellished through helping others and not through applying fragrance.

Nīti Shatakam by Bhartṛhari, Verse 72

We constantly live trying to seek other people's approval in what we do.
Guess what? **Everyone is different.**

Everyone has come from different backgrounds, places, and spaces so naturally everyone will have their own tastes, be it in food or fashion. That doesn't mean that they are wrong; it just means they are different. So how can we realistically expect everyone to like us or like what we like? Isn't that being unreasonable?

Have you ever seen movie ratings?

Something that's been rated by movie critics as 20% may sometimes get an audience rating of about 75%. Why do you think that happens? Sometimes, we watch a movie without checking ratings and we enjoy it so much, but when we check the ratings it seems like everyone else disliked it. Why is that?

Have you ever seen something on Amazon with five star ratings from EVERYONE?

Main Lesson

continued

3. **People may not always be in line with dharma.**

When we are trying to “fit in” a certain group and therefore do things that they may “like,” we may find that some of the things that they actually stand for are opposed to our very own values. We then get caught up in between our dharma and wanting to be liked and accepted by them. We are afraid that if we stand by dharma, we will stand alone. We think that if we just do whatever pleases them, then at the very least, we will have friends. These are both misconceptions.

When we stand by dharma, God stands right beside us. At the end of the day, life is not about pleasing others but about pleasing God. People will come and go in our lives but Bhagavān will always stay. Are we liked by Bhagavān or are we disliked? This is the most important question we should ask.

When we try to please others just to gain friendship with them, we can’t really call those people “friends.” Friends are those people who lead us on the path of dharma and take us away from adharma and not those who pressure us to do adharma.

As we learn to shift from pleasing others to pleasing Bhagavān and aligning ourselves with our dharma, we learn to say “no” to the things we do not need and the things that do not align with our value system. As we do this more often, we build our own self-validation and rely less on others. We learn to respect our boundaries and live a life of conviction instead of weakness.

When you seek approval, you never find it. When you seek yourself, approval finds you.

Unknown

4. **There is no way to please everyone.**

There’s a wonderful quotation in our scriptures that says:

śuciḥ piśāco vicalo vicakṣaṇaḥ
kṣamo’pyaśakto balavānśca duṣṭaḥ,
niścittacoraḥ subhago’pi kāmī
ko lokamārādhayitum samarthaḥ.

vidyate na khalu kaścidupāyaḥ
sarvalokaparitoṣakaro yaḥ,
sarvathā svahitamācaraṇīyaṁ
kiṁ kariṣyati jano bahujaḥ.

A pure person, one who is very clean or neat, is thought to be obsessed (or have like an OCD — obsessive compulsive disorder). A wise person is thought to be conceited and full of himself. A forgiving person is thought to be incapable. A strong person is thought to be vicious. A meditator is looked upon as a thief. A handsome person is thought to be lustful. There is no way to please everyone. Therefore, one should do what is truly good for them.

Story: Long ago, an old man and his grandson, who was an orphan, traveled across the countryside. The old man rode the donkey, while his grandson walked alongside holding on to the donkey. This journey was far from pleasurable. They were on their way to the big city market, where they'd try to sell the animal to help with their expenses.

During their journey, they passed through a village where some people began criticizing them. "What a shame!" they said resentfully as they saw the young boy walking while his grandfather rode on the donkey. "Child Protective Services would definitely put an end to this if they knew! How can he do such a thing? He has no compassion!" they said.

Feeling embarrassed by this situation, the old man promptly swapped places with the boy, who now rode on the donkey while his grandfather walked beside them. "Certainly, now nobody will get upset and criticize us!" he thought.

And so they continued on their journey. As they came into a new village, they began hearing people criticizing them again. "That's ridiculous! Poor old man! He should be the one riding the donkey, not the boy. What has this world come to? Nobody respects the elderly anymore," they heard.

Confused and without knowing what else to do, the poor old man had another idea. He sat on the donkey along with the boy and continued on their journey.

In the next village, the comments were even worse. "How absurd! Poor, poor donkey, he has to carry those two heavy guys! The Animal Humane Society should do something about this!" they said.



Discussion

What happened when the grandfather and grandson kept listening to the people around them? What does this tell us about constantly trying to please people?

Debrief: As we have seen, being liked by everyone is impossible because:

- Everyone has their own *vāsanās*.
- Everyone is different.
- People may encourage us to do *adharma* to be liked by them.
- There is no way to please everyone.

Main Lesson

continued

We may have at some point in our lives planned the perfect event or party. We had the best decorations, entertainment, food, and all the “IN” crowd came to grace us with their presence. No matter how good the party or event was, isn’t there always someone who complains about something? They may say, “Everything was good but the food could have been better. You should have gotten it catered from X restaurant instead.” And you’re thinking to yourself — you’ve put so much effort to put the whole program together and this is what you get?

Yes. This is surely what you’ll get — in every thing that you do, there will always be that person who thinks otherwise, but guess what? That’s totally okay because they are different so they are entitled to different views. And their views will keep changing. Just think about it, even Lord Rāma who was the ideal everything — man, husband, king, and student couldn’t please everyone.

So what should we do? Accept it and move on.

In our scriptures, this idea of wanting to please everyone is called **“loka vāsanā.”** This is something that brings us down on the spiritual path because we get too carried away in trying to please everyone. However, this doesn’t give us the license to just do whatever we feel like doing. Some may think, “I’m never going to please anyone so I might as well do what I want.” There are two exceptions to the pleasing rule — God and Guru. We should strive to please God and our Guru. Why? Because they are completely detached and they are unchanging. **They will always want us to do what is for our own good without truly expecting anything in return. They have no hidden agenda or ulterior motives.** They are true to the core. They also have the highest vision in life so they know each step that we need to take in order to reach our goal.

What does pleasing God and the Guru mean? It means doing our best and living a life of dharma. It means putting our sincere best effort in everything we do and dedicating that to a higher ideal or cause.

If we only strive in our lives to please God and the Guru then so many mistakes can be avoided, time won’t be wasted and we will truly feel at peace. Try it.

What if someone tries to get us to do something we don’t like?

Stand Up Like Sītā Mātā

Rāvaṇa took Sītā Mātā to Lanka and he kept on threatening her to no end. He said to her, “I will make Mandodarī and all other queens your handmaids, I swear, provided you cast your look on me only once.” Sītā jī didn’t stay quiet.

She didn't look at Rāvaṇa either. She put a blade of grass between Herself and Rāvaṇa because She didn't even think that he was worthy of Her glance. Thinking of the Lord of Her heart, She put Rāvaṇa in his place telling him that he was merely like a firefly while Śrī Rāma was like the sun. She told him that he took Her away when no one was by Her side, and he should feel ashamed of himself and then insulted him.

Rāvaṇa felt exasperated and even drew out his sword wanting to cut off Sītā jī's head. He told Her to obey his command, otherwise, She would lose her life. Sītā jī wasn't afraid at all. As Rāvaṇa rushed forward to kill her, Queen Mandodarī intervened and pacified him.

Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa, Sundara Kāṇḍa, 8.2-10.

It's better
to have God
approve than
the world
applaud.

Unknown

In this episode, we find Sītā jī's relentless courage of standing up to Rāvaṇa. There were so many people afraid of Rāvaṇa — the asuras, devatās, and even some of his very own ministers, who never dared to speak up against him, even if they thought he was wrong. Yet here was Sītā Mātā standing all alone, fearlessly facing Rāvaṇa, and standing up for what is right even in the midst of all suffering. She never let go of Her dharma. It was Her fearlessness and Her faith in Bhagavān that saved Her.

If we stand up to adharma, won't we always be alone? Won't it be hard?

Stand Apart Like Vibhīṣaṇa

When Hanumān jī first went to Lanka, he found a mansion with the weapons of Śrī Rāma painted on its walls along with clusters of tulasī plants. Hanumān jī wondered, "How could a pious person be living in Lanka? Who would take up their abode here?" It was none other than Vibhīṣaṇa, the brother of Rāvaṇa, who kept repeating Śrī Rāma's name. Vibhīṣaṇa described his plight in Lanka like a tongue that lives in the midst of teeth. Even amidst all of the negativities, he was still able to thrive, all because of his devotion to Śrī Rāma. In the end, Śrī Rāma asked for Vibhīṣaṇa to be crowned as the rightful king of Lanka.

Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa, Sundara Kāṇḍa, 5.1-7.

In this episode, we come to realize that it is possible to stand apart from the crowd and stick to what is right. It may not always be easy, but it's worth it. Vibhīṣaṇa's devotion to Śrī Rāma eventually led him to succeed to the throne of Lanka. More importantly, Vibhīṣaṇa became very close to Lord Rāma's heart and Śrī Rāma vowed to protect him.

Main Lesson

continued

**Discussion**

Share the following scenarios with the class and have them determine what their actions will be from two different perspectives: (1) an external validation perspective where they are acting based on being liked/disliked and (2) a dhārmika perspective where they are acting based on dharma and their connection with Bhagavān.

Scenarios are presented in the left column. The sample answers are presented in the center and right column. Share the sample answers with the class as needed. You are encouraged to come up with your own scenarios. The following are shared as examples.

Scenario	External Validation (Likes/Dislikes)	Dhārmika Action
There's a huge final exam on Monday. You know that all of Sunday will go to practice and your game, so you need to make sure you allocate time for studying. It's Saturday afternoon and your friends call you to let you know that there's this party going on tonight and that you better be there. You try to tell them that you need to study since you'll be busy the next day. They tease you saying you're always studying and to stop being such a nerd and have some fun for once. You start to think, well, maybe it won't hurt to just go for a little bit.	You start to think, "I'll be the only one that didn't go. Everyone will think I'm weird. Will they be my friends if I don't go? So, obviously, I should go, right? I need to stay in the in-crowd in order to be cool at school." You distractedly study for a few hours, then you dress up and head out for the evening. "This night is going to be one to remember," you tell yourself. Studying for the final can wait. Worst case, there's always the next exam.	You know that the final is important. It is clear that you won't have any other time to study and you need to make the most of the time you have. There will probably be other parties later on that you can go to. Right now, even though you really want to go, you know the right answer is to study. Real friends would understand the importance of this exam and would want me to be prepared for it. Do you really want friends that are going to peer pressure you into doing the wrong thing?

A new student, Mukund, joins your school after moving from India. Mukund is struggling to fit in. He tends to wear more traditional Indian clothing. He often brings only Indian food for lunch. Some of your classmates have started poking fun at him as he seems different from them. What do you do?	You don't want to join in mocking Mukund, but you also know that if you defend him then those classmates will mock you alongside him. Choosing to protect yourself from mockery, you stay quiet and let Mukund get insulted rather than correct your friends.	Show Mukund that he is welcome here and that you are there to help guide him. Since you have a shared cultural background, you feel that you can show him how to adjust better. Moreover, you help explain to your friends how Indian culture is, and help them also understand why Mukund may seem different than them.
It feels like everyone in school is saying you have to look skinny and be tall. Otherwise, no one will like you. You naturally have a larger physique and weigh more (higher BMI) than your classmates, but maybe you need to change yourself in order to fit in with what everyone else thinks.	You think, "Maybe, I should starve myself or force myself to eat less food. I know that it will cause problems with my fitness and health, but at least it will cause me to lose weight and I'll start to lean out and look like others. Then, surely, everyone will think I fit in and they'll like me." Slowly, you start to change your eating habits.	You know that life is only between you and Bhagavān. Bhagavān has given you this body and these opportunities that are unique to you. You accept them wholeheartedly and will continue to be true to yourself. You confidently think, "I'm sure that it's "cool" to be skinny now, and then a few years later, there will be some other new fad." If people don't like you as you are today, then maybe you don't need those people to like you.

Debrief: It is clear that sometimes we fall into the external validation perspective just because it is easier and we are interested in fitting in. Taking the dhārmika action is more difficult; however, the right choice is clearly being in line with our own dharma and in tune with Bhagavān. So, next time you find yourself in a situation, take a moment and think about whether you are acting out of wanting to be liked or if you are taking the proper dhārmika action.

Main Lesson

continued

Therefore, living a life of dharma is not just overcoming our likes and dislikes but **overcoming being liked and disliked by others.**

In reality, sometimes we think of ourselves too much. People aren't actually thinking about us all the time! We think that they are thinking about us but they are caught up in their own worlds. Sometimes, it's not that people like or dislike us, but it's our mental construct of imagining that people like or dislike us.

It's also important to note that there's a difference between wanting to be liked and being flexible. A person who is always wanting to be liked or wanting to please others will constantly change themselves just like a chameleon. They often lose themselves and forget what they stand for and what grounds them.

However, **a person who is flexible is one who adapts to different scenarios but remains firm in their principles.** A great example is Waze or Google Maps. A flexible person will have a set destination but may change their route in order to accommodate other passengers along the way. However, a people pleaser will change their entire destination just to seek approval from others and end up forgetting their original destination and why they wanted to go there.

The truth is, when we perform dharma, we like ourselves the most. We find the most peace and Bhagavān also likes us the most.

Activity 15 min

Activity #1: Thumbs Up or Down

Fold a sheet of paper in half. On the left side, write five things that you would give yourself a thumbs down on, but you do them anyway because you want to fit in. On the right side, write five things that you would give yourself a thumbs up on and might not do them because they feel uncool.



Example

On the left side:



Making fun of others — you do it, but you really don't think it's right.



Sense of style — you wear certain things to fit in but don't really feel comfortable.



Example

On the right side:



Wearing Indian clothes for festivals or pūjā — despite knowing this is the proper attire, sometimes you don't do it because others don't.

Then answer these questions on the back of the paper:

- Who is your most important critic?
- What do YOU stand for?
- When would you like yourself most?
- When would Bhagavān like you the most?

Activity #2: Influences of Media

Allow students to use their phone and scroll through any of their social media (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook). Give each student three minutes to scroll and identify three snippets of media (posts, videos, comments, replies) that are inline with seeking external validation. This can be their own content or content they are consuming. Have the students think critically about what the poster is trying to get people to think.

Then have students share their snippets in small groups and discuss:

- How does the pressure for external validation show up in your feed?
- How does this affect how you interact online?
- How does this bleed past social media into how you think, speak, and act?

Alternate: For students who don't have social media apps, they can use any form of content that attempts to "influence," like Youtube videos, news content, or blogs. This can also be modified to thinking about characters from movies and TV shows that fall to the pressures and effects of external validation. The following are some examples:

- Michael Scott from The Office
- Rachel Berry from Glee



Discussion

- How did the characters in this content make you feel? Which ones did you enjoy watching and why?
- How did characters' personal insecurity come across to others?
- How do we feel being around people who are secure in themselves versus those who are always seeking validation?

If you don't stand up for something, you will fall for everything.

Swami Tejomayananda

Ensure that the media is "clean" and "family-friendly," devoid of any profanity and indecent content.

Michael Scott from The Office



Rachel Bery from Glee



Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Go around and ask everyone when they like themselves the most and what they stand for.

Slogan

Be liked
by God

Sādhana

Every night before you sleep, look at the eyes of Bhagavān in your altar and ask yourself this question: Have I pleased Bhagavān today?

Conclude with the closing prayers.

The Fire of Desire

This class is about understanding desires and how to transition from having selfish desires to having selfless desires.

3.36 🔊 3.37 🔊



arjuna uvāca

atha kena prayukto'yaṁ
pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ,
anicchannapi vārṣṇeya
balādiva niyojitaḥ.

Arjuna asks:

But, impelled by what does one commit sin, though against their wishes, O Vārṣṇeya, constrained as it were, by force?

śrībhagavānuvāca

kāma eṣa krodha eṣaḥ
rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ,
mahāśano mahāpāpmā
viddhyenamiha vairiṇam.

The Blessed Lord said:

It is desire, it is anger born of the “active.” all devouring, all sinful; know this as the foe here in this world.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
30m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

A fire drawn and painted on a big piece of poster board

Two sheets of paper and a pen for each student

🔗 **The Fire of Desire** (slides)

References

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Chinmaya Mission. *Dharma*, 13.

🔗 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Story 3: The Sugar Cube.”

The Fire of Desire

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Ask the class to recall the slogan from the previous class: **“Be liked by God.”** Did they find themselves liked by Bhagavān this past week? How do we know what pleases Bhagavān? We should ask ourselves, did this action really please us and make us peaceful or not? If it truly pleases us, then it pleases Bhagavān.



Draw a line on the board, dividing it into two columns. Draw a thumbs up on one side and a thumbs down on the other side.

Ask the teens: What made them like themselves the most this week? What made them dislike themselves this week? Are there times where we gave into being liked by others over liking ourselves? List their answers on the board.

Sometimes, we know the right thing and we want to do the right thing but something is holding us back. Today we’re going to take a deeper look into that.

Introduction 5 min

Despite knowing what’s good for us and wanting to walk that route, something seems to hold us back. What is holding you back from being the “best” person you want to be? We have seen in the previous lesson that it is our likes and dislikes, but **how do they arise?**

Main Lesson 30 min

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers this question for Arjuna:

arjuna uvāca

atha kena prayukto’yaṁ
pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ,
anicchannapi vārṣṇeya
balādiva niyojitaḥ.

Arjuna asks:

But, impelled by what does one commit sin, though against their wishes, O Vārṣṇeya, constrained as it were, by force?

3.36

śrībhagavānuvāca

kāma eṣa krodha eṣaḥ
 rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ,
 mahāśano mahāpāpmā
 viddhyenamīha vairiṇam.

The Blessed Lord said:

It is desire, it is anger born of
 the “active,” all devouring, all
 sinful; know this as the foe here
 in this world.

3.37



Ask students: What is a desire? What are some examples of desires? Where does it come from? Why do we have them? Do we all have the same desires?

Vāsanās are deep impressions in our subconscious mind created out of repetitive thinking and acting. They express themselves as kāma or desires. Things which are in line with our desires become our likes and those which aren't in line with our desires, become our dislikes.

Why do we have such vāsanās? Our true nature is Ātman, which is pure bliss and complete in Itself. But, because we have forgotten our true nature, we feel that we need something to “complete” us, something to make us “whole.” This notion of not knowing our true nature is called ignorance. Ignorance gives rise to a vāsanā, which is an impression that happiness is indeed found in the outside world. These vāsanās express themselves as desires. These desires tend to obstruct our duties. For example: let's say we are supposed to study for a test; yet, something is prompting us to go on social media instead. It is desire that is prompting us.

IGNORANCE



VĀSANĀS



DESIRE

**Discussion**

Discuss the three types of desires and share examples of each:

- **Vitteṣaṇa** — Desire for wealth, power, and comfort
- **Putreṣaṇa** — Desire for love and relationships (to love and to be loved)
- **Lokeṣaṇa** — Desire for name, fame, attention, and status

Main Lesson

continued



Activity

Split the class into two groups.

- **Group 1:** Argue for how wealth, progeny, and name/fame brings long-lasting happiness.
- **Group 2:** Argue for how wealth, progeny, and name/fame does not bring long-lasting happiness.

You have three minutes to prepare with your group. Nominate one person to be the speaker. Each side has one minute to share their viewpoint.

Then, spend two minutes debriefing with the class why ultimately these three pursuits do not bring long-lasting happiness.

Here are the **five facts** about desires:

1. **Desires are born of ignorance of our complete and infinite nature.**

(Review the sugar cube story)

2. **All desires are nothing but the desire to be happy.**

Go through the thought process in a discussion format:

Q: What is one desire that you have?

A: To go to a good college.

Q: Why?

A: To be able to have a career.

Q: Why?

A: To get a job.

Q: Why....

Ultimately, one will discover that all desires are nothing but the desire to be happy.

3. **All desires are never-ending.**

Go through this in a discussion format also:

Q: Once you get the job that you want in the field that you want, do desires end?

A: No.

Q: Then what arises?

A: The desire to find a partner....

Q: Then what....

A: To have a family...

Q: Then what...

Ultimately, one will see that these desires never end!



Sugar Cube
Story



4. **No matter how much we fulfill them, we will still be unfulfilled.**
Go through the thought process of what happens when a desire is fulfilled. There are only two outcomes when it comes to desire: One is **dissatisfaction** — “I didn’t get it.” The other one is **unfulfillment** — “I got it but now I want more or I want something else.”
5. **When we fulfill our desires through selfish means, they only increase.**
Selfish desire comes in a team of 6 gangsters (desire, pride, greed, anger, jealousy, and delusion) with selfish desire being the ring leader. Whenever we fulfill our desires through selfish means, it only increases our ego. When we get what we want, it leads to pride — thinking that we are superior or better than others for having it. It leads to greed — wanting more and more of it. If we don’t get what we want, it leads to anger. Anger is nothing but an obstruction to our desired object. If someone else gets what we want, this leads to jealousy — wondering why in the world they got it instead of us! The entire time, we are deluded thinking that the object of attainment will actually make us happy.



And the entire time, we are DELUDED thinking that the object of desire will bring us HAPPINESS.
Sorry, better luck next life!

CHECK: If we are feeling pride, greed, anger, jealousy, or delusion, then guess what? There’s a selfish desire underneath it.

Do these emotions also manifest with a selfless desire?



As a class, brainstorm what the emotions of greed, anger, and jealousy turn into when we change our perspective when fulfilling our desires.

Main Lesson

continued

What does greed turn into?

Generosity — “Whatever we get is for everyone.”

What does anger turn into?

Acceptance — “If we don’t get it, we can try better!”

What does jealousy turn into?

Inspiration — “We can all learn so much from each other!”

Why?

Because **delusion turns into vision!** The vision is that there is something greater or higher that I should aspire to.

Reiterate:

If we are feeling emotions in **Column A** (The 6 Gangsters), then there’s a **selfish desire** underneath it.

If we are feeling emotions in **Column B** (The 6 Heroes), then there’s a **selfless desire** underneath it.

But most of the time, we feel mixed!

The 6 Gangsters	The 6 Heroes
Selfish Desire	Selfless Desire
Pride	Teamwork
Greed	Generosity
Anger	Acceptance
Jealousy	Inspiration
Delusion	Vision

THE 6 GANGSTERS



So how do we handle desires?

$$\text{HAPPINESS} = \frac{\text{\# OF DESIRES FULFILLED}}{\text{\# OF DESIRES ENTERTAINED}}$$

Swami Chinmayananda. *Self-Unfoldment*. Chapter 2, 13.

Happiness can be represented as a fraction, where the numerator is the number of desires fulfilled, and the denominator is the number of desires entertained.

Let's say today we had five desires (denominator): (1) get up early, (2) do some exercise, (3) eat healthy, (4) finish homework, and (5) speak to a friend.

If we fulfilled all 5, we would be happier.

If we fulfilled 4 out of the five, less happy.

If we fulfilled 0 out of the five, the least happy.

Why? Because the unfulfilled ones would just go on agitating our minds, telling us that we want to do this or that.

It's impossible to fulfill every single desire. By fulfilling desires, they only grow more. As we increase the numerator, naturally the denominator also increases, not leading us closer to happiness. So, the solution is not to expand the denominator or simply keep working on the numerator. **The solution is actually to decrease the denominator (the number of desires entertained).**

Main Lesson

continued



The Fire of Desire



Further Reading

Chinmaya
Mission.
Dharma, 13.

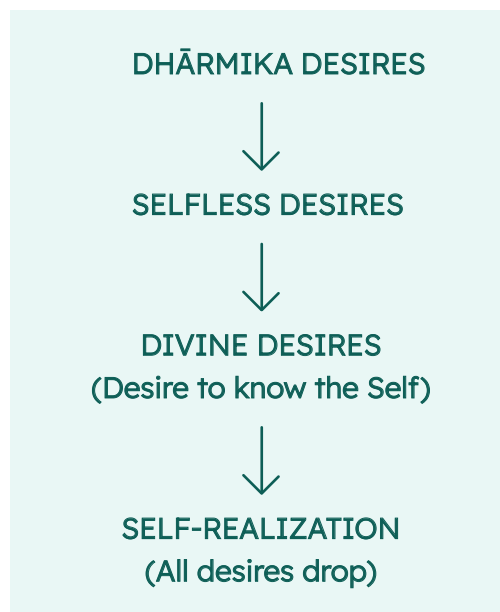
What does that mean? Does that mean we shouldn't have any desire at all?

No. Because without desires how will we act in this world?

Solution: Have desires that purify the mind and lessen agitations instead of desires that agitate the mind. Have desires that take us towards the realization of the Self and not desires that take us away from that.

The path to no desires is Dhārmika, Selfless, and Divine (the DSD formula — see slides).

1. **Fulfill them through Dhārmika means** — fulfilling them through moral and ethical means in line with one's inclination and stage of life (varṇa and āśrama).
2. **Fulfill them through Selfless means** — fulfilling them inspired by a goal or ideal that is higher than one's own individuality. For example: doing something that will benefit not just one's self but the family, community, or society as a whole.
3. **Divine Desires arise** — because the mind becomes pure and subtle, it begins to enquire about its own source. It seeks to know the Truth upon which it rests. This ultimately leads to Self-realization.
4. **Desires drop** — desires drop because nothing else exists but the Self. The Self is that which appears as the “desirer” and the “desired object.” This concept may be too subtle, so it is just enough to mention that upon Self-realization, all desires drop.



Activity 10 min

Instructions for selfish activity:

Now, we want you to be completely selfish.

Each one will have five minutes to be absolutely selfish. You can be the most selfish that you have ever been. Write down your top three desires and the most selfish ways that you could achieve them. For example: I might want to become a millionaire and live in a really big house! Think outside the box and don't worry about being too selfish.

Reminder: One more minute to be utterly selfish.

Now, find a partner and discuss one of these desires. What will happen if you selfishly pursue it? What effect will it have on you and your community? For example: in order to become a millionaire, I might steal from others. I might neglect my family and friends to focus on making money.

After this, take your selfish desires, tear the sheet, and offer it to the makeshift fire in the classroom. **This is your last chance to be selfish once and for all.**



While the students are offering their desires to the fire, the teachers might want to sing a simple dhun such as: Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma.

Now, on another sheet of paper, write down how you can achieve these very desires through selfless means.

Discuss and Debrief

- What were the main differences between your selfish and selfless approaches to achieving your desires?
- How did each approach make you feel?
- What's one way you can remind yourself to tune your desires towards selflessness going forward?

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students for their key takeaways from class (one line each without any repetition).

Slogan

**Stick to the DSD formula
(Dhārmika, Selfless, and Divine Desires)**

Sādhana

For each day of the week, pick one of the six heroes and act like them and embody the quality.

Monday: Selfless Desire

Tuesday: Teamwork

Wednesday: Generosity

Thursday: Acceptance

Friday: Inspiration

Saturday: Vision

Try to be as selfless as you can on the first day of the week, as good of a team player on the second day of the week, and so on. At the beginning of next class, share which of the heroes you found the most fun to embody!

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Ladder of Fall

In this lesson, we explore the ladder of fall, the consequences of anger, and how to deal with anger in our lives.

2.62  2.63 



dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ
saṅgasteṣūpajāyate,
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ
kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate.

When one thinks of objects, “attachment” for them arises; from attachment “desire” is born; from desire arises “anger”...

krodhād-bhavati sammohaḥ
sammohāt smṛtīvibhramaḥ,
smṛtībhraṁśād buddhināśaḥ
buddhināśāt praṇaśyati.

From anger comes “delusion”; from delusion, “loss of memory”; from loss of memory, the “destruction of discrimination”; from destruction of discrimination, one “perishes.”

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

Sheets of white paper for drawing
Pens, pencils, colored pencils (general art supplies)
Toy cockroach
 **Ladder of Fall** (slides)

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 2.62, 2.63.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Sense Control is a Must.”

Ladder of Fall

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Recollect the five facts about desires in a quiz format:

1. Desires are born of ignorance of our complete and infinite nature.
2. All desires are nothing but the desire to be happy.
3. All desires are never-ending.
4. No matter how much we fulfill them, we will still be unfulfilled.
5. When we fulfill our desires through selfish means, they only increase.

Then ask the class to write the desire formula on the board.

Desire Formula

$$\text{HAPPINESS} = \frac{\text{\# OF DESIRES FULFILLED}}{\text{\# OF DESIRES ENTERTAINED}}$$

Swami Chinmayananda. *Self-Unfoldment*. Chapter 2, 13.

We normally think that we become happy by fulfilling every desire we entertain. But, can we actually do that? By fulfilling desires, they only grow more. As we increase the numerator, naturally the denominator also increases, not leading us closer to happiness. So, the solution is not to expand the denominator or simply keep working on the numerator. The solution is actually to **decrease the number of desires entertained**.

How do we do that? Through the DSD formula: Dhārmika — Selfless — Divine Desires.

Introduction 5 min

Last class, we also discussed the danger of desires and how they lead to anger (kāma eṣa krodha eṣaḥ). When we are driven by selfish desires, we end up in the “Fire of Desire.”

Recalling that, we will begin class with a self-reflection period.

**Activity**

Ask the students to take out their class notebooks and writing utensils and reflect on the following question for five minutes.

Think about the last time you lost something you prized incredibly dearly, whether it was your fault or you had the position/prize/possession taken away from you. Write down what that prize was and how you lost it. Then ask yourself, “Did I get angry? If so, why?” and continue this series of inquiry for a few minutes. At every answer you arrive at, ask yourself, “Why?” or “What caused that?”. When you feel like you’ve found the root cause, you can stop. There should be at least five levels of “why” questions and answers.

We will return to these reflections later in the lesson.

Main Lesson 25 min

This is the exact topic that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa addresses in the verses that are affectionately known as the “Ladder of Fall.”

dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ
saṅgasteṣūpajāyate,
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ
kāmāt krodho‘bhijāyate.

When one thinks of objects,
“attachment” for them arises; from
attachment “desire” is born; from
desire arises “anger”...

krodhād-bhavati sammohaḥ
sammohāt smṛtīvibhramāḥ,
smṛtībhramśād buddhināśaḥ
buddhināśāt praṇaśyati.

From anger comes “delusion”; from
delusion, “loss of memory”; from
loss of memory, the “destruction of
discrimination”; from destruction of
discrimination, one “perishes.”

2.62 - 2.63

Let’s break these two verses down into the steps that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls out as leading to our destruction (praṇaśyati).

1. **DWELLING** on an object (dhyāyato viṣayānpuṁsaḥ) — “when one thinks of objects” — We begin to think of the object all the time. Our minds are fixed on that one thing that we really want!
2. **ATTACHMENT** (saṅga) — “attachment for them arises” — We begin to think that object will make me happy! We start to feel that my life will be better if I had that object.
3. **DESIRE** (kāma) — “from attachment desire is born” — We start to feel a burning feeling of “I want that! My life will be incomplete if I don’t have it.”

If the class is inclined, you can make this an interactive session with the class, so they can practice dissecting the verse and identifying the sequential order of steps.

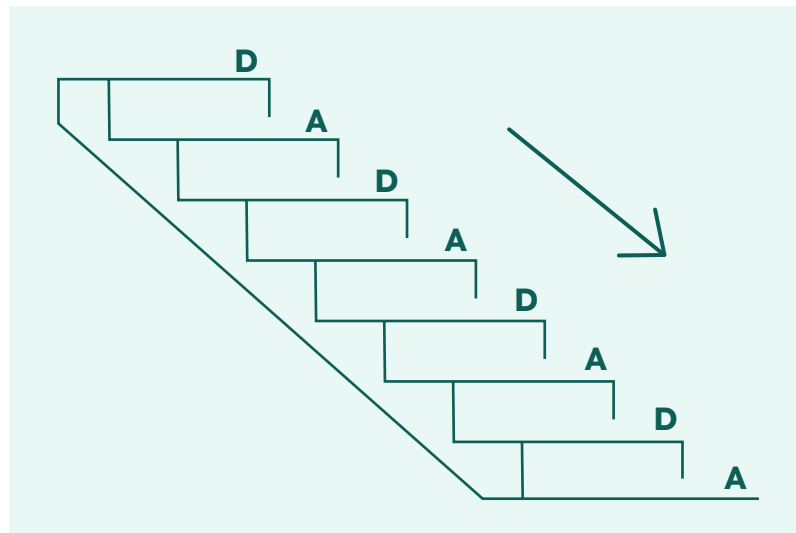
Main Lesson

continued

4. **ANGER** (krodha) — “from desire arises anger” — If I don’t get what I want, I begin to feel angry. If someone or something gets in the way of me and my desire, I get angry at them!
5. **DELUSION** (sammoha) — “from anger comes delusion” — I start to forget what is right and wrong. The mind begins to turn upside down. I lose sense of the right course of action.
6. **AMNESIA** (smṛtivibhramah) — “from delusion loss of memory” — I forget all that I’ve learned and love! I forget all the lessons that I’ve learned (e.g., from the Bhagavad-gītā). I forget my proper values and even my dharma. I forget my valuable relationships with others.
7. **DESTRUCTION** of the Intellect (buddhināśah) — “from loss of memory, the destruction of discrimination” — The intellect guides us based on past experiences. Because I have lost sight of all the lessons I have learned, I can no longer think straight! My innate sense of right/wrong and good/bad is completely gone. I am consumed by this destruction.
8. **ANNIHILATION** (praṇaśyati) — “from destruction of discrimination, one perishes.” — I act like an animal. Once our intellect is destroyed, our human-ness is as good as gone. We begin to act without any discretion.

We can easily remember this ladder by recalling the acronym (and sound):

DA-DA-DA-DA!



Let us now take a look at this ladder in more detail. We can break the ladder into three broad sections.



Part 1: Potential Danger Detected

Our ladder begins in the external world of objects. Everyday, we interact with numerous objects and people in order to complete our daily tasks. Problems arise when we start to see and think joy is in the object. We begin to feel that we must have something in order to be happy. As a result, we start spending a lot of our time thinking about that one thing and **dwelling** on that one object. Since we attend Bala Vihar, we may understand that true happiness isn't in that object, but our mind still has a hard time letting go and we spend undue attention on desiring that item.

The more often and more frequently we think of something, the more our desire for it begins to feel real. We create a groove in our mind, and each time we think about the object, the deeper the groove gets. As an analogy, think about the flow of water in a river and how it shapes the riverbed. Initially, there may just be a small creek flowing, but over time the creek erodes the soil, creating a deeper riverbed. Eventually, we have a much stronger flow of water and potentially even a raging river. Similarly, thoughts of the object create an **attachment** in our minds. Attachment is a firm conviction that the object can make us happy.

When this attachment gets strong enough, it becomes the burning "Fire of Desire." We are suddenly entertaining a new **desire** that we feel we must fulfill. If we recall the desire formula, we remember that one of the easiest ways to happiness or peace is to focus on reducing the denominator "Number of Desires Entertained." However, here, as we move down the ladder we are doing just the opposite — we have entertained a new desire.



Part 2: Warning... Proceed Cautiously

Suddenly, we have a new desire that we are struggling to fulfill. Our desire formula shows that our numerator (# of desires fulfilled) stays the same, but our denominator (# of desires entertained) has increased, which means our happiness and peace is decreasing. As with many desires throughout our lives, it is likely that we will not get what we want. When we don't, we feel frustrated, dejected at the situation, and eventually unleash **anger** towards anyone or anything we deem responsible for our desire not being fulfilled. Our already troubled mind has even more trouble with the anger beginning to consume it.

Main Lesson

continued

Our mind is now highly agitated and cannot discriminate between what is right and wrong properly. Our guiding intellect has started to lose its control. Since we failed to fulfill our desire, our mind spirals and creates more reasons to be angry. We think things like “Why me? What did I do to deserve this? Things like this only happen to me!” We may even blame other people and circumstances to feel justified in our anger. Our anger transforms into rage. We become **deluded** from all of this agitation.

**Part 3: STOP! Danger Zone!**

We are now in the most dangerous stages of the ladder (Amnesia, Destruction, and Annihilation). If we are not careful, then all will be lost — we are in the danger zone!

At this point, the delusion has made us forget all of our past knowledge, values, and qualities. Those lessons on right and wrong we learnt from our parents and teachers seem fully out of reach. We can't remember the lessons we learnt in Bala Vihar. Our brain feels stuck or as if it was on fire! Just like when our computer hangs or our phone glitches, the brain has glitched. We are not able to think clearly in this state of **amnesia**.

Our intellect is supposed to guide us based on our past experiences and knowledge, but now that we've forgotten all of that, the intellect is **destroyed**. Any semblance of a conscience is gone and we as an individual are on the brink of **annihilation**. We can no longer tell what is right from what is wrong, and what is good from what is bad. We become impulsive creatures reacting to every whim that comes our way. We act on every impulse and every idea that comes into our heads. There is no proper thinking. We have essentially become no different than animals. The six enemies of the mind *kāma* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (pride), and *mātsarya* (jealousy) have us acting in all kinds of crazy ways and we are unable to fight them or push back on them. The humanness in us has been destroyed. We tend to say and do harsh things that we really don't mean.

Putting it all together: Remember, all of this started with the initial incorrect belief that an object could grant us happiness. This ignorance caused us to dwell on the object creating a mental attachment, which led us to develop a burning desire. Unfulfillment of that desire, led us to get angry and deluded. The delusion made us forget our values, destroyed our intellect, and turned us into subhuman creatures.



Discussion

To better illustrate and understand the ladder, facilitate the following discussion. Break the students into small groups (3-4 students per group). Ask the students to think of stories they remember from Bala Vihar (or our Puraṇas and Itihāsas) that illustrate the Ladder of Fall. If they are unable to, they can use personal anecdotes for this exercise.

After about 5 minutes, ask the groups to share their examples and how the examples fit on the ladder of fall.



Example

The story of Devī Sītā and the golden deer:

1. **DWELLING** — Devī sees the golden deer and admires every limb of it. She's fascinated by the beauty of this unique deer!
2. **ATTACHMENT** — Devī thinks about how nice it would be to have that deer and how happy it would make Her.
3. **DESIRE** — She feels strongly that She needs it, that She is ready to send away Bhagavān (Śrī Rāma) to get it. She wants the deer more than She wants Her dear Śrī Rāma.
4. **ANGER** — When Mārīca, using Rāma's voice, calls out to Lakṣmaṇa for help, Sītā tells Lakṣmaṇa to go. When Lakṣmaṇa refuses (as he was tasked with protecting Sītā Devī), Sītā gets angry! Lakṣmaṇa is in the way of Her desire.
5. **DELUSION** — She thinks Lakṣmaṇa is an obstacle in the way of getting Her desired golden deer. She thinks Lord Rāmā needs help! Sītā Devī begins to exhibit upside-down thinking and confusion about what is right and wrong.
6. **AMNESIA** — She forgets about the strength and might of Bhagavān. Śrī Rāma has fought so many asuras and rākṣasas single-handedly. She sends Lakṣmaṇa away.
7. **DESTRUCTION** — In Her spiral, She has forgotten the greatness of Bhagavān (Śrī Rāma), ignored the loving care of Lakṣmaṇa, and worst of all, mistakes Rāvaṇa for a sādhu! Sītā Devī steps outside of the protective circle despite Lakṣmaṇa's warnings not to.
8. **ANNIHILATION** — Sītā Devī is taken by Rāvaṇa to Lanka to an unknown fate. Look how much suffering has come from Sītā Devī's desire for the golden deer.

Main Lesson

continued

Though Sītā Devī is Goddess Herself, She plays out this role in the Rāmāyaṇa to teach us a great lesson. She demonstrates exactly what happens when we start dwelling on objects thinking them to be a source of great joy. It's very natural to see beautiful sights, listen to wonderful sounds, and taste wonderful things, but when we dwell on these objects for extended periods of time, wanting to possess them, then we start falling down the ladder.

What should we do instead? Instead of dwelling on an object with the idea that the object will give us permanent happiness and will complete us, look at the object and understand its role in our lives. For example: food is for nourishment so that we can do our duties. Friendships are for sharing a bond — a space where people can support each other to grow and evolve. Going to college is a tool to develop one's self further on the path. All of these are required but they are not the sum and substance of life. They are important tools to help us grow, but to expect them to complete us and give us lasting happiness, and therefore place undue importance on them is called “dwelling.”

Consequences of Anger

We see that anger is quite a dangerous emotion in this ladder and it triggers much of our fall. Anger quite literally changes us physically; it causes danger and harm to our health. Anger releases a deluge of stress chemicals and causes metabolic changes that harm many different systems of the body. Some of these consequences include: headaches, digestive problems, insomnia, anxiety/depression, high blood pressure, skin problems, heart attack, and stroke.

Anger, at a social level, causes us to say and do things that we can never take back. The words that have left our mouth have made a permanent mark and impact on others. No matter what we try or do, we will never be able to take those harsh words or actions back. We may try to heal our relationships after, but the scar will always remain.

Reflect on the following story about the “Fence and Nails” to understand the above consequence further.

The Fence and Nails

A son had a bit of an anger problem. Whenever he would get angry, he would throw things around the house. He would yell and shout at whoever got in his way with no regard for their feelings, and overall was very difficult to be around. His father came up with a plan. He told his son, “Everytime you get angry, take this hammer and box of nails. Go to the fence in our backyard and hammer the nails into the fence until your anger subsides. At that point, you can come back into the house. If you are able to control your anger, then you can pull a nail out of the fence.” His son at first thought this was so silly,



Discussion

Where is the “point of no return” on your ladder? At which point does it become extremely difficult to turn around? At what step on the ladder should we catch ourselves?

but agreed to do it. So, now, everytime he got angry and couldn't control it, he went outside and hammered nails into the fence. Eventually, his anger would subside and he was once more pleasant to be around. Over time, the son improved in controlling his anger and started to pull nail after nail out of the fence. One day, he had finished pulling all the nails out of the fence and proclaimed excitedly to his father, "I pulled all the nails out! There are no more." His father didn't say much and tacitly walked with him back to the fence and asked him if the fence was the same as it was originally before all the hammering. The son replied that of course not, there are a ton of holes pockmarking the fence. The father replied, "Exactly. You cannot repair the damage of the holes in the fence, no matter how hard you try. It is wonderful that you have learnt to control your anger; however, that still left holes in the fence. Best is to not get angry at all. That is the secret."



Activity

Ask the students to take out a sheet of paper and think of the person (or people) they love the most (e.g., their parents, siblings). Now, ask them to draw a heart that covers the whole page representing the love that they have for this person (or people). After the students have finished drawing, tell them to crumple the paper with the heart in anger. Ask the students to try to fix the heart and make it the same as it was before.

Debrief: This is what happens when we are angry. In our moment of anger, we say and do things without thinking about the effect on others. We "crumple" others' hearts. Just as we see in the activity, it is impossible to bring the heart back to its original shape and form. It will always be a little broken and crumpled.

Every step that we take further down the ladder, the harder and more difficult it gets to turn around. So, when we notice ourselves start to fall and slip down this ladder, we should immediately stop ourselves and notice where we are and pull ourselves off the ladder safely.

When a ball rolls off the top of a staircase, initially, the first few bounces are somewhat controlled and small. The ball can easily be caught and placed back in rest. However, as the ball continues bouncing, it gathers more momentum and bounces with higher speed and more erratically. Soon, it is not only difficult to catch the ball, but also we have no idea where it's going. Just like that ball, we need to be careful with our own minds. The further and further we fall down the ladder, the harder and harder it gets to catch ourselves.

Main Lesson

continued

Remember

Our fall begins with Dwelling and ALWAYS ends in our Annihilation!

Now, we have all likely experienced this fall at some point in our lives. It is worth noting that falling is not ideal, but it is okay — we all fall. The biggest mistake is to willingly fall and to remain fallen. As we walk this path, we must work on catching ourselves in time.

The best place to catch ourselves is at the very top — when we begin to dwell on something. Catch yourself before the “Fire of Desire” consumes you.

How can we get off the ladder?

Sometimes we may notice that we are on the ladder of fall and we want to get off. We remember our Bala Vihar lesson about how if we don’t get off, we will get annihilated. How do we get off?



Ask the class for their ideas, then you can share some of the following.

The main method we can use is **Respond...Don’t React**.



The teacher may get a toy cockroach and throw it on a student or quietly place it on their shoulder. Observe the student’s reaction. Use this as a way to introduce the following story.

This story demonstrates the distinction between reacting and responding.

While a customer was having coffee with a friend, a cockroach landed on their shoulder. The customer panicked and caused a scene attempting to flick the cockroach off their shoulder. Eventually, the waiter walked over to help and the cockroach landed on him. In contrast to the customer, the waiter observed the cockroach and carefully caught and placed the cockroach outside. The customer’s **reaction** led to panic and chaos, and ultimately, it did not solve the problem. The waiter’s **response** was calm and measured, leading to a solution. Thus, we see that the disturbance does not exist in the cockroach, but rather in our reaction or response to it.

A **reaction** is an instant decision based on short-term thinking without fully considering the consequences. Oftentimes, when we are on the ladder (and consumed by desires), we tend to react because of how strong the pull of the

desire is. Our judgement gets clouded, and often this reaction results in making an error and feelings of guilt long-term. Instead, respond in these situations.

A **response** is a calm decision where we pause and consider long-term consequences. When we respond, we tend to feel peaceful and mindful.

React	Respond
Rage	Calmness
Rapid — Done without thinking	Thoughtful — Takes everything into account
Forgetful — Forgets everything	Clear — Understands the overall picture and thinks about long-term effects
Careless — One makes too many mistakes	Mindful — One pauses and avoids mistakes
Guilty — One feels guilt, regret, and dejection for having reacted	Peace — One feels at peace



Activity

Practicing Responding... not Reacting: Come up with about three scenarios that you will read to the class. After you read each scenario, you will hold up a “REACT” card. This will be the indication for the class to tell you their reactions to the scenario. Then, hold up the “RESPOND” card and the class should share their responses to the situation. After going through a few scenarios, debrief with the class on which feels better (reacting or responding) and discuss why.

Some sample scenarios can be:

- Your parents hid your phone because you spent too much time on it.
- Someone spread a vicious rumor about you at school and you feel humiliated.
- Your parents tell you that you can’t go to the party this weekend.

Debrief: When we respond, we are acting from a more grounded place and aren’t swayed by our crazy emotions. When we are reacting, we tend to be emotionally charged and are in danger of making a mistake or doing something we regret!

Main Lesson

continued

The following are some other techniques that can help us get off the ladder.

1. **Introspect, Detect, Negate, Substitute** — When we have fallen further down the ladder and are trying to get off, we can try this strategy. Introspect — analyze what is it that caused me to fall and why am I in this situation? Detect — determine the root cause of the fall. Most likely, it is a desire or attachment to something. Negate and Substitute — now, that we've found the root cause, let us negate it, by substituting it with something better and higher (like our love for Bhagavān). Finally and thankfully, we'll be able to step off the ladder!
2. **Attach to Iṣṭa Devatā** — Sometimes, we have fallen so far down the ladder (e.g., the destruction of our intellect) that all we can do is ask Īśvara for help! Sit in prayer and connect with your Iṣṭa Devatā. Bhagavān will protect you when you fully resolve to Him.
3. **Satsaṅga** — Keeping good company. If we are in the company of good people, they will call us out if we start to become too absorbed in our anger and delusion, and remind us not to react harshly. They will not let us destroy ourselves. If we are in the company of the wise, they will teach us how to better handle our anger and find our balance again. When we are around those who are at peace, it is much easier to find our way back to peace.

This is what made Arjuna stand out from Karṇa. Both Arjuna and Karṇa got angry. **What was the difference?**

Karṇa had so much anger for the Pāṇḍavas, specifically Arjuna. Due to keeping the company of Duryodhana, Karṇa was under his influence. Karṇa's anger became worse, this anger consumed him until the very end. Thus, he fell down the ladder and was ultimately destroyed.

Arjuna had anger towards the Kauravas, especially Karṇa. However, he kept the company of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He then began to see the war not with the eye of revenge, but with the eye of dharma. Because of this, he received the darśana of the Divine Mother in the form of the Bhagavad-gītā. Thus, Arjuna was able to rise up.

Self Check

Am I angry about something? Then, there is some desire at the root. Stop and analyze to make sure you don't fall further down the ladder.

What about our Mahātmās?

Sometimes it may look like our Mahātmās get angry; however, we must understand that what they are doing is not getting angry, but merely demonstrating what anger looks like. Just like Sītā Devī beautifully demonstrated the ladder of fall for all of us to learn from, our Mahātmās demonstrate anger, so that we can all learn from them.

How do we know this? Our Mahātmās can go from being angry one second to placid and joyous the next. Think about the last time you were angry, you probably couldn't switch emotions quickly. Probably your anger dissipated into all aspects of your life. Even after the stimulus of the anger was gone, you were probably still a bit furious and displaced the anger on other things or people.

Listen to this story of how Gurudev demonstrated anger.

There was a brahmachari who committed a serious mistake. Gurudev knew He had to reprimand and correct this misbehavior. Gurudev demonstrated anger and scolded the brahmachari sternly for a long time. After He was done, a little girl came up to Gurudev and offered Him a flower. Gurudev accepted the flower and with the most joyous grin on His face, He embraced the little girl and gave her a warm hug. Immediately, the “anger” that Gurudev had shown was gone and replaced with joy!

Debrief: If Gurudev was truly angry, then He would have not been able to switch immediately to joy. Gurudev knew that He had to use anger as a tool to correct this brahmachari. Even this scolding, Gurudev did from a place of love to help this brahmachari learn and develop proper action. How else would Gurudev be able to strongly communicate the gravity of the brahmachari's mistake? In this story, we see an example of how our Mahātmās are not truly angry ever; they are merely showing and demonstrating anger as needed.

Activity 15 min

What Animal Am I?

Ask the students to revisit the questions that they reflected upon in the “Introduction.” Ask them to take 2-3 minutes to find their personal ladder of fall.

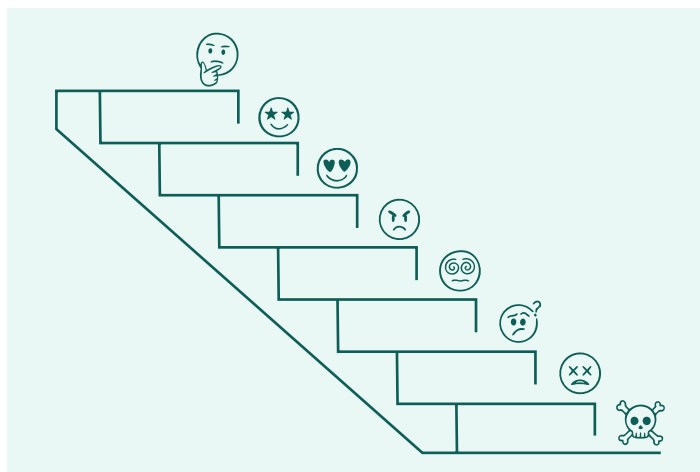
Now give the students paper and art supplies to illustrate their ladder of fall.

- They should clearly define what they acted like at each step on the ladder.
- For each step, they should draw an emotion or some representation of how they felt at that step.
- For the 8th Step (Annihilation), they must draw the animal that they acted like. As they do this, ask them to reflect on why?

Activity

continued

Debrief: If the students are willing, ask them what led to their anger. If not, ask them to share only the 8th Step (Annihilation). What did they act like? What animal did they become? If students are inclined, they can act out their animal.

**Conclusion** 5 min**Group Summary**

Recap the 8-step Ladder (DA-DA-DA-DA) and remind students that if they do not want to become like that animal they illustrated in the activity, they must catch themselves early on in their fall!

Slogan

DA-DA-
DA-DA

Dwelling, Attachment, Desire, Anger, Delusion, Amnesia, Destruction, and Annihilation.

Sādhana

Put your illustrated personal ladder of fall (from the “Activity”) on your bedroom wall. At the end of each day this week, ask yourself, “Where on the ladder was I today? Or am I off the ladder?” Mark that spot with a pen or sticker. If you are off the ladder, mark a spot off the ladder. At the end of the week, you should see what made you get on the ladder and off the ladder. Start to brainstorm how to stay off the ladder.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Guidance from the Guru

In this class, we explore the supreme importance of Guru's grace and guidance in attaining authentic spiritual knowledge.

4.1 



śrībhagavānuvāca

imaṁ vivasvate yogam
proktavān aham avyayam,
vivasvān manave prāha
manurikṣvākave'bravīt.

The Blessed Lord said:

I taught this imperishable Yoga
to Vivasvān; Vivasvān taught
it to Manu; Manu taught it to
Ikṣvāku.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m | Opening

5m | Introduction

30m | Main Lesson

10m | Activity

5m | Conclusion

 **Guidance from the Guru (Print-out Material)**

 **“The Karate Kid (2010) — Everything is Kung Fu Scene”**

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 4.1.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Who is a seeker? Who is a Guru? How can I find a Guru?” 2:42 - 7:03.

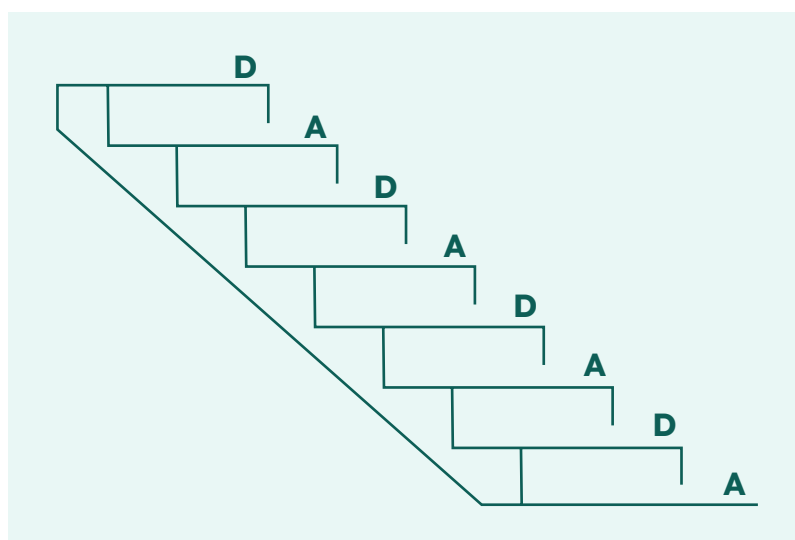
 Swami Swatmananda. “Why do I need a Guru?”

Guidance from the Guru

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min



Draw a ladder or a set of stairs with 8 steps and ask the class to fill out each step using the DA-DA-DA-DA acronym.



Were the students able to stay off the ladder during the week or were they on the ladder? If they were on, which step did they find themselves in?

How do we handle these situations? **Respond vs. React.**

Introduction 5 min

So far, we have been learning all about karma yoga — uniting with the Higher through selfless action. Karma yoga is an essential tool to help us live a healthy, peaceful, and fulfilling life while using our abilities and potential to serve others and benefit the world at large. It also teaches us how to sublimate our desires into something Higher, thus reducing the six gangsters (selfish desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride, and jealousy), and making our way to divine desires. All of these lessons come under the ambit of spiritual Knowledge.

As we now approach chapter 4 of the Bhagavad-gītā, Arjuna starts to wonder, **where does all this Knowledge come from? Is it something that we can learn on our own?**

Can we learn it from self-help books and YouTube videos? Unlike other forms of material knowledge, Guru's grace, guidance, and authenticity are absolutely essential in understanding spiritual Knowledge and manifesting the promised results.

A young girl asked Swami Chinmayananda, "Whatever you teach is there in the books. What do I need a Guru for?" His instant answer was, "Why don't you ask this question to the books!"

Swami Chinmayananda, *Say Cheese*.

Main Lesson 30 min

Guidance from the Guru

All forms of material knowledge can give us material prosperity and success. But material knowledge alone cannot bring lasting peace and happiness. It cannot help us navigate our way through conflicts and make the right choices. For example: a brilliant sports person may have knowledge of how to play a certain sport really well. In spite of this, they may still fall into addiction due to the influence of the wrong company. Their knowledge of sports, which brought them name and fame, won't prevent this downfall. However, with the right guidance from the right people, they might have made a better choice. **Right choices will lead us to the right results.** Spiritual Knowledge will help us make the right choices. Only spiritual Knowledge holds the key to discovering how to lead a purposeful, fulfilling, and happy life filled with love and sweetness. Shouldn't this, then, be something we must actively pursue? But how? Can we have a go at it ourselves?

Let's reflect on this:

- Why do top athletes need a coach? Why can't they just train themselves?
- A gym may have the most advanced equipment with detailed instructions, yet why do we still seek guidance from a trainer?



Discussion

Do we really need a Guru or a teacher?

Pose the following scenario to the class: If you wanted to learn soccer or a type of dance, would you rather learn on your own, or would you have a teacher?

Ask them to list the differences in their own words. You can give them some prompt questions, if required. Brainstorm as a class and note down the differences. Debrief using the following table.

Main Lesson

continued

Learning On My Own	Learning With A Teacher
Unsystematic. How do I start? I tend to just make up my own order.	Very systematic. It starts from the basics and then moves to the next level. Imagine playing a video game without any levels — there's just no fun. As you get better, it should get more challenging; otherwise we're stuck in the same round again and again.
No knowledge of weaknesses and strengths. What are my weaknesses? Strengths? I may not be able to tell.	The Guru knows exactly your strengths and weaknesses and helps tailor your growth and journey based on where you are currently. If you've never run before, starting by running 5 miles uphill would drain you and maybe stop you from ever running again.
More mistakes. I will probably make a lot of mistakes. And when I make a mistake, I may get dejected, lose motivation, and quit.	Fewer mistakes. Why go through mistakes unnecessarily? Learn from someone who's already gone through them, so that mistakes can be avoided. And when you do make mistakes, you can lean on a Guru to guide you back to the correct path. Imagine learning to cook on your own without any guidance.
More time. It will probably take a lot of time because I don't know how to do it.	Less time. Progress will be quicker because you are guided by someone who is already experienced. Think about going through a museum with a personal tour guide vs. without it. Which would be more enjoyable? Which would be more efficient?
Confusion. There are too many paths — which one do I follow? I might get confused.	Clarity. The Guru helps guide you at every fork in the path, assisting you to make the best decision for your personal journey. It's like having a nutritionist who helps you navigate through all the false information around diet fads.
Uncertainty. Did I get there yet? How do I know the signs?	Certainty. The Guru paints a picture of the end goal and knows exactly what it is because they've been there.

No live example.

I don't have a live example before me. I may follow someone on YouTube, but it is not as relatable or personal as someone I have a relationship with.

Live example right before your eyes.

The Guru IS the live example, so you have faith that it is doable to walk on this path and make it to the end.

Limited knowledge

base. This is based on my own knowledge and experience only.

Immense knowledge base.

The Guru brings the knowledge and experience of the whole lineage.

We all want to ensure we are on the right path; however, often, we don't see our own mistakes and need a well-wisher and/or guide to correct us. Simply having theoretical knowledge isn't enough — it might even be harmful if applied incorrectly. Just as we need to learn how to use gym equipment properly and avoid overexertion to prevent injury, just as we need a coach and mentor to excel in any chosen field, we need the right guidance in our spiritual journey to grow in the right way without missteps. And a Guru, out of immense compassion, provides us this guidance and showers us with grace and blessings.



Ask the class to ponder over this question for 2-3 minutes and write the answer in their notebook and then share.

Question: Can you think of any great teachers that you had who really helped train you to become better?

Even the great warrior Arjuna, standing on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, was overcome with doubt and confusion. Despite his immense skill and knowledge, he couldn't decide what was right. It was only through his choice to surrender to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa and to seek His guidance that Arjuna gained clarity, overcame his despair, and took the right action. If Arjuna, with all his wisdom and strength, needed guidance, how can we expect to navigate life's challenges alone?

Main Lesson

continued

Therefore, in the first verse of chapter 4, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa talks about the lineage of teachers of spiritual Knowledge:

śrībhagavānuvāca

imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ
proktavān aham avyayam,
vivasvān manave prāha
manurikṣvākave'bravīt.

The Blessed Lord said:

I taught this imperishable Yoga
to Vivasvān; Vivasvān taught it to
Manu; Manu taught it to Ikṣvāku.

4.1

Bhagavān himself taught this Knowledge to Lord Sun, who taught it to his son Manu, who then passed it onto Ikṣvāku, the ancestor of the Solar dynasty who ruled over Ayodhya for a long period of time. This is the same family where Lord Rāma, the living embodiment of righteousness, was born approximately eighteen generations later. As we can see, this is such an exalted lineage, pure and perfect. Those who learnt this Knowledge, benefited from it, and passed it on over generations. This lineage was by no means ordinary. They were extraordinary masters in their own fields! And why would such extraordinary beings pass this Knowledge on if this were some ordinary, frivolous piece of information of no benefit to anyone? And Manu, the first human, is the ancestor of all humankind. Thus, this spiritual Knowledge is also our heritage and inheritance as human beings, the children of Lord Sun. Bhagavān highlights and praises this lineage and this Knowledge, so that our importance and reverence for it increases.

Let's look at the first student of this lineage — Lord Sun

- Lord Sun is the greatest karma yogī.
- He does his duty perfectly and silently in the background, without concern for results. Even when He is not there, He takes care of the world through the moon.
- He is the teacher of Hanumān jī.
- Lord Sun is a symbol of unwavering dedication, consistency, and selfless service.

If such a revered and noble being benefits from this Knowledge and then advocates and imparts it, can there be any doubt of its priceless value?

Bhagavān emphasizes the lineage of this spiritual Knowledge to assure us of its authenticity.

Authenticity is defined as not false or an imitation — that which is true to the original in spirit and character.

Why is authenticity important?

Whenever we are about to buy something new, whether it's a smartphone, a gaming console, or even a pair of sneakers, don't we always check to see if it is from a reputable brand? Would we get a cheap knock-off that looks like an iPhone or a Samsung on the outside, but the software is buggy, the battery drains quickly, and it doesn't perform as promised? Most likely not. We only trust products and services from reputable brands because they have been tested, refined, and proven reliable.



Discussion

Knowing the Right Guides

Prompt: Write down the top 3 products you want right now. What is on your birthday or holiday wishlist?

Then, write down how you discovered this product existed. What or who made you want it in the first place? How were you exposed to it? What made it jump to one of your top 3?

Split the class into groups of 3-5 and discuss the following questions:

- What were some commonalities with the products you wanted and why you wanted them?
- Is it disappointing when you realize people or products are not what they were made out to be?

Whenever we follow someone — whether it's a fitness coach, a financial advisor, an influencer, or our friends — sometimes we get swayed by their appearance, persona, or lifestyle. It is easy to get wrapped up in the image one promotes of themselves without focusing on the depth and authenticity of those who influence us.



As a class, brainstorm the qualities of a true guide. Who should we be looking to for guidance and influence?

The best guides, for anything in life, are those who are real, who have walked the path they talk about and whose actions match their words.

Main Lesson

continued

**Discussion**

Let's say you want to bake cookies and need to find a recipe: what do you do?

Do you click on the first Google Search result? Read the AI overview? Ask ChatGPT? Or do you find a renowned baker's blog?

With all of these, how do we verify that the information we are reading can be trusted and followed? What do you look for to identify the authenticity of the source?

Potential Points:

- Generally, we may look at the author and their background and prior publications.
- We may look at the reviews of the article. Is the content of the source something that has been replicated?
- We may look at the references within the article.
- We may look at the pictures of the results. Are they actually real? Or AI-generated?

Conclusion: At this point in our lives, most of us have built up an internal “authenticity” meter for the internet, and so even if we pick the first link, we're usually automatically evaluating the content.

With ChatGPT, as an example, identifying the authenticity of AI is extremely difficult. How do we know we can trust what it outputs when there's no verifiable source? With baking a cookie, the stakes are low, and we probably don't mind grabbing a quick recipe from ChatGPT — but with something as valuable as our spiritual Knowledge, we wouldn't just trust anyone!

Its authenticity lies in the way it has been practiced and passed down through our Guru paramparā. They are living proof of the impact of this highest Knowledge. This Knowledge has stood the test of time, been practiced by the best and wisest, and has repeatedly delivered the promised great results. This is why Bhagavān emphasizes the lineage of this spiritual Knowledge. It is to assure us of its authenticity.

Our Guru paramparā from the Sun God to Hanumān jī to our Gurus, like Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda and Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, embody the teachings of this highest Knowledge authentically in the way they live their lives. If it worked for them, why wouldn't it work for us?

Caution: There may be Gurus out there who are posing to be Gurus but are not actually! How does one find a real Guru? Watch the video of Pūjya Gurudev.

Who is the Guru?

A Guru cannot be limited to any single form. A Guru is a living presence who comes in many forms, such as a mother, father, and teacher — guiding us on the path of dharma (righteousness). There are many forms of gurus. For example, a guru of dance or music, a guru of martial arts, and a guru of language. Amongst all of the gurus, there is a special Sadguru who is a Jīvanmukta (liberated one) and a visible form of God. This Sadguru awakens us to the Truth of who we are and helps us realize the Guru within.

In Chinmaya Mission, we consider Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda to be that Sadguru who shines forth through all of His disciples. Pūjya Gurudev's wisdom, love, and selflessness have been passed on to Pūjya Guruji and to the countless Swamins and Brahmacharins who serve the Mission today.

Who is a
seeker? Who is
a Guru?



From the teacher to the taught, the Knowledge-Supreme has come down, in each succeeding Master — the Self-Science gaining in authority and wealth of detail. The wisdom sparks the findings of a life-long specialized self-effort, the Master handed down to his disciple, who also had reached him, just as he had reached the banks of Mother Ganges. The disciple learned from his Guru and carried the torch of knowledge, maintained, tended, nursed and nourished by his own experiences and conclusions until he handed it over, intact and blazing, to his disciple.

Swami Chinmayananda

When the student is ready, the outer Guru takes the form of the inner Guru, which is the pure intellect within.



To a Vedāntin, the real Guru is the pure intellect within. The purified, deeply aspiring mind is the disciple. I have guided you in direction — you have to make your own pilgrimage. Some power has brought us together — let us surrender unto Him.

Swami Chinmayananda

Main Lesson

continued



Watch the following clip from *Karate Kid* and discuss with the class what we can learn from Dre as a student and Mr. Han as a guru.



The Karate Kid



The Karate Kid (2010) — Everything is Kung Fu — In *The Karate Kid* (2010), Dre grows frustrated with Mr. Han for only having Dre take a jacket on and off for his kung fu training. As Dre is about to quit, Mr. Han calls Dre back and shows him how everything Dre has been doing is actually kung fu. As the scene concludes, Mr. Han reveals the secret that everything in life is actually kung fu.

Debrief about the importance of surrendering to our Guru. As we see here, sometimes the purpose for the teaching might not make sense in the moment, but with humility and faith, we must follow our Guru. Without worrying about the results, we should strive to be the best learners we can be. Just like Mr. Han helps Dre find the connection between simple acts and the art of Kung Fu, our Gurus will show us the purpose of their teachings.

An authentic Guru is one who embodies their teachings. So, who is an authentic student?

Recall **lesson 7: “Arjuna’s Surrender.”** A true student has three elements of surrender: prostration, questioning, and service. This surrender expresses itself as reverence for their Guru and a hunger for learning.

Like spiritual Knowledge is passed on through the Guru paramparā, all authentic knowledge is shared the same way. Let’s take the example of music and dance — people who teach us these art forms have learned from generations of singers and dancers who have embodied the teachings of their own gurus. To truly excel in these art forms, the student must have a deep reverence for the teacher, approach the teacher with utmost humility, and an intense passion for learning.

Similarly, a student of Vedānta should approach the Guru in complete surrender and respect for the highest Knowledge carried through generations of the Guru paramparā. Taking Arjuna as a student of archery, we see that he showed surrender to the knowledge of his teachers, Droṇācārya and Bhīṣma, and took his learning seriously. He understood the value of the teaching and practiced daily with respect and humility.

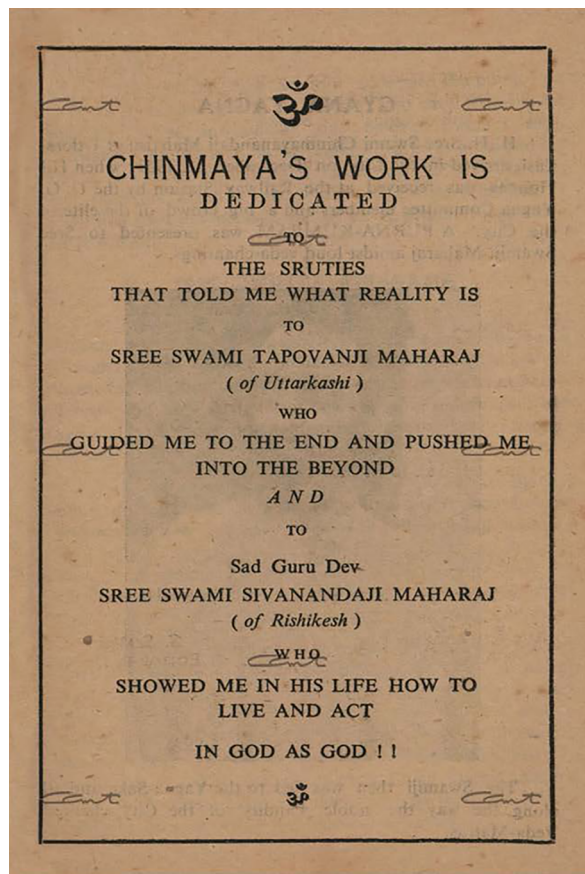
In our lives, whether we are learning the ultimate Truth of Vedānta or doing chemistry homework, we should strive to be authentic students and show this same reverence to our Gurus and teachings.

Activity 10 min

Activity #1: Gurudev's Love for Guru

Bring a printout of Pūjya Gurudev's writing below. Ask one student to read it out loud and ask another to explain what they see about Gurudev's love for his Gurus in this writing. Printout can be found in the following class material: Guidance from the Guru (Print-out Material)

Guidance from
the Guru



Activity #2: “Why Not Do It Myself?” Treasure Hunt

Objective: To explore why right guidance from the lineage is needed for spiritual Knowledge and can't be gained alone.



Divide students into three teams (do not reveal to the students what their teams represent):

- Team A will search for the treasure without any guidance.
- Team B will search for the treasure with misleading clues.
- Team C will search for the treasure with the correct guiding clues.

Activity

continued

The treasure is a quote by Pūjya Gurudev, beautifully written and printed in a nice box.



Guru's grace itself is God's grace, since Guru is none other than Nārayaṇa Himself expressing as 'Parameśvara' to help the disciple.
Swami Chinmayananda

Each team will be given 3 minutes to complete the Treasure Hunt. Have the other two teams step outside of the classroom while one team is completing the hunt. Time how long it takes each team to find the treasure.

Team A starts by looking for the treasure without any direction. They may ask the teacher questions and search in various directions. Once the three minutes are complete, have Team A exit the room.

Team B is given completely incorrect clues. These clues should seem like they are leading the team on the correct path but be completely misleading to finding the real treasure (customize these clues based on # of students and the classroom space).

CLUE 1: *Seek low where our feet are planted, where the angles are right.*

Team B should deduce that they should go check the corner of the room on the ground. They should find a piece of paper with their next clue #2.

CLUE 2: *A full circle will provide guidance, and time will reveal the answer.*

Team B should deduce that the next location is behind the clock in the classroom. They should find a piece of paper taped there with clue #3.

CLUE 3: *Now find the place where learning begins, it may creak and swing.*

Team B should deduce that the next location is the door of the classroom. They should find a piece of paper that says, "Uh oh...looks like you've been led astray! Dead end. Sorry."

Team C is given the following clues (customize these clues based on # of students and the classroom space).

CLUE 1: *Seek the place where roots are planted, and growth is slow but steady.*

Team C should deduce that this is referring to the potted plant in their classroom. There the team should find a piece of paper with the next clue.

CLUE 2: *Where stories unfold and wisdom is found, seek the place where pages turn and minds expand.*

Team C should deduce that this refers to the reading corner/library in the classroom. There the team should find the next clue taped to one of the books.

CLUE 3: *The source of knowledge lies here, where teaching begins.*

Team C should deduce that this refers to the teacher's desk. In the teacher's desk, they should find the final treasure, which says Gurudev's quote.

Reflection questions after the treasure hunt is completed:

For Team A:

- How did it feel trying to find the treasure without any guidance? What emotions did you feel?
- What was the hardest part of the hunt?

For Team B:

- How did it feel trying to find the treasure with the wrong guidance?
- What was the hardest part?
- How did you feel when you realized you were on the wrong path?

For Team C:

- How helpful were the clues in finding the treasure?
- Did your confidence increase as you found each clue that took you closer to the treasure?
- How did you feel being guided on the right path?

For the whole class:

- How does this reflect the importance of an authentic Guru's guidance in pursuing spiritual Knowledge?

Debrief: When we have guidance from a Guru, then we have a clear vision to work towards a concrete path or set of practices. The Guru is also there to guide us with any doubts or questions that come along the way. The Guru also helps us address our weaknesses and use our strengths to the best of our abilities.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

We looked at the significance of authentic spiritual Knowledge, along with the grace and guidance of the Guru paramparā, and how they lead us towards living a fulfilled and purposeful life.

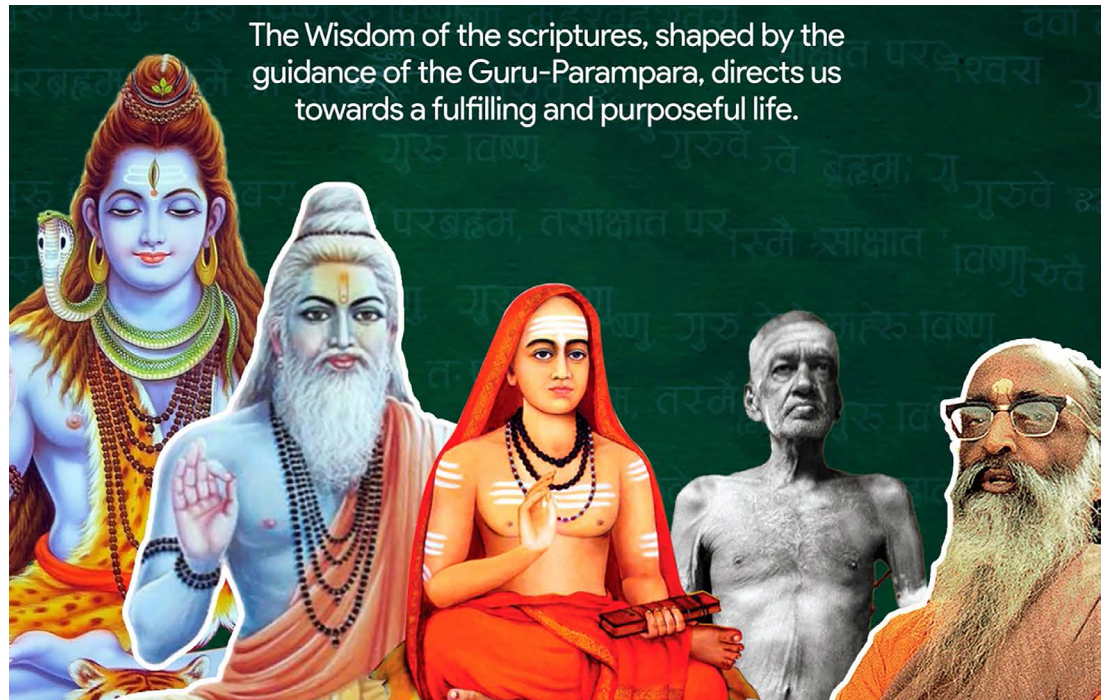
Ask the students for their key takeaways from class (one line each without any repetition).

Conclusion

continued

Slogan

Walk the path
with guidance
from the Guru

Sādhana

Give students the picture of the lineage of our Guru paramparā, from Lord Śiva, Veda Vyāsa jī, Śaṅkarācārya jī, Śrī Tapovan Maharaj, and Pūjya Gurudev. Look at their images and observe the lineage. Picture can be found in class material: Guidance from the Guru (Print-out Material)

Close your eyes and bring the image of Pūjya Gurudev in your heart, who symbolizes the entire lineage. Looking at His form, chant with gratitude:

gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuḥ gururdevo maheśvaraḥ,
guruḥ sāksāt parambrahma tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ.

Do this every day for one week.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Guidance from
the Guru



Bhagavān's Avatāra

This lesson deals with understanding the intricacies of Avatāra Siddhānta through a granular analysis of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's essays on the topic.

4.1  4.7  4.8 



śrībhagavānuvāca

imaṁ vivasvate yogam
proktavān aham avyayam,
vivasvān manave prāha
manurikṣvāke'bravīt.

The Blessed Lord said:

I taught this imperishable Yoga
to Vivasvān; Vivasvān taught
it to Manu; Manu taught it to
Ikṣvāku.

yadā yadā hi dharmasya
glānirbhavati bhārata,
abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham.

Whenever there is a decay of
righteousness, O Bhārata, and
a rise of unrighteousness, then
I manifest myself.

paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām
vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām,
dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya
sambhavāmi yuge yuge.

For the protection of the
good, for the destruction
of the wicked and for the
establishment of righteousness,
I am born in every age.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
30m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

 **The Secret of Avatāra** printouts

Blue scarf or garland

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 4.1-4.8.

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Art of Man-making, Part 1* (2024), Essays 41 and 42.

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Why does The Lord Take Birth?"

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Lord Krishna and his Avatar." 10:06 - 11:34

 Swami Chinmayananda. "Anecdote 2300."

Bhagavān's Avatāra

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous class, we learned about the importance of having an authentic Guru in seeking spiritual knowledge. Let's recollect our Guru paramparā by chanting this verse:

gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuḥ gururdevo maheśvaraḥ,
guruḥ sāksāt parambrahma tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ.

Show the students the picture of the lineage of our Guru paramparā, from Lord Śiva, Veda Vyāsa jī, Śaṅkarācārya jī, Śrī Tapovan Maharaj, to Pūjya Gurudev. Look at their images and observe the lineage.

Recollect the reasons why it is important to have a Guru with the class:

- Systematic learning
- Knowledge of strengths and weaknesses
- Fewer mistakes (walk a path that's already trodden)
- Clarity about the goal and path
- Certainty of accomplishment
- Live example
- Immense knowledge base

Introduction 5 min

Let's chant and recollect the previous verse:

śrībhagavānuvāca
imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ
proktavān aham avyayam,
vivasvān manave prāha
manurikṣvākave'bravīt.

The Blessed Lord said:
I taught this imperishable Yoga
to Vivasvān; Vivasvān taught it to
Manu; Manu taught it to Ikṣvāku.

4.1

After hearing this verse, a question arises in Arjuna's heart. Let's explore the question and answer through an essay written by Pūjya Gurudev.



Guidance from
the Guru



Main Lesson 30 min

Give each student a copy of Gurudev's article on "The Secret of Avatāra" (reproduced below).



Ask them to sit in groups of 3 and take turns reading these sections aloud. If there's a smaller space, then ask students to read silently and then get into groups of 3 after the reading for the discussion section.

The Secret of
Avatāra

**The Secret of Avatāra**

The Lord's statement, 'I told this imperishable yoga to Lord Sun' is stunning indeed (imam vivasvate yogam proktavān aham avyayam).

Naturally, Arjuna was confused — either this statement was a bluff or the Lord has a secret fact hidden away among His words.

Therefore, Arjuna pointedly asks, "Your birth was much later and that of Lord Sun very much earlier. Then how must I understand that you told this yoga to Him?"

There is a chronological absurdity in saying that Kṛṣṇa, a contemporary of Arjuna, had given out this yoga to the Lord Sun. The Sun was at the very beginning of the creation of this world — much earlier, perhaps, if the modern theory of the formation of the earth is to be believed. How is it possible then for Kṛṣṇa to justify, "I gave out this yoga to Lord Sun in the beginning?" (4.1).

Here Kṛṣṇa exhaustively answers with the theory of avatāra, famous in our Paurāṇika literature. The infinite Lord, as the total cause of the universe, often has to come down to express in the manifested world, to serve the creatures and set the rhythm of life for the purposes of directing and hastening the great grand general evolution. This is His divine function as the sole protector of the world of beings.

This avatāra concept is not so easy for the West to apprehend and Max Mueller characterized it as 'mere metaphysical twaddle and scholastic hairsplitting'. We shall discover how disappointing is the hasty criticism of this German scholar of the great Vedas.

Main Lesson

continued

The Lord opens his elucidation with a staggering revelation, Through many births have you and I passed, O Arjuna. I know them all while you know them not (4.5). The Supreme identifying with the limited microcosm is the *jīva* — individualized ego, you and I. The same supreme Consciousness functioning through the totality, the macrocosmic world is God, *Īśvara*. This is exactly like a person who at home is the father of his children, but in the office he himself is an officer. He remaining the same, functions in two different capacities: identifying with his children, he is the father and identifying with the day-to-day problems of his office administration, he is a mighty officer. The essential person is the same — yet he functions in different fields with different identities.

Similarly, each one of us must have lived through many embodiments, experiences and we are each today the product of all that we had gone through and reacted with. In our total identification with the present body equipment, we are so preoccupied with our immediate joys and sorrows, passions and pangs, likes and dislikes and so on that we are not able to stand apart from life's incidents to watch and realize our true identity.

Kṛṣṇa declares, 'through many births have you and I passed' (*bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna*) but 'I know them all', while 'you know them not' (*na tvam vettha parantapa*) (4.5).

To the breathlessly excited intellect of Arjuna, *Bhagavān* again says, "Though I am the unborn, I am the Lord of beings and by nature changeless. Yet, functioning through nature, by my own will, I manifest into being (4.6)." This is a very pregnant verse suggestive of very many philosophical truths. 'Though unborn' (*ajo'pi*) — that which is born is caused by something and so itself is an effect. 'I am unborn'. Also, 'I am the changeless Self' (*avyayātmā*), no change takes place in pure Awareness — change is the quality of perishable substances — modification is the nature of matter. The Spirit is changeless.

If this Lord of all beings (*bhūtānāmīśvaraḥ*) is thus unborn and changeless, how does He manifest in the world during his incarnations (*avatāras*)? 'I incarnate by My own inherent *māyā*' (*sambhavāmyātmamāyayā*). The inherent tendencies (*vāsanās*) in each one of us is our causal body and the total *vāsanās* — meaning the total causal bodies of all creatures — is called *māyā*. Due to our *vāsanās* we are born and our nature and worldly environments into which we manifest are both determined by our own *vāsanās*. The Lord says, 'By My inherent *māyā*, I project forth into My

incarnations' (sambhavāmi). The difference is, while the Lord is master of His māyā, we the individuals are victims of our vāsanās.

Then what prompts the Lord to manifest as an avatāra? Since He is the master of His māyā — the total causal bodies — why should He not come down as an avatāra? Kṛṣṇa clearly points out that 'He manifests and embodies forth whenever there is decline of dharma and rise of adharma in the world' (yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati). The property by which a thing is a thing and without which it cannot be what it is, is called its dharma. Thus, the essential quality of sugar because of which it is sugar, without which it is not sugar, is its sweetness. Therefore, sweetness is the dharma of sugar; in the same way heat is the dharma of fire; light is the dharma of the sun. The dharma of man is his essential inherent divinity, the Self in him (4.7).

When this essential divinity — expressed in terms of love, joy, goodness, honesty, forgiveness and so on is declining (yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati) and there is a preponderance of the animal nature — cruelty, falsehood, corruption, immorality, deceit, hate, and so on — (abhyutthānamadharmasya) to re-establish dharma among the creatures, 'I body myself forth' (tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham) (4.7).

Thus avatāras are answers to the silent prayers of the good, when they too tend to become bad at the onslaught of the evil minded. In short, when the evolved are detracted from their path of progress and the universal plan is outrageously balked, the Lord descends to the world arena to set things right, to make the world the proper field for the evolution of man and to lift all unnecessary impediments on his direct march to Godhood.

The term avatāra in Sanskrit means 'fallen'. The Infinite fallen from its supreme state into an apparent state of finitude and sorrow is avatāra. In fact, as the entire universe is but an expression of the infinite Reality, everyone of us, every inert thing and every sentient being, is an avatāra — just as every link in a chain of gold is also nothing but gold. Even though we are thus the Supreme, expressing through matter in the world of names and forms, we recognize the avatāras as direct divine manifestations. This is only because an avatāra is ever conscious of His own infinite nature. His mind is always pure and as such there is a greater resplendency of divinity beaming out from such a mighty incarnation. The sun gets reflected from all surfaces, but more so from a clean, polished mirror. In the avatāras we watch a greater effulgence of the divine Consciousness constantly expressed.

Main Lesson

continued

The sages, saints, prophets are all examples wherein we meet a greater ‘Divine Presence’. Yet they are not considered as avatāras — an avatāra is the Infinite directly appearing in our midst. From the womb onwards, the avatāra is very conscious of His divine nature. Those who are born as mortals and through study and meditation reach to experience the opening up of a fuller Consciousness are the saints, sages, prophets and messiahs. They are, in a way, greater and nobler beings than avatāras inasmuch as they can more readily sympathize with the weaknesses and the sense follies of the mortals.

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Art of Man-making, Part 1* (2024), Essay 41.

Discussion Questions: Ask the students to discuss the following in groups of three and then follow with a debrief.

1. What was Arjuna’s question and how did Śrī Kṛṣṇa answer?
2. What is the meaning of “avatāra” as explained in the essay?
3. According to the Lord, why does He manifest as an avatāra?

Debrief: Arjuna was curious as to how Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa taught this knowledge to the Lord Sun when clearly the Lord Sun was there at the beginning of creation while Śrī Kṛṣṇa seemed to have been born much later as he was a contemporary of Arjuna!

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that His real nature is actually birthless and changeless but He takes an avatāra — He manifests himself into a specific name and form for the welfare of all, to set things right, and to ensure that the world is a proper field for the evolution of all.

What do you think are the differences between our birth and the Lord’s birth?

Incarnation (Avatāra)	Reincarnation (Janma)
Comes from His own māyā	We take birth based on our past karmas
Not bound by karma	Bound by karma
Can be born however He wants to — Matsya, Varāha, Narasimha	Born through a womb
He leaves whenever and however He wants to	We leave when our prārabdha karma is exhausted
Has knowledge of His True nature	Are ignorant of our True nature
Wields māyā	Are bound by māyā

Unlike us, Bhagavān comes to manifest as an avatāra through His own māyā. He doesn't have any desire to do so nor does He have any karmas that push Him to do so. He manifests because His devotees call Him fervently, just like Prahāda did.

Bhagavān can also come in a variety of ways. There are different kinds of avatāras.



Ask the class to recollect their favorite avatāras.

Pūrṇa avatāras — These divine manifestations exhibit full splendor like Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Rāma. This is where Bhagavān lives a full life span and where there is a lot of teaching about dharma.

Aṁśa avatāras — This is where Bhagavān manifests only a partial splendor. He does whatever is required and then leaves. Examples of this are matsya (fish), kurma (tortoise), and varāha (boar). Bhagavān can even come as an inert object such as vastra avatāra, the endless sārī on Draupadī.

Āveśa avatāras — Sometimes Bhagavān makes a grand entrance (āveśa) to rescue His bhakta. An example of this is the Narasimha avatāra where He broke through the pillar to save bhakta Prahāda.

Does that mean that Bhagavān will only come in these particular forms?

Not at all. As Pūjya Gurudev says, in our saints, sages, and Mahātmās, we can definitely feel the presence of God. Bhagavān comes in many other forms too.

Story: Once there was a man who was swimming in the ocean. As the waves grew larger and larger, he felt himself drowning. He thought to himself that he should say a prayer to God so that he would be saved. As he was gasping for breath, he said a prayer in his heart. Just then, a person on a boat came and offered to help him. The man said, “No. God will come and save me.” He was still gasping for breath. A few minutes later, someone on a jet ski came and tried to pull him up. The man said, “No. God will come and save me.” This time, he was almost losing his breath completely. A helicopter saw him from above and let down a ladder to pull him up. He said, “No. God will come and save me.” Finally, the man drowned and he went up to the higher worlds and met God. He said to God, “I prayed to you so deeply to rescue me. Why didn't you come? I have lived my life well, always dedicating my actions unto you.” God said, “I came to you three times! At first, I came as the man on the boat, then as the one on the jet ski, and then as the one driving the helicopter. But you didn't recognize Me. I tried so hard to save you!”

Main Lesson

continued

Bhagavān will not always come as Narasimha avatāra or Devī or Śrī Kṛṣṇa's forms, but He will make himself manifest and felt in some way. Many people say that Arjuna was very lucky — he had Śrī Kṛṣṇa to guide him all the way.

Who do we have? We have the Bhagavad-gītā who is none other than the living form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Who do you think has been guiding us all along? In fact, whenever you want to hear Bhagavān's voice or message to you, just read the Gītā and He will come alive!

Now, let us delve into **“why avatāras?”**

yadā yadā hi dharmasya
glānirbhavati bhārata,
abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmyaham.

Whenever there is a decay of
righteousness, O Bhārata, and a rise of
unrighteousness, then I manifest myself.

paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām
vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām,
dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya
sambhavāmi yuge yuge.

For the protection of the good, for the
destruction of the wicked and for the
establishment of righteousness, I am
born in every age.

4.7 - 4.8

Thus, there is a **triple purpose behind all divine manifestations**: (1) for the protection of the good, (2) for the destruction of the wicked, and (3) thereby to re-establish the essential divine nature in the bosom of all.

Let's explore these verses in more detail.

Do you remember the definition of dharma? RTRPRT. The dharma of every individual being is doing the right thing at the right place at the right time. How do we know what is the right thing? This is based on our varṇa (inclination) and āśrama (stage of life).

Decline of Dharma and Rise of Adharma

Whenever there is a decline of dharma in society, people do not follow dharma, are afraid of following it, or are misled, then Bhagavān says He manifests Himself. Just like what happened with the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. The Kauravas were committing so much adharmā and were drowning so deeply in it. The Pāṇḍavas tried to remain as righteous as possible, but the Kauravas continued to be unrighteous. The Pāṇḍavas went through thirteen years of austerity in the forest for losing in the game of dice. Even after this period, the Kauravas didn't give them back the land they deserved. As a result, Bhagavān came forth to protect the Pāṇḍavas. (Recall Gurudev's essay 41, third from the last paragraph: “Thus avatāras are answers to the silent prayers of the good...”).



Why does The
Lord Take Birth?



How does Bhagavān protect dharma? (paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām)

Dharma is not a physical entity that can be protected. Dharma lives in dhārmikā beings. **Therefore, for dharma to be protected, dhārmika beings have to be protected.**

Bhagavān protects the Pāṇḍavas, because they are considered sādhu. A sādhu is one who does their best to stick to their dharma and protects it for others.

How does Bhagavān destroy the wicked? (vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām)

In the same way, adharma is not a physical entity. Adharma lies in adhārmika or wicked beings. For adharma to be destroyed, adhārmika beings have to be destroyed. Sometimes, it is necessary for the wicked to be destroyed completely as in the case of Rāvaṇa or Duryodhana. But when one has a change of heart, like Sugrīva, then Bhagavān accepts them and aids in their transformation into goodness.

How does Bhagavān firmly establish dharma? (dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge)

Recalling our lessons in the beginning, dharma is actually eternal. Dharma is actually already there, but Bhagavān firmly re-establishes dharma by providing great teachings and demonstrating a life of dharma. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teachings in the Bhagavad-gītā serve as the guidelines for Hindu dharma. In fact, the very first verse of the Bhagavad-gītā begins with “dharma” and the last verse ends with “mama,” translating to “my dharma.”

The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is also a wonderful source for dharma. In the first canto, a question is asked as to when Bhagavān withdrew His form, where did dharma take refuge? The answer is that Bhāgavan's splendor entered into Bhāgavatam. Why did Bhagavān have to withdraw His body? Because if He kept His body, we would be constantly attached to It and attached to our very own bodies! However, the Truth of life lies beyond the body so Bhagavān takes a subtle form in the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam to take us to the depth of dharma.

Sometimes, we still wonder, “Will the Lord take avatāra soon because it feels like the current world has seen a decline in righteousness and a rise in unrighteousness?”

Once someone asked Pūjya Gurudev, “Will Bhagavān come and take an avatāra now?”

He answered jokingly, “For rākṣasas like you, us sādhus are enough!”

Main Lesson

continued

A similar question was posed to Pūjya Guruji and He answered, “Is there anyone so pure now who can give birth to an avatāra?”

Actually, the answer is in Pūjya Gurudev’s article itself. The saints, sages, and great Mahātmās are the Divine Presence of Bhagavān. They not only teach dharma, they walk the path of dharma and protect it. In them, Bhagavān’s avatāra shines through.

One day, a devotee from the USA approached Swamiji about doing some healing work on his body through a method called radionics, which analyzes and treats the human system at the energetic level. For the analysis, the practitioner needed a few strands of hair.

His immediate response was: “No! I don’t want to keep this body around. I’ve finished my work here.”

The devotees increased their gentle pressure. “But Swamiji, while you’re still with us, working, why not let your body be strengthened a little?”

Finally, when the practitioner did her analysis, the results were so astounding that she repeated the measurements over and over again to assure that she had done her work correctly. But the astounding results remained the same. At the pathological (physical) level, Swamiji’s body was showing such low readings that under any circumstance, a person with such a pathological condition would have been dead. However, when the readings were taken at the energy level, they were so high that they went off the scale. The practitioner’s interpretation was that Swamiji’s as-thought-dead physical body was being kept alive by some immense source of energy.

When one of the two devotees relayed the analysis to him, she asked: “Swamiji, how do you do it?”

His reply was immediate and vigorous, “I do nothing. He alone does it all. This one here is a totally useless fellow. It is His work alone!”

Swami Chinmayananda, Anecdote 2300.

Although we may not see a physical Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Rāma or Devī, we definitely are able to see their glory shine through great Mahātmās. We are also able to access their eternal teachings of dharma through their scriptures by recollecting their way of life. Therefore, in a way, their avatāras have never left us.

Have you ever felt like you were falling into the hands of adharma, and then all of a sudden, something or someone lifted you up to dharma? It could have been a scripture, a message from a friend, a saint’s voice ringing in your head,

or even the thought of your parents — this itself is an expression of Bhagavān's avatāra, watching us fall and inspiring us to rise again.

Additional Information:

Is Buddha an avatāra of Bhagavān Viṣṇu?

Yes.

According to Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Buddha is an avatāra of Bhagavān Viṣṇu. During his time, the real essence of the Vedas was misinterpreted and instead, many people paid attention to animal sacrifices prescribed in them. These were prescribed for a purpose — in order to remove the tāmasika tendencies of individuals, but the subtler meaning was sacrificing the inner “animalistic tendencies.” However, as animal sacrifices got out of hand, Buddha's avatāra came to show the way of compassion and non-violence.

The Vedas are the very breath of Bhagavān and when looked at holistically, they provide a path for every single type of individual (tāmasika, rājasika, and sāttvika) to realize the Divinity within. Shortly after Buddha, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya who was another avatāra of Bhagavān rose up and restored the Vedas to their glory.

tataḥ kalau sampravṛtte
sammohāya sura-dviṣām,
buddho nāmnāñjana-sutaḥ
kīkaṭeṣu bhaviṣyati.

When Kali sets in, He will be born in
Magadha (North Bihar) as Buddha, son
of Añjanā, with a view to deluding the
enemies of gods.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.24

Discussion

Can you think of instances where you have felt expressions of Bhagavān's avatāra this past week?

Activity 10 min

Option 1: Role Play

Recollect Bhagavān's Kṛṣṇa avatāra. We think that our lives are very difficult, but if we think of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life, He went through more hardships than anyone and yet He never lost the smile in His face. Ask the class to share some of the hardships Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa went through. Some are shared here for reference.

- Born in prison.
- Forced to leave His parents at birth.
- Attacked and harassed by demons His entire life.
- Caught in between the Mahābhārata war.
- Saw the destruction of His entire kingdom and family.

Activity

continued

Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students and then ask them to act out any of the above. They can plan for about 3 minutes then present in front of the class. The class has to guess which scene they are acting out. There's a secret criterion for determining the best act, but that will be shared after all the performances.

In the end, the winner is the one who depicts Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa peacefully going through all the trials and tribulations. No matter how hard things get, He is always calm because He is centered in the Truth. That shows He is truly an avatāra.

Option 2: Interview with Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa

Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students and assign one student in each group to be Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. That student will be given a blue scarf or a garland to wear. Ask each group to come up with five questions for their Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa and answers to them. Give them about 5-7 minutes to prepare. After this, each group can present in an interview format to the class.

Conclusion 5 min**Group Summary**

Instead of a summary, the students can sing a melodious dhun or bhajan of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa.

Slogan

When adharma prevails,
Bhagavān will always find a
way to restore dharma

Sādhana

Read about your favorite avatāra and share a story about the avatāra in class next week.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

The Role of Varṇa

This lesson deals with understanding the varṇa system based on guṇas and karmas. We also see how each varṇa plays an important role in order to help society function.

4.13 



cāturvarṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ
guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ,
tasya kartāramapi mām
viddhyakartāramavyayam.

The fourfold varṇa has been created by Me according to the differentiation of guṇa and karma; though I am the author thereof know Me as non-doer and immutable.

Time 55 min

Materials

5m	Opening	Index cards (see lesson plan for more details)
5m	Introduction	Whiteboard or chart paper
20m	Activity	Timer or stopwatch
20m	Main Lesson	Reflection sheets
5m	Conclusion	Markers, pens, and paper

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 4.13.

🔗 Swami Chinmayananda. “Australian Interview of Swami Chinmayananda.” 11:14 - 21:07.

Swami Tejomayananda. *Notes on Purusha Suktam*.

🔗 Swami Mitrananda. “Swami Mitrananda explains about the Caste System.”

🔗 Swami Swatmananda. “Busting Hindu Myths - About Sadhu & Caste System.” 28:00 - 1:30:00.

🔗 DC Rao. *Understanding Hinduism*. Chapter 17, Caste.

🔗 Chinmaya Mission WRC Resources. “Hinduism - Caste System.”

The Role of Varṇa

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous class, we learned about Bhagavān's avatāra. Bhagavān comes and takes avatāra to protect the sādhus, destroy the wicked, and re-establish dharma. Can you share one of your favorite avatāras of Bhagavān?



At this point, the teacher can show the students different pictures of avatāras or share names of avatāras and ask the students what they remember about them.

What are the ways in which Bhagavān re-establishes dharma? This is what we will explore today.

Introduction 5 min

Icebreaker Activity: Invisible Threads

Each student should hold their piece of the yarn before tossing it. This is important so that the web stays connected.

Have students form a circle. Give one student a ball of yarn. That student will say a personal quality (e.g., "I love solving problems"). The student should then hold the end of the yarn and toss the rest of the ball to a classmate who also shares that quality (or something similar). The student that receives the ball should do the same as above with another quality that they have. Repeat this exercise a few times until a full, inter-connected web is formed.

Activity 20 min



Split the class into teams of 4 or 5 students. Give the teams the following scenario.

You were all living peacefully on a planet but a storm has destroyed your shelter and now, everyone has just landed on a new planet to rebuild the community. Everyone is in chaos, not knowing what to do and a food shortage is looming. The land in the new planet is barren without any crops. There are five hundred other people with you. You must organize quickly to survive and thrive. How will you do this?



Assign each student one of the following role cards.

The varṇa alignment is only for teacher reference and should not be shared with students.

- Strategist/Thinker (Brāhmaṇa-like)
- Leader/Protector (Kṣatriya-like)
- Trader (Vaiśya-like)
- Builder (Śūdra-like)

Sample role cards:

- **Strategist/Thinker:** loves planning, teaching, spiritual insight, provides wise advice, envisions, and guides others.
- **Leader/Protector:** brave, takes initiative, defends the group, manages disputes, and administers justice.
- **Trader:** resourceful, manages food/resources/trade, good at negotiation, and has the ability to create and sustain wealth.
- **Builder:** practical, builds, cooks, cleans, fixes things, and supports all roles.

Instructions:

- Each team has ten minutes to plan a survival and rebuilding strategy.
- Everyone must contribute according to their role.
- At the conclusion of their discussion, each team should present the following:
 1. Their plan for food, shelter, safety, and education.
 2. How each role contributed.
 3. A team value or motto they created.

As teams work together, the facilitator (teacher) should check each team as follows:

- Is every voice heard?
- Is one role dominating unfairly?
- Are students appreciating each other's strengths?

After ten minutes, each team will present: (1) their strategy for survival, (2) the contribution of each role to the plan, and (3) the team value or motto.



As they present, the teacher should encourage confidence and clarity in the presentation as well as the value and importance of teamwork. The teacher should ensure that the team discusses the value of each role in their plan.

Activity

continued

For the perfectly healthy life of a society, all 'castes' should not be competitive but co-operative units, each being complementary to the others, never competing among themselves.

Swami
Chinmayananda

Optionally, the teacher can give feedback and mention which teams had the most creative plans and the best teamwork.

After all groups have presented, discuss the following questions:

- Was any role more important? Why or why not?
- How can we apply this idea in school, family, or society?

Debrief: If we think about it carefully, one role is definitely not more important than the other. Without the strategists, no one would know how and where to start and what plan would be best for all. Without the leaders, no one would keep the place safe and secure and administer justice. Without the traders, no one would create resources and figure out how to provide food. Without builders, no one would be able to build shelter. In fact, without them, even the best strategy would not be executed. Each role is complementary to the others.

Main Lesson 20 min

When there is so much **diversity in the world** with different kinds of plants and animals, **classification** is required to understand similarities and differences among them. This understanding can be used for various purposes, such as ensuring that the plants and animals are in the **best suited environment for each of them to thrive**.

This happens in four steps:

1. Observation of data
2. Collection of data
3. Examination of data
4. Classification of data

Once this is done, it becomes very easy to understand that, for example, certain types of plants need to grow in an area with a lot of sunshine, like tomatoes, peppers, and squash. Other kinds of plants do not need much sunlight, like the snake plant and peacock plant.

There are some animals that thrive in water, like fish, octopus, dolphins, and whales, and some are amphibious, spending time both on land and in water, like frogs and turtles. Some birds thrive best on tree tops. Others, like chickens, need a coop and a place where they can run around.

This doesn't mean that one plant is superior to the other or one animal is superior to the other. It's just that they thrive best under different conditions. Imagine if we put chickens on tree tops and birds in coops? Or if we put fish outside of water and asked a dog to live in water? They definitely wouldn't thrive.

Human beings are also very diverse in terms of the quality of their mind. Certain environments or fields are best suited for certain mindsets. This was the whole idea behind the **varṇa vyavasthā** (classification based on the color of people's minds). **Varṇa** literally means **color**, and it refers to the **color or quality of one's mind**.



Discuss the following with the class. Each of the roles in the activity we just completed represents a varṇa. Can you think of which role is represented by each varṇa?

Strategist/Thinker (Brāhmaṇa): loves planning, teaching, spiritual insight, provides wise advice, envisions, and guides others.

Leader/Protector (Kṣatriya): brave, takes initiative, defends the group, disputes, and administers justice.

Trader (Vaiśya): resourceful, manages food/resources/trade, good at negotiation, and has the ability to create and sustain wealth.

Builder (Śūdra): practical, builds, cooks, cleans, fixes things, and supports all roles.

Recollect **lesson 4 on varṇa dharmas**, where the the 3 guṇas or qualities of the mind were discussed.

In the following verse, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that He created the four varṇas based on guṇa and karma. This classification provides a clear way for people to analyze their **mental temperaments (guṇas)** and get established in **fields of action (karmas)** best suited for them.

cāturvarṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ
guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ,
tasya kartāramapi mām
viddhyakartāramavyayam.

The fourfold varṇa has been created by Me according to the differentiation of guṇa and karma; though I am the author thereof know Me as non-doer and immutable.

4.13

What is a guṇa? A guṇa is basically the quality of mind. There are three qualities of our minds:

Sāttvika

A mind that is calm, peaceful, has clarity and vision.

Main Lesson

continued

Rājasika

A mind that is active, dynamic, has drive.

Tāmasika

A mind that is dull and inactive.

These three qualities of mind are present in all of us. However, they are in different proportions. All of us have one predominant guṇa that provides the flavor of our personality. Once we are aware of our guṇas, the idea is to try to express them in the field of their appropriate karmas. Let's have a look once more at the table from the [varṇa lesson](#):

Quality of Mind (Generally)	My Personality (Predominant Traits)	Varṇa (color of my character)	Roles Best for My Personality
Sattva: clear, calm, balanced (SRT = Sattva > Rajas > Tamas)	Ability to introspect, reflect, and think upon deeper things in life.	Brāhmaṇa	Thinker, Researcher, Teacher, Philosopher, Doctor
Rajas and Sattva: clear and yet dynamic (RST)	Ability to lead, administer, protect, and rule.	Kṣatriya	Leader, Administrator, Ruler
Rajas and Tamas: dynamic and resourceful (RTS)	Ability to create and sustain resources.	Vaiśya	Entrepreneur, CFO, Economic Advisor
Tamas: supportive (TRS)	Ability to follow and support others towards a greater cause.	Śūdra	Skilled Worker, Laborer

For someone whose mind is generally clear, calm, balanced, and likes to think deeply, the fields of action most suited for them are roles of a thinker, teacher, or doctor. For someone whose mind is generally dynamic and active, the fields of action most suited are roles of a leader or administrator. For someone whose mind is dynamic and yet resourceful, the field of action is business, economics, and finance. And if someone whose mind is generally supportive but not wanting to lead or manage others, then the field of action is a laborer or skilled worker.

When everyone engages in the field of action aligned with their temperament, society flourishes, because everyone does what they are naturally good at for the welfare of others. This is what we learned about in lesson 10: “Secret of Success - Svadharma.”

There was a truly brilliant vision behind the varṇa vyavasthā, as it encouraged people to follow their svadharma and engage in work aligned with their natural strengths. They found joy in their work and also uplifted society. This is exactly like an aptitude test we would take today. Oftentimes, we hear statements such as: “Do what you love, love what you do. Follow your passion. Live your dreams. Find out what you are made for.”

Unfortunately, even something with such a great vision can be misinterpreted, twisted, polluted, and used as a tool to gain power. The term “casta” was used by the Portuguese in Bharat for jātis (birth-based social groupings), as casta in Portuguese means lineage. The varṇa system was conflated with jāti into the “caste system.” Jāti-based rigid social practices existed in Bharat, just as they were present in other ancient civilizations and are present in contemporary societies. However, the mapping of jātis into varṇas by the British and the subsequent labeling of this system as “caste” made it a mainstream concept. As a result, the original vision and fluidity of the varṇa vyavasthā were lost, and the caste system became a systemic tool for oppression. **To group jātis under varṇas and to put a hierarchy on varṇas is a major distortion of Hindu scriptures.**

The varṇa system is a powerful framework that shares the best way for all people to live their lives most successfully given their current temperament, but it doesn’t force people into careers or lifestyles based on the family they are born into. The shift from something descriptive to prescriptive is what allowed the “caste system” to become a tool for organizing social order in the name of giving power to rulers.

Here are some common misinterpretations of the so-called caste system today:

Misinterpretation #1

Everyone is born into a “caste” by birth and it is a rigid system that one will have to be part of throughout their lives.

There is a possibility that in the house of a brāhmaṇa, a child can have qualities of a brāhmaṇa, but there are also other factors that contribute to their personality, such as their previous vāsanās. Therefore, the child should have that flexibility to express themselves as per the temperament of their mind.

Main Lesson

continued



Example

Veda Vyāsa, who is one of the most brilliant minds of Sanātana Dharma, was the child of a śūdra and a brāhmaṇa. But as he grew up, his mind was that of a brāhmaṇa. He went on to compile all of the Vedas into written format. He wrote the Bhagavad-gītā, Brahma-sūtras and Purāṇas! Even his mother, Satyawatī who was a fisherwoman became queen of the Kuru Empire. She was a powerful matriarch who guided the Kuru Empire through turbulent political times until a proper heir had taken the throne. She is another example of someone who was raised with one varṇa and evolved into another.



Example

Another brilliant mind of Sanātana Dharma was Vālmīki, who was originally known as Ratnākar. He spent his life stealing from others until he met Sage Nārada. When he met Sage Nārada, he was inspired to seek the higher and chant the name of Rāma (although he chanted it backwards)! During his immense austerity, an anthill had grown around him, and hence he was known as Vālmīki, the one who emerged from the anthill. If the varṇa system had been rigid, then Vālmīki would have never had the opportunity to move from a tāmasika mindset to a sāttvika mindset. This shift in the quality of his mind due to the austerities that he performed, paved the way for him to write the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

From Vālmīki Ṛṣi's example, we can see that **we are not limited to the balance of guṇas we are born with**. Over time, we may shift to a new mindset, which changes the nature of work we are best suited for.



Example

Śabarī was born into a śūdra family. She served in Mataṅga Ṛṣi's āśrama, keeping it clean for all of the āśramites daily. Mataṅga Ṛṣi told her to keep chanting the name of Rāma and soon, she would have the vision of Rāma. When Śrī Rāma came to bless her, he called her Bhāminī — the wise woman who had all nine forms of devotion and who had the vision of Rāma herself.

**Example**

Another example is Sant Kabirdās jī, who was raised in a family of weavers. If one were to classify Kabirdās jī just by birth, he would be a śūdra, raised in a family of laborers. However, his poetry and music have very deep philosophical insight. Therefore, by the qualities of his mind, he was truly a brāhmaṇa.

**Example**

One last example is none other than the rākṣasa, Rāvaṇa. His father was a great Ṛṣi named Viśravas and his grandfather was even a son of Lord Brahmā. He was capable of great feats of tapas and even spent thousands of years in single-minded worship to the Lord. Despite this heritage of great spiritual leaders, Rāvaṇa as a youth was restless and desired to act in the world. Upon attaining great power from his tapas, he formed a kingdom for his people and ruled from then on as a kṣatriya until he was defeated in battle by Lord Rāma.

Misinterpretation #2

One “caste” is superior to the other.

As you saw in the activity, **every single role is crucial to the functioning of society**. They are just like fingers on the hand. No finger is equal, superior, or inferior to the others. Each one is unique and important in order to make the hand function.



The differences in these four natural castes of activity do not make one greater or less than the others. All are necessary to the Cosmic Plan. When in man's body the brain, or the feet, or the hands, or the orderly life functions refuse to cooperate, the whole body suffers as a consequence. If in a society the superior intellects, the rulers and soldiers, the business leaders, and the laborers all fight each other, they will all suffer and perish. The welfare of one group cannot be sacrificed for the aggrandizement of another group falsely considered more elite or important.

Paramahansa Yogananda

Main Lesson

continued

In the Puruṣa-sūktam, the four varṇas are represented by parts of the body:

brāhmaṇo'sya mukhamāsīt,
bāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ,
ūrū tadasya yadvaiśyaḥ,
padbhyāṁ śūdro ajāyata.

From the face of the Puruṣa were born the brāhmaṇas (thinkers), from His hands, the kṣatriyas (rulers), from His thighs the vaiśyas (traders) and from His feet, the śūdras (laborers).

Puruṣa-sūktam 13

Some think that this verse proves the hierarchy of the varṇa system with the brāhmaṇas being at the top and the śūdras at the bottom.

Let us think about this deeper. If one is lying down or asleep, aren't all of these in one line? Also, when we meet the Guru, do we bow down to the Guru's head? No! The most important part of the Guru is their feet. We bow down to their feet because it symbolizes the ideals upon which they stand. Therefore, the feet are considered to actually be a very holy part of the body.

Also, in different fields, different varṇas excel most. For example: if one were to appoint someone with a brāhmaṇa mindset to manage finances, the brāhmaṇa wouldn't have the proper ability to do that and the company may suffer losses. In that particular field, one with a vaiśya mindset would be at the top. Or, if one were to appoint someone with a śūdra mindset to be a professor in metaphysics, then they would probably feel miserable trying to study the subject. They would prefer to work on something hands-on.

Each has an important role to play and none is superior or inferior to the other as much as they are a part of the whole. Even though they play different roles in society, they must have one single goal of serving the society or working for the well-being of society. If all work with the attitude of serving the Lord, the totality, or the Cosmic Being of which they are a part, their work truly becomes a worship and their life becomes inspired and inspiring and one of dedication and sacrifice (yajña).

Swami Tejomayananda. *Notes on Purusha Suktam*, 70.

Misinterpretation #3

Varṇa classifications are solely seen in Bharat.

If we look at any society or organization, there will always be four types of people:

1. The thinkers, visionaries, advisors, consultants, researchers, planners, policy makers. **They visualize every aspect and carefully lay out the plan.**
2. The leaders, rulers, administrators, organizers, law enforcers, social workers. **Once the plan is laid out, they execute the plan.**
3. The wealth generators and producers, traders, entrepreneurs, farmers. **Execution needs a lot of resources so they generate resources and wealth.**
4. The laborers, artisans, supporters who serve the society at the grassroots level. **Once we have the resources, they are the hands and legs of society who physically work and put things into place.**

This classification applies to the entire humanity.

**Examples**

- Thinkers such as Socrates and Einstein are brāhmaṇas.
- Leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. are kṣatriyas.
- Entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs and Henry Ford are vaiśyas.
- Laborers in different fields across the world are śūdras.

Misinterpretation #4

Caste system is seen in Hindus worldwide.

Caste is not native to Hinduism or any indigenous Indian religion, which followed more complex, nuanced, and flexible systems, including systems based on varṇa and jāti. These are distinct concepts and should not be conflated with each other or with “caste.”

Coalition of Hindus of North America

Further Reading

Coalition of Hindus of North America. “Hinduism & ‘Caste’.”

Although caste discrimination was outlawed in Bharat, unfortunately some people of all religions continue this practice in Bharat. It is extremely rare to find a verified case of caste discrimination outside Bharat.

Main Lesson

continued

Use and misuse

A system works if people understand it rightly and follow it meticulously. The misuse of the system does not make the system wrong or useless. It is the misunderstanding and the misuse of the divine varṇa system that has caused suffering and problems. The power hungry and greedy made birth the primary basis of categorization and then exploited, suppressed, and humiliated certain varṇas, depriving them of their rights and dignity. The right understanding and use of this universal system will only nourish society and bring growth, harmony, and prosperity.

Swami Tejomayananda. *Notes on Purusha Suktam*, 72.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students for three main points about varṇas from the “Main Lesson.”

Ask the students to list the three guṇas and their associated qualities.

Then, ask the students for their main takeaways and reflections from today’s lesson.

Ensure to emphasize the following:

- Everyone in the world has a unique guṇa and karma composition leading to their specific varṇa.
- The goal of the varṇa system is cooperation without ego and service without superiority. Every varṇa is necessary and equally important for a properly functioning society.
- Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa reminds us that no matter what role we play, we must always stay humble and spiritually anchored.
- Varṇa is not determined by the family you are born in.

At the conclusion of today’s lesson, students should have:

- experienced the interconnectedness of all social roles.
- learned to respect each role’s contribution as divine and essential.
- internalized that varṇa is a system for balance, growth, and unity through diversity.

Slogan

All varṇas are
unique and equally
important

Sādhana

For this week, identify your **current** guṇa composition. From Monday — Friday, at the end of each day, think back on your day and write down the top three memories, activities, or events. Objectively think about each item and assign each item its corresponding guṇa (or two) to the best of your ability. On Saturday, make a tally to count the frequency of each guṇa.

Think about:

- Is this guṇa frequency what you expected?
- What does this imply about the roles best for your personality (recall the table from class)? Do you agree?

Optional (Artistic Component): Assign each of the guṇas a color. For example: sāttvika (blue), rājasika (red), and tāmasika (gray). Now, take a sheet of paper and color in a circle (in the appropriate color) for each of the guṇas you experienced this week. This gives you a visual representation of your guṇa mixture. If you're inclined, you can challenge yourself to make a picture rather than just colored circles.

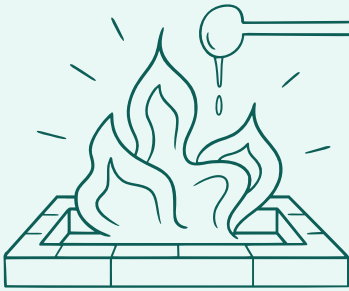
Please note: this is an approximation of your **current** guṇa composition. As we discussed in class, guṇas can change over time and as a result, so does your varṇa.



The Oneness in All Beings

This class is about understanding the vision of oneness and how it permeates our lives with supreme joy and sweetness. This class also gives the practical application of brahmārpaṇam and the reason it is chanted before every meal.

4.24 



brahmārpaṇam brahma haviḥ
brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam,
brahmaiva tena gantavyam
brahma-karma-samādhinā.

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.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
30m	Main Lesson
10m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

- ☞ **Yajña image** printout
- ☞ **“The moment two champions shared Olympic Gold!”**
- Sheets of paper and pens to write down questions

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 4.24.

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. “Forgiveness Based on Oneness.”

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

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

The Oneness in All Beings

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the earlier lessons, we talked about the varṇas. The four varṇas actually guide us to discover our **svadharma** (one's own dharma) in life. That was actually the vision for it. When everyone works according to their svadharma, then they feel joyful because they are able to exhaust their vāsanās (natural tendencies) for the greater good. They also engage in the field that is most natural to them. However, as we get deeper into the spiritual path, this is only a secondary definition of svadharma.

The real definition of Svadharma (one's own dharma) is abiding in our True nature which is Sat-Cit-Ānanda. As we work selflessly in our svadharma, we become purified to discover our Svadharma. That Sat-Cit-Ānanda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) which is our True nature, is one in all beings. However, it takes a very subtle mind to understand this. Let's explore this today.

Introduction 5 min

There are two ways to go through life — one is to take everything at face value, seeing things as they are, reacting, and then moving on. That's what we do most of the time — we go through the motions of life without questioning things much.

There is another way that Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa teaches us — thinking deeply and asking what lies beyond what meets the eye? He has very lovingly gifted us all with a sharp intellect, and when we use it to think deeper and systematically inquire using the scriptures as our framework, we start seeing things differently.

What is this difference? We discover that beneath all the variety, the ups and downs, and the ever-changing world around us, there is our dearest Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa — whose very nature is love and happiness. And the most beautiful part? That same nature of love and happiness is our own True nature as well. We are all made up of Love. If I am made up of Love and you are also made up of Love, is there any difference between you and me? Are we not one and the same? When we truly understand this vision of oneness and start living it, life becomes lighter, easier, and filled with sweetness beyond words.

Main Lesson 30 min

brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma haviḥ
brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam,
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ
brahma-karma-samādhinā.

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.

4.24

To help us understand this profound **vision of oneness**, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the metaphor of a traditional yajña ritual or fire ritual. Now let's break down exactly what this means.



As the teacher breaks down each part of the verse, ask the class to point out the respective aspect in the canvas.

Brahma arpaṇaṁ — Brahman is the ladle or the instrument by which we offer.

Picture: The yajamānas (ones who are performing the sacrifice) are holding a ladle. This ladle is called arpaṇaṁ.

Brahma haviḥ — Brahman is the offering.

Picture: The grains that are in front of the yajamānas.

Main Lesson

continued

Brahma agnau — Brahman is the fire into which everything is offered.**Picture:** The fire in the center.**Brahmaṇā hutam** — The grains are offered by Brahman.**Picture:** The yajamānas who are offering the grains, they themselves are Brahman.**Brahmaiva tena gantavyam** — Brahman alone is to be attained.**Picture:** The fruit or result for doing this yajña is the attainment of Brahman. This is a subtle intent which has no gross representation in the picture.**Brahma-karma-samādhinā** — Brahman alone is to be attained by who? The one who sees Brahman in all actions.**Picture:** The yajamānas are intently focused on what they are doing.**In simpler terms:**

- The instrument by which anything is offered is Brahman
- The offering is Brahman
- The thing into which something is offered is Brahman
- The one who offers is Brahman
- That which is to be attained is Brahman
- The ones who are able to do this have their minds absorbed in Brahman; they see Brahman in all actions.

What is Brahman? As we pointed to each part of the painting, we saw different names, forms, colors, and textures, but what is the underlying truth of the painting? What really is the ladle, offering, yajamāna, fire, etc.? Aren't they all essentially the canvas? The Canvas is Brahman! The underlying reality beneath all names and forms is what we call Brahman, sometimes also known as Sat-Cit-Ānanda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) or Truth.

Why is it important to know Brahman? What does this vision of oneness do to us?

Let's examine this story.

Once, on a hot scorching summer afternoon, two weary travelers stood in a long line, waiting to board a bus. The heat bore down on them, sweat trickling down their faces. One of them struggled with a heavy load of luggage. Both were getting increasingly anxious — what if they don't get a spot on the bus?

Finally the bus arrived. Everyone rushed to get in, the orderly line dissolved into chaos as people rushed forward desperate to get a seat on the bus. Amid the scramble, the two men got into a heated argument over who should board

the bus first. Tempers flared. Voices were raised. Until in that commotion, an ID card slipped from one man's pocket and fell on the ground.

The other man caught a glimpse of the name on it and his eyes widened in recognition. "Wait, Are you Mr. Gupta's son?"

The young man looked up and said, "How do you know?!"

A warm smile spread across the older man's face. "Didn't you recognize me? I'm Mr. Sharma — your father's best friend! I saw you when you were just a child. And I am on my way to visit your father, my long-lost best friend!"

In that instant, everything changed. The tension dissolved into joy. The anger melted into warmth. Laughter replaced frustration. Instead of fighting over who should board first, they now insisted the other go ahead.

What has changed? **The illusion of separateness had vanished.** When we see through the lens of oneness, only positivity emerges. Love replaces conflict, bringing peace, happiness, and the absence of stress.

Where there is love, harmony follows.

This is how someone who knows this profound Truth conducts their life. They do not have enmity with anyone. They are not jealous of anyone. They go about life with an indescribable ease. They see the Divine Lord in everything and every being and all their actions are selfless. To the extent that we embrace this vision, our lives become simpler and happier. The unwanted and unnecessary burdens we carry begin to lighten.

Do you ever wonder why we say Hari Om? Hari means form and Om means Divinity or God. When we say Hari Om, we intend to say, "I see God in your form." This means that when we meet people, we always start operating from a place of oneness. We first realize that essentially we are one and then we relate to each other as we need to.

Watch Pūjya Gurudev's [talk on oneness](#).

1. Discuss this quote: "From the top of the crown, to the tip of your toe, you love you...even though the hands are not the legs, the legs are not the toes... every part is different in shape, name, and function... and yet, am I not one? I pervade every cell in me."
2. "When you poke your finger into your eye and your neighbor pokes their finger in your eye, would you respond the same way or differently?" Explain.
3. What do you think this quote means: "When you start really analyzing it, the whole world is your body."

Why do we say
Hari Om?



Forgiveness
Based on
Oneness



Main Lesson

continued

4. Reflect on this: “Wherever there is sorrow I see, I run there and try to remove and wipe off as much as possible, the tears of others, not because they are others but because they are my very own Self.”

Debrief: When we look at everything from the Highest standpoint, there is one Canvas underlying us all, that is called Brahman. When we operate from this level, we become more compassionate, understanding, forgiving, and accommodating. However, this doesn’t mean that we do not fulfill dharma and let everyone do whatever they want.



Example

Śrī Rāma always operated from a vision of oneness and saw that one Reality in all beings even in Rāvaṇa. No matter what Rāvaṇa did to Him and His people, He didn’t have hate towards him. He knew that Rāvaṇa was the exact same Self. Yet, He had to treat Rāvaṇa the way he needed to be treated. He didn’t just let Rāvaṇa go free. He killed Rāvaṇa in battle to fulfill His dharma and bring justice to the world. Śrī Rāma’s vision was always seeing Brahman everywhere, while His actions were always Dhārmika.

In the same way, we may see the same Self everywhere in our entire family — our mother, father, older sibling, and younger sibling — we are all one. **However, recognizing oneness in all doesn’t mean that we treat everyone the same way.** We do not treat our mothers and fathers like our siblings or treat our siblings like our mothers and fathers. Recognizing oneness means recognizing the same underlying substratum in all, and yet treating people with dharma, as they need to be treated.

Vision = Brahman
Action = Dharma

Can this vision of oneness change our response to challenges?



Provide the scenario to the class and ask them to share their thoughts. The following are sample responses.

Let's examine this scenario: My best friend and I took part in a dance competition. We both worked equally hard. My friend won the first prize, I did not win anything.

How would one respond with the vision of plurality?

How is it possible that my friend won? I was just as good. Clearly, the judges are biased and they have something against me. I know I was better and I feel that my friend is not deserving of their medal. It should have been mine.

How would one respond with a vision of oneness?

I am so happy for my friend. It's so wonderful that their hard work paid off. Even better, I think we pushed each other to be the best versions of ourselves. I am inspired by my friend. I look forward to celebrating with them and then we can work on getting better together. In short, their win is also my win.

Let's explore how this actually happened in the Olympics. Watch how two Olympians decide to share the gold medal at the highest level of athletic competition: [The moment two champions shared Olympic Gold!](#)

What are some practical ways to remember this teaching daily?

Did you ever wonder why we chant brahmārpaṇam before meals? It's a symbolic way to remember that we are all one every day of our lives!

Eating is also a yajña or a ritual. Eating is the one action that we have to do daily, and before eating, we chant this as a reminder so that the purpose of life may never be forgotten. We may miss bathing, doing our homework, doing our sādhanā, but we will rarely skip eating! Everytime we eat, may we be reminded of this beautiful prayer.

Brahma arpaṇam — the hands which we use or spoon/fork is Brahman

Brahma haviḥ — the food is also Brahman

Brahma agnau — our digestive fire is also Brahman

Brahmaṇā hutam — the one who is eating is Brahman

Brahmaiva tena gantavyam — the purpose of eating is to perform our duties well, purify our minds and serve others (because they are none other than our own selves)

Brahma-karma-samādhinā — this tells us the attitude with which we are supposed to eat — complete awareness

Shared
Olympic Gold



Main Lesson

continued

Here's a simpler way to understand it:

- May we eat with awareness to keep this body healthy.
- May we use this body to perform our duties cheerfully and serve the entire world as a living expression of God.

What does eating with awareness mean?

Eating with awareness means:

1. Eating healthy.

There are different types of food available to all of us. The kind of food that we eat directly affects the state of our minds. How do we feel when we consume the following:

- A cup of coffee? Usually we tend to feel hyperactive.
- A lot of sugar? Usually we tend to feel super energetic, unable to control ourselves sometimes.
- Fruits and vegetables? Usually we feel nourished and healthy and our mind is calm and peaceful.

When we make healthier food choices, our mind tends to be healthier too, which makes us more able and fit to perform our duties and serve others.

2. Eating with purpose.

Many times, when we eat, we do not consider the reason why we should eat. If someone were to eat a very heavy meal right before they went out for a race, would they not feel lethargic and nauseous when they were running? Similarly, as we assess the needs of the day and think about what we eat, we should consider how we can choose to fuel ourselves to best meet the needs. Eating a late-night snack may satisfy a craving, but it doesn't help you achieve the goal of fueling your body at the right times — especially through the most important hours of the day. Skipping breakfast may not seem like a big deal, but if you are trying to be focused at that time, eliminating pangs of hunger will help with that.

3. Eating with gratitude.

Did you ever wonder how rice comes to your plate?



Discussion

Ask the students to trace all the possible steps it takes for rice to come into their plates. This can be an interactive session with the students calling out responses popcorn-style (with one student randomly selecting the next student after sharing their response).

How does reflecting on these steps make us feel?



Gratitude to
those who
make food
WHOLE



Debrief: Here's what it takes for a grain of rice to come into our plates:

1. The sun shines, wind blows, and rain falls.
2. The farmers take so much time to prepare the soil. It takes one year to grow rice and harvest it.
3. Then it gets processed and packaged in a facility.
4. Then a delivery truck puts it in the grocery store.
5. Then our parents go out and buy that packet of rice.
6. They bring it home and cook it for us.

When we realize how much it takes for rice to come into our plates, we eat with gratitude and awareness of only taking what we need and not creating unnecessary waste. We acknowledge the effort, patience, and hard work of so many forces that brought us food on our plates. We also take time to savor and enjoy it and not just eat in a rush or while we are walking or on our phones.

In this way, when we eat healthy, with purpose and gratitude, then we are better equipped to serve others as the living form of God and are always reminded of the vision of Oneness.

Activity 10 min

Finding Our Oneness

Split the class into groups of 3-4 students. Each group will be a team for the game described below. Time each round for 1-2 minutes.

Round 1: Each group will need to name what they have in common with a book. The group should talk to each other and write down their answers. At the end of the three minutes, the teacher should go around to each group and see how many answers they came up with. The team with the most commonalities wins.

Before moving to Round 2, ask each group to share their most unique or interesting commonality with a book.

Some sample commonalities can be:

- A book holds knowledge. Similarly, when I learn, I also hold some knowledge.
- A book communicates ideas through words. I also communicate through written words.
- A book can inspire others to perform good action. I too can inspire myself and my team to perform good action.
- A book exists. I too exist.
- Sarasvatī Devī lives in the book. Sarasvatī Devī lives in me too.

Activity

continued

Round 2: Repeat Round 1 with a new topic: “How many ways am I one with a plant?”

Some sample commonalities can be:

- A plant is a living organism, just like me.
- A plant grows and changes through its life, just like me.
- A plant needs to be given water, just like I need to drink water.
- A plant responds to external stimuli, just like me.

Round 3: Repeat with a new topic: “How many ways is the entire group one?”

Some sample commonalities can be:

- All of us are in high school or secondary school.
- Our favorite day of the week is Sunday, because we have Bala Vihar that day.
- We all play musical instruments.
- We all want to be happy.

Round 4: Repeat with a new topic: “How are we similar to Rāvaṇa?”

Some sample commonalities can be:

- I am ambitious to achieve my goals, just like Rāvaṇa.
- I succumb and fall to my desires, just like Rāvaṇa. However, I am working on catching myself so I can grow.
- I sometimes disobey and fail to heed the warnings of my family, just like Rāvaṇa. However, I am working on improving in this regard.
- Rāvaṇa and I both exist and come from the same Brahman.

Round 5: Repeat with a new topic: “How are we similar to Śrī Rāma?”

Some sample commonalities can be:

- I try to stick to my dharma as much as possible, just like Rāma. If I ever falter, I bring myself back to dharma as soon as I can.
- I try to stay positive and resilient in adversity, just like Śrī Rāma.
- I guide my friends along the path of dharma, just like Śrī Rāma.
- Śrī Rāma and I both exist and come from the same Brahman.

Debrief: Now coming together as a class, discuss how the group felt in coming up with commonalities.

- Which rounds were easy? Which rounds were difficult?
- Would it have been easier to come up with differences or commonalities?

There will always be so many differences in life; however, the truth and beauty of life is that **there is much more oneness that connects us all.**

We have learnt through our study of the Gītā that there is a substratum called Brahman that is common to us all. Being able to see and pay attention to that oneness rather than superficial things that makes us different, that is truly **brahmārpaṇam**.



After the activity, ask the students to make a list of questions about Hinduism that they are not clear about or that they have doubts about. Then, give these questions to a Vedānta teacher or sevaka who can visit the class next week to answer them.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the students to explain the meaning of brahmārpaṇam as a class and then chant it all together.

Slogan

Live with the
Vision of Oneness

Sādhana

Chant brahmārpaṇam before every meal this week, understanding the meaning in your heart. Feel free to teach it to your family members too.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Keep the Faith

This class is about understanding faith — what it means to have faith in the Guru and śāstras and how we should develop faith.

4.39 



śraddhāvān labhate jñānaṁ
tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ,
jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntim
acireṇādhigacchati.

The one who is full of faith, who is devoted to That, who has subdued the senses, obtains Knowledge; and having obtained Knowledge, soon attains supreme Peace.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

List of questions that the students wrote down last week
Guest Vedānta teacher or sevaka

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 4.39.

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. “Faith, The Key to Gain Direct Self-Knowledge.”

Swami Chinmayananda. *He did it*. 67.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Chapter 6.7

Keep the Faith

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min



Ask the students to recollect the brahmārpaṇam prayer and review the meaning by saying the words in Saṁskṛtam and asking them to provide the English translation.

Brahma arpaṇam — Brahman is the ladle or the instrument by which we offer.

Brahma haviḥ — Brahman is the offering.

Brahma agnau — Brahman is the fire into which everything is offered.

Brahmaṇā hutam — the grains are offered by Brahman.

Brahmaiva tena gantavyam — Brahman alone is to be attained.

Brahma-karma-samādhinā — Brahman alone is to be attained by who? The one who sees Brahman in all actions.

Ask the students if they chanted this prayer before every meal during the past week. Did everyone eat with awareness? Recall what it means to eat with awareness.

Introduction 5 min

In the last lesson, we learned all about Brahman which is known as the Ultimate Reality, the Canvas underlying the entire painting. That Truth without which none of the names and forms of the canvas can exist. Brahman itself is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. We are all that Canvas. **A question might arise in your mind as to, how do I know if Brahman is true? How do I know if underneath all of these names and forms, there is oneness? Why should I believe it?**

Anticipating this question, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents this verse to us on the **importance of faith.**

śraddhāvān labhate jñānam
tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ,
jñānam labdhvā parāṁ śāntim
acireṇādhigacchati.

The one who is full of faith, who is devoted to That, who has subdued the senses, obtains Knowledge; and having obtained Knowledge, soon attains supreme Peace.

Main Lesson 25 min

In this lesson, we will mainly focus on this phrase: **śraddhāvān labhate jñānam**. The one who has faith attains the Knowledge of Truth.

We have already seen that Brahman or Truth is the Ultimate Reality, having known which, we live with a vision of oneness and the ability to see our own selves in others. How do we know this is true? Is this something we blindly believe? Does Hinduism encourage blind belief?

Actually in Sanātana Dharma, questioning is encouraged as we have seen in the case of Arjuna. Of course, we should aim to remain respectful and genuine in our inquiry. To do that, we all have to start with some faith, also known as śraddhā.

What is śraddhā? It is an intellectual conviction in the nobility and ability of the Guru paramparā, the validity of śāstra, and the existence of God.

Where is śraddhā needed? We don't need śraddhā in something that is a fact for us. For example: we don't need śraddhā that we have a nose. We know we have a nose. We don't need śraddhā that we are breathing now. We know we are breathing now. **Śraddhā is only needed for what we do not know as a fact for ourselves.**

Everything starts with faith. Even if we don't want to admit it, everything we do in life starts with faith.



Example 1

When we walk into a class at school, we start with the faith that the teacher knows what they are talking about and faith that the books accurately represent the subject matter. We don't walk into a class saying that we don't have faith in the teacher and we don't believe the book to be true. Otherwise, we would never attend any class.



Example 2

When we walk into an airplane, we don't walk in questioning the ability of the pilot and examining the plane and doubting if it can fly or not. We walk in with faith that the pilot is qualified and the plane is fit to take us to our destination.

Faith, The
Key to Gain
Direct Self-
Knowledge



Main Lesson

continued



Example 3

When we walk into a restaurant, we don't walk in questioning the ability of the chef to cook or questioning if the restaurant is safe and clean. We walk in trusting that the cook must be qualified and the restaurant must have been inspected.

Imagine if we questioned every single thing in life, we would never move forward! We actually move in life with a lot of faith. For some reason, when it comes to our own scriptures, we tend to over-question and over-analyze without actually understanding them.



Discussion

1. What is the hardest thing to have faith in? Why?
2. How do you think faith in that particular thing can be developed?

Debrief: It might be difficult to have faith in someone new or something that we've never truly experienced before. It may be difficult to have faith in something that has disappointed you before. It might also be difficult to have faith in others, because we don't think that anyone knows more than us! When our attitude is this way, then we may lose out on valuable guidance. Sometimes, we do not have faith in our parents' advice because we think that they don't know what they are talking about and that we know more than them. Many times, this has caused us to make a lot of mistakes and suffer.

The only way to really develop faith in anyone or anything is to give it a try and see for ourselves.

Why have faith in our Guru paramparā?

We have already seen in [lesson 24: "Guidance from the Guru"](#) that it is not so easy to walk this path on our own. It's much clearer, more efficient, systematic, and enjoyable when we are guided by someone along the way. When we have faith in the teacher, then their words will have the ability to strike us and touch our hearts, and we will also put forth effort to do the spiritual practices or sādhanās they prescribe. If we do not have faith in the teacher, then we will not pay attention to their words, nor do what they ask us to do. Worse, we may second-guess everything they say and doubt their intentions behind their

teachings. We may miss the opportunity to grow and develop into true seekers. We may think that we can just go to Google or YouTube and learn by ourselves, but we might not be able to understand everything and not everything will be appropriate to our stage of seeking. The Guru knows how much we need and how much we can digest at a given point in time. Lastly, the Guru has realized this very Truth, so the Guru knows what this Knowledge is all about.

Why have faith in our śāstras?

Before we understand why we should have faith in our śāstras, there's one key component we need to explore.

Every field has a valid means of knowledge. For example: in order to know the form or color of a certain thing, the valid means of knowledge is the eyes. The ears cannot confirm or contradict the form or color of a thing because the ears are not the valid means of knowledge for form.

Similarly, the tongue is a valid means of knowledge for taste. The eyes cannot confirm or contradict the taste of a thing because they are not a valid means of knowledge for it.

Now, when we speak of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, the Canvas, that is something that lies beyond the ken of the senses and mind. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and mind cannot access that field. Therefore, anything related to the senses or mind cannot be used to know Brahman.

To know Brahman, our śāstras or scriptures are used. They point out Brahman to us by giving us useful indicators, like Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the Witness of the thoughts, and then they ask us to turn within to directly realize It for ourselves.

Sometimes, we think that we can use science or mathematics to prove religion and philosophy, and if something isn't scientifically proven, then we don't want to believe it. Actually, the deeper understanding is that what we conventionally consider as science only pertains to the outer world of objects, while religion and philosophy, which are spiritual subjective sciences, deal with the inner world of identity and the Self. They both have different fields of inquiry.

The outer sciences are only good for understanding the external world. In the same way, though external sciences can complement religion or philosophy in many ways, they are not the right tools to fully grasp religion or philosophy, because outer sciences cannot access that which lies beyond the senses and mind. Only the śāstras can do that.

Example

If you need to understand the beauty and emotion behind poetry, do you need laboratory equipment to analyze it? No — what's required is a deep understanding of language and emotions because that is the right tool to grasp poetry.

Main Lesson

continued

Therefore, we have faith that the śāstras which are taught by the Guru are the means to realize Brahman (Oneness in all beings). The śāstras are the words and the Guru is the one who brings life to the words so that they touch our hearts.

What if we still don't believe?

The best way is to see for our very own selves. **Our śāstras actually tell us that we must have faith until the Ultimate Reality becomes a fact for us.**

We must have faith until we realize this Truth for our own selves.

Here's a beautiful expression of Realization written by Gurudev Himself.



Serene in the recesses of the bosom — when Knowledge comes to know itself — the Wisdom Light is one homogenous whole, in which the unknown becomes known without the distorting intervention of the Knower knowing the Knowledge.

In short, unless you are ready to take a plunge into your own within and move up beyond the mind and the intellect to the very source of light, power, and wisdom, I know not how to make you know what I know.

Swami Chinmayananda, He did it. 67.

Faith is, "To believe what you do not see," the reward of which is, "you see what you believed."

**Swami
Chinmayananda**

The best part about Sanātana Dharma is that faith is not a blind belief but a working faith. We are allowed to question, enquire, think deeply until we ourselves make it a fact.

What about faith in God?

We have been hearing about God since we were young, but how do we know if there is a God? How do we know if God exists? Our scriptures very logically establish that there is a Supreme Being from which the entire universe springs forth, in which it is sustained and into which it is dissolved. This is called Īśvara. Let's follow step by step logical inquiry.

- **If there is something created, then there must be a creator.** For example: if there is an iPhone, then there must be someone who created it! It can't create itself.
- Similarly, **if there is a created world, there is a creator.**
- **The creator of a thing has knowledge of the thing.** The one who created the iPhone, knew how to program it and put it together. So too, the one who created the world, has knowledge of the entire world.
- **The creator of a thing has strength or power to create the thing.** The one

who knew how to create the iPhone also had to have the ability to do it, the power to do it. Knowledge becomes manifest through power. If there's no power, then nothing can happen. Similarly, the one who created the world, has the power to create the entire world.

Therefore, through logical inquiry, we have just established that there has to be a creator, and the creator has to have knowledge (which means the creator has to be a sentient entity and not something insentient like an atom). The creator also has to have ability and strength which is only again seen in sentient beings and not insentient beings.

We call the creator who has knowledge of the entire world (omniscient) and power to create the entire world (omnipotent) as Īśvara.

A question might arise as to how did He create the world? What material did He use? Well, he created it out of Himself. He actually manifested the world out of Himself much like a spider creates a web. The spider creates, sustains, and dissolves the web, and the web is none other than the spider!

In the same way, Īśvara creates, sustains, and dissolves this world and is actually none other than this world.

Even after logical inquiry, many questions can still remain. Not everything will be answered or understood in one class. However, as we walk on the path, it's important to constantly keep our faith until we realize it for our own selves.

How can one develop faith?

1. **Don't just dismiss, question.** Sometimes when we read our scriptures, our Ītiḥāsas in particular, we think that all must be mere imagination! Did the Rāmāyaṇa or Mahābhārata really happen? We sometimes find it hard to believe. This is because **we are basing reality only on what our limited minds can grasp, which is absolutely incorrect.** Greater minds can grasp greater things. For example: in the Patañjali yoga-sūtras, there are actually methods for very sharp and subtle minds to overcome hunger and thirst, or know the time of their death. We might not think it's possible because we can't fathom it, but yogīs have achieved this.

Furthermore, if we look at actual historical facts regarding the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, then we will come to know what really happened. Instead of just blindly dismissing something, it's important to ask someone qualified or do thorough research ourselves.

A good source of information is [Nilesh Oak's videos on YouTube](#).

🔗 Lessons from
Māhābharata
For Modern
Bhārat



Main Lesson

continued

Question in good faith. When we ask a question, we should ask with an open mind and heart. Doubts are natural, but the way we express our doubts makes a difference. First, ask questions only when you genuinely seek the answer. When you get a response, if it seems confusing, do not just dismiss it as nonsense. Sit with it, reflect on it, and consider it deeply. If you still do not understand the point or perspective, then come back and ask more questions.



At this point, the teacher can share something that they didn't really believe in until they actually dug deeper. For example: "I never really believed in meditation. I thought it was a waste of time. Why sit quietly? Then, when I learned how to do it and saw the benefits for myself, I couldn't stop doing it."

2. **Surround ourselves with people who have faith.** As we walk this path, it's important to surround ourselves with people who have faith or who are seriously inquiring with reverence and patience. Being around such people helps our faith grow stronger.

Reverential Inquiry and Questioning is Part of Sanātana Dharma

Did you know that most of our Upaniṣads are in a question and answer format? The student usually approaches the teacher with humility and reverence seeking the Truth and the teacher in turn, does their best to explain the Truth according to what the student can understand. Many times, the teacher provides systematic logic and examples to get the point across.

Here's an episode from Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Chapter 6.7.

The father Uddālaka Ṛṣi tells his son, Śvetaketu that the mind is made up of food. However Śvetaketu has his doubts. He's not quite sure how this is possible. Below is summary of that dialog:

Uddālaka Ṛṣi: The mind is made up of food, dear son.

Śvetaketu: How?

Uddālaka Ṛṣi: Let's do this experiment. The human being is made of sixteen parts. Do not eat for fifteen days but drink as much water as you like. As long as you drink water, your life will not be lost.

Śvetaketu: Okay.

After fifteen days...

Śvetaketu: What should I do now?

Uddālaka Ṛṣi: Recite the Vedas that you have learned.

Śvetaketu: I cannot remember them.

Uddālaka Ṛṣi: Now, go and eat.

Śvetaketu: Okay.

Uddālaka Ṛṣi: Now, recite the Vedas.

Śvetaketu is able to recite the Vedas that he learned.

Uddālaka Ṛṣi: Oh Śvetaketu, when you had food in your system, you were able to recollect what you had learned but when you had no food, you were not able to recollect it. This shows a direct relationship between food and the mind. Therefore, the mind is made up of food.

Logic:

- When A is, then B is. When A is not, then B is not.
- This proves that A is the cause of B.
- When food is, the mind is. When food is not, the mind is not.
- Therefore food is the cause of the mind.

We often find that when we are hungry, we say things like, “Okay, I can’t think anymore. I need to get something to eat.” This is exactly why. This is also the reason the type of food we consume directly affects our minds, as we have seen briefly in the last lesson.

This is just a simple example of how questioning is part of our scriptures along with logical reasoning, experiments, and examples.

Activity 15 min

Q&A

At this point, the teacher should introduce the guest Vedānta teacher or sevaka. Ask the speaker to read out the students’ questions and then answer them. The class teacher should have provided these questions to the Vedānta teacher or sevaka prior to the class so the speaker has had enough time to prepare and do thorough research, as necessary.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Go around the class and ask everyone, what is something that they have absolute faith in?

Slogan



Keep the
Faith

Sādhana

Find something about Hinduism that you really do not have faith in. Make an attempt to dive deeper and enquire about it this week. Come and share about it in the next class.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Believe in Yourself

This lesson explores how self-doubt arises and how we can go beyond it to do our duties, accomplish our goals, and soar to new heights.

4.40 



ajñāścāśraddadhānaśca
saṁśayātmā vinaśyati,
nāyaṁ loko'sti na paraḥ
na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ.

The ignorant, faithless, the
doubting-self goes to destruction;
there is neither this world, nor the
other, nor happiness for the doubter.

Time 55 min

5m	Opening
5m	Introduction
25m	Main Lesson
15m	Activity
5m	Conclusion

Materials

- 🔗 **Story of Arunima Sinha** printouts
- Stationary (1 letter with envelope for each student)
- Tape

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 4.40.

🔗 Arunima Sinha. "On Top of the World." 0:00 - 7:00.

Believe in Yourself

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the previous class, we talked about faith — the intellectual conviction in nobility of the Guru, the validity of our śāstras, and the existence of God.



Ask the class to share their sādhanā. Did they find something in Hinduism that they didn't have faith in? Did they dive deeper and do thorough research?

Introduction 5 min

While it's important to have faith in Guru and our śāstras, **it's equally important to have faith in our very own selves**. Sometimes, we have so much self-doubt that we are unable to start anything, or upon starting, we are unable to continue because we feel that we won't succeed. And, if we have managed to continue, we doubt if we will be able to finish because we don't know if we're good enough compared to others.

Have you ever felt this self-doubt? Where does it come from? Why does it come and how do we deal with it?

Let's explore this verse in the Bhagavad-gītā:

ajñāścāśraddadhānaśca
saṁśayātmā vinaśyati,
nāyaṁ loko'sti na paraḥ
na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ.

The ignorant, faithless, the
doubting-self goes to destruction;
there is neither this world, nor the
other, nor happiness for the doubter.

4.40

Main Lesson 25 min

In this verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa says **saṁśayātmā vinaśyati**. This means that the one who doubts themselves goes to destruction. Why is He so harsh? It is because **the one who doubts themselves cannot bring themselves to do anything at all**.

Self-doubt occurs when people question their self-worth, abilities and potential.

There's a phase in our lives where we start doubting ourselves and wonder if we really can do the things that we set our mind to. Let's say a simple goal of waking up early every morning and going for a walk or exercising — can we keep that routine? Or eating healthy and avoiding all kinds of junk. Or what if we set a goal to learn a new instrument or language? Or can we take on a huge project?

We question ourselves; and it's because we've never done such a thing, it's completely new to us, or we just don't know if we have the ability to do so. Sometimes, we compare ourselves to our peers, feeling like we'll never be good enough. We question our worth and potential because we may have made mistakes in the past, or we are just afraid.

Consequences of Self-Doubt

1. **We aim low.** Because of our past mistakes or fear, we are afraid to do anything or see anything through. As a result, we aim low.

We may not realize this, but our actions will never be bigger than our thoughts. So if we think that we can only do this much or achieve this much, that's actually what we will end up doing. Self-doubt makes us aim low and limit ourselves. It prevents us from achieving greater goals and thinking out of the box.

2. **We think of ourselves too much.** When we have self-doubt, we often feel like we are the victim of the situation, because we feel inferior to others. What we don't realize is that self-doubt makes us think of ourselves so much. It makes us pay attention to our insecurities ALL THE TIME. And when we think of ourselves too much, we fail to think about Bhagavān or the deeper things in life. **Self-doubt is an expression of our ego.**
3. **We constantly seek validation from others.** As we saw in the previous lesson of going beyond being liked and disliked, instead of seeking validation from others, the best is to please Bhagavān. When we have self-doubt, we are constantly trying to please others so that they can make us feel worthy, because, on our own, we do not feel worthy.
4. **We do not step out of our comfort zones.** Because we always feel like we might fail or do something wrong, we are afraid to step out of our comfort zone and try new things. As a result, we just stick to what we know and have experienced, limiting our knowledge, ability, and growth. We also lose out on valuable opportunities.

The greatest folly in life is not aiming high and missing it but aiming low and making it!

Unknown

Whether you think you can, or you think you can't — you're right.

Henry Ford

Main Lesson

continued

If you hear a voice within you saying, “You are not a painter,” then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced.

Vincent Willem van Gogh

5. **Too much time and energy is spent on decision making.** When we have doubt, we swing back and forth like a pendulum on a clock. Because we are unsure of ourselves and our abilities, it’s very difficult for us to make decisions and commit to anything. We tend to postpone and delay things to the last minute. Each decision feels paralyzing and draining, even when the choice can be very simple!

How do we deal with self-doubt?

One way to get through it is to go through it. **Just do it** and trust that an opportunity wouldn’t present itself to us if it wasn’t meant for us, and even if we’re not 100% ready, we can make ourselves ready.

Though it may be uncomfortable, we have to put ourselves in these situations so that we learn and grow. Maybe our response goes from “Yes, I can try” to “Yes, I can with God’s grace.” If we only take ourselves into account, then it might be impossible. But if we truly have faith that Bhagavān is right beside us, then anything is possible.

Even the word impossible contains “I’m possible!”

Here are other tips to get rid of self-doubt:

- **Focus on strengths.** Sure, we all have weaknesses, and there are times when we fail to do what we have set out to do, but it’s okay; the important thing is that we keep trying. There are certain strengths that we have and we should focus on those. **Strengthen the strengths and that will overpower our weaknesses.**
- **Inward stare instead of compare.** Self-doubt also comes when we tend to compare ourselves to others. We pay more attention to the success and following of others than how we are living our lives! We value their stories more than we value our reality. We have to get out of that. Remember, life is between us and Bhagavān. The most important question is not what others are doing right now but what am I doing? Am I evolving? Am I growing? However, we shouldn’t obsess over our growth either. Think about it enough to do something about it, but do not wallow in it without ever progressing.
- **Take a break.** Maybe it’s time to just reboot our system and analyze what we really want to do with our lives before plunging in. Maybe the reason we are doubting ourselves so much is because our vision isn’t clear. We don’t know what our true purpose is.
- **Practice distancing ourselves from our thoughts.** When an event triggers our negative thoughts to develop, they can tend to spiral out of control. We start questioning ourselves and criticizing ourselves relentlessly. This can ruin our mood and, if we let it, our whole day or week. If we realize

that the first negative thought came forth as an involuntary reaction from this event, not unlike how your knee jerks when a doctor hits it, then we can remember that that negative thought will pass if we do not dwell on it. We do not blame ourselves for kicking if the doctor triggered the knee's involuntary reflex, so don't blame yourself for the negative thought. Let it appear and go away, as so many other thoughts do all the time. This is difficult but a powerful skill to practice!

- **Connect with a role model.** Whether it's Bhagavān or a role model, connect with someone who has what you want. If we want to be more disciplined, connect with someone who is very disciplined. If we want to be more athletic, then connect with someone like that. The more we spend time with Bhagavān or our positive role models, the more we acquire their good qualities and develop faith in ourselves.

Let's explore an amazing role model that we can all look up to, especially when we doubt our own abilities.



Ask the class to read the story of Arunima Sinha. This is a really touching story about conquering the impossible.

Arunima Sinha 



At twenty-four years old, Arunima Sinha was a prolific, national-level volleyball player for India. After concluding her sporting career, she eventually applied for a position with the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). Due to a clerical error, she needed to travel to New Delhi to rectify her application.

On April 11, 2011, Arunima Sinha boarded the Padmavat Express from Lucknow to Delhi. That fateful night, a group of dacoits noticed Arunima was wearing a gold necklace (a gift from her mother) and that she was traveling solo. Outnumbering her, they attacked her to steal the necklace. Given Arunima's sporting background, she put up a tremendous fight, even overpowering the robbers at times. Despite the train compartment being full, no one helped Arunima and eventually the robbers fully overpowered her. To her shock, the robbers inhumanely threw her out of the train. An oncoming train hit her body and eventually she landed on the opposite tracks. In a matter of seconds, before she could move, another train ran over her left leg.

She lay on the tracks the whole night in agony and pain, unable to move and holding onto her life. Over the course of the night, 49 trains passed by her mangled and bleeding body. Rodents and bacteria infected her open wounds.

Main Lesson

continued

In the morning, some of the local villagers ventured to the tracks and were the first to discover Arunima's body. Arunima had suffered irreversible damage to both legs and fractures in her spinal cord. At the local hospital, doctors operated and amputated her left leg without anesthesia and inserted a metal rod from knee to ankle to stabilize her right leg.

In the media, she was humiliated by bureaucracy and false investigations that made fictitious claims about the incident (even claiming it was a suicide attempt).

Eventually on April 18, 2011, Arunima was transferred to a hospital with better facilities (All India Institute of Medical Sciences or AIIMS) and given enough funding by the government to take care of her medical expenses.

As she went through further care and rehabilitation, Arunima set a goal — she would climb Mount Everest. She did not want the amputation to become a weakness or let it define her. She took a mountaineering course at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in Uttarkashi and worked with Bachendri Pal (the first Indian woman to scale Everest) to prepare for her ascent.

On May 21, 2013, at the conclusion of a 52 day expedition starting on April 1, 2013, Arunima summited Everest — the first Indian female amputee (world's second) to scale Everest. The ascent had been difficult and she faced all kinds of unique problems due to her prosthetic limb. In her toughest times, she recalled Swami Vivekananda's quote: "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is achieved." At the summit, as a tribute to her idol, Swami Vivekananda, she placed His picture alongside India's flag.

Arunima set a new goal of completing the Seven Summits. By 2016, she had summited Denali (North America), Aconcagua (South America), Kilimanjaro (Africa), Elbrus (Europe), and Kosciuszko (Australia). Finally in 2019, she summited Vinson (Antarctica), one of the most treacherous peaks given the perilous and abnormal conditions of the Antarctic continent.

Nowadays, Arunima runs a non-profit school — Shahid Chandrashekhar Azad Viklang Khel Academy for disabled children. Her new goal is to guide these physically challenged children to achieve their dreams. She wants to train and empower them so that they can get equal opportunities and full participation in society. Ultimately, she hopes they can achieve their own highest dreams.

Ability Magazine. "Arunima Sinha — First Woman Amputee to Climb Mount Everest."

Activity 15 min

Activity 1: Reflection on Arunima Sinha



Now, ask the class to watch the video (up to seven minutes) to listen to Arunima's own words and discuss the questions below.

Please ensure that closed captioning is turned on with English subtitles.

On Top of the World



- What were the obstacles that Arunima encountered?
- How did people react when she told them that she wanted to climb Mt. Everest?
- How did Bachendri Pal respond to her?
- How would people normally respond if they had gone through what Arunima went through?
- What stood out about Arunima's character?
- What kept her going until the end?

Reflect on these quotes from the video:



The biggest problem is that people only look at your physical self and they don't see what's inside.

The biggest motivator is you yourself.

The day your inner-self is awakened towards any goal, nobody can stop you from reaching that goal.

Arunima Sinha

Debrief: Despite all the challenges in her life, Arunima Sinha held on to the faith in herself. Her left leg was amputated, a rod was inserted in her right leg, there was a fracture in her spine, 49 trains passed by her, she lay near the tracks overnight with no help for several hours, and yet, her heart was beating with faith. To even have the thought of climbing Everest after going through such a tragic experience is not ordinary. When people told her that she was out of her mind, she still pursued her goal even to the extent of approaching Bachendri Pal. Her story doesn't stop here. She had many difficulties scaling up the mountain, but she held on until she summited Mount Everest and hoisted the Indian flag. It's the faith in herself that made her literally climb mountains. Such faith in one's self is the direct expression of Bhagavān's grace.

Activity

continued

If God is for you, then who can be against you?

Romans 8:31
(English Standard Version)
The Holy Bible

mūkaṁ karoti vācāraṁ
paṅguṁ laṅghayate girim,
yat kṛpā tamahaṁ vande
paramānanda-mādhavam.

I salute that supreme bliss,
Mādhava, Whose grace
makes the mute eloquent and
the cripple cross mountains.

Gītā Dhyānam Verse 8

The only way to overcome self-doubt is to just do it and know that we are not alone. Bhagavān is always with us as long as we are on the side of dharma.

Activity 2: Letter to My Future Self

Give a sheet of paper and an envelope to each student in class. Ask them to write a one page letter to themselves. The letter should have two parts. A sample is given below.

Part 1: My deepest fears... (Afraid Me)

I'm afraid to try out for the school squash varsity team. What if I don't make it? What if people make fun of me? I don't think I'll be able to face them.

Part 2: Breaking free... (Inspiring Me)

I think I can try. I'll stay back after school and practice this week. I've had some good moments in the field. If I keep working on it, I'm sure I'll progress.



After they write the letters to themselves, ask them to seal it with tape and hand it back to the teacher. The teacher should keep these letters and hand them back to the students for deeper reflection at the end of the semester or Bala Vihar year.

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Ask the class to share their own tips of how to come out of self-doubt.

Slogan

Believe in
yourself

Sādhana

This week, do something that scares you.

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Lift Yourself by Yourself

This class is about understanding how to lift ourselves and make our minds our best friend.

6.5 



uddhared-ātmanātmānam
nātmānam avasādayet,
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhuḥ
ātmaiva ripur-ātmanaḥ.

One should lift oneself by oneself;
one should not lower oneself.
The mind is verily one's friend;
the mind is one's own enemy.

Time 55 min

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

Materials

Construction paper (one for each student)
Markers, colored pencils, stickers

References

Swami Chinmayananda, *The Holy Geeta*. 6.5.

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. "Lift Yourself by Yourself."

☞ Swami Chinmayananda. "You are your Friend — You are your Enemy."

Lift Yourself by Yourself

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

Debrief with the students about their sādhanā in the previous week. Did they do something that scared them? How did it go?

Now, ask the students to pause for a moment and take a breather and believe in themselves.



Play a quick game of a minute to win it. Have some sheets of paper folded up with prompts, like “faith,” “self-doubt,” and “oneness,” from the previous lessons. Call the students at random to pick a sheet of paper and share their thoughts for a minute.

As we begin to have faith in ourselves, we are able to work with our minds and make it our friend, so that we can become the best version of ourselves.

Introduction 10 min

In any good story, be it a novel or a movie, critics will always look for strong character arcs. Let’s say that the story is concerning two characters who are friends — in this case, too, there is a friendship **ARC**. A good friend is:

- **Always** there for me
- **Ready** to share when I am in need
- **Challenges** me to become better

There once were two best friends, Deepa and Shanti, who attended the same school and were always seen together. Deepa excelled in all her school subjects, yet had a strong yearning to join the lacrosse team despite having little athletic background. On the other hand, athletics came naturally to Shanti, but she struggled in mathematics. The best friends decided to make a pact — Deepa would help Shanti ace her next math exam, and Shanti would help Deepa train before the lacrosse tryouts.

For the month before tryouts, every morning at 5 AM, Deepa was rudely awakened by her phone ringing — Shanti was calling her to come join for a morning jog! In this way, her friend was **Always** there for her.

When Shanti struggled to make out what her mathematics notes read, Deepa would share her own and patiently explain them so that Shanti could catch up. Deepa was **Ready** to share when her friend was in need.



Discussion

Think of those in your life that you consider a good friend — what are their qualities?

There were many times in studying for the math exam and training for tryouts that both Shanti and Deepa wanted to give up on their goals. But the other acted as a motivator and accountability partner — reminding them how far they had come and how close they were to achieving their goals. In this way, both friends **Challenged** each other to be better.



Discussion

Give some examples of iconic friendships from the Purāṇas, novels, or movies (some examples may be: Harry Potter and Ron Weasley, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā, a student and her Guru). Then, discuss the below:

1. Why are these friendship ARCs so special?
2. Tell us a story about your friendship ARC between you and your best friend.
3. How does the ARC vary when it involves a guide/Guru or family member?

We all can relate to the experience of having a good friend — but even the best of friends may not always be able to help us with the specific challenge we are trying to overcome.

Imagine you are taking a mountaineering class and are dangling 20 ft above the ground. The instructor might know exactly what your next move should be to continue the climb. Maybe she rappels right next to you and talks you through it. Still, it is you who has to finish the climb that you've started.

Each of us experiences challenges that have been custom-designed by Bhagavān just for us, and while we are lucky if we have love and support from true friends in our lives, it is ultimately up to us to learn from our own mistakes, overcome adversity, and become better versions of ourselves. We all have to rely on ourselves alone, and the one friend we will always have with us — our minds!

Main Lesson 25 min

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa shares with Arjuna that Arjuna, himself, holds the key to giving up weaknesses and rising to embrace and live his strengths.

Main Lesson

continued

uddhared-ātmanātmānam
nātmānam avasādayet,
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhuḥ
ātmaiva ripur-ātmanaḥ.

One should lift oneself by oneself;
one should not lower oneself.
The mind is verily one's friend;
the mind is one's own enemy.

6.5

Let's examine a story about this.

Radha loved to play soccer; she loved to dribble around and spend all her free time thinking about it. Unfortunately, at the end of tryouts for the school team, the coach told Radha that she wouldn't be a starter and had to sit on the bench as a reserve. Every morning before soccer practice, Radha would just pull the sheets over her head and say, "I don't want to go. There's no point!" The very game that had given her so much joy now felt meaningless. Her mother would ask her what's wrong and Radha would say, "I don't even want to go anymore. All I do is sit on the bench. It's not fun." Radha's mother straightened up and said, "Radha. No matter what happens. **Get up! Dress up! Show up!**"

After a particularly disappointing weekend, Radha's mind was all over the place and she couldn't focus, so she didn't do her homework or study for her math test on Monday. On Monday morning, Radha once again pulled her sheets over her head. Her mother asked, "What's the matter? What's wrong?" Radha feigned being sick (coughing, playing ill). Her mother caught her lie and said, "Radha, what's really the problem?" and Radha admitted that she hadn't been able to study for her math test. Her mother said, "Radha. No matter what. **Get up! Dress up! Show up!**" Radha got out of bed, went to school and took her math test.

Over time, she started getting better at soccer and better at math. In fact, the coach even let her play in one of the games!

One day, the school theater was holding auditions for the school play: "Devīs in Wonderland." Radha was very interested and told her friend Saara all about it, but Radha was too scared. When Radha's mom came to pick her up, Saara told Radha's mom all about the play and Radha's interest. Radha's mom said, "Radha, **get up! Dress up! Show up!**" So Radha straightened herself up, fixed her clothes and hair, and went to audition.

When the final casting was posted, Radha's name did not make the list. Radha was really upset by the time her mom came to pick her up. Her mom said, "Radha, you know what I'm going to tell you." Radha replied

begrudgingly, “Yeah. I know. **Get up. Dress up. Show up.**” Radha’s mom said, “You forgot the last part — **grow up!**”

In life, sometimes we will succeed. In life, sometimes we will fail. If we keep trying, eventually we will get there. Who knows what will happen next time. So, no matter what: **Get up! Dress up! Show up! Grow up!**

Now let’s relate this story to the verse in the Bhagavad-gītā.

Lift yourself by yourself (uddhared ātmanātmānam):

What does it mean to lift oneself?

1. **Physical level** — At the physical level, **lifting ourselves means just getting up!** There are times when we don’t feel like getting out of bed or going to school or showing up for a test. The first step is to just get up and face the day no matter how hard it is. Think of the story: what if Radha never got up and showed up? Would she have any of these opportunities?

Sometimes, we feel like we have gotten up but we don’t really want to go wherever we’re supposed to go, lifting ourselves then means — dress up! Just get ourselves together and make ourselves show up! If we can manage to do this no matter what, we will lift ourselves.

2. **Emotional level** — At the mental level, lifting ourselves means **lifting our minds to a peaceful state.** Whenever we get agitated, angry, upset or disturbed, lifting ourselves means bringing our minds to peace. Recall the lesson on the “Ladder of Fall” DA-DA-DA-DA. Lifting ourselves at the emotional level also means that we are able to respond, instead of react.

Ask the class: How did Radha show that she was lifting herself up at an emotional level?

Instead of closing her mind to possibilities and reacting, she was open and listened to her mom’s advice and responded to the situations presented in front of her.

3. **Intellectual level** — At the intellectual level, lifting ourselves means, **lifting our intellects to our ideals** of truthfulness, discipline, moderation, inclusivity, etc. We all have a set of values that we identify with or strive to live up to. Lifting our intellect means trying to live by these values and not being swayed to act otherwise — either in the face of temptation or simply to be liked by others. Recall **lesson 21: “Beyond Being Liked and Disliked.”**

Lift Yourself
by Yourself



Main Lesson

continued

Ask the class: How did Radha show that she was lifting herself up at an intellectual level?

Radha kept trying no matter what. She rose above self-doubt in her mind and learned to have faith in herself.

4. **Spiritual level** — At the spiritual level, lifting ourselves means lifting ourselves inward to understand who we truly are — the Ātman or the pure Self.

One should not lower themselves (nātmānam avasādayet):

And having lifted ourselves, we shouldn't let ourselves fall. Once we get up, we have to stay up! How do we get up and then stay up?

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises us to make our minds our best friends.

The mind is your best friend (ātmaiva hyātmano bandhuḥ):

Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa goes on to explain that our mind will help us get there; in fact, the mind is our best friend. However, it is not like the mind will become our best friend overnight; we will have to train it to truly lift ourselves.

Gurudev gives a metaphor of the mind as a river and three problems to understand the state of an untrained mind:

1. **The river has too much water** (the quantity of thoughts in our mind is too much)
2. **The river has dirty, impure water** (the quality of our thoughts is impure)
3. **The river is flowing in the wrong direction** (the mind is directed outwards, seeking stimulation from our external relationships with things, people, and situations)

To train the mind to become strong, we can address these problems with **3S's**:

1. **Sevā** — Engage in selfless service. Whether helping with a neighborhood clean-up or organizing books at a library, using our hands for selfless good work helps us to focus on what is right in front of us, thereby reducing the quantity of our thoughts. **This lifts us at a physical level.**
2. **Sādhana** — Engage in devotional practices. Whether it is music or dance embodying the forms of the Divine or reading stories which highlight Divine qualities we wish to embody, devotional practices slowly improve the quality of our thoughts. **This lifts us at the emotional level.**
3. **Śvādhyāya** — Spend time engaging in reflection on the scriptures, rather than focusing too much on the changing world around us. Through the

study of the Gītā and holding ourselves to daily discipline, we can redirect the flow of thoughts from outwards to inwards. **This lifts us at the intellectual level.**

When we are lifted in these three levels, our mind becomes pure, focused, and subtle to go beyond and lift ourselves to our true identity — Ātman.

The mind is your worst enemy (ātmaiva ripur ātmanah):

If we end up **lowering ourselves** instead of **lifting ourselves**, then what happens? The mind becomes our worst enemy.

Physical level — When we lay in bed and refuse to get up and face the day or when we delay and procrastinate all the things we have to do, then the mind becomes stressed, agitated, and disturbed.

Emotional level — When we react instead of respond, then we tend to feel guilty about our thoughts, words, and actions. When we choose to rewind, replay or loop all the incidents that happened instead of letting them go, then the mind wallows in sorrow. When we worry too much about the future instead of surrendering to Bhagavān, then the mind becomes anxious.

Intellectual level — When we do not live up to our ideals because we are tempted to do something else or because we want to please someone else, then the intellect feels degraded and we start to lose our sense of self-respect.

Spiritual level — When we lower ourselves in this way, we aren't able to turn inward to Ātman, instead we turn outward to anātman (the not-Self).

Building a strong mind requires sincere and consistent training, like practicing the 3S's. If we do not invest in this training, it makes it more difficult to use the mind as a tool to lift ourselves to a higher ideal. It is like trying to chop a vegetable with a dull knife — we're unlikely to be successful (and it can be more damaging and dangerous to us as well!).

The thoughts in our mind are like an endless feedback loop; over time, they compound on each other and yield even more intensity. If we train the mind effectively, this can be a virtuous cycle, otherwise, it will likely become a vicious one!

If we allow our mind to run wild with fear or anger, those thoughts will keep coming back stronger, making it more difficult to root them out and more likely that we outwardly express fear or anger wherever we go. Conversely, if we allow our mind to be steeped in compassion and gratitude, we will build the tendency to reach that positive state of mind sooner and more fully.

Your are your
Friend — Your
are your Enemy



As we think, so
we become.

Proverb

Main Lesson

continued

Each thought is like a drop of water, which makes a tiny puddle on our personality. Over time, the same thoughts will pool deeper and deeper, until a deep canal is formed. At that point, our thoughts will always trickle in that direction without any resistance whatsoever.

Activity 10 min**Art Activity**

Preparation: Gather art supplies like construction paper, stickers, markers, magazines, glue, etc. The specific supplies don't matter so much, just ensure every student has one sheet of paper and access to a variety of supplies.

Introduction: In today's lesson, we learned Gurudev's metaphor of the mind as a river. For this activity, consider that the mind is a garden. Plan out what all you want to have in your garden, and use the art supplies provided to uniquely portray what your mind-garden would look like. Some prompts to consider:

- What would you "plant" in terms of habits, activities, and company to nurture a strong mind?
- What negativities might you need to "weed out" to ensure that you nurture a strong mind?
- How do the 3S's: Sevā, Sādhana, and Svādhyāya, show up in your mind-garden?

Debrief: Give the students at least 5 minutes to work on their mind-garden art pieces. Then have students share their work with their peers, using the same questions above to gather their reflections on how this relates to the lesson about training the mind.

Optional follow-up class with Gardening Sevā Activity

If your center or āśrama has a garden or you can connect with a community garden nearby, consider organizing a gardening sevā project in a follow-up class.

Introduction: One of the 3 S's we discussed was Sevā. Now we are going to head outside to practice this S in the form of garden sevā.

As we are outside, tap into your quiet mind by maintaining maunam (silence). Reflect on your mind as a garden, considering the same questions from the art activity:

- What would you "plant" in terms of habits, activities, and company to nurture a strong mind?

- What negativities might you need to “weed out” to ensure that you nurture a strong mind?
- How do the 3S’s, Sevā, Sāadhanā, and Svādhyāya, show up in your mind-garden?

Debrief: After completing the garden sevā, head back into your classroom to debrief.

- How did you all feel as you were engaged in the gardening sevā?
- How does this relate to the lesson about training the mind?

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Go around the room and ask each student, what do you think is the “lift” you need the most right now? Is it on the physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual level? Why?

Slogan

Sevā,
Sāadhanā, and
Svādhyāya

Sāadhanā

Re-using artwork from class activity: Put your mind-garden artwork somewhere you can see it, like in your room or on the fridge. Every day, “tend” to your garden; meaning, spend 5 minutes looking at your garden and checking on if you’re maintaining the habits/activities/company you wanted to “plant,” if you are successfully “weeding out” any negativities, and if you are engaging in the 3S’s (Sevā, Sāadhanā, Svādhyāya).

More hands-on option (requires additional materials): Adapt the above by handing students seeds that they can plant in a pot at home, and engaging in the same “tending” and reflection as they water every day.

Conclude with the closing prayers.



Everyone is a Blessing

In this lesson, we discuss the different types of relationships in all of our lives and how every relationship is a blessing.

6.9 



suhṛn-mitrāryudāsīna-
madhyastha-dveṣya-bandhuṣu,
sādhūṣvapi ca pāpeṣu
samabuddhirviśiṣyate.

One who is of the same mind to
the good hearted, friends, enemies,
the indifferent, the neutral, the
hateful, relatives, the righteous,
and unrighteous, excels.

Time 55 min

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

Materials

 “Po’s Final Fight with Shen Kung Fu Panda 2.”
 “Moana - Dad’s Sad Story About the Reef.”
Heavy ball
Paper
Box

References

Swami Chinmayananda. *The Holy Geeta*. 6.9.

 Swami Chinmayananda. “Recognize the Self Everywhere.”

 Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya. “Art of Loving Others.”

 “Motivational story GO Higher.”

Everyone is a Blessing

Opening Prayers & Recap of Previous Class 5 min

In the last class, we learned how to lift ourselves by ourselves by making the mind our best friend. Do you remember the formula to make the mind our best friend (3 S's).



Draw a river on the board and ask the class to recollect the river metaphor along with Sevā, Sāadhanā, and Svādhyāya.

1. The river has too much water (the quantity of thoughts in our mind is too much).
2. The river has dirty, impure water (the quality of our thoughts is impure).
3. The river is flowing in the wrong direction (the mind is directed outwards, seeking stimulation from our external relationships with things, people, and situations).

The mind has too many thoughts



Sevā is practiced to reduce the quantity of thoughts by focusing on one thing at a time.

The mind has impure thoughts



Sāadhanā is practiced to divinize thoughts.

The mind is directed outwards



Svādhyāya is practiced to turn the mind inwards to values, ideals, and spiritual Knowledge.

The reflections that the students do will be helpful for them later on in the lesson. The teacher is welcome to lead a debrief if they'd like to; however, they can move onto the "Main Lesson" without a debrief.

Introduction 10 min



Ask the students to reflect on the following questions by themselves in their notebooks for 5 mins. Then, break the students into groups of 3-4 students to discuss their thoughts for 5-10 mins.

1. What are the qualities of a true friend?
2. Do you believe it is a blessing or a curse to have an enemy in life? Analyze this from both perspectives: how can an enemy be a curse and how can an enemy be a blessing?

Main Lesson 25 min

When we think about our relationships with others (friends, relatives, classmates), we realize that we relate to all of them in different ways. Sometimes it is because of a common interest (music, art, sports). Other times it is because you grew up in the same neighborhood. There are many unique ways we relate to other people.

We can categorize these reasons into the following five levels.

1. **Physical** — At the physical level, we relate to others because of how they look or their interests in external things. For example: maybe we both like the same types of clothes or shoes. We may even be friends with someone because both of us look the same or have the same haircut. We may share an interest in worldly things, like the same favorite musician or sports team.

This type of relationship is built on attributes that develop and change over time. Think about it. We probably don't have the same interests and favorites as we did growing up. We probably also change our style every few years. A relationship built only on this may not last very long. As our interests change, the relationship will also fade.

2. **Mental** — At the mental level, we relate to others because of our emotional qualities. We may feel that a person has qualities of kindness and empathy, which we really value. We may be friends with someone because of how they make us feel when we spend time with them. It can be a very comfortable space.

This type of relationship is built on something that is more innate to a person — their emotional qualities. Therefore, this type of relationship may last longer than a relationship built purely on physical interests; however, this too may fade over time. People's personalities change over time and as that happens, their emotional qualities may also change, leading to a deterioration of this relationship.

3. **Intellectual** — At an intellectual level, we relate to others based on common values. For example: we may both believe in the importance of doing selfless action and volunteering our time in sevā as a way to give back to the community.

Such a relationship is built on something more core to our personalities and on ideologies that we believe strongly in. This relationship will last longer than the previous two relationship types. Someone's core ideology can

Main Lesson

continued

change, but it is more stable to modification than someone's emotional qualities. Therefore, building a relationship at this level is better, but still not the best option.

4. **Spiritual** — At the spiritual level, we relate to people because we share the same value of seeking something higher. We realize that there is something beyond this transactional world and that we should work towards seeking that. Many of our relationships with our classmates in Bala Vihar, may be based on this understanding.

This is a very strong relationship as it is based on something higher. We are connecting with something that is beyond all of us, which makes this a strong and long-lasting type of relationship.

5. **Highest Level (Ātman)** — At the highest level, we build relationships on the idea that we are all Ātman. We understand that every single one of us is the same and connected from the Highest perspective. We all are no different from Brahman (Recall [lesson 27: “The Oneness in All Beings”](#)).

Now that we understand at a high-level the different levels of depth in a relationship, let us take a look at specific types of relationships in our lives. In this week's verse, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells us that there are nine different types of relationships in our life.

suhṛn-mitrāryudāsīna-
madhyastha-dveṣya-bandhuṣu,
sādhūṣvapi ca pāpeṣu
samabuddhirviśiṣyate.

One who is of the same mind
to the good hearted, friends,
enemies, the indifferent, the
neutral, the hateful, relatives, the
righteous, and unrighteous, excels.

6.9

This seems kind of crazy at first. “How am I supposed to view my best friend in the same way as my enemy? That makes no sense,” we might say. If we recall our five levels of relationships from earlier, we see that the Highest level was to relate to others at the level of Ātman. If we think carefully, we realize, whether someone is my best friend or my mortal enemy, they are all Ātman in reality. As such, mentally, I can think of them as the same. Of course, we live in a worldly life, and the way we treat them externally likely looks different; however, internally, we should realize, regardless of the type of relationship, they are all one and the same — so we should have the same vision of internal love.



Recognize the
Self Everywhere



This may feel a little abstract, so let us focus on analyzing a few specific relationship types to understand this better. We will focus on mitra (friend), ari (enemy), critic (dveṣya), and family (bandhu).

Friend (mitra)



Discussion

Lead the class in a short discussion about friends: What does it mean to be a friend? What is a friend to you?

The students answered a similar question in their “Introduction” exercise, and they can refer to that answer to inform their discussion here.

A true friend is one who showcases TLAH:

- **T — Takes us on the path of dharma.** They will guide us and keep us on the path of dharma. Whenever we falter, they are not afraid to tell us how we messed up and put us back on the path. Together, we can walk the path of dharma and grow stronger spiritually.
- **L — Leads us away from adharma.** Not only does a true friend take us on the path of dharma, they also guide us away from adharma. They recognize the vices in the world and help us stay away from that which may drag us down and destroy us. A true friend is not afraid of hurting their friend’s feelings if it means keeping them away from adharma.
- **A — Admires our good qualities and we admire their good qualities.** Sometimes, when we see a friend (or anyone) doing better than us, we feel jealous. A true friend is someone who is happy that their friend is excelling. They understand that, at the Highest Level, we are all one; so they realize, when their friend rises, then they also rise!

Not only are they not jealous, but they also don’t make others jealous of them. They do not go around bragging about their accomplishments. They do not put others down and gloat in their faces. Rather as they accomplish things, they help others around them rise as well.

- **H — Honest about our shortcomings.** A true friend is not a people pleaser. A true friend is one who will tell you like it is, even if it hurts sometimes. They will tell you directly to your face, when you make a mistake and how you can improve. They are not afraid that you will dislike them or abandon them for trying to lift you up to higher things. They are honest about your weaknesses and help you realize things you may have missed about yourself.

Main Lesson

continued

They also do this from a place of love and caring. They take care to understand that you may be going through some difficulty and will offer guidance from a place of love.

A friend is someone to whom you can talk with an open heart at any time, and they will be happy to listen to you. A true friend will treat their friend's issues like the tallest mountain and their own problems like a grain of sand.

**Example of Śrī Rāma**

In Śrī Rāma's life, Rāma took on many roles. One such role was as a mitra to Sugrīva. When Śrī Rāma and Sugrīva met, they were both exiled from their kingdoms and had lost their families. When Rāma heard of Sugrīva's story, He treated it as if it was the largest and most important problem. He wanted to take care of Sugrīva and make sure to resolve Sugrīva's sorrow. Śrī Rāma treated His own sorrow as a grain of sand. As the Rāmāyaṇa proceeds, Śrī Rāma helped Sugrīva win back his Vānara kingdom from Vālī.

Once Sugrīva has his kingdom back, he fell into a life of comfort and pleasure. He began to falter from the path of dharma. When Śrī Rāma heard of this, He sent Lakṣmaṇa to bring Sugrīva back to the path of dharma. Bhagavān displayed all the qualities of TLAH here.



If time permits, you can have the students discuss how Bhagavān Rāma showcases the qualities of TLAH in the above example.

Enemy (ari)**Discussion**

Lead the class in a short discussion about enemies: What does it mean to have an enemy or a rival? Is it a blessing or a curse?

The students answered a similar question in their "Introduction" exercise, and they can refer to that answer to inform their discussion.

In our lives, we probably have rivals or competitors. These people that seem to stand as opponents to us are our enemies (ari). In the heat of the moment, we may grow frustrated with our opponents or even hate them! However, let us take a look at this a little closer.

Think about a competition objectively. For example: a basketball game. Would a basketball game without an opponent be fun? What would that even look like? Would we just keep scoring without anyone stopping us? See, sometimes we need an opponent. Only then, does a basketball game get interesting. Then, there are ups and downs, and you have someone that forces you to be more creative and better to score. Without an opponent, things would get pretty boring quickly.

When there's someone much better than us, it forces us to get better! It really makes us unfold and grow. We all need enemies (ari) in our lives, otherwise, we may quickly grow stagnant.

When you have an opponent, understand that they are there to do their role. In a worldly sense, this role seems like they are there to stop you or to be better than you. In reality at a higher, more spiritual level, we realize, they are there to help us get better whether they realize it or not.

When someone is competing with us, it is truly a blessing to help us grow. At a spiritual level, we understand that we all arise from the same Brahman, but we must fulfill our roles based on our dharma.

Stop thinking of it as a curse to have been given an enemy in life. It can be a blessing, too.

Niki Lauda
Rush (2013)



Example of Śrī Rāma

Recall the example we saw in “The Oneness of All Beings” of Rāvaṇa. In Rāmāyaṇa, the primary antagonist or enemy (ari) is Rāvaṇa. When Rāma fights Rāvaṇa, He didn't say that we are the same Consciousness arising from Brahman and as such, I won't defeat you — in fact, Rāma kills Rāvaṇa. Śrī Rāma understood that from the level of Brahman, it is true that they are all one; however, it was His dharma to act and defeat Rāvaṇa. Even in fighting Rāvaṇa, Rāma did it from a place of love and understanding to fulfill His dharma.



Example

In the *Kung Fu Panda* franchise, Po trains to become the dragon warrior under a guru (Shifu). However, his true unfolding and discovery of his abilities only arises from his battles with his greatest opponents (such as Tai Lung and Shen).

Po's Final Fight with Shen | *Kung Fu Panda 2* — In this clip, Po finally understands and masters the concept of inner peace in the middle of an intense battle with Shen and his army. Po's ari (Shen) helped him rise to even greater abilities in kung fu and his own spiritual understanding, even in the middle of battle.

Kung Fu
Panda 2



Main Lesson

continued

Remember

Next time you get frustrated that you have competition, remind yourself they are only here to make you get better. Suddenly, the competition becomes a lot more fun!

Critic (dveṣya)

Someone who is a dveṣya can seem hateful. Their hobby is to criticize. They find the small things and use that to critique us. Often, this makes us feel bad about ourselves. So, how do we deal with this type of individual?

First, analyze if what they said is true. We have to be honest with ourselves when we do this, sometimes only our critics are the ones that see things that others don't. If what they are critiquing is true, then we must do something about it and improve ourselves. If it is not true, then we must rise above it. There will always be people who want to drag us down and make us feel bad about ourselves unnecessarily, and it is up to us to choose how we respond.

In school, we may have someone that is always teasing us or making fun of us. When this happens, we need to objectively think if what they are saying is true, and something we need to fix. If it is not, then we should understand that what they are critiquing has nothing to do with us. Maybe they are going through something, and this is how they are expressing their own insecurity or frustration. By recognizing that what they are saying is not true and by accepting that they will say it anyway, we can rise above it. We can choose to ignore it and learn to focus on what truly matters. Maybe we can take action like talking to our teacher or counselor, if needed, to help address the situation. We can even see them as a gift from Bhagavān — Bhagavān has put them there to help us grow higher.

Please note: If you are being bullied, please seek safety and help of professionals, like your teacher and counselor. Bullying is an extreme form of criticism.



Example of Śrī Rāma

In Śrī Rāma's life, an example of a dveṣya is Mantharā. Mantharā was always criticizing Rāma. She was the one that planted the idea in Kaikeyī's mind that Bharata should be king and that Kaikeyī should use her boons to make this happen. Despite Mantharā being the direct cause of Rāma being sent to exile, Rāma rises above it. He even forgives Mantharā during His coronation festivities.

We can see this in the following story of the “Crow and the Eagle”:

There was an eagle that was flying majestically and peacefully on its own. Then one day, a crow noticed and decided to go peck the eagle as it flew. The crow would sit on the eagle’s back and peck incessantly. While this hurt the eagle, the eagle made no mention of it and continued flying. Eventually, the eagle was tired of the crow’s pecking, so it decided that it would fly higher. The eagle continued to fly higher and higher until the crow fell off. The crow was unable to survive the lack of oxygen at such a high altitude.

Plot Patter. “Motivational story GO Higher”

Motivational
story GO Higher



Similar to the eagle, we should continue to rise higher and higher, until our critics (dveṣya) can no longer criticize us.



Example of Pūjya Gurudev

In Pūjya Gurudev’s life, so many people criticized Him for the decisions He made. Most of it was undue criticism with no backing. What did Gurudev do? He just rose higher. He rose so high that eventually no one could say anything negative about Him. He let His actions speak louder than His words. In fact, by rising so high, He helped everyone around Him rise higher (even His critics).

Family (bandhu)

This refers to all of our family members and relatives. This is a relationship type that we don’t choose, but are rather born into. We may not be able to control who these people are, but we can control how we respond to them and treat them.

Our relatives offer us a chance to get rid of our likes and dislikes. We can see them as giving us our own Kurukshetra in the form of a field of purification. Our families are there to help us (1) purify and (2) to become more selfless.

Generally speaking, we have two broad categories of relatives:

- **Hurtful and Tough** — With tough people, we must learn to forgive and accept them. We never know what they are going through. People will make mistakes. Often, those that are harsh to us or do harmful things, have had a harsh past and are in pain. They often act out, because they are suffering inside. We must understand that the same reality in us is the reality in them (at the level of Brahman).

They are relatives,
because they are
not absolute.

Swami
Tejoymayananda

Main Lesson

continued

- **Kind, Caring, and Loving** — With loving people, we need to make sure we give them enough space to breathe. These people tend to give a lot to others. If we don't give them enough space, they may feel suffocated. This is where conflict arises. So, for those relatives in your life that are loving, give them space to breathe.

**Example of Śrī Rāma**

In Śrī Rāma's life, Kaikeyī was someone that seemed tough and hurtful. Initially, we believe that Kaikeyī is the reason that Rāma was exiled. In reality, Kaikeyī was being poisoned by Mantharā. When Śrī Rāma returns from exile, He does namaskāra to Kaikeyī showing His forgiveness. At a subtler level, He is expressing that he sees the same divinity in Kaikeyī as is within Him.

Bharata is a loving and kind brother of Rāma. When sent to exile, Rāma leaves with full trust in Bharata that he will rule the kingdom as required. Rāma makes sure to give Bharata enough space to breathe and do as he needs.



Moana

**Example**

In the movie Moana, Moana is an adventurous girl and wants to sail beyond the reef from her home island of Motunui to the rest of Polynesia. She really wants to experience the ocean and enjoy its beauty. Her father (the chieftain) prohibits Moana or anyone from going beyond the reef. This really frustrates Moana as she feels a yearning for the ocean within. Later in the movie, Moana finds out that the reason her father prohibits it is out of a desire to save and protect Moana. When younger, her father had sailed beyond the reef with his friend. Storms and wild waves on the ocean caused their boat to topple and his friend died in the ocean. Her father wants to protect Moana from that same fate.

Moana - Dad's Sad Story About The Reef — In this clip, Moana is upset that her father won't let her sail beyond the reef. As she's sitting in anger, her mother comes and explains the reason that her father doesn't want her to sail beyond the reef.

Similarly, sometimes, we don't know why our parents tell us certain things at the time. We may think they are silly or being overbearing — but in reality, there is probably a reason. We're just too young or aren't ready to understand the true reason, yet.



Activity

To solidify our understanding of the relationship types that we discussed today, have the class split into groups of 3-4 students. In each group, have the students discuss each of the relationship types and answer the following questions:

- Who/what is an example of that relationship type?
- What was an inspiring lesson you learnt from them?
- How can you improve that relationship?

They may fill out a table like the following:

Type	Who/What? (Person, Place, or Object)	Inspiring Lesson	Improvements
mitra			
ari			
dveṣya			
bandhu			

After about 10 mins, bring the class back together and debrief by asking for some example lessons that the students have learnt from different relationship types. Remind the class that regardless of what the relationship type is, they are all blessings in their own way. Bhagavān has put that relationship in our life to help us grow.

Activity 10 min

Directions: For this activity, we are going to bring each of these four relationships to life through stations and reflection prompts. First, do the activity with the students. Then, reveal the relationship type prior to transitioning to the reflection prompts.

Mitra (Friend)

Station Activity: Have each student do a trust fall into their classmates arms.

Reflection Prompt:

Facilitator Set-Up: Being a good friend isn't just about showing up. It's about helping your friends stay on the path of Dharma and being honest about each other's shortcomings. It starts with trust.

What makes a relationship feel safe? How can you be a better friend to others?

Depending on the class size you can split the class into 2-4 groups and have them rotate or do each of the stations as a class.

Activity

continued

Ari (Enemy)

Station Activity: Have the attendees do wall sits while also needing to pass a heavy ball back and forth.

Reflection Prompt:

Facilitator Set-Up: Even in opposition or tension, we're often still connected.

Our opponents are there to help us get better. How we handle shared pressure reveals our patterns of reaction and resilience.

How do you respond when you feel pressure? Do you push back, yield, or find a third way? How does the other person's skill affect yours?

Dveṣya (Critic)

Station Activity:

- Write down criticisms that you have received or thought about yourself on two pieces of paper — on the first, write criticisms that you think are untrue and on the other, those that indicate opportunities for improvement.
- First, crumple up the paper with criticisms that are untrue and throw it into the box (labeled "Criticism").
- Next, reread the second paper, internalize the lessons, and remember them. Throw away the criticisms in the same manner as the first paper.

Reflection Prompt:

Facilitator Set-Up: Criticism, whether from others or ourselves, can weigh us down. However, learning to sort truth from noise is part of accepting what helps us grow and learning to focus on things that matter.

What makes releasing criticism hard? What helps you let go of it?

Bandhu (Family)

Station Activity: Ask the students to complete a wheelbarrow race in pairs — one person walks on their hands while the other holds their legs. Then switch roles, if time allows. Challenge the pairs of students to try and reach the other side at the same time.

Reflection Prompt:

Facilitator Set-Up: Family support often shows up in quiet ways — carrying one another through tough moments or simply being there. The wheelbarrow race offers a playful way to feel what it's like to rely on someone and be relied on. It's a reminder that family can be both our strength and our training ground for giving and receiving care.

What has your family taught you, good or bad? How have you grown from it?



Wheelbarrow
race



Post Stations

After completing the four stations, ask the class the following question (time permitting): How can we continue to grow through all types of relationships rather than just the easy ones?

Conclusion 5 min

Group Summary

Go through each of the four relationship types we discussed in class today (mitra, ari, dveṣya, and bandhu). As a class, have the students share: (1) the definition of each relationship type and (2) how to view that relationship type as a blessing and grow from it.

Slogan

Everyone is a
blessing

Sādhana

At the end of each day this week, take 5 mins to do the following reflection. Think about whether there was someone in your life that day who frustrated you or made you angry (this can be a friend, family, enemy, etc.). Reflect on how, despite annoying you, this person is truly a blessing. What was Bhagavān trying to teach you through them?

Conclude with the closing prayers.

Key Takeaways

- 1** Salutations to our GPS, our Guru Paramparā System!
- 2** Whenever I have a problem, the Gītā has the solution.
- 3** Dharma = RTRPRT
Right Thing. Right Place. Right Time.
- 4** Stay true to your dharma.
- 5** ABCD: Attachment Blinds us from Clearly doing our Dharma.
- 6** T: Take action, even if it's small
H: Hold onto the Higher
R: Relinquish perfection
I: Inquire, introspect, talk it out
V: Value the present/Vow to be present
E: Everyone feels this way sometimes
- 7** Let go of your ego — Surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- 8** Be a Silent Listener.
- 9** Says Kṛṣṇa, ICE, ICE Baby
I am Indestructible, Changeless, Eternal.
- 10** Live YOUR Svadharma.
- 11** NBK — Nitya before Kāmya.
- 12** Act with a Higher Vision.
- 13** Act with Surrender.
- 14** Selfishness binds and Selflessness frees.
- 15** Happy ThanksLIVING!
- 16** In this cosmic system, be a cog and not a clog.

- 17** Be a WOW person – Be happy With or Without!
- 18** Be a 5D Leader — Dhārmika, Decisive, Dynamic, Daring, and Devoted.
- 19** Actions are not meant to be owned, they are to be offered.
- 20** Dharma: Stick to what’s right and not just what you like.
- 21** Be liked by God.
- 22** Stick to the DSD formula — Dhārmika, Selfless, and Divine Desires.
- 23** DA-DA-DA-DA — Dwelling, Attachment, Desire, Anger, Delusion, Amnesia, Destruction, and Annihilation.
- 24** Walk the path with guidance from the Guru.
- 25** When adharma prevails, Bhagavān will always find a way to restore dharma.
- 26** All varṇas are unique and equally important.
- 27** Live with the Vision of Oneness.
- 28** Keep the Faith.
- 29** Believe in yourself.
- 30** Sevā, Sādhanā, and Svādhyāya.
- 31** Everyone is a Blessing.

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