

GITA MAHOTSAV IN MAURITIUS

(13 – 16 Feb 2019) SVICC

Speech delivered by H.E. Mr Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, G.O.S.K, Acting President of the Republic of Mauritius on 14 February 2019 at 11.45 hours at SVICC – Opening Ceremony

1. Gita Maharishi, Swami Gyananandji, Maharaj
2. Hon. Prithivirajsing Roopun, Minister of Arts and Culture
3. Hon Ministers
4. Hon. Rajcoomar Rampertaub, PPS
5. H.H. Swami Pranavanda, of the Chinmaya Mission
6. H.E. Shri Tamanya Lal, High Commissioner of India
7. Excellences of the Diplomatic Corps
8. Shri Maneet Kapoor from the UK
9. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Arts and Culture
10. Shri Suresh Ramburn, Chairman, India Mauritius Trade and Cultural Friendship Foundation
11. Dear Brothers and Sisters of Mauritius and India, and dear Students

Namasté, Good Morning, Jai Shri Krishna

I must say to you all how thrilled I am, how happy I am to be addressing you here in this beautiful auditorium that bears the name of an illustrious Indian Spiritual leader, Swami Vivekananda. His very name conjures up in our mind the great speech he made in Chicago at the International Council of religions starting with the words “brothers and sisters of America”. That speech has been a major cultural landmark in promoting Indian Culture and the age old indian values to the world. Since then a

lot of ground has been covered to promote and propagate Indian Culture, traditions and values among the Indian diaspora and across the world.

The Bhagwad Gita Mahotsav has the same purpose. That of promoting and propagating human values contained in the Bhagwad Gita, the most popular and valued indian scripture.

I am very happy today, that, we, in Mauritius are being able to organise the Bhagavad Gita Mahotsav in our country, the first outside India to do so. The theme chosen is most appropriate given the dearth of peace and brotherhood and human values both at the individual level and on the international scale. The Bhagwad Gita is indeed an epitome of peace, brotherhood and humanity.

This festival has been organised in Kurukshetra,, North India since 1989, and since 2016 on an international scale, with partner countries. In 2017 and 2018, Mauritius was a partner country in the Mahotsav in Haryana. In 2017, Honourable Rampertaub attended the festival accompanied by a cultural troupe and last year I had the honour of representing Mauritius as a Partner country along with a cultural troupe which presented a Krishna Leela dance item. The theme was *“The relevance of the Gita in Modern life”*.

I must say that it was a most enriching and memorable experience for me especially the Maha Aarti at the Brahma Sarovar, the Gita Aarti and the exhibition depicting the appreciative comments of the great minds of the world on the Gita. I had the opportunity of delivering a speech in English on the given theme at the Kurukshetra University. When the proposition to hold the Mahotsav in Mauritius was intimated to me, I welcomed the

idea, without taking any commitment, hoping in my heart that we would be able to rise to the challenge.

We in Mauritius must feel really honoured and happy that we are the first country among Indian Diaspora countries to host the Mahotsav. I must say that when the proposition was brought to Mauritius, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Arts and Culture and subsequently, the Cabinet of Ministers and Cultural Associations welcomed the proposition. Here I must thank all the participating Cultural Centres and Associations and Speaking Unions for the great interest they have shown in the project and for their precious contribution. My thanks and appreciation also to the staff of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, to the MGI and the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture.

I would like to-day to especially welcome Swami Gyananandji and all the nearly 300 delegates from India, UK, Canada and other countries.

As you all know, the Mahotsav started yesterday afternoon with a Yatra. We were fortunately blessed with a bright sunny weather. The Yatra started at the Mariammen Kovil in Trianon. The procession, led by a ratham and followed by a number of floats depicting the message of Shri Krishna and some 200 devotees marched along to trunk road to reach the ISKCON centre in Phoenix, singing all along the way the ever green mantra “*Hare Rama Hare Rama Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare*”.

Tomorrow we will have the great pleasure of welcoming the Honourable Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Manohar Lall, who will be the Chief Guest for the day and we are looking forward to listening to his message.

At the Gita Mohotsav I attended in Haryana last year I was also greatly impressed and enriched by the writings of great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, .Leo Tolstoy, Ralph Emerson and Henri Thoreau among others on the Bhagwad Gita.

These have been exhibited in the lobby for your benefit. I hope you will take time to read them and be enriched.

In these 2 days' conference, we will also be gratified with speeches on the Gita by non-Hindu speakers. The Gita contains a message of peace, brotherhood and humanity for the whole mankind, not just for Hindus or Indians.

Before the Mahabharatha war we could see how Krishna was a messenger of peace. The Pandavas were being deprived of their rightful ownership of their land in Hastinapur. Krishna went to meet Durodhan and the Kauravas clan for peace on behalf of the Pandavas.

But Duroydhan, out of greed, arrogantly refused. And war inevitable. A war between the Kauravas, who represent the forces of evil and the Pandavas who represent the forces of good took place. I must pose here, to ask why do we need to know about a war that is supposed to have taken place thousands of years before Christ?

The answer to this question is simply that the Kurukshetra war lends itself to be interpreted as an allegory.

The Kurukshetra symbolises the human mind and the Pandavs symbolise the forces of good – our good tendencies of righteousness, good character

and right choices. The Kauravas symbolise our bad tendencies evil thoughts of greed, anger, revenge and violence. There always is an ongoing battle that happens in our minds: should we be honest in our business dealings, or should we be loyal in our relationships or should we give in to transient and immoral temptations in corruption. Should we think positively or negatively....the list is endless. In the Mahabharata war Duryodhan chose Shri Krishna's army for his help because he focused on material gain, while Arjuna selected Shri Krishna's wisdom for his support. On the battle field, Arjuna finds himself dejected, he is beset by weakness born out of doubt. He refused to fight but he has the good sense to turn to Krishna for advice. Krishna's advice was to rise and fight for righteousness against unrighteousness.

In our everyday life, when we are faced with difficult situations and have to take decisions, what can we do? We too can turn to Krishna for advice by looking up in the Bhagawad Gita which is a source of inspiration, an epitome of peace because if we follow Krishna's advice we can be sure to have a peaceful mind. And a peaceful mind will bring happiness. One powerful piece of advice in the Bhagwad Gita is found in sloka 2.47.

Seek to perform your duty, but not claim to its fruits. Be you not the producer of the fruits of karma – neither shall you lean towards inaction. Good accrues from detachment and never attachment”.

When duty is discharged untarnished by desire, clarity of understanding ensues. In addition to it, efficiency increases. The work is successfully accomplished.

Karma therefore has to be performed perfectly by the aspirant, unmindful of the fruits thereof.

Verse 48 further consolidates the idea of how one should perform one's duty.

Krishna says to Arjuna and to us:

“Perform action, O Dhananjaya, being fixed in yoga, renouncing attachment, and even-minded in success and failure; Equilibrium. is verily yoga”. Karma Yoga.

A Karma yogi places himself in a position of a willing servant, ever to fulfil his duty to the best of his ability. An attitude of this kind eliminates attachment.

The Gita talks about three modes of liberation, of attaining peace at the individual level – the path of action – karma yoga

- The path of devotion – shakti yoga and the path of knowledge – Gyana Yoga.

The Gita says that the path of devotion is open to all men and women – great and small, strong and weak, and learned and illiterate.

Devotion in itself is both the practice and the reward.

The key point in the path of devotion is the whole-heartedness in the love of God.

The path of knowledge says that the root cause of bondage is the ignorance of the true nature of our being. It is our ignorance of the nature that traps us in the web of endless desires.

True knowledge enables us to see the embodied self – that is the soul, the atma – that has to be liberated.

The atma – our individual soul is of the same nature as the super soul, the Paramatma – the divine.

We should know that it is our senses, mind and ego which derive their power from our own attachment to the worldly relationships – to the material world; that disturb us and drive us onto the wrong path.

Therefore the secret of success is the path of knowledge – i.e Gyana Yoga.

The Bhagawat Gita wonderfully harmonizes the philosophy of action, devotion and knowledge.

For attainment of perfection all three yogas – that is Karma Yoga, Shakti Yoga, and Gyana Yoga must be harmoniously blended.

Brothers and sisters, the Bhagwad Gita is a great treasure for mankind.

Bhagwad Gita, if righteously understood and acted upon, is a potent tool to bring about global peace and harmony. Bhagwad Gita teaches unity, equality equal mindedness. The Gita is a source of inspiration and enlightenment and can be the medicine for many mental crisis. There is

therefore a great need to give all over support to the Global Inspiration and Enlightenment Organisation (GIEO) being spearheaded by Swami Gyananandji Maharaj. We can pledge all our support to your mission. This Bhagwad Gita Mahotsav being organised here in Mauritius is a proof.

Jai Shri Krishna.

Danyavaad.