

श्री सनातन धर्म सभा – दक्षिण आफ्रिका

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GITA JAYANTI



Gita Jayanti is the birthday of the Bhagavad Gita. It was on this day, six thousand years ago that the Srimad Bhagavad Gita was spoken by Lord Sri Krishna to HIS dear most devotee Arjuna. This day, referred to as GITA JAYANTI, is the celebration of the anniversary of the sacred scripture. Annually, it occurs on the 11th day (EKADASI) of the bright half (SHUKLA PAKSHA) of the month of MAARGSHEESH (November/December)

Ekadashi is an auspicious day for austerities and worship dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The word Ekadashi means eleventh and refers to the “thithi” (Hindu date) on which it is observed. Each Hindu month has two “pakshas” comprising 15 thithis each. A thithi is similar to a day; however, it does not necessarily begin at sunrise and end at sunset. The pakshas are called the Krishna Paksha (“dark fortnight”) and the Shukla Paksha (“bright fortnight”). We therefore have two ekadashis in every Hindu month, one in the dark fortnight and one in the bright fortnight on which devotees observe fast and worship Lord Vishnu. There are 24 Ekadashis

in a year. Each of these Ekadashi's has a special name. The Gita Jayanti Ekadashi is called Mokshada Ekadashi.

Traditionally, devotees go to Kurukshetra and recite Bhagavad Gita from early morning until the next morning, perform Aarti to Bhagavad Gita and to Krishna and offer lamps (deep daan) on the day of Gita Jayanti. Devotees who cannot get to Jyotisar Tirtha (the name now given to the place where the Bhagavad Gita dialogue took place), remember the blessed event by reciting Bhagavad Gita, performing hawan and discussing the subject matter of the Bhagavad Gita in the association of devotees. Distribution of Bhagavad Gitas on this day is also a very auspicious activity to perform.

The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are based on the Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita provides the concise conclusion of the millions of verses in all the Vedic scriptures. In just eighteen chapters containing seven hundred verses, Sri Krishna answers all questions about the duty of the living entity. In glorifying the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Siva says in the Gita Mahatmya (Padma Purana) that it is sufficient to lead one to liberation.

The Varaha Purana contains a section on Gita Mahatmya – Glory of the Gita. In this Gita Mahatmya a conversation takes place between Mother Earth and Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu says to Mother Earth:

प्रारब्धं भुञ्जमानोपि गीताभ्यासे सदा रतः । स मुक्तः स सुखी लोके कर्मणा नोपबध्यते ॥

prārabdham bhujamānoipi gītābhyāse sadā rataḥ| sa muktaḥ sa sukhī loke
karmanā nopabadhyate||

Though engaged in the performance of worldly duties, one who is regular in the study of the Gita becomes free. He is the happy man in this world. He is not bound by Karma.

The Gita is a scripture intended for ordinary men and women, without any discrimination by way of gender, caste or creed, for people to live their daily lives in accordance with the advice given.

Shri Vishnu continues in his conversation with Mother Earth:

सहायो जायते शीघ्रं यत्र गीता प्रवर्तते । यत्र गीता विचारश्च पठनं पाठनं तथा । तत्राहं
निश्चितं पार्थ निवसामि सदैव हि ॥

sahāyo jāyate śīghraṁ yatra gītā pravarttate| yatra gītā vicāraśca paṭhanam
pāṭhanam tathā| tatrāham niścitam pārtha nivasāmi sadaiva hi||
Help comes quickly where the Gita is recited and O Earth, I ever dwell where
it is read, heard, taught and contemplated upon.

Lord Vishnu further states in the Gita Mahatmya:

गीताभ्यासं पुनः कृत्वा लभते मुक्तिमुत्तमाम् । गीतोच्चारणसंयुक्तो भ्रियमाणो गति लभेत् ॥

gītābhyāsam punaḥ kṛtvā labhate muktimuttamām| gītoccāraṇasamyukto
mriyamāṇo gati labhet||

By repeated study of the Gita, a person attains liberation. Uttering the word
Gita at the time of death, a person attains liberation.

The Mahabharata also sings the glory of the Bhagavad Gita.

गीता सुगीता कर्तव्या किमन्यैः शास्त्र संग्रहैः । या स्वयं पद्मनाभस्य मुखपद्मा द्विनिः सृता ॥
सर्वशास्त्रमयी गीता सर्वदेवमयो हरिः । सर्वतीर्थमयी गंगा सर्ववेदमयो मनुः ॥ गीता गंगा च
गायत्री गोविन्देति हृदि स्थिते । चतुर्गकारसंयुक्ते पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥ भारतामृतसर्वस्व गीताया
मथितस्य च । सारमुद्धृत्य कृष्णेन अर्जुनस्य मुखे हुतम् ॥

The purport of this is that the Gita is the essence of all Hindu scriptures. We should make a
careful study of the Gita because the words of the Gita are those of Shri Vishnu himself. Just
as Hari (God) is the Supreme, and Ganga is the foremost among places of pilgrimage, in the
same way the Gita is the foremost among Hindu scriptures. Those who recite with devotion
the four names – Gita, Ganga, Gayatri and Govind will attain liberation.

The popularity and reverence of the Bhagavad Gita is such, that it has been included in the
famous collection *Sacred Books of the East* and it is also one of the most widely read texts of
the world (De, 2000: 6). According to Hunt, Oderberg and Van Mater (1974: 2):

I find myself asking why is it that such an ancient book as the Bhagavad Gita has
become so popular today. I think it only proves the strength of the noble teachings
that are involved in it, and that these universal principles endure even though they are

expressed in different ways in the various philosophic scriptures of the world. What it all comes down to is that it is an intensely practical book, and in many ways one of the most beautiful. It helps us to understand how we can live in society and still make spiritual values the real motivation of our lives. Because what the Bhagavad Gita enjoins is the importance of the inner life; that this is what motivates us, and what motivates all life in the universe.

The Gita tells us our lives can be kept pure. It comes to our help whenever we are doing something. But it does not leave us there, it takes us by the hand and leads us right to the goal. The Gita is prepared to go to the lowest, the weakest and the least refined of persons. The voice of the Bhagavad Gita is the call of the Supreme. It is the divine sound explained. It is a source of power and wisdom. It strengthens us when we are weak and inspires us when we are feeble. It teaches us to embrace righteousness and resist unrighteousness.

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