



ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 18: Mokṣa-Sannyāsa-Yoga

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Interpreter: SENIOR TRAINER SOU SHRADDHA JI RAODEO

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/VFAg7Rxx6ls>

The Distinctions in Happiness and the True implication of the four Varnas

The evening started with the lighting of the lamp and prayers to Ma Sharada and our Guru.

We have so far learnt important principles of life in this 'Ek Adhyayi Gita'. It is a blessing and a wonderful opportunity for us that on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tertiya we are getting to learn further the content of this holiest of all knowledge. It is a practice for people to buy gold on Akshaya Tertiya. For the learners of Gita, this knowledge is no less than a goldmine. In the previous sessions, we have gone through three kinds of knowledge, actions, doers of actions, intellect and Dhriti respectively.

In this discourse we will see how Sri Krishna takes us to a topic which is a favourite of everyone, for who does not hanker for it? The topic revolves around happiness. It is after all, the ultimate goal of our lives.

Some people are asked if they want wealth, marriage or delicious savouries, and they might refuse it as these pleasures may not coincide with their larger goals. **However, if these very people are asked if they want happiness, it is highly improbable that even one of them would refuse it.**

The great Buddha left his home and his kingdom because he realized that wordly acquisitions are nothing but a gilded cage that trap a person into bondage. He wanted happiness that would come out of knowledge.

As discussed earlier, there is nothing in this world that does not come under the sway of the three gunas. **Happiness is no different, and like all the other aspects of life that fall under the purview of Prakriti, happiness too falls under three categories, dictated by the three gunas, namely, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.** It would be wrong though to assume that these gunas exist in isolation. Everything on earth is a merge and mix of these three gunas. It is the composition and extent to which one guna predominates over the other two, that makes us assign objects and persons into a definite category of either Sattva, Rajas or Tamas.

The next few shlokas describe the categories under which happiness can be demarcated.

18.36

sukhaṃ(n) tvidānīṃ(n) trividhaṃ(m), śṛṇu me bhāratarṣabha, abhyāsādRāmate yatra, duḥkhāntaṃ(ñ) ca nigacchati. 18.36

Now hear from Me the threefold joy too. That in which the striver finds enjoyment through practice of adoration, meditation and service to God etc., and whereby he reaches the end of sorrow-such a joy,

Addressing Arjuna as 'the best of the Bharata dynasty', Sri Krishna tells him to listen to HIM as HE explains the three kinds of happiness in which the embodied soul rejoices, and reaches the end of all suffering.

Before understanding the three types of happiness, let us first analyze the definition and implication of this term. The Shastras say that happiness stands for anything that is 'anukul' or favourable to us. Hence, 'sukh' or happiness is to be taken in the context of the situation. Two months back, we were all in the grip of the cold wave during winters. A warm and cozy blanket would be the need of the hour at that time, and give us immense happiness. At present we are at the threshold of summers. Soon we will be facing the worst of heat as the summer advances and blankets would no longer be considered favourable; instead it is the air-conditioners and coolers that would be the new criteria for happiness. And when the monsoons approach, the Air-conditioners too would become unwanted. It is clear therefore that what we want at that particular time, defines our perception of happiness. **However, our yardstick of happiness may not match up with that of the others.**

In many families, the elderly ladies get up very early at dawn to follow up with their daily chores such as bathing and offering pujas. For them, happiness lies in following this morning routine as they are used to it. On the other hand, the younger generation from the same families would consider it cumbersome to get up so early. For them, bliss would lie in waking up at a leisurely time not before 8 am. Yet other youngsters would derive pleasure out of observing a more disciplined lifestyle and engaging in wholesome exercises like long walks and Surya Namaskar to keep themselves fit. It is evident that people judge happiness by different parameters.

Let us take the example of our own freedom fighters and great leaders.

Balgangadhar Tilak was imprisoned in the Mandalay prison (in present day Myanmar) for a long time. When Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose visited this prison, he could not stand it for even two hours! He wondered how Tilak ji could have spent so many years in this dank, confined place! What is worth noting is that it is from these very places of detention that our freedom fighters like Savarkar and Tilak ji churned out great granthas or books because of 'abhyāsādrāmate' as they had immense capacity to focus on their work even in the worst of adversities and be in a state of perpetual happiness. Whatever a person is habituated to, would indicate his definition of happiness.

18.37

yattadagre viṣamiva, pariṇāme'mṛtopamam, tatsukhaṃ(m) sāttvikaṃ(m) proktam, ātmabuddhiprasādajam. 18.37

though appearing as poison in the beginning, tastes like nectar in the end; hence that joy, born as it is of the placidity of mind brought about by meditation on God, has been declared as Sāttvika.

That which seems like poison at the beginning but tastes like nectar in the end, is said to be in the Sattvika mode. It is generated by the pure intellect that is situated in self knowledge.

If we want to lose weight for example, and feel healthy, we would have to get up in the morning, go for

long walks, engage in a balanced diet and so on. Initially, this regulated lifestyle would seem like poison or 'viṣamiva' to us. The outcome of this disciplined approach however, would be like 'amrit'. Here, poison refers to anything that is difficult and appears detestable. Some people start the practice of doing exercises and Surya namaskar, but find it so tough to continue as they go through initial exhaustion and body pain. Nonetheless, the end result is better health, more sprightliness, increased capacity to do work and more accomplishments. **It is this kind of happiness that will lead one to ātmabuddhi or knowledge of the self and eternal bliss.**

We need to understand that the body is made up of matter or prakriti and consciousness or the purusha. The subconscious that resides within us is a part of Paramatma, who is a form of Sachidananda that personifies happiness. Happiness is hence in our very nature! **Sattvika sukh leads us from the feeling of 'I am happy' to the awareness that 'I am happiness itself'.**

We cannot imagine the Sun without light. Just like the light is a form of Sun, similarly Paramatma is happiness or Sachidananda; hence, we, being a part of Paramatma, are also happiness personified. **The beauty of the Sattvika sukh is that it leads to happiness that needs no reason to celebrate its joyful state. Sattvika people do not attach any conditions to their happiness. They are joyous under all circumstances.**

Often we come across people who are perpetually lamenting without any basis. They are the very antithesis of those who belong to the Sattvika mode of nature. For the Sattvika person, happiness is eternal bliss- free from the influence of external worldly factors; it is 'ātmabuddhiprasādam' or self knowledge that is generated by pure intellect.

The next shloka describes a 'sukh' which is one level lower.

18.38

viṣayendriyaśaṃyogād, yattadagre'mṛtopamam, pariṇāme viṣamiva, tatsukhaṃ(m) rājasam(m) smṛtam. 18.38

The delight which ensues from the contact of the senses with their objects is eventually poisonlike, though appearing at first as nectar; hence it has been spoken of as Rājasika.

Happiness is said to be in the Rajasik mode when it is derived from the contact of the senses with the sense-objects. **Such happiness brings much pleasure in the beginning, only to cause distress in the end.**

People in whom the Rajasik guna is predominant, are immersed in the worldly pleasures that their senses lead them on to. They indulge in excessive eating, drinking and other such activities that give a lot of gratification in the beginning, but end up causing pain. Who does not love savoring ice-creams, mangoes and Aamras during the summer months? Knowing fully well that we should not eat these food items beyond a certain limit, we nevertheless throw caution to the wind and cater to our insatiable appetites.

There are cases of diabetic people who would rather indulge in excessive intake of sweets and increase their dosage of daily medication than pay heed to the consequences of taking prohibited food items. **In other words, the outcome is, as expressed metaphorically, sheer 'viṣamiva' or akin to poison.**

A mother forcing her child's mouth wide open to administer bitter medicine is a Sattvika gesture as the result of the intake of medicine is that it will cure the child. However, watching TV beyond a certain limit affords Rajasik happiness as it affects our eyes adversely.

All said and done, at least in the beginning if not at the end, the Rajasik happiness also makes one

experience amrit . **There are other kinds of happiness that give no amrit.** The next shloka deals with such a kind of base happiness.

18.39

**yadagre cānubandhe ca, sukhaṃ(m) mohanamātmanaḥ,
nidrālasypamādotthaṃ(n), tattāmasamudāhṛtam. 18.39**

That which stupefies the Self during its enjoyment as well as in the end-derived from sleep, indolence and obstinate error, such delight has been called Tāmasika.

One cannot help but notice that the word 'Amrit' is missing from this kind of happiness which is Tamasik in nature. **Neither is it good to begin with, nor favourable to end with.** Take the example of people who are habituated to tobacco. Knowing fully well the dangers of taking this harmful substance, they are nevertheless addicted to it. It is moha, greed and indolence that prompt them to seek this imaginary happiness. This is also the happiness that arises out of sleep and indolence.

We all know that a certain amount of sleep is essential for our wellbeing. However, getting completely dominated by this pleasure and indulging in activities that are harmful is typically a Tamasik pursuit of happiness. In some unfortunate families, we find that the man of the house does not work as he is addicted to undesirable habits. Instead, his wife toils day and night to make ends meet. Such a Tamasik man leads an aimless and futile life.

Our aim in life should be to stay away from the Tamasik pleasures, reduce Rajasik gratifications and analyze how we can gradually progress to the Sattvik mode of happiness. That is the only way by which we can enjoy eternal bliss. Just like the Sun emanates brilliant light, similarly we will be illuminated with indefatigable happiness.

Devotees from the Geeta Pariwar are an ideal example of Sattvik happiness. Some members of our pariwar are always happy and spread happiness all around them. They are in fact, happiness personified! **We should never forget that this eternal bliss is our internal nature while the external worldly factors are the outer blankets that veil our true 'sum and substance'.**

Yogeshwar says that everything around us has inherited these three gunas. Since there is no escaping from these three modes of material nature, we should at least aspire to imbibe the Sattvik way of life.

18.40

**na tadasti pṛthivyāṃ(m) vā, divi deveṣu vā punaḥ,
sattvaṃ(m) prakṛtijairmuktaṃ(m), yadebhiḥ(s) syāttribhirguṇaiḥ. 18.40**

There is no being on earth, or in the middle region or even among the gods or anywhere else, who is free from these three Guṇas, born of Prakṛti.

Sri Krishna explains in this shloka that everything around us, including the celestial abodes like the Swargaloka, the Deva loka, the Pataal Loka and of course our own Prithvi constitutes these three gunas. **None can escape from their overpowering influence, whether it is a plant, an insect, an animal or a human.** Even the Gods residing in the Swargaloka are not entirely free of these gunas as they originate from Prakriti, which is by nature 'trigunatmika'.

The concept of 'Trigunamika' can best be explained with the example of mud. Whether it is a pot, a jar, a

'suraahi' or a matka, they are all made of the common element, that is, mud. **Similarly, whatever falls in the domain of Prakriti, will comprise the common element, that is, the three gunas as Prakriti itself is 'trigunatmika'.**

The word 'Sattvam' in this shloka refers not to the Sattva guna but to the substance. All our knowledge, actions, the nature of the doer, our intellect, and our dhriti can be traced to this substance that constitutes the three gunas.

Uptill now, whatever Sri Krishna has explained, pertains to the individual level. **From the next shloka onwards, HE takes the conversation with Arjuna one step ahead, giving it a social tilt that reflects a comprehensive view on society.**

18.41

brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṃ(m), śūdrāṇāṃ(ñ) ca parantapa, karmāṇi pravibhaktāni, svabhāvaprabhavaairguṇaiḥ. 18.41

The duties of the Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas, as well as of the Śūdras have been assigned according to their innate modes of Prakṛti (Guṇas), Arjuna.

We all know that the social order prescribed in our scriptures and in our Sanatana Dharma comprises the four castes, called the 'chatur varnas, namely, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and **śūdrā**. This caste system happens to be a topic of great controversy, subject to baseless commentaries and hence, much misunderstood. These misconceptions unfortunately, have been embedded in our society.

We should be aware that our Shastras are perfect and the reason why this social order was created was to strengthen the stability of our society. Those of us who understand the principles of management will see how its fundamental propositions are used in every sphere of life, be it the office, financial institutions, the educational system, our homes or even our Geeta Pariwar.

On a closer scrutiny one will find that our social order has been established by our Maharishis for the management of society. Our Swamiji always says that our society is standing on 16 pillars of which four are these chatur varnas or the four castes. This social order has given so much stability to our society since endless yugas! Today if our Sanatana Dharma is stable it is because of such a strong foundation. It is both a natural as well as a scientific way of maintaining society.

Taking the context of organizations or even countries all around the world, we see four divisions at play that ensure successful operation in any system:

- Knowledge centric
- Strength centric
- Wealth centric
- Service centric.

The entire organization at every place works along these divisions. In a similar way, the chatur varnas are revolving precisely around these principles of work. **The knowledge component of any operation is symbolized by the Brahmin, while the strength is exemplified by the Kshatriyas. The creation of wealth is the domain of the Vaishyas whereas providing services would be the privilege of the śūdrās.**

Over the years, due to invasions and subsequent atrocities perpetrated on the Sanatanis, certain distortions have definitely seeped into this social order. **However, we cannot use a few misrepresented contortions to pass sweeping judgment against the social order as a whole.** It is as absurd as tarnishing black the reputation of the entire community of medical practitioners, based on the corrupt actions and greed of a select few doctors. Instead, we should appreciate how strong and robust this ancient social order and management was.

18.42

**śamo damastapaḥ(ś) śaucaṃ(ñ), kṣāntirārjavameva ca,
jñānaṃ(m) vijñānamāstikyaṃ(m), brahmakarma svabhāvajam. 18.42**

Subjugation of the mind and senses, enduring hardships for the discharge of one's sacred obligations, external and internal purity, forgiving the faults of others, straightness of mind, senses and behaviour, belief in the Vedas and other scriptures, God and life after death etc., study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures and realization of the truth relating to God-all these constitute the natural duties of a Brāhmaṇa.

Tranquility, restraint, austerity, purity, patience, integrity, knowledge, wisdom and faith in the existence of the great Cosmic Power, mark the intrinsic qualities of work for the Brahmins. In other words, Brahmins are knowledge-centric, totally engaged in acquisition of knowledge. The first quality mentioned in this shloka is śama which refers to a mind free of all distractions and completely tranquil. Our mind frequently gets diverted from the task at hand by mundane matters like the ringing of the phone or the TV Serials. The capacity to focus on the work assigned or where needed is śama.

Damah means controlling the senses and sense organs. Desiring an ice-cream yet having the ability to control the temptation is an example of Damah. Tapah means austerity. For the Brahmin, tapah is very important and includes the basic spiritual practices such as meditation. Tapah also alludes to the peaceful and calm way in which one faces and bears difficulties and obstacles that come in the way of one's spiritual practices. Getting agitated and upset over a person distracting one while one is engaged in japa, is an example of absence of the quality of Tapah. At many places in the Gita, the word Tapah has been mentioned, stressing its importance. In this shloka the word refers to the peace and forbearance one should exercise in the face of adversities and obstructions that often crop up in the path to spiritual progress.

The word śaucaṃ means, cleanliness-not just of the body but of the mind, speech, all the indriyas or sense organs, that is, what we hear, see and think. We have to be 'antarbaahyashuchita' which means cleanliness from within and also externally. Complete peace and absence of the urge to retaliate is śānti. While driving, we come across people who want to overtake us. Immediately the ego issue crops up and anger swells up within. Even if one overtakes without any conscious intention, the other vehicle would retaliate by speeding up and driving right ahead of the vehicle. Road rage is the frequent outcome of such a revengeful and retributive mindset.

Let us look at the example of Dyaneshwar Maharaj who, along with his siblings faced such hostile and struggling situations in life. Never once did he even dream of harboring any vindictive thoughts against the

society that subjected him and his family to such trials and tribulations, even though he wielded the power to inflict his wrath. Hence, absence of vindictive feelings and a spirit of forgiveness marks the quality of Shanti. There are some amongst us who might not overtly be involved in any direct action of rage, but would nevertheless be abusive. This verbal aggression is equally undesirable.

When we engage in any aggressive reaction, our stock of good karmas get depleted. On the other hand, if we are able to bear the abominable behavior of the other person, then all our own doshas will get transferred to the other person. Sri Krishna mentions in the second chapter:

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत

(One must learn to tolerate these fleeting perceptions of happiness and distress without being disturbed, O Bharata)

Yogeshwar also mentions the term 'Arajvam' or simplicity. Nowadays we are exposed to so much cunningness and deceit that is regularly depicted in the TV serials. No matter what the circumstances, we should ensure that our minds do not get corrupted. We just have to look at the sterling example of Dyaneshwar Maharaj who refused to get drawn into the murky politics indulged in by the people around him.

The above mentioned qualities indicate the nature of the Brahmin. These are the characteristics that a Brahmin should aspire for.

18.43

**śauryaṃ(n) tejo dhṛtirdākṣyaṃ(m), yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam,
dānamīśvarabhāvaśca, kṣātraṃ(ñ) karma svabhāvajam. 18.43**

Heroism, majesty, firmness, diligence and dauntlessness in battle, bestowing gifts, and lordliness-all these constitute the natural duty of a Kṣatriya.

Bravery and fearlessness or śauryaṃ distinguishes the Kshatriya from the other castes. Our soldiers protect us by standing guard at the country's borders. What would happen to us if they abandoned their duties and ran away? These soldiers are fearless. **A kshatriya is meant to be as brave as a tiger who walks boldly and fearlessly. Even the tiger's cubs are equally fearless.**

Shivaji Maharaj is one such example of valour. Once as a child, he was being accompanied by his father who was serving under the Mughals at that time. On the way, they saw a man dragging a cow ruthlessly. Shivaji, barely nine or ten years old at that time, heedless of the fact that his own father was an employee of the Mughals, stood in the way of that tormentor and demanded that the man stop this atrocity against the hapless cow. The young Shivaji was aware that 'Gau raksha' or protection of the cow and the other creatures was his dharma. Highly offended, the enraged man took out his knife to get even with Shivaji, claiming that he would do whatever he wished to do with the cow as the poor bovine belonged to him. With one stroke of his sword, the little Shivaji cut off the man's hand! **The sheer courage that Shivaji showed even as a child is mesmerizing indeed!**

When the father Shahaji and his brave son Shivaji visited the court of the Mughal emperor, the former obviously bowed down as a mark of respect to the reigning king, Aurangzeb. Shivaji however, stood with his arms folded, refusing to bow down. Once they were back home, Shahaji confronted the mother, Jijabai,

asking her what she had taught her son, who refused to even obey him! Jijabai then turned to Shivaji asking him to answer this question himself. **Shivaji replied that his mother had taught him not only how to bow down, but also WHOM TO bow down to! An emperor who is cruel to cows, who destroys temples, who tramples upon his helpless subjects heartlessly, certainly does NOT deserve any salutation or respect!**

What is Tejo? Tejah is the power by which even sinners would be scared of committing a crime in front of a brave person. During Shivaji's tenure as king, no one had the courage to carry out a heinous and unlawful activity.

We have come across the word 'Dhritih' in the previous sessions. **It denotes unwavering firmness and resolve by which we take our actions to their successful completion.** The word dākṣya implies caution. Besides being courageous, one should also exercise caution. Shivaji knew very well the strength of his army versus that of the opponent's army, and planned his strategies accordingly, with caution and wisdom. Swamiji always says that this shloka would remind anyone of the mighty Shivaji whose endless stories of valour hold us captivated.

When Shivaji Maharaj and his son were captured by Aurangzeb, there was no place from where he could escape. He therefore bided his time, waiting for the right moment to plan a breakthrough. This was not Shaurya but Dhriti on the part of the great Maratha warrior.

Furthermore, a Kshatriya is not meant to run away from the battlefield. If our own soldiers decided to abandon their posts, one can well imagine what the plight of the countrymen would be, who rely on these bravehearts for their safety and protection.

Sri Bhagavan had mentioned in the second chapter:

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम्

(if you fight, you will either be slain on the battlefield and go to the celestial abodes or you will gain victory and enjoy the kingdom on Earth).

For a Kshatriya therefore, it is not winning or losing but standing in the face of the most dangerous situations in war that matters.

Danam is yet another aspect that defines the Kshatriya dharma. Chapter 17 has dealt extensively with the concept of Daanan or charity. The ideal charity is that which is given to the right, deserving person at the appropriate time , in the mode of Sattva. The feeling should be that of 'Ishwar bhavashcha' - that is the sense of being the caretaker and not the proprietor of any society, ensuring the wellbeing and safety of the subjects.

18.44

**kṛṣigaurakṣyavāṇijyaṃ(m), vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam,
paricaryātmakaṃ(ñ) karma, śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam. 18.44**

Agriculture, rearing of cows and honest exchange of merchandise-these constitute the natural duty of a Vaiśya (a member of the trading class); and service of the other classes is the natural duty even of a Śūdra (a member of the labouring class).

What are the actions of the Vaishyas? Agriculture, rearing cattle, doing Gau sewa is the Vaishya's dharma. In the olden days our society was dependent on cattle rearing. Sri Krishna's father Nand received this title and name because he was the owner of more than a lakh cows! One should try to understand in detail the

significance of looking after the cows and why it was considered important in the society of yesteryears.

Vāṇijyaṃ or pure trade meant ensuring that people received all the commodities necessary for survival by the trader, no matter how far-flung an area the people would be living in.

The next line of this shloka is much misunderstood. **We have to first understand that the correct word as implied in this shloka is śūdra, that starts with the letters 'Sh' and not 'Ksh'.** A fine distinction can be observed in the pronunciation of this word as it appears with a different spelling and different meaning in the second chapter:

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं

Through these above given words in the second chapter, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna to give up his petty and undesirable weakness of the heart.

Here the word 'Kshudram' means something that is not good. **Pronunciation is therefore very important as it changes the meaning of the shloka!**

Engineers, doctors, plumbers, artisans, laborers- all come under this category of the Shudras. **How can such people be thought of as belonging to a lower social strata in terms of caste?** If the lights go on while the Geeta classes are going on, the first person we would need is the electrician. While taking a bath early morning before performing our puja, if hot water is not available, the only person that comes to mind is the plumber. If we are able to enjoy our classes from the safety of our homes, it is because of the laborers who have put in an effort to build our houses. **Such professions may be assigned the category of Shudras, but they are by no means low in any respect!** They offer their services and are therefore extremely important for our well-being and for the durability of our society. We should rectify our misperceptions regarding this word Shudra.

Each and every caste bears a relevance and carries its own significance in society by virtue of the work assigned to that particular caste.

18.45

**sve sve karmaṇyabhirataḥ(s), saṃsiddhiṃ(m) labhate naraḥ,
sVākarmanirataḥ(s) siddhiṃ(m), yathā vindati tacchṛṇu. 18.45**

Keenly devoted to his own natural duty, man attains the highest perfection in the form of Godrealization. Hear the mode of performance whereby the man engaged in his inborn duty reaches that highest consummation.

What we need is to maintain a balance in society. By fulfilling their duties born of their innate qualities, human beings can attain perfection. We should therefore continuously strive to do our own work meticulously.

Suppose a plumber decides to become a priest, would that help him or the people he is serving? Conversely, if the priest decides to give up his work and become a plumber or a doctor, what possible good would it serve society? We all have to do our own work as if this is our puja. Swamiji has said that our karmas are our pujas that lead to liberation, siddhi and union with HIM. When we are focused on our karma and doing our work with full dedication, we can be led towards the greatest accomplishments. These are all very important shlokas for us to follow in our lives.

How one can attain perfection by discharging one's prescribed duties, will be discussed in the next session.

Questions & Answers Session:

Manohar ji Gadre

Question: In this adhyaya, mention of the same words occur, though their implications are different. One such word is Dhriti. Can you explain its meaning

Answer: Dhriti is the conviction to complete a task. The context in which the word is used may change, but the meaning remains the same. Just like the word 'sukh' carries a different implication in different contexts and situations but retains its basic meaning, similarly the word 'dhriti' might appear in a different backdrop, but would carry the same meaning. Suppose you have decided to learn by heart all the 18 chapters of Srimad Bhagavad Gita. How you use the power within you to complete this feat and whether you do manage to achieve this goal, points towards Dhriti.

The closing prayer was followed by a beautiful rendition of the Hanuman Chalisa.



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Jai Shri Krishna!

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