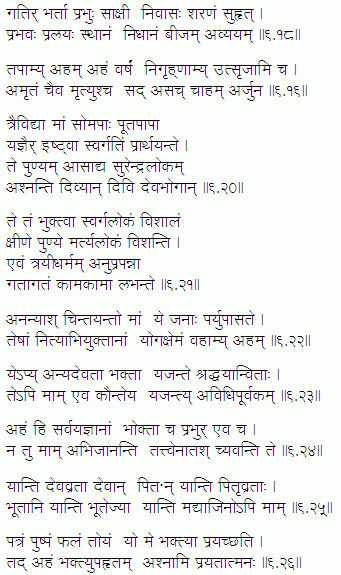


Srimad Bhagvad Gita Pooja on December 14, 2013



If a pure hearted devotee offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or even water with love and adoration, I accept it. (B.G. 9.26)

In Dracut, Massachusetts, the Merrimack Valley Chapter of the VHPA celebrated the auspicious occasion of the Gita Jayanti by holding a pooja dedicated to the Srimad Bhagvad Gita. The pooja celebrated the culmination of the reading of the eighteen chapters of the Gita under the guidance of Dr. Nand Kishore Sharma assisted by the meeting coordinator Mr. Vijay Chitra. The MV chapter has been studying the Gita each month shloka by shloka for the last 25 years.

Present were over 50 people young and old alike who braved the subfreezing temperatures and an impending snow storm convinced that it would arrive after the conclusion of the pooja. Indeed the snow storm held off until after all devotees had reached home safely. Pandit Dr. Anand Shukla from Braj Mandir presided over the vidhivat pooja by first conducting Sri Ganesh pooja, then the pooja of the Srimad Bhagvad Gita followed by a havan of the Gitaji. Panditji remarked when invoking the navgraha the remarkable fact that we need not go to any planet, when we recite the appropriate mantras then the planets themselves come to us thus illustrating the efficacy of the age old mantras, a legacy of our ancient Rishis. Led by Dr. Abhaya Asthana, the recently elected President of VHPA, the entire group participated in reciting the first and last mantra of all the eighteen chapters of the Bhagvad Gita together with ghee ahuti in the havan being poured by Sri Prahlad Sharma accompanied by his wife Smt. Bala Sharma. A Bal Vihar Mandir student from Ashland Temple, Krishna Rajagopalan studying the Gita has memorized chapter 15, the Purushottam Yoga. He recited along with other participants all the 20 shloka of chapter 15 to havan ahutis. Havan samagri was distributed to all pooja participants who were able to make their individual offering in the fire to Om Namo Bhagvate Vasudevaya, Svaha. Maha Prasad was offered to all the devi devatas and the Gitaji in the pooja. Sri Krishna says Himself that He is easily touched and happy to accept even a leaf, or a flower, or a fruit, and in the absence of all, just plain water, as long as it is offered with great love and adoration by a bhakta with a pure mind without any selfish motive. The pooja concluded with the Gitaji aarti sung by all with fervor full of adoration accompanied by a make shift ghanta and shankha nad, with the sweet fragrance of agarbatti, the havan samagri, and the lightened ghee diyas permeating the atmosphere.

Dr. Asthana as the newly elected President was then asked to give a presentation on the scope of work of Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America and its future direction. VHPA, with its 21 chapters is a national organization dedicated to serving and connecting all Hindus in North America. According to the Parishad, Hindus are all those who believe, practice, or respect the spiritual and religious principles and practices having roots in Bharat. Thus Hindu includes Jains, Buddhas, Sikhs and people of many different sects within the Hindu ethos. The word Hindu is a civilizational term - Hindu “Sanskriti.” Similarly, the word Dharma includes religious practices only as a subset. *Dharmo rakshati rakshatah* (Manusmriti 8:15) is the axiom of VHPA which translates as dharma protects those who preserve dharma. So the safeguarding of Sanatana Dharma is essential for the wellbeing of Hindus. Connecting all the different groups preserving their essence in their natural forms is one of the four main objectives of VHPA. Indian subcontinent has tremendous diversity and that is its beauty and source of strength. Many VHPA networks have arisen to meet the needs of various segments of the community including children, youth, women, elderly, Hindu Mandirs and priests. VHPA pioneered Balvihars, youth camps and youth conferences in North America. Community service (Seva) is the cornerstone of VHPA’s work since its formation in 1970. One particular seva network consists of Hindu American Vanprasthi (HAVAN) which caters to relatively healthy persons age 50 or over who no longer are actively engaged in raising families.

Caring for and selfless service to all beings and non-beings is service to God. With respect to caring for the community members, Sri Girish Mehta from the Indian Circle for Caring ([www.ouricc.org](http://www.ouricc.org)) was introduced next. ICC was established in August 2007 to fulfill a need for helping community members with health care, medical support, family crisis, and death and bereavement. This need can be on an emergency or planned basis. The organization besides providing emergency care also holds medical information seminars. Currently, it is conducting a 12 week arthritis exercise program. Their signature work has been in providing health care proxy statements and living wills where a person indicates their wishes in case unable to advocate for oneself in the future. Should a person need their services they have a list of available volunteers that can help. If anyone including vanprasthis is interested in volunteering their time and energy, they may provide their time of availability and the distance willing to travel. Should a need arise they would be contacted. It is not mandatory to volunteer if called due to change in schedule.

The pooja ended with all partaking of mahaprasad blessed by Bhagwan Sri Krishna Himself.

VHP of America is a national organization which has among its objectives to unite Hindus by instilling in them devotion to the Hindu way of life, to cultivate self-respect and respect for all people, and to establish contacts with Hindus all over the world. For more information please visit <http://www.vhp-america.org/>