

AVG Independence Day Camp 2014 with Swami Veditatmanandaji: Report

By Melkote Ramaswamy

Theme: *Yo madbhaktaha sa may priyaha.*

In Chapter 7 (Gnana Vignana Yoga) Verse 16 of Bhagvad Gita, Lord Krishna lists the following four types of Bhaktas depending on their level of emotional maturity:

Aarthi— seeks God's help only when in difficulty. God is pleased that the bhakta chose to come to Him rather than to go to a less desirable source.

Artharthi—looks for God's favor for a specific thing—like a job, son, wife, husband, house, etc. He has come to realize that only God has the power and resources to give such favors.

Jignaasu— curious to understand more about God. Already on the right track in his spiritual quest.

Gnaani—one who has discovered the essence of self as limitless entity, He is ever-happy, contented, and at peace with himself, He recognizes that he is Sat-chit-ananda.

This fourth category of Bhaktas is dear to Lord Krishna. Verses 13-20 of Chapter 12 spell out in detail the *lakshanas* or characteristics of the ultimate abiding Bhakta—Gnaani. He is also to be identified as *Sthitha-prajna* or *Jeevanmukta* or self-

realized individual—one for whom there is no re-birth since he has no unfulfilled agenda.

Such an individual who has identified himself with Ishwara sees the world as it is, accepts people as they are and looks at them as Ishwara playing roles in different costumes, Duality disappears when we realize that behind all individual costumes (self's) there is just one actor. Gnaani is one whose mind is free from Raga/Dwesha which puts labels on things and brands people and obstructs objectivity.

He has no enemies since he does not brand anyone, is happy being himself and does not depend on external objects/people for his happiness.

He has no agenda for himself and whatever he does is to fulfill others' agendas.

Vedanta offers a vision of the individual in relation to the cosmos and it is reflected in various *mahavakyas* such as:

Sarvam Kalvidam Brahman –Everything is Brahman

Aham Brahmaasmi—I am Brahman

Ishavasyamidam sarvam—Everything is Ishwara

Tat tvam asi—You are that

Note that all the *mahavakyas* are in the present tense. You already are that. You need to personally discover that. We are indeed that elusive tenth man. The true shining self is covered by the veil of ignorance and only knowledge—and knowledge alone—can remove that and scriptures provide that knowledge.

Raga and *Dweshha* raise expectations and not fulfilling them cause disappointment, frustration and anger.

A true karma yogi is aware of *Karmanyevaadhikaraste Maphaleshu kadachana* (*Gita Chapter 2-47*) and focusses on the effort which he can control, offers it to the Lord, and leaves the outcome to Bhagwan. He takes whatever he gets as prasaad. He believes in the fairness and benevolence of Bhagwan and that Bhagwan plays no favorites. It is like the rain that falls equally whether it is the pavement or grass.

The above are spontaneous values for the abiding Gnaani but are to be cultivated by us to unearth our true inner nature,

When an individual merges with Ishwara, his limitedness changes to limitlessness. This is similar to a river merging into the ocean, The river may lose its individuality but gains the ocean's mightiness.

While a Gnaani/man of wisdom is dear to the Lord, the remaining types of bhaktas at various levels of maturity are not forgotten. Lord Krishna is always with them helping and guiding in their spiritual journey.

Swami Viditatmanandaji's explanations of Bhagvad Gita and Vedanta were crystal clear and easy to take home and implement.

Other highlights of Swami Viditatmanandaji's presentation were guided meditation with *Om Namah Shivaaya* mantra, satsang and bhajans. Satsang serves as an eminent forum for campers to ask questions freely to seek clarifications and answers on things and issues that they encounter in life. Easy-to-follow Bhajans and Swamij's rich and strong voice made his singing delightful to hear, follow and learn.

Suddathmaji's chanting lesson made a tremendous impression on the campers thanks to his dynamic resonant voice and impeccable style imbued with ultimate clarity.

It was delightful to hear Mukesh Desai's classical; bhajans and to learn to sing *Har Har Har Mahadev* in raga Yaman Kalyani from a true maestro.

The camp was jam-packed with adults and children of all ages who were hard pressed to find any free time. Many might have missed newspapers, computers and TV, but were too busy to notice.

Master Chef Ramachandran's creative vegetarian menus had something for everyone, not an easy task to accomplish.

The Management's efforts to improve the campers' comfort level and provide a spiritual experience in a true home-away-from-home setting were evident in every respect.