



GLOBAL BHAGAVAD GITA
≈ CONVENTION ≈

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Global Bhagavad Gita Convention 2018 Report

The Global Bhagavad Gita Convention, themed “A Call for Personal Growth and Universal Well-Being” was held on September 15 – 16, 2018 at the Center for the Arts, Concert Hall, George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Everything about this stupendous event was sheathed in sublimity and elegance. The beautifully decorated concert hall with its grand stage and excellent sound system created the perfect nest for the hatching of spiritual awakening.

Day 1, 15th September 2018

Swamiji Bhoomananda Tirtha’s Inaugural Envisioning Address

Contact of the senses with their objects generates cold and heat, pleasure and pain. They come and go, being impermanent. Bear with them patiently, O scion of the Bharata race! BG 2.14

Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha, known as Poojya Swamiji by devotees, in his opening address elucidated that BG is a cherished historic text that has been preserved unchanged for millennia. He expounded how life is nothing but interactions, and that the Bhagavad Gita equips us to not only deal with the conflicts that arise during these interactions but also get enriched from them. The key then lies with us, and not the objects.

Swami Sarvapriyananda: Seeking the Ultimate - Guide for Spiritual Seekers

Therefore fight, remembering Me always. One who has dedicated his mind and understanding to Me, shall come to Me alone, undoubtedly. BG 8.7

The first key-note address was by Swami Sarvapriyananda. He pointed out that when Swami Vivekananda had first spoken in Chicago 125 years ago, his two main messages were inner divinity and oneness of the universe, similar to the theme of the current convention (Personal Growth and Universal Well-Being) which is the core of Vedantic teaching. Swamiji urged us to realize our true Self, then illustrated that spirituality flows from inward to outward, from knowing yourself to living life in the world.

Professor Graham Schweig: Universal Messages of Bhagavad Gita for Today’s World

Listen again to My supreme word, the profoundest of all spiritual teachings. You are well beloved of Me; and so I shall tell you what is beneficial to you. BG 18.64

Next was Professor Graham Schweig, who delivered his interpretation of 8 universal messages from the Gita, including living in a conflict-ridden world while appreciating that all of life is precious. Professor Schweig had the participants in stitches with his hilarious anecdotes but left us with a deep message—that we ultimately live in a loving universe and the divine is calling us. The question remains whether we are ready to hear it.





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Swami Nirviseshanda Tirtha: Towards Freedom and Fearlessness - A Step By Step Pursuit

The senses are great, they say. Superior to the senses is the mind, and superior even to the mind is the intellect. What is superior even to the intellect is He, the Atman. BG 3.42

The final talk of the first day was by Swami Nirviseshananda Tirtha on the steps towards freedom and fearlessness. Using an illustration of a chariot depicting the horses as the senses, reins as the mind, charioteer the intelligence, and master of chariot the Soul, Swamiji presented an in-depth analysis of the inner workings of our personality. He drove home that what the Gita entreats us to do is to reverse the slavery of our whole being to the objective sphere, allowing us to be master of the world.

Day 2, 16th September 2018

Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha: Dhyana Yoga (Yoga of Meditation) - The Science and Practice Based on Bhagavad Gita

Setting the mind firmly on the Self under the direction of a steadfast intellect, one should practice tranquility little by little, and abstain from every kind of thought. BG 6.25

This convention saw Poojya Swamiji conducting, for the first time ever, a group meditation session during a public talk. It was indeed a rare event that everyone benefited from. He emphasized that meditation is an exclusive mental process and explained the concept of optional thought, urging everyone to understand that the mind can never be affected by its own products. Finally, with the hall lights dimmed, Swamiji guided the participants to a blissful meditation session.

Ma Gurupriya: Towards the Abode of Joy and Contentment

Whose mind is not agitated in adversity, who is free from desire, and who is devoid of attachments, fear and anger- such a person is called a sage of steady wisdom. BG 2.56

Ma Gurupriya's session was uplifting and comforting like a mother's embrace. She shared that the most effective sadhana is to learn shlokas and to chant with the heart's tune. She cautioned that we can do everything in life but must always give the supreme position to Knowledge. We were all soaked in blessedness listening to Ma Gurupriya with her open heart lovingly reminding us that the infinite bliss within is our real treasure.

Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha: Key Messages in Bhagavad Gita

To work alone you have competence, and not to claim their fruits. Let not the longing of fruits be the motive force of your action. At the same time let not this attitude confirm your indolent inaction. BG 2.47





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The final session of the program was a treasure trove, where Poojya Swamiji handed us the most precious gems from the Gita. He went through almost a dozen choice shlokas, substantiating that the “Bhagavad Gita is the epitome of spiritual knowledge”. He set right the common misconception that the Bhagavad Gita wants us to renounce the results of all actions, extolling that the Gita only speaks of renouncing mental outcomes, never the objective results. Swamiji endeared himself to the audience right up to the very end, when with his characteristic exuberance he exhorted everyone to LIVE JOYFULLY.

Other Treats

Over the two days, apart from the formal lectures, there was also a panel discussion entitled “Engaging the American Adult on Bhagavad Gita”. The panelists were cardiologist Dr. Kavitha Chinnaiyan and neuroscientist Dr. Gary Weber, and moderator Professor Graham Schweig. Panelists discussed the impact the Gita had in their lives, right from childhood until their present positions as successful American adults.

The talks were interspersed with fantastic performances by children and adolescents which provided a spiritual-laced diversity to the program. There were vibrant dances by Salangai Arts and Kuchipudi Dance Academy, and an electrifying violin ensemble performance by young children from the Kalamandapam Music School which had the audience on their feet in a standing ovation.

Finally children from the JKYog Balamukund Center held the audience captive with their delightful and creative Bhagavad Gita recitations. It was truly inspiring to see the sacred words of the Gita coming alive from these youngsters.

Feedback from Attendees

We are encouraged and delighted that we received so much positive feedback about the Convention. Below is some of the feedback we received.

“IMHO, the event was very well organized and managed. The pre-convention information was well communicated and matched my expectations.” – R.B.

“Overall the programs were excellent. I am a first time attendee - and was very impressed by the speakers, their way of thinking and explaining and by how they attempt to get individuals to think in a similar manner.” – Anonymous

Center for Inner Resources Development - NA
A 501 (c) (3), Non-Profit, Tax Exempt Organization
1417 Homeric Ct. McLean, VA 22101
Tel: 703-748-8405
www.cirdna.org | info@cirdna.org





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“The speakers and panelists were well chosen to convey the message to the audience effectively. Equally important the organizers/participants chose the theme of each panel/speaker well to shine light on the Gita from different angles.” – P.B.

“I think an event like this is very needed. I’m very impressed this was put on at no charge.” -
Anonymous

“We really loved how it was organized. We really thank the organizers for doing this kind of an event. I think this is equal to any world class event that can happen. What makes it even better is it’s done by volunteers, it’s not for profit, for so many people coming in for the welfare of people in making such kind of an event happen I think that was great.” -M.N.

“Such a convention is a first of its kind and it was a truly enlightening, rekindling experience for me.” –
Dr. J.

“I felt blessed to be here. Just listening to Swamijis, to the different speakers, wonderful speeches, got a lot from it. And Once we came out, it was so seamless, everything was just clicking and it was falling into place. It was so well organized. Overall it was a very, very, very wonderful event.” -M.M.

