**Kritajnata Samarpana**

**Rewind to Aug 2016**

July 2016, Karya Siddhi Hanuman Temple witnessed a very unique event – A spell binding performance by 43 children rendering the Sampoorna Bhagavad Gita Parayana in the divine presence of HIS Holiness Parama Pujya Sri Ganapathy Sacchidananda Swamij. An event like this was never heard before.

This divine sankalpa of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji, which was brought to fruition under the able guidance of Srikanth Datta and supported by Kum.Aishwarya Lanka was loved and appreciated by one and all, within USA and worldwide. Hence, it was no surprise when enquiries started pouring in as to when the next batch of Bhagavad Gita Mahayagna classes would start. With Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s blessings, Batch 2 Gita Mahayagna Program was inaugurated on August 10, 2016. Number of initial applicants were about 500! A new category of fluent reading was introduced for adults in this batch. It was also heartening to see many adults signing up for memorization.

2017, being the birthday celebration year of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji, all participants made it a resolve to offer Sampoorna Bhagavad Gita Parayana with utmost gratitude - “*Kritajnata Samarpana*” at the lotus feet of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji.

**Making of Batch 2**

Batch 2 students hailed from across 15 states in the US, with enrollments from Trinidad & Tobago and Canada as well. Each of the centers were supported by local teachers, with able assistance from Batch 1 students and parent volunteers.

Similar to Batch 1, bi-weekly classes, weekly assessments and monthly competitions were conducted to ensure that the students stayed on top of the game. Gita related games and fun activities were also planned monthly. Parent – Teacher Meetings were set-up regularly to facilitate open communication and to set expectations. Focused Camps during Spring Break, Thanksgiving Break and Christmas Break helped the students immensely catch up with their backlogs. They learnt meanings of selected shlokas, had lots of fun playing Gita related games and got used to sitting for full-fledged parayana sessions.

Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji finalized July 16, 2017 for the Sampoorna Parayana event. Venue was going to be the Nada Mantapa at Avadhoota Datta Peetham, Mysore. Participants were excited to hear the news about the event date and the venue. They could not wait for the day to arrive. It also meant they would need to be thorough and pass all assessments put forth by the teachers to be able to participate in this event – “*Kritajnata Samarpana*”.

May 27, on the birthday of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji , Batch 2 Mahayagna students across all centers offered their first ever Sampoorna Parayana with great enthusiasm. Few of Batch 1 students also joined them.

**July Camp in Dallas, TX**

Despite the thorough practices and parayanas taking place in individual centers, one thing that was lacking so far, was that all would-be participants from Batch 2 and Batch 1 never had the opportunity of chanting as one unified group at one physical location. This was crucial to the success of “*Kritajnata Samarpana*” Parayana in terms of synchronization in pace and pitch.

To serve this purpose, a camp was organized from June 26 to July 4 in the Karya Siddhi Hanuman Temple premises for all the participants across 15 US states, Trinidad & Tobago and Canada.

Participants were thrilled beyond words when they had Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s darshan over Skype into the second day of the camp. HIS encouragement and kind words gave a big boost to all the teachers and participants. HIS care for children regarding getting mosquito repellants, avoiding oily food etc showed how lucky all the participants and families were, to be visiting their beloved Tataji/Appaji very soon. HIS mention of a trip to either Mekedatu or Lord Sri Krishna Temple at Somanathapura sent the whole audience in the Yagashala into a clapping frenzy. The Camp continued with renewed energy with parayana sessions every day focusing on coordination, pace and shruti with emphasis on the new changes incorporated as per the suggestion of Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji. Assessments were underway for those who were very close to being current in the syllabus.

Camp participants were fortunate to listen to visiting guest Sri Gopal Babu’s words of wisdom. Gopal Babu ji is a prominent judge in many a Gita Competition. He was in turn amazed at the childrens’ skills in Gita themed games like parallel chanting, Gita by numbers, Gita by meanings etc.

Few local families opened up their homes to accommodate out of town camp participants. Local participant families also pitched to provide excellent meals to all camp participants throughout the duration of the camp.

The Camp concluded on July 4 with a Sampoorna Parayana dry run, with complete audio in the main hall of KSHT. Thus, the audio semifinal round was signed off with the ‘finals’ around the corner.

**Mysore—Here we come again—for Batch 2**

Participants were instructed to arrive in Mysore no later than July 13th. NRI Gita Families and their extended families in India were accommodated inside the Ashrama, at Arka Ganapathi Kuteera and at Hotel Siddharth. Buses were arranged from the Hotel to Ashrama at regular intervals to facilitate back and forth commute.

Students got the blessed opportunity of chanting a few chapters as a practice during Sri Chakra Puja performed by Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji. Later Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji blessed everyone with HIS divine darshan from the balcony. Out of immense compassion, HE enquired to the details of the arrangements being made for the convenience of all families that have arrived for the event. All attendees were also informed about joining HIS sankalpa in performing 1 lakh Ganapati Homas. All families enthusiastically joined this wonderful initiative and felt blessed to be part of it. Those who signed up had the opportunity of receiving prasadam from Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji HIMSELF. Families also had the opportunity of listening to Yoga Vasishtha and Guru Vaibhavam discourses by Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji as part of Chaaturmasya Program.

Everyone raved about the excellent food arrangements made by the caring Ashrama staff. It was served in the Lakshmi Narasimha Kuteera’s dining hall. Under the motherly guidance of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji, great care was taken by the Annadanam team from preparing allergy-free menu to using filtered water for all cooking and serving. Visitors were pampered with 4 delicious meals every day – Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks and Dinner. One could evidently feel Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s love and compassion from such close quarters. It felt like a wedding every day, It felt like one was at their loved ones’ home. Food was served in a very traditional way on Plantain leaves. The variety of menu items was vast and the taste was delicious. Hot beverages for both adults and kids were served during breakfast and snack time. The newly inaugurated Ashrama canteen also had a great menu and served delicious food.

Practice sessions continued in full swing during mornings and evenings. They were initially conducted at the main hall of Lakshmi Narasimha Kuteera and then later moved to Nada Mantapa once the stage got ready. The beautiful Bhagavad Gita themed backdrops were mesmerizing. The lighting effects added a nice touch to the backdrop. It was pleasantly surprising to see wide tiers being set up to accommodate 131 participants. Nada Mantapa stage with all these arrangements was a sight to behold. Students practiced on the stage a couple of time as part of audio testing and seating arrangement. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji and Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji took valuable time off from their busy schedules to visit the participants on the sets of the Nada Mantapa. They lovingly encouraged everyone and wished the best for the main program on the 16th.

**July 16, 2017**

All the Mahayagna participants arrived early morning at the Ashrama. They looked splendid donning the Diksha Vastras (Dresses) specially stitched for the event. They took the blessings of Lord Dattatreya and Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s Padukas in the Prayer Hall. They stopped by at the Sri Chakrarchana Puja alter where Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji was performing the Puja. Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji having noticed the participants getting ready to leave to the Nada Mantapa for the performance, instructed the temple priest to give Aarti to them, thus bestowing the blessings.

After a nice and healthy breakfast, they proceeded to the Nada Mantapa and settled down on the stage. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji inaugurated the “*Kritajnata Samarpana*” event by lighting the lamp and performing Aarti to Lord Sri Krishna and the participants as well. Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji joined Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji in wishing the very best for the participants.

The Parayana got off to a great start with the invocation of Datta stavam and Gita Dhyana Shlokas. The chanting continued seamlessly and at a steady pace with Srikanth ji motioning the participants, to slow down, speed up, chant loudly wherever necessary. With permission from Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji , students got a 20 min break midway after chapter 9 was recited. Volunteers provided them with snacks, water, juice and tea during the break. Chanting resumed with renewed gusto when the second half of the Gita was chanted, followed by Gita Mahatmyam, Gita Sara and Sadguru Stava. Following the completion of 18th Chapter, the audience erupted in a unanimous standing ovation. Not just smiles, but tears of joy were also seen trickling down on a few faces in the audience and participants as well! There was a sense of serene contentment that was noticed by everyone. For the participants and their families, the contentment was the result of their hard work and efforts culminating successfully. It was only because of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s divine presence all throughout the Parayana, that led to this smooth sailing and a successful rendition of the entire Bhagavad Gita.

During Gita Sara recitation, Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji offered aarti to Lord Sri Krishna. This was followed by Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji’s aarti to Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji . Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji later showered flowers on the participants on the stage.

A total of 131 children including 20 adults took part in memorization category, with ages ranging from 5-50 years. About 60 adults participated in the fluent reading category.

Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji addressed the audience and mentioned that seeing happiness on Appaji’s face is a big boon in itself and that all the students made HIM happy with their Parayana that day and thus won their Sadguru’s heart. As HE opined, the event day should go down in history with golden words. It was later revealed that the muhurtam (timing) set by Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji for the event was very very auspicious and special. Sri Kuppa Krishnamurthy ji, Vidyaadhikari of Datta Peetham, mentioned this when Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji instructed him to explain about the significance of muhurtam. It was the Dakshinayana Punya Kala combined with Bhanu Saptami. Any Japa, Dhyana, Homa or Yagna performed during this time would result in 1000 fold merits. This day is also known as Karkaataka Sankranti. It was indeed a great boon for the entire audience as well to listen to Sampoorna Bhagavad Gita on this auspicious day and time.

Everyone, especially the participants were eagerly waiting for Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s reaction and feedback on their offering. The question in everyone’s mind was if Tataji/Appaji liked the Parayana and if it was up to HIS standards. Evidently, it was a moment of relief when Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji said except 2-3 participants who could not perform up to the mark due to jetlag, nervousness, tiredness; the rest of performance was 120 % upto the mark. HE expressed that Lord Sri Krishna was happy, Arjuna was happy and Parabrahma swaroopa Sri Swamiji was happy too. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji gave HIS special blessings to all the fluent readers. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji also showered Srikanth ji with special blessings and mentioned that HE was happy that Srikanth ji’s work has been successfully accomplished. Out of HIS infinite compassion and kindness, Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji praised the parents and teachers for their encouragement, support and guidance in making the students learn and memorize the entire Gita. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji explained that it is completely HIS Shraddha and the Shraddha of the parents and teachers that brought the children to Nada Mantapa to perform in HIS divine presence.

Presentation and Recognition Ceremony followed Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s discourse. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji was presented with vastram, gajamala, flower crown, flute and a garland made of QR Codes. The QR code consisted of individual audio recordings of all 700 shlokas Gita chanted by memorizers. On the occasion of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s 75th birthday, on behalf of all Mahayagna families, an amount of $75,000 was offered to HIM by all centers teachers.

A list of all children who participated in the Har Ghar Gita (HARI) program, as part of which more than 75 Sampoorna Parayanas were performed at various devotees’ homes, temples, religious organizations etc., was also presented to Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji. This was followed by teacher recognition where Srikanth ji and all the center teachers were blessed by Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji. Last but not the least; Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji presented all memorizers with a gold medal (similar to the ones presented to Batch 1 children). The medal has Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s picture on one side and Gita Sara engraved on the other side. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji made the Sankapla that anyone performing Sampoorna Gita Parayana in Mysore Ashrama would be presented with a similar gold medal. Pujya Sri Bala Swamji presented the participants with gold embossed certificate containing the invaluable signature of Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji. A customized Memento, acknowledging their participation, was also presented to the participants. Not to be left alone, all the Batch 1 children on stage were also given prasadam by Tataji. Later Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji blessed the certificated for the fluent readers and took a group picture with them.

Later in the evening, the visiting families were treated to a relaxing program that consisted of Gita Sara Dance Ballet choreographed by Smt. Lakshmi. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the program. What better way to sign off such a memorable day than to imbibe the meaning of Srimad Bhagavad Gita in the form of Gita Sara!

**Visit to Somanathapura**

Next Day, Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji planned a trip to Somanathapura to visit the Chenna Keshava Temple. This temple was built by the Hoysala Dynasty rulers - ancestors to Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji. Built in 1268CE, it is one of the finest and most complete examples of Hoysala Architecture. This temple is not a functional temple any more as the main deity was damaged during the attack of the foreign invaders. It is now a protected Heritage Site. The magnificent and intricate architecture provided the perfect photo-op for the numerous pictures Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji graced with HIS devotees. From there, the party proceeded to the banks of the Cauvery river. Devotees were blessed when Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji sprinkled (Prokshana ) them with the holy waters from the river . Delicious lunch was served at the nearby Ashrama. Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji spent time will all the devotees and wished them safe travels. The program concluded on a fun note with Tataji throwing lots of candy at the devotees! Many families proceeded to visit the Mysore Palace from there on, while others returned to Mysore Ashrama.

It was a not only a fun and a blissful day, but an emotional one as well, with the trip to Mysore coming to an end. Families were going to miss seeing Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji and Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji at such close quarters every day. They would also miss the serene and scenic Ashrama atmosphere, the birds in Shuka Vana, visiting various sites in the Ashrama, the wonderful food - to name just a few. Hope the wait will not be very long. We sincerely pray to our Sadgurudeva to provide us with many such opportunities!

All throughout their stay in Mysore, the Mahayagna families could not stop heaping praises on the Ashrama staff. From accommodation arrangements, pilgrimage planning, food preparations, travel and commute, audio setup to stage decoration to name a few, they have gone above and beyond in their seva. The visiting families thank them from the bottom of their hearts for a happy, smooth and safe pilgrimage.

During the pilgrimage, ever so kind and compassionate Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji took time off from HIS busy schedule of Chaaturmasa Deeksha and spoke with the participants and encouraged them every step of the way. Pujya Sri Bala Swamiji also took time to meet and speak with participant families.

Words fall short even as we begin to express our gratitude for HIS Holiness Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji. HIS conception and divine vision of the Bhagavad Gita Mahayagna program has enriched the lives of all participants beyond imagination. The blessed and fortunate families are indebted to their Sadguru for the gift of Gita. Armed and adorned with Gita knowledge, along with Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji’s blessings, they know that there is no mountain that is high enough, no ocean that is deep enough and no problem that is hard enough to conquer.

We humbly and sincerely pray to Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji that HIS Tataji sena continues to spread the message of the Holy Bhagavad Gita and brings it to many more homes. We will constantly strive to enrich our lives spiritually from the sacred treasure trove called Srimad Bhagavad Gita, which Parama Pujya Sri Swamiji has so lovingly given us.

Jaya Guru Datta!