

## The Bhagavad Gita - Its Relevance Then And Now

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*"Paarthaaya Pratibodhitaam Bhagavataa Naaraayaneyna Swayam  
Vyaasena Grathitaam Puraana Muninaa Madhyemahaabhaaratam  
Advaitaamritavarshineem Bhagavateem Ashtaadashaadhyaayaneem  
Amba Tvaamanishandadhaami Bhagavadgeetey Bhavadveyshineem"*

The above is one of the Dhyana Shlokas (prayers) to be recited before one commences with the recitation of the Bhagavad Gita. The Dhyana Shlokas are as important as the Gita itself, as it a humble prayer to the great souls who gave us this precious, divine work.

The meaning of the above Dhyana Shloka is as follows:

*"O Sacred Mother Bhagavadgita!  
Thou art the One who was imparted to Arjuna by none other than Lord Narayana Himself, and was recorded during the time of the Mahabharata by the great sage Vyasa.  
Thou art the one who showers the sweetest nectar of the Advaita philosophy.  
Thou art bedecked in ornaments made of eighteen precious gems (chapters).  
Humbly I bow to Thee, O Divine Mother, the Destroyer of Samsara."*

The Bhagavad Gita, literally translated as the 'Song Of God', is a part of the immense Indian epic, the Mahabharata, a story of the enmity and ensuing war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Gita, as it is also called, enjoys an exalted position in India's culture and philosophical milieu. This brilliant chronicle is regarded as the highest philosophy in the Hindu pantheon.

The Bhagavad Gita starts with a scene on the battlefield at Kurukshetra,  wherein Arjun (or Paarth as he is also referred to) prepares to confront the Kauravas. Lord Krishna Himself becomes his charioteer (hence the name Parthsaarathi) and drives his ratha into the battlefield.

On seeing his own family, the legendary Bhishma Pitaamah and his Guru, Acharya Drona on the other side of the battlefield, Arjun is overcome by waves of sadness, anxiety and emotion. He is convinced that he would be committing an unforgivable sin by slaying his own kith and kin. Arjun suddenly feels weak and shaky and slumps down on the chariot, laying down his bow and arrow. He declares to Krishna that he would not be fit to wage war against his own relatives and requests him to take him away from the battlefield. In the verses 28 and 29 of Chapter 1, Arjun says:

*"Drishveymam Swajaanam Krishna Yuyutsum Samupasthitam  
Seedanti Mama Gaatraani Mukham Cha Parishushyati*

*Vepathushcha Sareerey Mey Romaharshascha Jaayatey  
Gaandeevam Sramsatey Hastaattvakchaiva Paridahyatey"*

*"O Krishna, seeing all my kinsmen assembled here on the battlefield, the limbs of my body are weakening and I can feel my mouth drying up. My body trembles in fear and my hair is standing on its end. My bow is slipping from my hand and my skin is burning like it is on fire."*

Lord Krishna comes to the rescue of Arjun and reveals to him the Ultimate Truth of Advaita (oneness with Godhead). Krishna further inspires Arjun by telling him to go ahead, discharge his duty as a Kshatriya (warrior) and fight to destroy wrongdoers without having hatred for them in his heart.

Krishna explains about Ananta Prakriya - about how the process of creation is endless and continues as a cycle in between birth and death. The human soul (Jeevatma), which is but a part of the Universal Soul (Paramatma), is not affected by death and so, cannot actually be killed. Hence, Krishna says, it is only right action, without concern about the result, which is truly important to achieve in life.

Everyone reading the Bhagavad Gita finds in it a part which he or she can completely identify with, in his or her own personal life. All of us go through a dilemma at some point of time or the other. This is where the Gita comes to our aid, guiding us to do what is right and prevent us from treading the path of wrong or sin.

As the Bhagavad Gita unfolds further, it adheres to the above principle all through.

## What makes the Gita so special

What makes the Gita stand out as an incomparably brilliant gem is that it adopts a panentheistic attitude rather than a pantheistic one. This means, that the Gita completely accepts the philosophy that God is the Universe and everything that we see in it. But it also goes one step ahead and proclaims that God is everything, plus something more that we normally do not perceive. What is that something more?

Panentheism expounds the theory of God as being a Supreme Force that is greater than the Universe itself - that He is a Synergy. Not only that, it says that God is affected by both gross and subtle changes in the Universe, so He learns and evolves with the evolution in the Universe as well.

The Bhagavad Gita, thus, not only propounds the theory of Advaita to the maximum, but it also states that all His creations in this Universe are also co-creators, who help Him achieve His mission!

This attitude of the Gita takes into consideration all practical aspects of life, without relying wholly and solely on the karma theory of pantheism.

The above notwithstanding, the Gita can also be viewed as being one of the most powerful expressions of pantheism among the scriptures of the world. This aspect acknowledges the presence of God residing in everything and in all things and all beings - good and evil, darkness and light and so on.

## The Background of the Bhagavad Gita

Dhritarashtra and Pandu were two brothers, born in the royal Kuru dynasty. The former, who was older, was visually challenged, and so Pandu was officially crowned as King of the Kuru clan. Pandu had five sons, called the Pandavas, while Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons, called the Kauravas.

The Pandavas, Yudhishtir, Bhim, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev, were brilliant, each one possessing at least one excellent trait. The eldest son of Dhritarashtra, Duryodhan, also his dearest, held a long, deep-seated hatred for the Pandavas.

Pandu died young, after which Dhritashtra then ascended the throne. Once the princes came of age, there arose a dispute as to who would become the next rulers - whether it should be Yudhishtir or Duryodhan. All the elders, gurus and those wielding high authority in the dynasty, unanimously averred that Yudhishtir, being the son of the King, was the rightful heir to the throne. But Duryodhan differed, saying that he was the son of the older brother and hence, solely held the right to the throne. The dispute prolonged without a solution in sight, leading to a bifurcation of the kingdom. This is where the tale of the Mahabharata actually started.

Duryodhan tried everything to destroy the Pandavas - he even tried to kill them in the infamous wax house incident. But Krishna's grace always prevailed over the Pandavas and they were saved each and every time.

## The Game Of Dice

Next, Duryodhan, along with his sly uncle, Shakuni, hatched the plan to conduct the elaborate game of dice, where he tricked Yudhishtir into placing heavy stakes such as his riches, kingdom, brothers, and finally, his own wife, Panchali (also called Draupadi), who was married to all the other four brothers as well.

Panchali was humiliated in the presence of one and all in the court premises. Duryodhan termed her as a 'daasi' (slave) and invited her to come and sit on his lap instead of staying with her husbands. He even asked his brother, Dussasan, to disrobe her in public.

A distraught Panchali begged and pleaded with her husbands, Dhritarashtra and all other dignitaries present at the venue, but none could speak to save her dignity. She finally beseeched her friend and savior, Sri Krishna, to

protect her. When Dusshasan attempted to disrobe her (Draupadi Vastraharan), Krishna showered His grace on her, covering her with yards and yards of cloth, protecting her modesty from being outraged. Dusshasan finally tired of pulling out the endless yards of fabric and, completely exhausted, fell to the ground.

The infuriated Daughter of Fire, Draupadi, at once took an oath that she would leave her lustrous, luxuriant tresses untied till the time Bhim killed Duryodhan and soaked her hair in his blood (Panchali Shapat).

## Why The War Came To Be Fought

According to the rules of the game of dice, the Pandava brothers were to go for exile for a stipulated period, after which, Duryodhan promised, they would get back their kingdom. But when they got back from exile, they were refused even an inch of land. Lord Krishna tried his level best to discuss and bring about an amicable situation, but none seemed to present itself on the horizon.

The only other way out was to wage a war against the Kauravas. Lord Krishna promised that He would not wield any weapon in the battle and offered both Duryodhan and Arjun a choice of either His army or just Himself.

Arjun immediately said he wanted only Narayana behind him and not his Sena (army). Duryodhan, on the other hand, was only too happy to add to his already huge army. Krishna decided He would take on the role of Parthasarathy, Arjun's Charioteer. Though maharshis like Vyasa requested Dhritarashtra to stop the battle, the latter helplessly expressed his extreme inability to act.

Seeing how distraught Dhritarashtra was, Vyasa blessed Sanjay, one of Dhritarashtra's aides, with the capability to see and hear the goings-on in the battlefield from the palace premises itself, so that he could narrate all to Dhritarashtra, including the message of the Divine Bhagavad Gita.

## Dating of the Bhagavad Gita

As with most great chronicles, there is some confusion as to the exact dates of the Kurukshetra war. But many experts believe that the Lord narrated the Bhagavad Gita in 3102 B.C., just before the battle commenced. This means that the war should have taken place about 2500 before the Buddha and 3000 years before Jesus Christ descended on this earth.

This chronology has been arrived at, based on the evidence received from the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II. The inscription also gives the exact positions of the constellation at the time the battle of Kurukshetra commenced. This was based on the astronomical year that lasts for a span of 26,920 years and is known as the Procession of Equinoxes.

## Translation in Various Languages

Ever since the revelation of the Bhagavad Gita by Lord Krishna, several attempts have been made to translate the works into foreign languages. The original Gita was narrated in Sanskrit, the then prevalent Indian language. Charles Wilkins was the one to first translate this work into English in 1785. Schlegel then translated this into Latin in the year 1823, after which Von Humbolt gave a German version of the Gita in 1826. Lassens converted the work into French in 1846 and Galanos did a Greek translation in the year 1848.

As of today, the Gita has further been translated into Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Hebrew, Dutch, Portuguese, Arabic and so on.

## The Supreme Message of the Bhagavad Gita

When Arjun's confidence takes a downward plunge while on the battlefield, Krishna decides to make him understand the real meaning of life.

The whole essence of the Bhagavad Gita lies in the various types and theories of Dharma it expounds. Additionally, Krishna talks of universal harmony and strict, unflinching adherence towards duty.

After having related how the soul is permanent, immortal and never dies, Krishna asks Arjun to shed his anxiety and reticence that inhibit his duty on the battlefield and co-operate to reinstate the dharmic balance of the universe. Krishna warns him that if he were to leave the battlefield at this point of time, he would fail miserably in his duties, throwing the entire cosmos out of balance, obscuring and wiping out all good from the face of the earth.

Krishna takes a Vishwaroopa (massive avatar) and reveals Himself as but one aspect of the Supreme Mahavishnu. He shows him the cycle of life and how souls live and die and pass through the various stages between the process, while in this mortal world.

## The Yogas mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita

The various Yogas that Krishna propounds in the Bhagavad Gita truly captures the essence of life itself.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sri Krishna states that one should try to go beyond the limitations of the temporal ego and identify themselves with 'The One Self' or the Atman, thereby attaining true enlightenment. He says that it is only through this detached attitude that the upaasak (follower) attains true liberation or moksha.

In the same breath, however, Krishna elucidates that man never should neglect his duties in Samsara, just because he wants to follow the tenets of the Yoga. On the contrary, He says, man must learn to live material life fully, while also understanding the transience of the same. A constant awareness of the Absolute and Timeless Reality

would help him lead a happy and contented life, ultimately bestowing enlightenment on him, while still in this material world.

Lord Sri Krishna, in his exposition of the Gita, explains to Arjun the yogic aspects of Bhakti (devotion), Karma (action), Gyana (knowledge) and Dhyana (meditation) Though He talks about many other types of yoga, He mainly talks about the above aspects in the 18 chapters of the Bhagavad Gita.

Though each aspect of yoga differ from each other, He stresses on one fundamental principle - that of realizing the formless, immortal Brahman as the ultimate truth; that our material body is mortal and prone to disintegration; that the Paramatma existing inside every Jeevatma is infinite, immortal and imperishable.

The whole aim of the yoga is to rid one of the vicious cycle of the material world and break free from the repeated cycle of incarnation and reincarnation. Sri Krishna enunciates the following three stages to pass through, in order to attain self-realization:

- The Brahman - the supreme, all-pervading Universal Force.
- Paramatma - The Supreme One, residing within one and all.
- Bhagavan - God as a personified idol, given a transcendental form.

Now we go through all the four yogas in detail:

## Karma Yoga

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Karma means 'action'. In this sense, it implies the discharging of one's duties, selflessly, without concentrating on the result of the action. In Chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna speaks entirely on the aspect of Karma Yoga.

*"Karmanyevadhikarastej Maa Phaleshu Kadaachana  
Maa Karma Phala Hetur Bhurmatey Sangostva Akarmani"*

Krishna asks one to do his duty, being detached about the final outcome. He advises against the doing of a thing, worrying only about the end. Instead, He says, one should enjoy the whole journey of getting to the end.

Krishna advises one to continue doing Karma, dedicating that action itself as a prayer to the Divine. He says that results could turn out to be any one of three categories - those that are originally intended to get, those that are the opposite of what is intended and the third variety is a mixture of both the first and second types.

Involving oneself totally in one's activities, dedicating all actions to God, completing one's tasks to perfection and submitting them in the name of God, is itself a pathway to moksha, says Sri Krishna.

Krishna advocates the theory of Nishkaama Karma Yoga, or that of selfless action, as the right path to take towards moksha. He says that selfless social service is one of the easiest ways to attain the Supreme, but Krishna says, even dedicating one's being to one's profession is a way to salvation.

Working selflessly, without expecting any outcome, purifies one's mind, gradually changing him, making him surrender his entire work at the Lord's Lotus Feet.

The following shloka very clearly explains this theory:

*Kaayena Manasaa Buddhyaa*

*Keyvalair Indriyair Api*

*Yoginaah Karma Kurvanti*

*Sangam Tyaktvaatma Suddhayey*

Krishna further states that when a man pursues a definite end for an action, he gets attached to that end. From the attachment stems desire, which in turn gives rise to anger. Anger leads to bewilderment, which leads to loss of memory. From loss of memory arises destruction of intellect and it is from this destruction of intellect that he ultimately perishes.

Krishna refers to the Kurukshetra war as a Dharma Yuddha (battle for righteousness) and urges Arjuna to discharge his duties as a Yoddha (warrior), fight for what is right, and aim to destroy sin and untruth.

## **Bhakti Yoga**

In chapter 12, Krishna talks about the principles of Bhakti Yoga as a path to attain Him. He says:

*"Mayyaveshya Manoye Maam Nityayuktaa Upaasate*

*Shraddhayaa Parayopetaas Tey Mey Yuktamaa Mataah"*

Lord Krishna says that out of all those who place firm, unflinching faith in the Ultimate, without giving in to material pitfalls, those who place their minds exclusively on Him and His worship, are deemed to be the most superior.

In the next verse, Krishna also states:

*"Yey Tvakshar Amanirdeshyam Avyaktam Paryupaasatey*

*Sarvatragam Achintyam Cha Kutastham Achalam Dhruvam*

*Sanniyamyendriya Graamam Sarvatra Sama Buddhayah*

*Tey Praapnuvanti Maameyva Sarvabhootahitey Rataah"*

Krishna says that those who also worship the all-pervading, immutable, constant, eternal, inconceivable One, devoid of any form or attributes; being totally in control of the senses, developing spiritual intelligence; dedicated to bestow welfare on all living beings, also can achieve Him with great ease.

Complete Bhakti (devotion) and abject surrender, He says, is the highest form of Yoga and is the easiest path to attaining complete salvation.

## Gyana Yoga

In verse 5 of Chapter 4, Sri Krishna says:

*"Bahuni Mey Vyateetani Janmaani Tavachaarjuna  
Taany Aham Veda Sarvaani Na Tvam Vettha Parantapa"*

*"O, Arjuna, many births of mine and yours are over. Only, I have knowledge about them all, but you do not."*

In verse 9 of the same chapter, He elucidates:

*"Janma Karma Cha Mey Divyam Evam Yo Veytti Tattvatah  
Tyaktvaa Deham Punarjanma Naiti Maameyti So Arjuna"*

*"Those who know this transcendental reality and acknowledge the reality of My birth and My mission, and relinquishes his body awareness, stops taking any more birth and attains Me."*

Gyana Yoga, Krishna says, is a process which involves differentiating between the real and the unreal, realizing what is eternal and immortal and what is not. It is through this entire process that one becomes a Gyana Yogi. Hence, He says, this type of Yoga is a path to enlightenment through the realization of the difference between the temporal body and the immortal soul (Atman).

Krishna starts teaching the Gyana Yoga as early as the second chapter itself, where he explains to Arjun how he is never going to actually 'kill' anyone in the battlefield. There itself, He starts talking about the 'nashwara' (indestructible) aspect of the soul. He reiterates the point about how the soul is never affected by fire, water and the other elements, how it is above all and how closely connected to the Paramatma.

In the verses 7 and 8 of the same chapter, Krishna talks about His entire mission and the true reason for this Avatar. He speaks the famous words that practically made the Mahabharata what it is today:

*"Yadaa Yadaahi Dharmasya Glaanirbhavati Bhaarata  
Abhyutthaanam Adharmasya Tadaatmanam Srujaamy Aham"*



*Paritraanaaya Saadhunaam Vinaashaaya Cha Dushkrutaam  
Dharma Samsthaapanaarthaaya Sambhaavaamy Yugey Yugey"*

*"Whenever there is a decline in righteousness, O descendant of Bharata, and whenever there is much more unrighteousness, I manifest Myself personally at that time.*

*In order to protect the good at heart and destroy evil and wrongdoers, I show Myself, millennium after millennium."*

## **Dhyana Yoga**

After having narrated the process of attaining self-realization through the 18 yogas, including Karma, Bhakti and Gyana yoga, Sri Krishna ends with the Moksha-Upadesa Yoga, wherein he teaches Arjun what the Ultimate Truth really is and what is the best way to attain it.

Krishna also gives an additional yoga, namely, Dhyana Yoga, as an ideal path towards enlightenment. He speaks of applying several tenets and techniques of meditation in order to achieve complete control of the mind and body, thereby realizing the true nature of the Brahman dwelling within oneself. A similar method of meditation was later expounded by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras.

One of the requirements to practice Dhyana Yoga, Krishna says, is to seat oneself in a secluded place, be seated on kusa grass, on which is covered deerskin and a soft cloth. Once comfortably seated, the Yogi should control his body and mind, thereby purifying the heart chakra (one of the seven chakras or spiritual centers in the subtle body).

This, done on a regular scale, thinking of nothing else but the Yoga, focusing one-pointed attention on the Lord, slowly breaks the mind of its limitations, removes fear from it, helping him attain the kingdom of God.

## **Who Actually is Lord Krishna?**

The whole world knows about the Krishna Avatar, His mission and His actions during the course of His Incarnation. But who was this Krishna really? When we think of Krishna, the first thing that comes to our minds is that mischievous little toddler who tormented, yet pleased Yashoda and the other Gopis with his unending pranks.

We then think of incidents like the Kamsa Vadh (killing of His uncle, Kamsa), raising the Govardhana Giri on His little finger to protect the villagers from a raging storm, Kaaliya Nartan (dancing on and subduing the vicious snake, Kaaliya) and finally, His Divine Love for Radha during His youth.

The main highlight of the Krishna Avatar is the imparting of the Bhagavad Gita teachings to Arjun, making not only Arjun, but also the whole world, realize the true nature of God and the higher Self.

## Krishna's birth

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Through many miracles, Krishna demonstrated the power and wisdom inherent within Him. His entire birth was a miracle. He was born in a prison to Devaki and Vasudev. Kamsa, Devaki's brother, plotted to kill Him at birth, since he was afraid he would have to face death at the hands of Devaki's eighth child.

The night when Krishna was born, the chains fell away from Vasudev's person, the gates of the prison opened by themselves and an unseen power transported him with his child held in a wicker basket, to his close friend, Gokul King Nanda's home. Once there, he put Krishna with Yashoda and brought their newborn girl child with him.

Krishna's birth, according to historians, took place on the midnight of the 8th day after the New Moon, in the month of Sraavana. The English date is given to be July 19th, in the year 3228 B.C. The Krishna Avatar is said to have lasted about 125 years, after which He left this mortal world on the 18th of February, 3102 B.C., on the New Moon night of Phalgun.

## Uniqueness of the Bhagavad Gita - The Ultimate Philosophy

What is so unique about the Bhagavad Gita is that his elucidation of the 18 different yogas mentioned therein, is much more than merely high philosophy, which one cannot easily understand and grasp. Quite on the contrary, these teachings are scientific, objective and work for all who care to apply the same in their lives.

Krishna does not pass a judgement on anyone, nor does He specify a moral conduct of 'right' and 'wrong'. He does not impose any rigid 'do's' and 'don'ts' either. Krishna's message of the Bhagavad Gita teaches man to free himself of his fetters, while being very much in Samsara, realize the actual nature of his Self and go beyond the human limitations of sorrow, ageing and death.

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Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, reveals Himself to Arjun, as the Supreme Being, the One who incarnated on this earth by His own will. He further clarifies that all beings He created in this universe are but parts of His own all-pervading wisdom and are the same as Himself. The only difference between Himself and his multitudinous creations, He says, is that, His co-creators have not developed that they too are self-realized and are Gods themselves!

Lord Krishna is not just the body as was described to us - He is the wisdom of the Supreme that dwells in that body. Whenever Krishna used the terms 'I' and 'Me' in the Gita, He never was referring to Himself or the temporal ego - he was speaking of the Supreme who resided in Him.

Hence, the Bhagavad Gita teaches us that it is not through empty idol worship that we can attain Him -only by fixing our entire selves on His Supreme wisdom can we hope to attain self-realization.

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the finest of world philosophies for this very reason - its teachings are practical, easy to understand, yet teach us the best way to attain the highest wisdom of all.

## Influence Of The Bhagavad Gita Worldwide

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The Bhagavad Gita has had and continues to have a great influence on different types of people from several cultures around the globe.

- Mahatma Gandhi, stated that the Gita was a call to humanity as a whole, to surrender mind, body and soul to purity.
- Sri Aurobindo averred that the Bhagavad Gita always had a new message for people of any age, from any part of civilization.
- Albert Einstein stated that he was so deeply moved by the Gita that once he started contemplating on how God went about creating the universe, he found everything else false and of no consequence.
- Dr. Albert Schweitzer said that the Gita is so profound that it deeply influences the whole spirit of mankind by its attitude of devotion to God.
- Aldous Huxley stated that the Bhagavad-Gita is the most complete statement of perennial philosophy.

## The Present Scenario

Today's life is extremely busy, with its hectic pace, relations getting stressed, too much violence, corruption and so on and so forth. The present generation of youth who are pursuing their studies does not seem to have the time for anything at all. In the little time they manage to spare themselves, they often tend to fall prey to various distractions that life presents before them.

Working people are constantly caught up with trying to earn more money in order to provide their family and children with more luxuries and material desirables. In this rat race, they lose themselves and their identities even as living beings, leave alone becoming higher entities!

## The Relevance Of The Bhagavad Gita In Today's Scenario

In an age when spirituality is steadily on the decline on a global scale and materialism rules the roost, most people in the present scenario doubt the efficacy of teachings such as the Bhagavad Gita.

The greatest doubt that arises in people's minds is whether it is truly relevant to life as it is today or whether it is merely meant exclusively for chanting. Doubts like these arise only because of one reason - people today do not remember that the Bhagavad Gita means the 'Song of God' and hence, it is bound to reflect His voice for eternity!

The Divine Mother, Bhagavad Gita, veritably pulsates with life and vibrancy and is very much alive for all those who care to turn to Her for solace and support. There are people who swear by the fact that if they have a particular issue in their personal lives and open the chronicle to read it, they invariably find that they have turned to a page which holds an answer to that particular question or issue. Such is the sheer power of the Bhagavad Gita.

Lord Krishna, through these teachings, sees to it that one who asks for His grace is never left feeling alone and hapless. He shows man His divine support in one way or another, assuring the devotee that He is there to provide succor to him when he most needs it.

Any ordinary speech starts losing its impact within a few minutes or few hours. The Gita, on the other hand, has lost none of its appeal till date. This is because the meter and tone of the 'Lord's Song' pleases and soothes the auditory senses, allowing the Divine Discourse linger in the mind, making one want to savor more and more of the nectar that is the Bhagavad Gita!

Life today is filled with anxiety, uncertainty and sorrow. An individual has now fallen out of tune both with himself and with his surroundings. As a result, he experiences disharmony, both within and without. While he fails to find true happiness within himself, he also fails to make his family and friends happy.

What causes this disharmony? Greed to own more material things, unfulfilled desires and harboring negative emotions such as jealousy and hatred are some of the reasons why he loses touch with the real 'him' that is calm, serene and ever compassionate. Because man fails to see his basic nature, he falls out of Dharma and Sattva, which results in him forgetting the God lying dormant within him.

What man needs at such a time is someone who can teach him train his mind, bring it under his control and get him back to his higher 'Self'. Reading even just one verse each day and reflecting on it helps him see exactly how precious this human birth is and how he can use it to immensely benefit both himself and others. He thus starts on the path towards true wisdom, changing his own life and that of others for the better!

This human life which has come to us after having gone through infinite lifetimes of struggle and suffering is extremely valuable and, if lived right, can be filled with happiness and contentment. The Bhagavad Gita teaches

one to be detached from the negative aspects of Samsara, to be ever grateful to the Lord for having given him so much good and to do a great deal of good unto others. A deep study of the Gita gives rise in the reader, a spirit of surrender, creating within him an eternal fount of joy, happiness and peace.

## The Bhagavad Gita For The Present Youth

The youth is the wealth of the nation. Shaping them properly and helping them develop their personalities will let their hearts flower, making them better citizens of the world, who would go ahead and create a better tomorrow. The present generation of youth is currently experiencing a lot of stress, worries and tensions. They tend to age faster and fall prey to various illnesses and ailments. The teachings mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita can be used to help them view their own lives from a different perspective, enriching them spiritually, letting them lead a quality life.

The beautiful thing about the Gita is that it does not advocate the follower to sacrifice anything in this material world. Quite on the contrary, it tells you to enjoy this life completely, indulge yourselves, listen to the music of your choice, go to the movies, eat out and so on. The only thing the Gita asks you to do is to make a small shift in your thought process, start trusting in the grace of God and enjoy all you do in the material world, considering your work as a service at His Lotus Feet.

Such actions purify your hearts and destroy the negatives in your psyche, liberating you from your day-to-day troubles, letting you enjoy your life to the maximum and spread that happiness to everyone around. This is the Divine message of the Bhagavad Gita for the youth of the entire world!

Such is the greatness of the Bhagavad Gita. It purifies the mind, completely destresses the individual and helps him realize the ultimate Godhead. Further, it helps develop values in the youth, molding them into better global citizens, ushering in the new Golden Era for India and the rest of the world.

Reading the Bhagavad Gita, understanding the tenets mentioned therein and leading a life shorn of mundane tensions and worries helps you remain young for life and add life to your years, without merely adding years to your life!

*"Prapanna Paarijaataaya Totraveytraika Paanayey Jnaanamudraaya Krishnaaya Geetaamritaduhey Namah"*

*"My humble salutations to Lord Krishna, The Protector of all who beseech Him, the one who holds a cane to drive cattle in one hand, while holding the Gyana pose in the other. I bow to Krishna who bestows on us the nectarine milk of the Bhagavad Gita!"*

## A Pragmatic Approach

What shall be the message to be extracted from Gita for common men who are engulfed in worldly affairs? Gita profusely speaks about ecstatic mystical experiences of difficult order. It is not possible for everyone to have self-realisation or God realisation. Therefore the various paths described by the Gita at length dividing its chapters into three main streams of knowledge, action and devotion remain theoretical in nature for most of us. There are very few who can

claim to have achieved the state of superconsciousness called Brahmisthiti .

Hundreds of thousands of readers are impressed by the greatness of Gita-philosophy. But they are unable to practise its teachings since they have no capacity to rise above their mundane limits. Various interpretations rendered on Gita by great spiritual masters, no doubt, provide valuable guidance to humanity. But in modern times when science and technology have taken control of everything, pragmatic approach to Gita-philosophy will provide another dimension to its social relevance. Admitting that the Gita is a gospel, it can also be used for worldly purposes to build up a sound and healthy social order. Out-worldly it may look non-spiritual materialistic approach but in reality it would be an applied philosophy, the application of spiritual ideas to pragmatic use.

It may appear as some kind of compromise with the idealistic position that Bhagvad Gita presents. Majority of the people belong to the category who admiringly accept the greatness of the Gita but are unable to follow its spiritual tenets to its logical conclusions. It is beyond their capacity to practice. It does not mean that Gita's idealistic position is an impossible proposition. Gita - philosophy has been severely tested time and again and great many people have testified to its validity. The pragmatic approach without any compromise with the basic tenets of Bhagvad-Gita will serve the interests of majority of people who always remain outside the domain of spiritualism.

Gita stands as a culminating point in the evolution of spiritual thoughts in India and it has become a perennial source of philosophical ideas thus developed for the benefit of entire humanity. Whatever has been said earlier by Vedas and Upanishads, by Sankhya of sage Kapil and Yoga of sage Patanjali has found its way in Gita in a finer and better way. As a revolt against the heaven - seeking materialism of sacrificial rituals of the vedas the path of knowledge propounded by Sankhya and the path of contemplation propounded by Yoga flourished and the ideology of renunciation had its sway over the Indian mind. In order to arrest this trend and bring balance of approach, Gita stressed the importance of action thoroughly analyzing its mechanism which underlines the spirit of renunciation in wider sense. However Gita's theory of action is not easy to follow. The individual needs power from within to imbibe Gita's approach to life according to which ultimate goal should be freedom of the soul, i.e. Mukti or Moksha . But majority of men in today's world of economic domination created by science and technology do not subscribe to this view. Influenced by worldly affairs leading to worldly pleasures and happiness, they prefer to be slaves of clouded vision.

This state of mind is totally different from that of Arjuna whose mental dilemma prompted Lord Krishna to deliver this immortal song of philosophical wisdom. Even Arjuna, at later stage confessed that Gita-philosophy faded away from his memory and he needs revision of the same. Lord Krishna, too, expressed his inability to recall it since it was revealed through the divinely unique mystical state of his mind. The fact remains that Arjuna also had his own limitations in practicing Gita in day to day life. For every commentator Gita remained as unsolved riddle though each one attempted his own interpretation born out of his personal encounter with the Ultimate Reality. The mystical experience must have been the same for everyone but interpretations differ due to their diverse intellectual capacities, different educational settings, varied tastes and worldly limitations.

In understanding the supreme ends of life in the prevalent socio-economic scenario all over the world one can avail the guidance from Gita. Lord declares, "whenever the evil triumphs over the good, hold of righteousness declines, I manifest myself to establish the kingdom of truth." Today's world is full of tragedies mostly facing the problems of decadence through violence, cruelty, unemployment , over - population, exploitation of the nature, destruction of natural resources, environmental degradation, hunger, ignorance, hatred, quarrels, deaths etc. etc.

In what way Gita can come to our rescue in such turmoil? Keeping its metaphysical and spiritual conclusions aside for the exclusive benefit of the spiritual aspirants who will always be small in number the remaining vast population all over the world can have a plunge into its nectar like thoughts about life and all that is related to life to correct man-made ills of modern century. In his pursuit of happiness the modern man remains discontented in today's world of consumerist culture built upon the philosophy of self - aggrandizement. All the social ills witnessed today are arisen out of mindless pursuits of selfish material gains.

The Bhagvadgita shows us the way to destroy these evils and inspires us to lead a happy

and peaceful life. According to scholars, Gita laid down the foundation of India's ethics, sociology, polity and arts. Gita's ethical teachings, if followed in true spirit, have an intrinsic strength to cure all our ills. Certain concepts philosophically developed by Gita can be applied to our life on behavioral plane.

The fundamental doctrine of unity in all diversity, the same eternal principle manifesting itself in animate and inanimate is a matter of mystical experience and remains out of reach of the majority of people. But its connotation that all are equal gives sufficient strength to unite all. The feeling of all-alike, the sense of empathy will make you feel happy when others are happy and unhappy when others are unhappy. Gita calls him a perfect man when one identifies oneself with others in pleasure and pain alike. In today's world this feeling is totally lost creating barriers among living as well as nonliving beings many times resulting into killings and destructions. Gita's fundamental doctrine of oneness of the universe has been already proved on physical plane by the unified field theory of quantum physics in modern times. The mankind can easily adopt this as an unifying force to curb the divisive tendencies so immensely growing today. "One who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me is a man of wisdom" thus says the Gita for sustenance of all. Social tensions arising out of greed and hatred can be instantly defused if such a universal approach based on Gita philosophy of monism is practiced in our day to day life sincerely and gracefully.

Consciously or unconsciously man embarks upon his life-journey through the channels of pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat and many other pairs of opposites. They are inescapable. It is natural for everyone to run after happiness and to avoid sorrow. When one's ambitions desiring enjoyment and power are not fulfilled he becomes pessimist and leads a life of frustration. Gita advises us to renounce all selfish desires and make life a sacrifice offered with true devotion to God. But for ordinary men it is quite impossible to work without desiring fruits. It is the motivating force behind their actions and whatever advances the mankind has achieved in physical and psychological fields is partly due to this motivating factor. The actions, only when they become self-centered, conservative and for trivial selfish gains, they bring catastrophe.