

SRIMAD BHAGVAD GITA-THE GOSPEL OF HUMANITY

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ABSTRACT

The great literature transcends the boundaries of nations, cultures and languages and manifests an aura of universality, catholicity and essential oneness of human family. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two great literary creations that have been cherished heritages of India for more than three thousand years and they are to the present day interwoven with the thoughts, beliefs and moral ideas of our nation. Mahabharata is one of the mightiest literary creations in human history. This vast epic, an immortal creation of Ved Vyasa, unfolds India of a heroic and creative age. It describes the great war between Kauravas and Pandavas, two branches of the royal clan of Kuru who lived in Northern India thousands of years ago. The war of Mahabharata was a series of eighteen battles, fought for eighteen consecutive days. In the Mahabharata, each hero has a distinct individuality, a character of his own. On the canvas of Mahabharata we find the old Kuru monarch Dhritarashtra, sightless and feeble, but majestic in his ancient grandeur; the noble grandsire Bhishma, revered guru Drona, noble minded Pandavas, great archer Arjuna, valorous Karna, Dharamraj Yudhishtir, the proud and unyielding Duryodhana and the wicked Dushasana. Women are as stately as the menfolk. Kunti the worthy mother of Pandavas, Gandhari, the devoted wife and sad mother of wicked sons, Draupadi nursing her anger till her wrongs are fully revenged, and the vibrant Subhadra. We also have the Lord Krishna, a rare hero, the great God Himself in the incarnation of a human being. Lord Krishna's divinity radiates through his human form. His character dominates the galaxy of heroes by loftiness and brilliance.

The characters are quite impressive in the epic and so are the incidents. Every scene of the gigantic text is perfect with an impressive picture. The tournament of princes in which Arjun and Karna first met, gorgeous bridal of Draupadi, the fatal game of dice and scornful wrath of Draupadi against her insulters, and the council of war on the occasion of the great contest - each scene of this great epic impresses itself on the mind of the astonished reader. Then follows the war of eighteen days.

The war ends in a midnight slaughter and the death of Duryodhan. In the Mahabharata, every human dilemma and conflict finds expression as sage Sauti, one of the narrators of the tale said that 'which occurs here occurs elsewhere, that which does not occur here occurs nowhere else

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(Swargarohanka Parva, Section 5)'. Mahabharata, the epic of Maha (great) Bharata (India), discloses a rich civilization of a highly evolved society in the grand simplicity of the narrative.

INTRODUCTION

Srimad Baghavad Gita is the essence of the Mahabharata and the center of devotion of the Indians. The Gita is a treasure of valuable sermons that Lord Krishna gave to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra when the two armies of Kauravas and Pandavas were ready to wage the great war. Arjun, an expert in the art of war feels totally distressed and doesn't want to fight as he thinks it quite futile to gain victory, kingdom and pleasures ordained by such dreadful means of killing his own kith and kin in the war. Lord Krishna calls the dejection and faintheartedness of Arjuna as unworthy of a noble soul and says that it would neither lead him to heaven nor bring him fame. Lord Krishna gives his reason and lights the lamp of wisdom in the sorrow laden heart of Arjuna by saying:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि। (2.47 Gita)

The Gita is the philosophy of 'karma' (action) based on gyan (knowledge) and supported by bhakti (devotion). It gives the message that fight against evil is the duty of man. 'Nishkama Karma' or selfless devotion to duty is the advocated value for everyone. It advocates the message of devotion and dedication to work, spirit of social welfare, harmony and co-existence, equanimity, control over senses, selfless service, developing perfection through dharma (righteousness) as the universal guiding force to attain self-perfection and self-realization. It gives the message of motivation, leadership and sustainable development. The verses of the Gita reveal social, political and ethical truths of eternal significance. These verses of the Gita are repository of the ethical principles and eternal truths. Most of them are

the cherished ideals of all religions and these principles if inculcated in true spirit may dispel the crisis of faith affecting us in the maze of materialism. The verses of The Gita may usher our journey into the noble path of spiritualism where we may scintillate freshness and vibrance at every juncture of our life.

The Gita is 'a perennial philosophy' as observed by Aldous Huxley. It is a compendium of the principles that are absolutely true, non-sectarian and universal. They are relevant for the welfare of the whole human society and valid in all periods of human life. These principles are the gospels of humanity which, if inculcated properly, may smoothen the journey of our life removing the veil of ignorance.

This article makes a humble attempt to study some verses of the Gita that are cherished with the gems of ideas relevant in all periods of human life. These verses enable us to face the challenges of life boldly and give us wisdom to work out the solution of our problems.

The present work aims at identifying the values as propounded in the Gita and enumerating the principles and values as absolutely true and beneficial for the whole human race. The Gita is a gospel of humanity encompassing valuable precepts that may streamline the thinking of the younger generation in to right direction. The Gita is an epitome of all the scriptures whose proper understanding may enable us to comprehend the truth contained in all the other scriptures as has been said in the Mahabharata: "Sarva Shastramayī Gita" i.e. "The Gita comprises all the scriptures". (Bhisma .44.4) [1]

The present work is of a descriptive and philosophical nature based on an analytical study of Srimad Bhagvad Gita. The primary source of the present study was Bhagvad Gita and secondary source was the literature available in the form of books, journals, magazines and other research studies.

DISCUSSION

The study is quite useful in the present scenario when we are passing through a phase of conflict, struggle and confusion. In such a turbulent time, the message of the rational, universal and comprehensive spirituality given by Lord Krishna to Arjun are highly relevant and contextual. Arjun, the great warrior, got disillusioned at the thought of killing his own relatives at the battleground of Kurukshetra for the sake of achieving victory. At that crucial juncture, Lord Krishna preached the true precepts of life to this great archer. The verses of Gita are God's message to man - eternal, ancient and ageless. Edwin Arnold very aptly called the Gita as a 'Song Celestial'. The Gita is a scripture that can bring lasting benefit to humanity. Burnouf, the French translator of the Gita wrote "No greater book has ever come from the hands of man".[2]

In the modern world, we are in profound need to understand the true depth of the slokas of the Gita. If they are comprehended in true spirit, they may pave our way to the state of supreme bliss as envisioned in one of the Vedic hymns:

असतो मा सद् गमय, तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय,

मृत्योर्मा अमरतां गमय (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् १.३.२८)

Asato ma sad gamaya, Tamso ma jyotirgamaya, mrtoryma amaratam gamaya. (Brahadaranyaka Upnishad 1,3,28)

The assimilation of this philosophy of the Gita may lead from unreal to real, from darkness to

light and from death to immortality.

The Gita is a reservoir of invaluable gems of ideas having great socio-political, ethical and spiritual relevance. All the slokas conform to the norm of ethical education providing a real solace in the form of spiritual happiness to the youth of today who is bedazzled in the blind race for material happiness. Swami Chinmayanand opined, "In the Bhagvad Gita, the philosophical theories are couched in a language of least confusion and she suggests scheme for self-improvement which are unique in their variety and effectiveness. They are most acceptable to the intelligent modern youth -as they are direct, simple and easy to understand exercises for the unfoldment of personality.[3]

Some concepts of the Gita having eternal significance may be discussed here to have an insight:

न हि ज्ञानेन सदसम्पवित्रमिहियते

तत्स्वयम् योगसंसिद्धः कालनात्मनि विन्दति (४.३८)

na hi jnanena sadrsam pavitram iha vidyate

tat svayam yogasamsiddhah kalenatmani vindati. (4.38 Bhagvad Gita)

In this world there is no purifier as great as knowledge; he who has attained purity of heart through the prolonged practice of karmayoga, automatically sees the light of truth in the self in course of time.

The Gita exhorts us to lead the life of activity with detachment. Idleness can never make our life productive. Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to start war without thinking of winning or losing:

कुतस तव कश्मलं इदं विसमसमुपस्थितम्

अनर्यजुस्तं अस्वर्ग्यं अकिर्तिकरे अर्जुन (2.2)

Kutas tva kasmalm idam visame samupasthitam

anaryajustam asvargyam akirtikaram Arjuna.
(2.2 Gita)

Such state of Arjuna will amount to attainment of none of the four goals of life i.e. dharma, artha, kama and moksha. His dharma is to fight bravely and not to flee the battle-ground as a coward:

असौच्येन अन्वसोचस त्वं प्रज्जवदंस च भससे

गतसून अगतसुंस च ननुसोचन्ति पण्डितः (2.11)

Asocyan anvasocas tvam prajnavadams ca bhasase

gatasun agatasums ca nanusocanti panditah.
(2.11 Gita)

You grieve over those who should not be grieved for and yet speak like the learned; wise men do not grieve over the dead or the living:

न जयते म्रियते व कदचिन -नयं भूत्वभूवितव न भूयः

अजो नित्यः शश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे
(2.20)

na jayate mriyate va kadacin -nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah

ajo nityah sasvato yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire. (2.20 Gita)

The soul is never born, nor it ever dies; nor does it become on being born. For it is unborn, eternal, everlasting and primeval; even though the body is slain, the soul is not.

वसंसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि ग्राहन्ति नरोऽपरानि

तथा शरीरानि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयति नवानि देही
(2.22)

vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya navani grahnati naro'parani

tatha sarirani vihaya jirna-nyanyani samyati navani dehi. (2.22 Gita)

As a man shedding worn-out garments takes other new ones, likewise, the embodied soul,

casting off worn-out bodies, enters into others that are new.

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पवकः

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यपो न शोषयति मरुतः (2.23)

nainam chindanti sastrani nainam dahati pavakah
na cainam kledayantyapo na sosyati marutah.
(2.23 Gita)

Weapons cannot cut it, nor can fire burn it; water cannot wet it, nor can wind dry it.

When the realization comes that we are spiritual beings having the soul that is a part of the supreme soul, our entire view of life becomes transformed. We develop the state of equanimity and by attaining such an altitude of spirituality we become 'Yogi'. Such a person has an impartial and fair outlook towards things. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to perform duty renouncing attachment as follows:

योगस्थः कुरु कर्मणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वधनञ्जय

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वसमत्वम्योग उच्यते (2.48)

yagasthah kuru karmani sangam tyaktva dhananjaya

siiddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva samatvamyoga ucyate. (2.48 Gita)

Such evenness of temper is known as yoga. As life cannot be made worthwhile and successful by following the path of idleness and inactivity the golden mean between action and contemplation is what the teaching of the Gita aims at. It advocates a life of activity with detachment. This spirit of renunciation and activism results in the blending of these two ideals in the form of 'karmayoga'.

Swami Vijayanand in 'Gita on Karmayoga in Yoga' said,

"This fusion of two ideals in karmayoga gives

due regard to social welfare on the one hand and on the other leads an individual to the fulfillment of his spiritual aspiration. Thus Gita ignores neither the society nor the individual. It doesn't advocate a life of inaction but instead recommends a life of intense action in which self is effaced in all its aspects." [4]

Such a karmyogi has complete control over his mind and senses. He acquires a fair outlook towards things. He does not have any ego. He is equipoised in success and failure alike and does every work without any desire of return attaining the state of equanimity (yoga). He does not take credit for his works and offers the fruit of his action to God, he is not tied down through his desires or ego. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन

मा कर्मफलहेतुर् भूर् मा ते सङ्गो' स्त्वकर्मणि (2.47)

karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadacana

ma karmaphalahetur bhur ma te sango' stvakarmani. (2.47 Gita)

Doing all actions without the desire of return is a state of contentment and happiness through attainment of God who is 'sadchidanand'. When a man leaves all desires of mind and remains contented in himself he becomes a wise man unattached to pleasure and pain ,fear and anger:

कामक्रोधवियुक्तानां यतीनां यतचेतसां

अभितो ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं वर्तते विदितात्मानं (5.26)

kamakrodhaviyuktanam yatinam yatacetasam

abhito brahmanirvanam vartate viditatmanam. (5.26 Gita)

He starts doing selfless service with the realization that spirit of service is the best worship of god. He becomes a giver rather than a grabber. Swami Vivekanand's words can voice

this realization in true spirit:

"This is the gist of all worship - to be pure, to do good to others. He who sees Shiva only in the image his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him without thinking of his caste or creed or race or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in the temples. He who wants to serve the father must serve the children first. He who wants to serve Shiva must serve His children, must serve all creatures in the world.[5]

Gita gives the message of righteousness. Lord Krishna says:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर भवति भारत

अभ्युत्थानं अधर्मस्य तदात्मानं रुज्म्यहम् (4.7)

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुस्त्रतां

धर्मसंस्थापनपरार्थय संभवामि युगेयुगे (4.8)

yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bhārata

abhyutthanam adharmasya tadatmanam srjamyaham. (4.7 Gita)

paritrāṇāya sādhuṇāṃ vīnāśāya ca duṣkṛtāṃ

dharmasamsthapanapanarthaya sambhavami yugebyuge. (4.8 Gita)

God manifests Himself for the protection of virtuous and for the extirpation of evil doers establishing righteousness on firm footing.

Gita propounds the spirit of social justice and equality, cooperation and co-existence. Such a yogi having the serenity of mind, and knowledge of manifest divinity becomes a truly transformed soul viewing the world as:

सुःनिर्मत्र्युदसिना मध्यस्थाद्रेस्यबन्धुसु

साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर् विशिष्यते (6.9)

suhṛnmitrāryudasina

madhyasthadvesyabandhusu

sadhusvapi ca papesu samabuddhir visisyate.
(6.9 Gita)

He who looks upon well-wishers, friends and foes, neutrals as well as mediators, inimicals, relatives, the virtuous and the sinful with equanimity, stands supreme.

This transformed being has the realization that the God is in all beings and all beings exist in the God.

सर्वभूतस्थं आत्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि

ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः (6.29)

sarvabhutastham atmanam sarvabhutani
catmani

ikshate yogayuktatma sarvatra samadarsanah.
(6.29 Gita)

Such an enlightened soul performs all the activities as an agent of the God who is devoted to the service of humanity without any egocentric view.

Then Lord Krishna reveals his imperishable form where in the one person of that supreme Deity, Arjun beholds the whole universe with its manifold divisions. This manifestation of Lord Krishna's cosmic form embued with splendor fills the whole cosmos with divine radiance. Arjun reverentially bowing his head to the divine Lord with folded hands says:

पश्यामि देवांस तव देव देहे सर्वास तथा भुतविसेससन्धान

ब्रह्माणं इषं कमलसनस्थंरिसं च सर्वान उरगांश् च दिव्यान्
(11.15)

pasyami devams tava deva dehe sarvams tatha
bhutavisesasangan

brahmanam isam kamalasanasthamrsims ca
sarvan uragams ca divyan. (11.15 Gita)

Lord, I behold within your body all gods and

hosts of different beings, Brahma enthroned on his lotus seat, Siva and all rishis and celestial serpents.

He adds:

अनेकबाहुदरवक्त्रनेत्रम् पश्यामि त्वं सर्वतोऽनन्तरूपं

नान्तं न मध्यं न पुनस्तवादिं पश्यामि विश्वेश्वर विश्वरूप
(11.16)

anekabahudaravaktranetram pasyami tvam
sarvato 'nantarupam

nantam na madhyam na punas tavadim
pasyami visvesvara visvarupa. (11.16 Gita)

Lord Krishna says:

मत्कर्मकरं मत्परमो मद्भक्तः संगवर्जितः

निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु सः स मामेति पाण्डव (11.55)

matkaqrmakrn matparamo madbhaktah
sangavarjitah

nirvairah sarvabhutesu yah sa mameti pandava.
(11.55 Gita)

Who performs all his duties for my sake, depends on me, is devoted to me, has no attachment, and is free from malice towards all beings, reaches me.

As a result of the teaching, Arjun regained his spirit and began fighting. Lord Krishna's teaching served its purpose but it has also been the beacon light guiding the life of thousands of people in every generation. The Gita re-enacts a routine human drama. The situation portrayed in the Gita frequently occurs in our life where we find ourselves in the state of dilemma. The Gita tells us how to act in these situations. It contains wonderful objective lessons to guide us in our battle of life.

Lord Krishna represents the divine essence as a common denominator and the teachings of Lord Krishna are always significant if understood in the right spirit in the right

context. The Gita is replete with the ethical values signifying rationality and universality. The Gita imparts us a sense of purpose by laying stress on doing work pleasant or unpleasant in the spirit of duty with full detachment and unselfish motives. It defines karmayoga as dexterity in action; yogah Karmasu Kausalam (2.51 Gita). The wise imbued with this evenness of mind abandon the fruit of their action and reach the altitude of spirituality beyond all evils. The Gita integrates our personality to such an extent that it may be able to face the challenges of life dynamically.

If we want real happiness, we have to relinquish the fruit of all action (karamphalyagam) or share our fruit of labor with the needy, do the work in the spirit of yajna (any action performed for the good of the society) and work for the betterment of the world and for the welfare of the whole society. If we adapt ourselves to the divine life as ordained by Lord Krishna in the Gita, we are bound to be in tune with the cosmos.

Gita gives the message of holistic view of development, harmony, co-operation, co-existence, lack of greed selfishness and egotism restraining excessive materialism and unrestricted individualism, promoting a balance between man and nature by reduction of wants and augmenting the spirit of selfless service. It is our duty to maintain the ecological balance. Material progress is not the summum bonum of human life. Spiritual advancement can pave the way to the realization of god and thereby enable us to attain salvation or moksha.

CONCLUSION

Srimad Bhagvad Gita is a philosophy enunciating social, political, ethical and eternal truths relevant for the whole human race and valid in all periods of human life. They may undoubtedly be called the gospels of humanity

and all this has been explained in a simple and easy to grasp manner. There is no intricacy of occult or religious rituals. These precepts are immensely helpful in solving the problems of our life and overcoming the challenges of life.

Srimad Bhagvad Gita is not confined to the spiritual development only. The messages of the Gita are for the fullest development of the personality into an ideal human being. We may resort to truthful conduct shunning all evils howsoever precarious the state of affairs may be for us. Om, Tat, Sat - this has been declared as the triple appellation of Brahma who is Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss (17.23 Gita). The Karmayogi who depends on God, attains by His grace the eternal, imperishable state, even though performing all actions (18.56 Gita). The God of Srimad Bhagvad Gita is the God of universal religion not of mere one religion who gives the knowledge that there is no such thing like death. Once the fear of death is removed, we are filled with courage, hope and happiness. We get ready to face the challenges with equipoise and equanimity realizing that we are a part of the immortal soul - 'Tat Twam Asi' entailed in the Upanishads. This realization of the Absolute, God's omnipresence frees us from the fear of death, from grief and delusion, of sin and suffering. We reach the state of enlightenment shedding the cloak of ignorance as darkness is dispelled with the flashing of light, all problems are resolved in self-realization.

Swami Rangnathananda in 'Eternal Values for Changing Society' said,

"In all the 18 chapters, we are face to face with a philosophy which seeks to impart redeeming wisdom by which men may work out their own solution. This is its dynamic feature. On our endeavor depends the taking hold of wisdom and making something out of it. Philosophy, if understood in the vedantic sense, should not be mere academic study and discussion but

should be closely related to life and its problems sustained by life and helping to sustain life in turn. That is the philosophy which is revealed in the succeeding verses of the Gita." [6]

Thus Gita is the gospel of humanity that encompasses presentation of truth in all its simplicity which helps us to face the problems of life boldly. The Gita provides us perfect peace and freedom from all conditionings-external and internal and frees us from all attachments so that we may remain attached to truth only.

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