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THE PHILOSOPHY OF BHAGAVAT GITA

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Abstract

The Bhagavat Gita, also known as The Lord's song or The Song Celestial, is a Hindu scripture that represents the essence of Vedanta for millions of Hindus. Because of the universality of its message, it goes far beyond being merely a Hindu text. In truth, it is a formula for successful living valid for all time – an imperishable spiritual heritage bequeathed to all humanity. As a Vedantic text, the Gita is a superb summary of the Upanishads. Traditional scholars include three text of Vedanta – Upanishads, Brahma sutras and the Gita– as a trilogy: foundational texts (prasthanatraya). Lord Krishna is the divine milkman, the Upanishads are the cows, and the Gita is the milk obtained for the sake of Arjun and all mankind state a poem.

The Bhagavat Gita contains 700 verses and is divided into 18 chapters. Each chapter is given a title as Yoga of – Yoga means path. Yoga also means union (with the supreme). Thus, the word yoga denotes both the method and the goal. The Bhagavat Gita presents a synthesis of Hindu ideas about dharma, theistic bhakti and the Yogic ideals of Moksha. The text covers Jnana, Bhakti, karma and Rajayogas incorporating ideas from the samkhya – Yoga philosophy.

Keywords – Karma Yoga,Bhakti Yoga,Jnana Yoga,Niskamakarma.

Introduction

The Bhagavat Gita is a part of the Mahabharata which is attributed to Vyasa. It is regarded as one of the most sacred books of the Hindus. It is more a book on others than one on metaphysics. Even as a treatise on ethics it is not a compact philosophical work. It is an inspired poetical work with a philosophical theme. It is rightly called the song Divine.

The Gita teaches theism, and regards God (Isvara) as the supreme reality. He is higher than Brahman. God is the foundation of the immortal, infinite Absolute. He is holy and the ground of the eternal moral order. He is the fountain of eternal bliss. He is the supreme Reality. He is unequalled, unexcelled, infinite, eternal and immutable. He unborn immortal, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. He knows the past, the present and the future. He is ancient and without beginning, middle and end. He is the first cause and ultimate ground of the universe. He is their Lord and moral Governor. He is one in many. He is existent and non-existent. He is both transcendental existent and empirical existence. He is both immutable Being and mutation and becoming. He is the supreme person. This is theism.

The Bhagavat Gita is a philosophical conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna right before the start of the climatic Kurukshetra War in the epic Mahabharata. The massive armies have gathered to destroy each other. The Pandava prince Arjuna ask his charioteer Krishna to drive to the centre of the battle field so that he can get a good look at both the armies and all those so eager for war. He sees that some among his enemies are his own relatives, beloved friends and revered teachers. He does not want to fight to kill them and is thus filled with doubt and despair on the battle field. He drops his bow, wonders if he should renounce and just leave the battle field. He turns to his charioteer and guide Krishna, for advice on the rationale for war, his choices and the right thing to do. The Bhagavat Gita is the compilation of Arjuna's questions and moral dilemma and Krishna's answers and insights the elaborate on a variety of philosophical concepts. The compiled dialogue goes far beyond the rationale for war, it touches on many human ethical dilemmas, philosophical issues and life's choices.

Gandhiji looked upon the Gita not merely as a source of spiritual strength and comfort but as something more personal and intimate. He wrote I lost my mother, who gave me birth long ago but this eternal mother (ie, the Gita) has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed. She has never failed me when I am in difficulty or distress. I seek refuge in her bosom. I can

declare that the Gita is ever presenting me with fresh lessons and if somebody tells me that it is my delusion, I regard it as my richest treasure.

Gita for peace of Mind

The Gita contains several beautiful passages in which Krishna promises. Peace of mind to those who firmly believe in him for example.

मयिसर्वाणि कर्माणि ,संन्यस्याध्यातत्मचेतसा
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः।।3.30

ये मे मतमिदे नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः।

श्रद्धवन्तोऽ नसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तोऽपि कर्मभिः।।3.31

Those who constantly follow my teaching in full and without quibbling get released from the bondage of action. But those who question my teaching and do not act according will be denied enlightenment and, being unable to distinguish between right and wrong are doomed to be lost. In chapter VII Krishna further emphasises the imperative need to have firm faith in him and promises the fulfilment of desires.

Many eminent persons both of in India and abroad have also found in the study of the Gita a powerful source of inspiration as well as a constant guide to solve their personal problems and achieve mental peace. It is interesting to find that the great books of other religious also have helped their followers to avoid tension and realise harmony and happiness. Certain verses from the Gita which, if correctly understood and assimilated, should help one to ward off defeatist thoughts and other emotions which effect our physical and mental health.

Nishkamakarma in Bhagavat Gita

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूमा ते सङ्गैस्त्वक्कर्मणिः2.48

You have all the freedom to engage in work. But reward there of is not in your hand. And unceasing activity is most desirable for you.

The sloka is one of the milestones of the Gita message. And the theme will be retreated later in most chapters. All the work is sin and one who elects to work carries the stain of the sin, and that will stand in his way to attain Moksha. This was the momentous findings of the Upanishad era. Gita has however, found a marvellous escape out of this big predicament. If not, reward is cherished from an activity in hand, it becomes a service to mankind, and helpful for speeding up attainment of Moksha. To that, even the most orthodox opinion cannot be open opponent.

As against the Upanishad era exhortation for withdrawal, cessation from activity, Gita commentators commend the sublime scripture as a book of renaissance. The transcendental song lends full support to meaningful activity is every one's life for without incessant creative work, life at any level is not possible, it will perish. Human body and mind grow and pick up and store energy when they were full worked, Utilised. Human society had attained prosperity and escape from hunger, hardship disease and struggle for survival by incessant commitment to purposive activity. So, Gita counsels' full commitment to and engagement in work. But that work is uplifted to worship, to the extent the self motive is less and less. But activity should not cease, if will be a call for death, not for a fulfilling, thriving life. In different situation however the actor has to decide how far he can be loyal to Gita's enthralling precept. Consider Arjuna in the battle of Kurukshetra in the thick of the warring armies. Arjuna would have not even distant thought of gain or loss, not even of safety of his life. The self motive is completely obliterated.

Knowledge leads to Moksha

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मान् स्वनुष्ठितान्

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः3.15

It is always better to perform one's own dharma in accordance with one's own capacity; the dharma of other even performed with perfection will lead to darkness. It is always better to die on the performing one's own dharma.

Gita is a scientific book which provide practical directions for a meaningful life. One can attain more rest and happiness of it. According to Gita absolute freedom is the real goal of life. For achieving the perfect eternal happiness, the Gita suggests three kinds of knowledge (Yoga – 1. Karmayoga 2. Bhaktiyoga 3. Jnanayoga. This three-fold path leads man to attain self-perfection. The last chapter summarises chapter II – the "Vishvaroop darshan" where the Lord gives Arjun the divine power to see His cosmic form – the beatific vision showing the Glory of God.

Karma Yoga

The Bhagavat Gita has another important message. The message of karma yoga or selfless action. This is an amazingly original lesson from the Lord. In simple terms, 'Do your duty; do not crave to result, accept success and failure with equal calmness –unperturbed. You only have the right to do your duty – You have no claim on the results. Be detached from results, for they may bring name and fame one moment, and disgrace and ignominy the next. The man of wisdom remains unmoved in prosperity as well as in adversity. Unmindful of whether he is criticized or glorified.

This message is of great significance for two reasons. Firstly, the Vedic literature extolled rituals and sacrifices that were mostly performed for personal gains. For Prosperity, for progeny and for long stay in the heavenly abode, the lord deprecates this in no uncertain terms. He says "Do your duty and offer the fruits to the Lord. That is the highest form of sacrifice you can make". This message represents a radical departure from the ritualistic overtones of Vedic cult. The second reason for the significance of the message is for Arjun and indirectly for all of us. Arjun was a warrior prince inclined to shirk his duty of fighting a righteous war. The lord tells Arjuna that he should fight, doing his duty to the society even though he might have to kill his kinsmen and teachers. How often we are faced with similar dilemmas in our social and professional life? Should we do our duty boldly or run away from our responsibilities? The answer is clear: do your duty but leave the results to God.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, this message of karma yoga is the Central message of the Gita. He brought this out clearly in his lectures on the Gita delivered at Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmadabad in the 1920s. The message of karma yoga has great relevance for us today. We find many shirking their duties and responsibilities because they are apprehensive about outcomes, i.e. results. Equanimity taking success and failure, fame and disgrace as equal than attitude that is very difficult to cultivate, but cultivate it we must. The Lord says that equanimity (Samatvam) is called Yoga.

Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti Yoga or the path of Devotion is repeatedly stressed in the Gita. Earlier, the ritual part of the Vedas emphasized rituals and offerings to propitiate various Vedic gods, mostly for temporal benefits. Taking the lead from the Upanishads or the later part of the Vedas, the Gita emphasizes the supreme importance of devotion to a supreme Being or Brahman.

Infact, the Gita goes one step further. It calls for devotion to a personal God, God in human form, in this case Lord Krishna Himself. What about those worshipping other Gods? The Lord says in clear terms that if men worship other, lesser gods, their worship nevertheless still reaches Him alone. Therefore, it does not matter which God you worship long as your heart (motive) is pure. The Lord repeatedly talks about single –minded devotion to him. Again, He rejects the elaborate rituals and sacrifices of Vedic times. One can worship the Lord with the simplest of means: a flower, a fruit, a leaf and even a few drops of water. Such is the stirring message of the Gita.

The Lord takes us to yet another – and higher – stage. The easy path is to surrender to the Lord. The Lord protects your assets and rights in this world. He will remove all your sins, shower His grace on you and give you liberation and freedom from future births, the endless cycle of births and deaths we call samsara. The Lord will give inner peace and bliss (Ananda). He will also give you knowledge of Brahman. In short, you will realize sat- chit- Ananda (existence consciousness bliss)

Jnana yoga

Jnana yoga, the path of knowledge and self-enquiry, is considered a difficult path in this day and age. Very few have the mental equipment, the level of concentration required and the will power to exercise the sense – control required for deep contemplation and enquiry. The knowledge of the self or Atman is the central theme of Jnana marga. The Lord begins to tell us about the self-right form the second chapter. He clearly says that it is the self that gives life force (prana) to all creatures, including the humans. The self is present in non- living matter also as a lower form of consciousness. The self is unborn and eternal.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देहि।।2.22

Just as a man puts on fresh cloths after discarding worn- out ones, so does the embodied self, discarding worn-out bodies, proceed to take up new ones

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः।।2.23

Weapons do not cut it; fire does not turn it neither does water wet it; nor does the wind dry it.

अच्छे *f* धोयमदाहो *f* यमक्लेद्यो *f* शोष्य एव च
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोयं *f* सनातनः।।2.24

This self cannot be cut, burned, wetted or dried, eternal, all pervasive, stable, immovable and everlasting is it. The soul residing in the body is not different from the Brahman or Paramatman. The soul is a small part of this Brahman; it activates the body, but the Brahman remains undiminished by forming innumerable creatures.

The Lord tells us of this Supreme knowledge repeatedly is several verses. In his mercy, the lord conveys this knowledge to us in personal terms. Lord Krishna says: “I am seated in the hearts of all I am the indwelling spirit. I am the Paramatman, the imperishable Brahman. Very few know me, because of my human form. Those who know me as the Supreme Being worship Me alone with steadfast devotion, they reach me.

Role of the Bhagavat Gita

Gandhiji's main contribution in regard to the application of the Gita a social and political causes was that he developed the satyagraha technique based on Ahimsa. Many scholars who go merely by the words of the Gita argue that 'Mass Scale Ahimsa' was Gandhiji's own philosophy and that he linked it with the Gita to obtain widespread support of the people. However, Gandhiji's portrayal of an ideal satyagraha as the sthitaprajna of the Gita does establish the Gita as the main references book to understand the full implications of the Gandhian technique.

Conclusion

Bhagavat Gita is an epic scripture that has the answers to all our problems. It was considered a spiritual dictionary by Mahatma Gandhi and was a book of inspiration for many leaders of the independence movement. Take a look at some of these Bhagavat Gita quotes you can use to bring your life back on the right track. The Bhagavat Gita encourages us to live life with purity, strength, discipline, honesty, kindness and integrity in order to find our purpose and to live it fully, The Gita presents a synthesis of Hindu ideas about dharma, theistic bhakti and the yogic ideals of Moksha. The text covers jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Raja Yogas incorporating ideas from the Samkhya - yoga philosophy.

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