



BHAGAVAD GITA

Introduction

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In India we have two very important and famous epics. One is known as the *Ramayana* and the other the *Mahabharata*. *Ramayana* is about the life of one incarnation of Divinity, Ram. The *Mahabharata* is a very long book full of interconnected stories - primarily the history of two different families: the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Part of this epic is what we know as the Bhagavad Gita. The two clans were related but due to various disputes they decided to wage a war against each other. Lord Krishna was present at that time and tried to avoid the war as much as he could but, as matters could not be settle peacefully, war became unavoidable.

The relevant fact was that Arjuna, a friend or even relative of Lord Krishna, the Divine incarnation, was the greatest warrior and hero of that time. Lord Krishna took upon himself the work of driving the chariot of the warrior Arjuna. Lord Krishna said that he would not take sides with either of the two groups, but would just act as the Arjuna's charioteer. Thus, as driver of the chariot of Arjuna, he arrived on the battlefield and positioned the chariot in between the two confronting armies. Here the Bhagavad Gita starts.

The wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita is developed through a question and answer session between Arjuna and Lord Krishna. It is most interesting that all elements of spirituality that are known to the world are found there in that wisdom. There is meditation, the path of action, the path of devotion, and there is the cosmic principle. There are answers to all sorts of questions of an intellectual type which are related to spiritual development.

It takes a long time of course for anyone to understand the real meaning of the Bhagavad Gita and it takes an even longer time than to have transformation inside through the grace of God. But it is a book which helps us at every step in life, if we keep it with us, because it contains wisdom which is useful to us not in an ashram (in theory) but in the field of activity. That is the great beauty of it and it remains an unparalleled monument. Other books do exist but the problem is that some teach about meditation, some teach devotion, some teach other techniques, but here is one manual which gives us everything.

Why is so much importance given to the Bhagavad Gita? The reason is that this wisdom was given during activity. It was not normal activity but the greatest form of activity on Earth - war and the battlefield. The highest wisdom was given on the battlefield and it was wisdom to become enlightened. Get enlightened and even then perform whatever duty comes to your share. Let it be even the duty of waging war. You can fight on the battlefield while remaining peaceful inside.

The Bhagavad Gita is what we call *moksha-shastra* - a teaching for Liberation, and nothing else but that. There are different categories of books which impart wisdom. The word *shastra* refers to those books or scriptures in which matters of importance

for human life have been settled for all times - finally settled by human beings over thousands of years. The wisest people have concluded that on this particular topic this statement is the last word. If people follow it they will be benefited. The Bhagavad Gita is such a scripture. There is nothing in it that can be changed. It is not a question of someone's opinion but it is the science of human evolution.

The Bhagavad Gita is in a category of its own, although there are other books which are similar. The Gita is said to be the *shastra* for Liberation. There is no other purpose - wisdom for Liberation. This wisdom has its own characteristic - one is that it comes very late in the life - after people have passed through many stages of religion and morality. The taste for the Bhagavad Gita comes very late in life after a person has tasted other books and doctrines. It has been said to be the last taste in life! It is the last taste because after it comes Liberation and all efforts are finished - the journey ends. This is one characteristic.

The second point is that, once someone develops a taste for it, all other theories and books lose their relevance. It is difficult to cultivate the taste, but once you have acquired it other likings disappear.

This wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita has for its purpose. Through these words you go into the world-less state - transcendence. What happens always is that, whenever a seeker reads the Bhagavad Gita, he understands the meaning up to the limit of his own understanding - the level of understanding that he has reached. If he read the same passage again after one month, he would see a different meaning in the same words. The reader's level of understanding changes. In the beginning he is unable to understand deeper concepts. He can only understand superficial points. He is satisfied at first but then dissatisfaction begins. He reads the passage again and sees the real meaning. At a later date he reads it again and he understands even more. It goes on happening like that.

The purpose of the Bhagavad Gita is not to make you knowledgeable and a learned person; its purpose is to cleanse and purify you - to liberate you from all those inner impressions.

There is another part. When you reach a certain stage by your own efforts, you will be blocked. You will feel that it is not possible to understand more than you have. Your inner problem is not solved. This stage will come and it comes quite late. At this point the need arises for a guru to teach the Bhagavad Gita. Up to this point you can go on reading it yourself, but when you have read it many times and, although you have already understood much of the meaning, you are not satisfied - it is at this point that a Guru (a person to whom the secret meaning has already been revealed) should become involved - to show the hidden meaning, which can never be revealed by self-effort.

This is a dialogue between the Guru and the disciple, and here is one thing for your information. This greatest wisdom in reality can never be understood by anybody in the whole world without sitting as a disciple and recognising somebody as a Guru. It is not possible otherwise. A person may have the greatest award in the whole world, even a Nobel prize. He may be a great writer or a great scientist but he will not be able to understand the inner hidden secrets of this wisdom without sitting as a disciple at the feet of a Guru. It is not possible because it cannot be understood through the mind only. The deepest secrets are understood through the centre of heart - through love - and that understanding comes only when the heart of the Guru and the heart of the disciple are joined by love. Only then will the secret get revealed.

The Bhagavad Gita is an important book in the life of a spiritual seeker. It is not a book of religion it is a book of the science of transformation of mankind. Science has two dimensions. The external science of the physical world where nature is subject to analysis and inferences drawn and the inner science, the science of being, of our existence or of our own truth. Gita is the book of this inner science. One needs to believe in it and depend upon it. Intellectual understanding is valuable, but more important is practice and faith.

I ask seekers to practise a rule of having a regular relationship with the Gita, by referring to it daily. Even if people have busy lives, they should at least touch it daily. If people are tired one could touch it and then sleep, this way the connection with the Gita is maintained. It is important that people have principles in life and that they are practised regularly. This relationship is one that seekers should practise.

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