



BHAGAVAD GITA

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.



The Gita is not a religious book like some books in other religions, although many Hindus take it like that. It does not contain any mention of religion or ceremony and all that is connected with it. To my mind it is the greatest sermon for the benefit of humanity at large. In it you will find a reply to all your questions.



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 nature which are related to spiritual development. It is known as the codex of spirituality. (A 'codex' means a collection of all relevant matter pertaining to a certain subject.)



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 inner impressions.



The great contribution of Bhagavad Gita for the whole of humanity is to teach us that to achieve the highest aim of human life, one need not do anything else than the performance of one's natural duty. It is only a question of a change of your inner attitude towards work. The very purpose of human life will be achieved.



It is the essence of the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita - complete peace in activity. There is activity going on and during that activity there is total peace.



One of the most important driving forces on this planet Earth is action. The very formation of this Cosmos has primacy of action. It is through activity that life in this Cosmos goes on. It is because activity is so important that Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita is so particular about action. Perfection in human life can never be possible without passing through the domain of activity.



In the Bhagavad Gita the Lord has shown the path of duty to humanity, and if anybody starts following it sincerely, there can never be any harm to the individual and the highest goal will definitely be realised by him.



The sorts of guidance and instruments that are required for evolution vary from individual to individual. The best of all these methods, books, teachers or sermons, I find to be the Bhagavad Gita. It contains the supreme wisdom. In these seven hundred verses, originally in Sanskrit, the Lord has explained everything that is relevant to human life.



If you read the Bhagavad Gita attentively, you will find the complete science of the development of consciousness.



For many reasons I heartily recommend the Bhagavad Gita because I find that the philosophical points are very logically and clearly expressed. Nevertheless, I still have great respect for all the other scriptures of different religions.



Each and every verse of the Bhagavad Gita has very deep implications and meanings.



If Arjuna found Truth on the battlefield, it should be possible to find it anywhere else. War is one of the most intense forms of activity. Where is there greater activity than on the battlefield? It was on the battlefield that the disciple, Arjuna, discovered Truth, so why then, can Truth not be discovered when you are in the office, factory, school or hospital? Why not? Wherever you work the experience can happen inside the body.



I have no doubt about my path and when I say 'my path' - it is the path of the Bhagavad Gita. It is the path followed by thousands of the greatest men in this country, starting from the times of the Rig Veda at least five thousand years ago. Therefore, there is no question about the correctness of the path that we are trying to follow. I have not invented a spiritual path of my own.



The Bhagavad Gita cannot be understood only purely through the mind. The inner meaning of the Bhagavad Gita becomes known to us only when there is Divine grace. The reason is that no one can understand Divine wisdom while ego still exists.



Science has two dimensions. The external science of the physical world where nature is subject to analysis and inferred conclusions made. Then there is 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.



It is most interesting that all elements of spirituality that are known to the world, are found in the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita. 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. 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.



It takes a long time, of course, for anyone to understand the real meaning of the Bhagavad Gita and it takes even longer to gain that transformation inside, through the grace of God. But it is a book which helps us at every step in life because it contains wisdom which is useful to us, not in theory, in an ashram but in the real world, in the field of activity. That is the great beauty of it and the Bhagavad Gita remains an unparalleled document.



The taste for the Bhagavad Gita comes very late in life after a person has experienced 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 discernment for it, all other theories and books lose their relevance. It is difficult to cultivate this taste, but once you have acquired it other likings disappear.



Why is so much importance given to the Bhagavad Gita? The reason is that this wisdom was given during activity. Not normal activity but the greatest form of activity on Earth — war and the battlefield. The highest wisdom was given on the battlefield and that wisdom was to enable enlightenment. “Get enlightened and, even thereafter, perform whatever duty comes your way! Let it even be that of waging war! You can fight on the battlefield while still 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 defined for all times - finally agreed upon by human beings over thousands of years. The Bhagavad Gita is such a scripture. The wisest people have concluded that, on this particular topic of liberation, this teaching is the last word. If people follow it they will be benefited. There is nothing in it that can be changed. It is not a question of someone's opinion but it is about the science of human evolution.



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.



Whenever a seeker reads the Bhagavad Gita, he understands the meaning up to the limit of his own understanding. If he read the same passage again after one month, he

would see a different meaning in the very same words. The reader's level of understanding changes. In the beginning he can only understand superficial points. He is satisfied at first but then eventually 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.



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



In the Bhagavad Gita there is a dialogue between the Guru and the disciple. This greatest wisdom in reality can never be understood by anybody in the whole world without 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 great sermon of the Bhagavad Gita was given by the Guru – the Lord – the Guru Krishna to his disciple Arjuna, in the battlefield. And that is the value of real knowledge – knowledge which is useful in the battlefield. Your office is the battlefield; the factory is the battlefield; your university is the battlefield; any place where you work is the battlefield. The true spiritual knowledge is only that which is useful at that time, when you are fighting your own battle of life, in your own profession or vocation.



The great beauty of the Bhagavad Gita is that it tells you not to change your job or your place of residence but rather your inner quality and your inner attitude. If you change from within, everything else will change. It is easy to change your job, your place of residence, your husband or your wife, but changing yourself is not so easy! However, the solution to all your problems lies in that change.



Two things were quite clear for Arjuna: one was that he did not want to fight, and the other was that he was accustomed to fighting. Krishna could have motivated him by making him angry against the people who had insulted his wife, and make him fight out of revenge and anger. But Lord Krishna did not do this. He told Arjuna that, although he (Arjuna) talked like a learned person, he was not wise. "In the name of not fighting, you are renouncing your duty, as a hero and the protector of the land. It is a fight for righteousness because the others have done much wrong. The real fight

is inside. You should neither run away from performing your duty of protecting the land from bad people, nor should you fight with them with a feeling of revenge or anger. Fight with them in the outside world without having the fight inside. Make yourself peaceful inside and perform your duty outside." This is a most difficult thing to achieve.



The greatest wisdom, in the opinion of Indians and also of most impartial intellectuals in the world, is to be found in the Bhagavad Gita, the most famous of all the yogic scriptures. This greatest wisdom was not imparted in an ashram but in the course of normal activity. Arjuna, the disciple of Lord Krishna, was considering two alternatives: he could withdraw from the battle or he could fight the battle with hate, anger and in a spirit of revenge. But the Lord said: "No, both these actions are wrong. Do not withdraw from the battle. It is your duty. Take part in the battle, but do it with a pure heart as a matter of duty, without a feeling of revenge."



The Gita contains true wisdom. The greatest people everywhere, even in the West, those who are impartial, say that true wisdom is there. Paul Brunton has written this in many of his books. He realised a very deep truth. He came to know that yoga is a great teaching but it is not the ultimate in spirituality in India. When he came across yoga, he did more research and then he wrote the book *The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga*. In the Gita there is no story but just pure wisdom. However, it requires someone who is well versed in it to explain it because it is said that the Bhagavad Gita cannot be understood merely by reading it, no matter how intelligent the reader is.



Many people give discourses on the Bhagavad Gita, without following the instructions given in the Bhagavad Gita itself. There are various reasons for this. Some people just want to use their skill as orators. Some do it to become famous. Some are learned people who have mastered the language and teaching intellectually. I personally always try to follow the written instructions as well as I can.



In the Bhagavad Gita there is only one perfection. Those *siddhis* (special powers) that people often talk about, do not exist in the Gita. These types of *siddhis*, I mean miracles, though they may appear very impressive, are of a very low rank. In the Bhagavad Gita there is no place for them. There is only one perfection there and that is the goal of God-realisation or Self-realisation. This is the only *siddhi* or perfection of value and, as you know, once this perfection is attained all *siddhis* become useless.



The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are, in many ways, are concerned with this one word 'duty', which in Sanskrit is translated as *dharma*. The real meaning of the word *dharma* is 'duty'. It was only later on, during the era of degradation, that some religious ceremonies were described by the term *dharma*. *Dharma* is nothing but the performance of duty. When someone is motivated by a sense of duty for the sake of duty, only then is there a possibility of spiritual unfolding.



The wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita, that there is nothing but God, can now be explained, even through the science of physics. Here it is understood that it is all a

play of energy. The division between matter and energy does not exist any more in quantum physics. They say that what appears to us as matter or solid is actually energy, but the speed of those atoms and electrons is so high that it appears in a particular form. This is the theory now. When it indicates that there is nothing but energy and energy is God, then the matter ends there. So whatever was said by the Lord thousands of years ago, that only God exists, is now virtually proved even by science.



The Bhagavad Gita is such a great work that, for one's liberation, one may read the whole book but can get liberation even by selecting just one part of it, even one verse, or even one sentence.



A challenge was put before the great warrior in the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna. He entered the battlefield with the intention of fighting for justice. Arjuna had to fight with relatives in his clan, his own people and friends with whom he played as children, even his great grandfather who loved him. Attachment and disillusion developed in his heart. He said it was useless to fight: "Even if I win, after killing them, the victory would be useless." He presented these arguments to Krishna, who at that time was doing the work of the charioteer. Krishna said: "It is your duty to fight, but fight without anger. They are doing injustice and it should be confronted. Not to fight this should not be allowed by any person who has dignity. But before fighting with them, fight with your own anger. Do away with your anger; and then take up your bow and arrow, and, with a peaceful mind, pierce them through the chest! Do your duty without anger."



I keep referring to the Bhagavad Gita, not because I am a Hindu, but because it appeals to me that all the ideas contained in it can be understood by logic. Its subject is the most common worldly problem before any person - in this case Arjuna, the disciple. As you know, he was one of the greatest warriors of his age and he came on to the battlefield with the intention of fighting. Lord Krishna was his charioteer. In those days people used to fight from chariots. Arjuna asked Krishna to position his chariot somewhere in the centre of the battlefield. But all of a sudden he saw his dear relations and there arose in him attachment to the relatives. "These people whom I am going to fight with and kill are my relatives! What is the point of this?" It was a very simple and direct question that anybody could ask. There is no ritual and nothing religious in the Bhagavad Gita. It portrays a problem of conflict in everyday life. It is a conflict that we all experience: "Should I do it or should I not do it, and why should I do it?" It is a typical human problem.



There are innumerable secrets in the Bhagavad Gita. Innumerable because this is the wisdom given to us by the infinite Truth, God himself. God is infinite, everything belonging to Him is also infinite.



In the seven hundred verses of the Bhagavad Gita, we can find the essence of all spirituality and find everything in a nutshell. It is pure spirituality which is common to all religions. So in that sense Bhagavad Gita is not a book of religion. It is a book of spiritual science that can be understood.



In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord gave two paths through which Enlightenment can happen: the path of selfless service or desire-less action and the path of knowledge or wisdom. It is interesting to find that, whatever path a person may follow upto Enlightenment, the activity of the Enlightened person becomes the same. The Lord has said that the person who is Enlightened through either path remains fully occupied in the service of others.



It takes a long time to fully understand the Bhagavad Gita or any of the great scriptures of other great religions, including the Bible and the Koran. Often the written words convey a simple meaning but the deeper spiritual significance of the words may not be understood. Actually our understanding of the scriptures depends on the depth of our inner evolution. The deeper our inner evolution the more we are able to understand different interpretations of the same words.



We are all human beings and it is only through ignorance that we have divided ourselves into sects and religions. Why should we not learn the truest wisdom from any source? Depending on one's own faith, intellectual capacity and preference, one ultimately discovers that one particular book gives one more inspiration than other books. There is no harm in this but even then one should respect all holy scriptures, without regard to the religion which they represent. You can consider one particular scripture as your main guide but you should respect all the other scriptures also. The reason is that the only differences between the scriptures are of approach and expression, while the main gist remains the same in all.



Many subtler aspects of human life are hidden here. Each and every verse of the Bhagavad Gita has very deep implications and meanings.



In the Bhagavad Gita there is one topic, among many others, which is particularly important. It is the element of service that is described there - that we should try to live and care for others. It is referred to there as 'sacrifice' or '*yajna*'.



We should lead a completely normal life. This is the path of the Bhagavad Gita - a completely normal life. Everything should be normal and then Self-realisation will happen. Other paths are also there and they have their own truth in them and we respect them. But respectfully we say that they are not our path.



There are many books about spirituality coming on to the market in every country, but mostly they are written by learned people and scholars, and they will not help you. Some books are written by saints who are Realised. If you cannot find such books, you should go to the highest - I mean the Bhagavad Gita. Those who have a different faith can go to the Bible or to the Koran. It is a question of one's personal choice. In these works, the words that are written have potency and power in them. As soon as you start reading the work of a great person you fall into harmony with spiritual state of that person. So that should also be one's habit.



Although I am a Hindu and we are discussing the Bhagavad Gita, we are still not following any religion! As I have often said, we are following spirituality. It is spirituality that is the essence of all religions. Therefore, we accept all religions equally and are ready to take good points from any of them. From my background as a Hindu I have more knowledge about these scriptures, so I am able give better explanations of them. Secondly, I do not know of any other book containing such a clear exposition of the science of spirituality than that which is contained in the Bhagavad Gita. This is the reason that I keep quoting from it. I respect the Bible and the Koran as much as I respect the Gita. They are eternal gifts from the greatest men on Earth and they have in them the same element of truth. Truth is one and the same but the method and manner of its projection is different. All those various practices and techniques were also correct at different times periods of time and in different circumstances. These different techniques, methods and ways of expression were used for the people of those times. So I respect all these great people and their works of spirituality.



You will find the same description of right activities in the Bible, in the Koran, in the Bhagavad Gita, in the Vedas and in the scriptures of all religions. The sense in all the scriptures is the same but the language may be different. One should be kind, helpful to others, not steal etc. - these are universal ideas. You will find almost the same or similar virtues in all the scriptures. The fanatics who carry out all those terrorist activities cannot show where such activities are written about as being desirable.



Actually, the purpose of the Gita is the total transformation of a person. No one can understand the climax of transformation or the Infinite. The climax of transformation is the eradication of I-ness or Ego. One should pray for grace and have the experience of one-ness in love. That is the climax.



Not everybody is acquainted with the Sanskrit language. Even those who understand Sanskrit cannot always understand the depth of meaning in the original verses given by the Lord. For this reason, many commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita have been written in almost every language.



The Bhagavad Gita has been described as an *Upanishad*. What does this mean? It means the most valuable, the most secret, the greatest wisdom in the world which should not be imparted lightly. It should be imparted in confidence to those who deserve it, asking them to sit in close proximity. The word *Upanishad* is formed of two words: 'Upa' and 'Nishad.' 'Upa' means 'near' and 'Nishad' means 'sitting'. It means making a person to sit near and then telling him the secret with due precautions. It should not be said to just anyone because most people do not deserve it.

Therefore, the *Upanishads* contain the greatest secrets and the most valuable advice in the whole world. They contain the totality of knowledge about the final truth of existence - God.



At the end of every chapter the word *Yogashastra* is used for Bhagavad Gita. *Shastra* is a scripture but what does *Yogashastra* mean in this context? Here it means that this book contains not only theory but it contains also the technique to realise Truth. It does not contain only the theory of the universe, the theory about the relationship between the individual and the Totality, but it also describes how that theory can be applied, experienced and made a part of life. The practical application is also given in it. Therefore, the word *Yogashastra* has been used.



This great spiritual wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita was given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield. Life is like a battlefield. The battle is actually going on here in everybody's heart. In Bhagavad Gita there were two opposing armies there on the battlefield: the army of the Kauravas and the army of the Pandavas. One was the army of evil and the other the army of righteousness. Similarly in the battlefield of our heart, a constant struggle is going on between evil forces and good forces, between vice and virtue, and in between those two is the discriminating faculty - the charioteer is there to decide. The individual wants to know what he should or should not do and the Divine gives us the direction.



Interestingly, the name of the place where the battle described in Bhagavad Gita took place is called Kurukshetra, which can be translated as “the field of activity”. So it is during activity that a conflict faces us. It is during the course of the life that we lead in the world that we are faced with problems – “should I do this, or should I do that”. What distinguishes this teaching from all the teachings in the world, is that this is wisdom which is to be used in the world of activity, as we live our normal lives.



It is not always possible to consult with a master or spiritual person in person, so second-best alternative is to become acquainted with the thoughts of evolved people - I mean the authentic works of real saints. It also helps to have daily association with accepted scriptures. It is a matter of faith. One can have a relationship with the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, the Koran or any other holy book. I recommend you to develop a relationship with all authentic books and all holy scriptures, as much as possible in your circumstances.

