



## ETHICS THROUGH BHAGAVAD GITA TO PROMOTE PEACE AMONG YOUNG ADULT LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

*In the present century, there are various issues that perturb people all over the world. For instance, the mass murder of people in the name of race, religion, caste. There are multitudes of such reasons for people to fight against each other. The main reason for an increase in such incidents is the ignorance of ethical and moral values as well as the deterioration of moral values among people. Hence there is a growing need to teach ethics, especially to the young adult learners who are in their late teens. The main purpose of teaching ethics is to impart ethical values among the learners and also to make them aware of the good and bad, in turn, which will make them better citizens and more than that a better human in the globe. These ethical values could be inculcated through Bhagavad Gita, one of the most valued books of the Hindus. It has the teachings of Lord Krsna to Arjuna on the battlefield. Though superficially it appears to be an advice to the confused warrior to boost his morale, it has a universal theme of doing one's duty without expectation and moreover, it moves beyond class, culture and other differences. For the present study, Chapter II, III, VI, and XII were taken. The paper focuses on the moral values that could be taught using the above-mentioned chapters from Bhagavad Gita. It further stresses the point some chapters from the book should be incorporated into the textbooks as a part of the curriculum of Ethics, thus bringing a positive outcome among the learners.*

**Key Words:** Discipline, Duty, Self- Sacrifice, Non-violence, Peace, Moral values

### INTRODUCTION

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In this post-modern era, many countries around the world face social and political issues which make peace as the need of the hour. Peace could be achieved only by inculcating ethical values among the young learners. The reason for choosing young learners is that when moral values are instilled during this transitional age, it will turn them out as better citizens. For this purpose, *Bhagavad-Gita*, the sacred book of the Hindus is used, as it is considered as the counsel of God himself to the confused Warrior, Prince Arjuna in the battlefield.

The *Bhagavad Gita* consists of 18 Chapters with around 700 verses in the form of a dialogue between Krsna and Arjuna about dharma, duty, Swadharma. This text not only gives suggestions on specific issues faced by the prince but contains valuable thoughts for common people across the globe. It is worthwhile to quote the words of Mahatma Gandhi that, "Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like unto God. The endeavor to reach this state is the supreme, the only ambition worth having. And this is self-realization" (9). Thus, it is evident that self-realization is one of the subjects of the Gita. Another important aspect promoted by Gita as stated by Gandhi is desirelessness or renunciation. Only true devotion with right knowledge will lead to the path of peace.

In the second Chapter of Bhagavad Gita Arjuna listens to Lord Krsna's advice like a disciple. This chapter contains the essence of the whole book where various subjects like *Karma yoga*, *Buddhi Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga* and *Sankhya yoga* were discussed. Soul's immortality is also discussed in this chapter. Hence this chapter when prescribed to the students will definitely help them in developing an optimistic way of life.

### **The Purpose of Gita:**

The main reason for enforcing on Gita is that it not only elevates the humans to a spiritual level, even at the material level, it teaches ordinary humans on how to cope up with life. Hence, the words of Lord is not for Arjuna alone, it is for everyone in the world. Swami Srilasri Prapubadha, while talking about the central ideal of the Gita states that:

The purpose of *Bhagavad-gita* is to deliver mankind from the nescience of material existence. Every man is in difficulty in so many ways, as Arjuna also was in difficulty in having to fight the Battle of Kuruksetra. Arjuna surrendered unto Sri Krsna, and consequently, this *Bhagavad-gita* was spoken. Not only Arjuna, but every one of us is full of anxieties because of this material existence. Our very existence is in the atmosphere of nonexistence. Actually, we are not meant to be threatened by nonexistence. Our existence is eternal. (8)

### **Self Realisation:**



We perceive this universe as a place for humans and God as the human explanation of the universe. For instance, if the five sensed animals are considered philosophical, then they might possibly think the whole universe is theirs and also God in their form as the ruler of the universe. Swami Vivekananda in his book on Jnana Yoga highlights *Katha Upanishad* that questions the internal nature of man. In this *Katha Upanishad*, there is an episode which details the story of a young boy Nachiketas, who was granted three boons by Yama (the God of Death). Nachiketas wanted to get the knowledge of what happens after death. This is an ultimate question which puzzles even the greatest philosophers around the world. This question is answered in this story where, Yama says, “The wise man never dies, is never born, It arises from nothing, nothing arises from it. Unborn, Eternal, Everlasting, this Ancient one can never be destroyed” (163). Renunciation is the very basis of life. This central idea of the Upanishads is stressed in *Bhagavad Gita*.

### **Bagavad Gita and Non-Violence:**

Truth and Ahimsa are the two greatest qualities promoted by Gita. It lists ahimsa as the foremost virtue in chapter 10 verse 5 it is stated that, “*Ahimsa samataa tuSh Tih...*” Which states that ahimsa is one of the seven states that arise from the Lord. The Lord is praised as the one who preserves. Similarly, in ch 16, verse 2 it could be noted that: “*Ahimsa Satyam a-krodhah...*” which means that Ahimsa is one of the aspects of divine wealth. Thus one may find that *Bhagavad Gita* contradicts itself. On one hand, it praises ahimsa, but on the other encourages Arjuna to involve in the battle.

In the present Era, where youngsters are provoked for even trivial matters, it is better to remind them the words of Lord Krishna that, without expectations, one should do their duty, that is, by considering victory and defeat as same. Without eliciting pleasure or pain from the act. This is an essential lesson which everyone should learn in their life.

*Mayi sarvaani karmaani  
Sanyasyaadhyaatma-chetaasa  
Nir-aasheer nir-mamo bhootva  
Yudhyasva vigata-jvarah. (2. 38)*

The above verses states that if one surrenders all the actions to the Lord with mind dwelling on the self, free of expectations, the actions do not affect the doer but everything will be nullified by the Lord. Swami Veda Bharati on “Ahimsa in Bhagavad Gita” differentiates the war waged by Arjuna from the present day war and states: “Even His Holiness Dalai Lama, the great contemporary proponent of non-anger, has stated that sometimes force becomes



necessary to combat evil” (“ahymisin.org”). This does not mean that war is justified, but it is the detachment with which one fulfills the task.

### **The Role of Self- Sacrifice:**

Sri Krsna details various forms of sacrifices all of which requires the action of body, mind, and intellect with the expectation of the fruit. But He emphasizes that knowledge-sacrifice is far superior to other sacrifices done with material objects. The Lord extols spiritual wisdom and tells Arjuna that this knowledge can be obtained through sincerity, purity of heart, service to God-realized Guru with devotion, prolonged practice of Karma Yoga and sense-control.

The Real Knowledge is the awareness of the Self or Pure Consciousness within. This Pure Consciousness is experienced by the seeker only after a protracted period of practice in deep meditation. For this, one must have immense faith in God, belief in the preceptor, patience and devotion accompanied by a withdrawal of the senses from the objects of the world. Then alone one can have supreme peace.

The ignorant one, due to lack of these qualifications, entertains doubts in himself as well as in others and suffers here as well as hereafter. But nothing in the world can bind him who works with this understanding of Knowledge. ("e Samskriti")

### **Selflessness and Fearlessness:**

A person should not be selfish all the time. He/she must try to help the needy people. This is the basis for any religion and it also finds its way in *Bhagavad Gita*, in Chapter 3 of the Gita, Krsna tells Arjuna: “*na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣhkarmyaṁ puruṣho 'śhnute / na cha sannyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigachchhati*” (Ch3.Ver. 4). In the same chapter the seventh verse deals with control of the senses through which one can attain a greater level. The idea to work with detachment is recurrent. One must be selfless in the society. Service to humans and other beings is the foremost duty of everyone on this earth. Selfless activities will ultimately lead to peace of mind and happiness. Due to its transcendental nature, reading *Bhagavad Gita* will make one shed fears about life.

### **Devotion to Duty:**

This is yet another important aspect that could be learned from Gita. The present generation has not realized the value of performing duty with utmost care and devotion. This is the reason for chaos and other problems to the youth. Krishna tells Arjuna, “*yajñārthāt karmaṇo / 'nyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ/tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgaḥ samāchara*” (ch 3 ver.9) which is translated by Swami Mukundananda as: "Work must be done as a yajña



(sacrifice) to the Supreme Lord; otherwise, work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties, without being attached to the results, for the satisfaction of God" ("Bhagavad Gita The Song of God").

### Gita and Moral Values:

In Chapter 2, Verse 14, Krsna tells Arjuna that control of the senses like Kama, krodh, and lobh have done us no good. Unreasonable craving for sex will turn you into a pervert, anger will drive people away from you and greed will never let you be satisfied. ("indiatimes.com") A man's self is his own foe. You're your own best friend. If you have a problem, only you will have a solution to it, and not your friend. To find answers to your questions, you will have to look within. Seeking suggestions from ten different people who you call 'friends' is not going to help because they have ten solutions to one problem, whereas your solution is the ultimate answer. One should believe in oneself. The same message we can find in The Bible where it says "Trust in Thyself". In *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna says: "*adharmabhibhavat Krsna pradusyanti kula-striyah strisu dustasu varsneya jayate varna-sankarah*" (Ch I Ver. 40) through which Arjuna reveals the fact that when irreligion becomes prominent in the family and where women of the family are corrupt, their progeny also becomes degraded. The worry of Arjuna is universal and could be identified with that of the Indian parents. Further, Arjuna's words reveal the fact that woman must not lose their moral identity. They are the basic blocks of ethics.

### The Role of *Bhagavad Gita* in Promoting Peace:

The context in which *Bhagavad Gita* was delivered is often misunderstood and misquoted by many as promoting war and violence. But on the contrary, it does not support unnecessary violence. This is evident from Chapter 2, where Arjuna is doubtful and raises a question on killing, the Lord responds thus:

*vedāvināśinam nityam  
ya enam ajam avyayam  
katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha  
kam ghātayati hanti kam . (2.21)*

The translation of the verse is "O Pārtha, how can a person who knows that the soul is indestructible, eternal, unborn and immutable kill anyone or cause anyone to kill?" ("Vedanta.com"). Everything has its proper utility, and a man with complete knowledge knows how and where to apply a thing for its proper utility. Similarly, violence also has its utility, and how to apply violence rests with the person's knowledge. Although the justice of





peace awards capital punishment to a person condemned for murder, the justice of the peace cannot be blamed because he orders violence to another person according to the codes of justice. In *Manu-samhitā*, the law book for humans, it is supported that a murderer should be condemned to death so that in his next life he will not have to suffer for the great sin he has committed. Therefore, the king's punishment of hanging a murderer is actually beneficial. Similarly, when Kṛṣṇa orders fighting, it must be concluded that violence is for supreme justice, and thus Arjuna should follow the instruction, knowing well that such violence, committed in the act of fighting for Kṛṣṇa, is not violence at all because, at any rate, the man, or rather the soul, cannot be killed; so for the administration of justice, so-called violence is permitted. A surgical operation is not meant to kill the patient, but to cure him. Therefore the fighting to be executed by Arjuna at the instruction of Kṛṣṇa is with full knowledge, so there is no possibility of a sinful reaction.

Bringing the spiritual dimension into the peacemaking process can create access to the more deep-seated, affecting the base of the parties' behavior, enabling them to examine critically their own attitudes and actions. People's conflict behavior is often based on more emotional considerations and thus may not be changed simply by rational negotiation processes and subsequent agreements. Cognitive decisions and commitments, he argues, do not necessarily translate into feelings and actions.

### **The Ideal of a Universal Religion:**

To achieve global peace, religion has a vital role to play. The ethical principles and values contained within the teachings of the spiritual leaders have essential factors for the reduction of the evil roots of greed, hatred, and delusion that cause unrest in the mind and delusion, leading to physical outbursts of violence culminating in world warfare. Hence the above-mentioned factor is considered as the foundation for various conflicts and wars.

K. Sri Dhammananda brings to light the fact that people's mind is the place where violence begins by quoting the preamble to UNESCO's constitution, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed. That is, if one wishes to have peace of mind, one must also construct defenses of peace in one's own mind" ("The Role of Religion in Promoting World Peace"). The same can be identified with the teachings found in Gita. The book could be seen as a kind of universal religion.

Swami Vivekananda notes in his lecture that various Yoga should be carried out in practice; mere theories about them will not do any good. First, we have to hear about them, then we have to think about them. We have to reason the thoughts out, impress them on our minds, and we have to meditate on them, realize them until at last they become our whole life. No



longer will religion remains a bundle of ideas or theories, nor an intellectual assent; it will enter into our very self. By means of intellectual assent, we may today subscribe to many foolish things, and change our minds altogether tomorrow. But true religion never changes. Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion.

We should follow what is called in Hinduism as *Sanaatana-Dharma* does not refer to any sectarian process of religion. It is the eternal function of the eternal living entities in relationship with the eternal Supreme Lord. *Sanaatana-dharma* refers, as stated previously, to the eternal occupation of the living entity. As pointed out by Ramanujacarya, *sanaatana* refers to "that which has neither beginning nor end" (16). Thus this *Sanaatana* is a new sect in itself which should be followed by all humans irrespective of the place one is born.

### Unity in Diversity:

Gita is not only the book for the Hindus but for everyone in this universe as it contains universal codes. Swami Vivekananda points out the duality of the world which is a mixture of happiness and sorrow. This duality of good and evil makes our world. "Do not think that good and evil are two, are two separate essences, for they are one and the same thing, appearing in different degrees . . . feeling in the same mind" (181). This world is a mixture of optimism and pessimism, where an individual is a bubble in an ocean. "Unity in variety is the plan of the universe" where we are humans yet different from one another.

### CONCLUSION:

*Bhagavad Gita* has so many values and it should be imbibed by the people not as a religious text but as common text that helps people to be cultured and understand the values of the human system. Hence the book does not belong to Hindus alone. According to Shri Bhaktivedanta Swami Prapupadha, man is not meant to labor like swine. He must be intelligent to realize the importance of human life and refuse to act like an ordinary animal. A human being should realize the aim of his life, and this direction is given in all Vedic literature, and the essence is given in *Bhagavad Gita*. Vedic literature is for human beings, not for animals. Animals can live on other animals and there is no question of sin on their part, but if a man kills an animal for the satisfaction of his greed or taste, he must be responsible for breaking the laws of nature. By making use of the above verses from *Bhagavad Gita* combined with relevant examples from real life situation the young learners could be inculcated with ethical values. Moreover, these principles taught to them will make them morally sound and prepared for any adverse situation with a strong faith in the God.



Also, the learners will become disciplined and will become responsible citizens in the society.

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