



PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE LITERATURE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

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ABSTRACT:

Bhagavad Gita (God Song/Celestial Song) is a Hindu Scripture that forms a part of the famous epic the Mahabharata. Aldous Huxley, the famous English writer, felt that "Gita is one of the most clear and comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever revealed; hence its enduring value is subject not only to India but to all of humanity". The essence of the Gita is the up keeping of Dharma. If you protect Dharma, it will protect you. "Dharmo Rakshathi, rakshitaha". God remains in the side of Dharma. That's why it starts with the seminal phrase "Dharmakshethre, Kurukshethre". In the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata (Book-6), it is spread over in the chapters from 23-40. Again in the Gita there are 18 chapters that contain 700 verses written in Sanskrit. This celestial song is supposed to have been written by the god Ganesha when the great sage Veda Vyasa was dictating. This is set in the narrative framework of dialogue between Arjuna, the third Pandava Prince and his charioteer Sri Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It is originated in the Kurukshetra War between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. At the start of the war, Arjuna feels despaired as he has to fight with and kill his relatives, family members and great people like Bhishma, Drona (Guru), Krupa and his cousins

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Kauravas. He is emotionally preoccupied with these sorrowful feelings and loses heart and is unwilling to take part in the war. He is crestfallen and puts himself in a dilemma. At this point of Arjuna's disillusionment and indecision, Lord Krishna comes to his rescue and helps him come out of his desperation and makes him ready to fight with his magical words of advice. Sanjaya with his mystical sight narrates the war scene to the blind emperor Dhritarashtra. This celestial song of Sri Krishna is bejeweled with many dharmas, three gunas, ethical values, cyclical birth and death, Soul and its immortality, body and its mortality and so on. Each chapter is a diamond that glows and reveals the universal values, applicable to all persons irrespective of caste, creed and sex. My paper emphasizes on the literature of the Gita that contains these values necessary for all, especially for the students who need to upgrade themselves to improve their personality and character.

Key Words: celestial song, incarnation, crestfallen, disillusionment, bejeweled with, mystical sight

Expansion of the Topic:

Renowned scientists like Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Schrodinger publicly admit that “the Bhagavad Gita and Vedic texts illuminated their understanding of key scientific explanations and discoveries”. Gandhiji who treats the Gita as ‘mother’ says that “man is but the product of his thoughts and what he thinks he becomes”. There are eighteen chapters in the Gita. The first chapter reveals the distress of Arjuna or the war within, due to his nature of strong attachment. He is overwhelmed with sorrow which becomes the base for the entire song. He is in dire need of help and right counselling to get himself out of helplessness and depression. With Arjuna's prayer, Lord Krishna initiates a dialogue with a sloka as follows;

“Klaibhyam maasma gamah Paardha-nai tatwa yyupapadyathe ,
Kshudram Hridaya dawrbalyam-tyakthothistha Paramtapa”

These lines are inspirational as Krishna asks Arjuna to quit his timidity and despair, because giving shelter to weakness in the heart is mean and debilitating. So these cowardly feelings should be shed off at once. He then continues saying,

“Asochyaa nanvasochasyam, pragjnaa vaadaamstha bhaashase
Gathaa soonaagathaasuuncha, naanu sochamthi panditaaha.”

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Krishna says that Arjuna is talking like a great scholar as if he knows everything. But he does not have true knowledge. A real pandit is one who is neither afraid of nor lament on those who are dead or alive.

Application to modern life:

Death is only a Myth:

People are always afraid of death because death is terrible looking to them. To such people Krishna's words give joy and relief. We are entangled in relational bonds and get attached to them firmly, forgetting the fact that these bonds are not permanent. This strong attachment, when breaks, leads people to misery. It's true that any physical attachment will break one day or other. Only the attachment with the Divine will last forever and leads one to Moksha or liberation.

Causes of Sorrow & Key to Happiness:

The spiritual conflict is the confusion of identity. If we do not know who we are, and what God is, we cannot resolve our conflicts completely. Many people do the work expecting something in return. If they fail to get favourable results, they become depressed and weak. This is the main cause of sorrow. To such ones, to get out of sorrow, Krishna says that people have right to do the work but no right to think of the results. So, we must do the work without expecting anything in return. This is Karma Yoga or non-attachment.

*“Karmanye vaadhikaarasthe, maa faleeshu kadaachanaa
Maakarma falaheturbhuh, maathe samgostya karmani”*

The students who compare their marks with those of others and suffer have to learn one thing. They should wholeheartedly do the work, but must take the results as such. The sad thing is that unable to withstand the truth, they are committing suicides. They should know that life is a battle field. There will be winners and losers. There is always a scope to try again and reach the goal. They must take their defeat sportively and work again with enthusiasm.

Sorrow comes when we think that this body is permanent. But Lord Krishna says that it is sheer ignorance to think so, because this somatic body is nature-made and not permanent. It undergoes changes with time and finally crumbles. He affirms that there is death and birth that go in a cyclic process. Only the Soul remains unchanged.

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*Jaathasyahi dhruvo mrithyuhu—dhruvam janma mrithasyacha
Thasmaa daparihaaryerdhe—nathwam sochithu marhasi !*

Only the ignorant people believe in death. In fact, death is only a transformation to earn a new body. Death and life are like day and night that alternate with each other. Only the body, the soul's abode, perishes. So, excessive love for this body leads to misery. So, this unwanted attachment is to be shunned.

*Vaasaamsi jeernaani yadhaa vihaaya—navaani grihnaathi naroparaani
Tadhha sareeraani vihaaya jeerna—nyanyaani samyaathi navaani dhehee!*

Just like we throw off our torn and tattered clothes and take the new ones, so also this soul after leaving this physical body, takes a new body. From this we can understand the fact that the soul has no death. There is no meaning in crying over death.

Before this body appears (vyaktha), it remains in an invisible state (avyaktha), and after death, it goes into the avyaktha state again. So, it is foolish to think about the dead as death is merely a misapprehension.

*“Avyakthaa deeni bhuutaani, vyaktha madhyaani bhaaratha
Avyaktha nidhanaanyeva, thathra kaa paridevanaa”*

How to get everlasting joy:

If we know that the soul is permanent, there is always joy in our actions. Krishna asserts that no weapons can destroy it, no fire can burn it, no air can absorb it. It is permanent, ancient (sanaathana) and beyond the boundaries of time and space, motionless (achaloyam) and all pervading. So, people who are ignorant only are frightened. This is true knowledge. Whoever that gets this knowledge will remain calm and contented.

*Nainam chindamthi sasthraani – nainam dhahathi paavakaha
Nachainam kledhayamtyaapo – nasoshayathi maaruthaha !*

Life & Its Purpose:

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The very purpose of our life is to uphold values and safeguard Dharma. “Sareera maadhyam khalu dharma saadhanam”. Before the body falls to the ground, one must do maximum good to the society. This can be done with selflessness, universal outlook, courage and determination.

Krishna’s advice works and Arjuna recoups his energy and fights with the Kauravas and wins the war. Krishna reminds the duty of Arjuna, a kshathriya, whose duty is to fight and save dharma. If one forgets one’s dharma, there will be a disorder and a disaster. Adharma prevails and virtuous people suffer. So, God will have to take another incarnation to establish dharma by killing the demons. Krishna’s words are for all times and to all people. He speaks on the qualities of a stoic (sthithapragina).

Be stoical:

A stoic is one who neither swells in size during sukha/ happiness nor becomes anxious/weakened during dukhha/ hardships.

*“Dukheshwanudwigna manaaha, sukheeshu vigatha spruhaha
Veetharaaga bhaya krodhaha, sthithadheermuni ruchyathe.”*

The above lines make the people think and grow wise. For the students who are often subjected to mood fluctuations, this idea of being a stoic will be of great help. Everyone should realize that they are being carried away by emotions. Kaama (extreme desire to possess something or lust) and krodha (anger) are powerful emotions which should be shunned with practice. They originate from rajoguna and kill our judgement and throw us into the hell of sin.

*Kaama yesha, krodha yesha rajoguna samudhbhavaha
Mahaasano mahaapaapma vidhyena miha vairinam*

Acquiring virtues:

Krishna mentions three gunas namely, Sathwa, Raja and Tamo, which dictate our lives. Every person will have the combination of these three gunas. But the ratio differs and whoever that has one quality in abundance acquires that type of nature. Sathwa guna is the highest one in quality which should be inculcated by all. Rajo and Tamo gunas push the people out of gear and become the cause of misery and distress. So, whoever that realizes the role of these gunas and adopts the sathwa guna will be able to lead a virtuous life.

Realization of the true enemies:

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All of us should know that we have no enemies in the form of persons, but we have them in the form of Arishadvargaas (kaama, krodha, lobha, moha, madha, maatscharyas). These are the true enemies we need to fight with. Their resting places are the five senses (gjnaanendriyas) and the mind. These durgunaas shroud gJnaana and work on the actions of the individuals and push them towards the sinful path. The students should be aware of this fact and control themselves by vigorous self-practice.

How to control Mind:

Mind is volatile and it is a hard task to control it. Krishana tells Arjuna that controlling the mind is no doubt a difficult task but not impossible. It can be controlled through incessant practice and non-attached feelings. “Abhyaasenathu kountheya, vairaagyenacha grihyathe”. Through practice (abhyaasa) and Non-attachment (vairagya) only, one can control one’s mind. “Mun jeetho, jag jeetho” is a Hindi proverb that elucidates it.

Right way of Living:

Unwanted qualities like desire for money, lust, hatred, sorrow, egoistic feelings should at once be got rid of. Earning is essential but done in an honest way. Love is good but love of the body alone is not good. “It is better not to love, if loving only means hating others” says Vivekananda. Gandhiji says “Strength does not come from physical capacity”. It is through right way of living alone one becomes strong. Kaama/desire for sex is a natural quality. But if it is not under control, the society suffers a lot. Divinity is the most refined form of human qualities. We must work for dharma because work gives us an opportunity to prove our qualities and elevate our character. Swami Vivekananda says, “See the glory of your own soul, and see that you will have to work.”

Ultimate Reality & Achievement:

What is the ultimate reality? “Nahi gjnaanena sadhrusam Pavithra miha vidyathe” One must know that there is nothing in the world that is equal to gjnaana. “Gjnaanagni daghdha karmaanam”. Our karmas get purified with gjnaana. “Sarvam karmaakhilam paardha, gjnaane parisamaapyathe”. All karmas end in gjnaana. But we must know how to get this gjnaana and what is the ultimate outcome of this gjnaana. “Sradhhavaan labhathe gjnaanam” “gjnaanam labhdwaa paraam Santhim”. People who have (Sradhha)unquenchable thirst/ interest for knowledge, only will gain knowledge. Once this knowledge is gained, we get the permanent peace of mind (paraam santhi), the ultimate one that people ought to get.

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CONCLUSION:

Man is a bundle of desires, the main cause of misery. As the mind dictates the body, no amount of physical effort can be of use without a reform in the mindset. “Mana yeva manushyaanam, kaaranam bandha mokshayo”. Truly speaking there is nothing ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in this world, but our thinking makes it so. It is the perception that makes things what they are. Dolly Parton says “Find out who you are and do it on purpose” The people should know how to live life to the fullest by turning a negative situation into a positive situation. As darkness cannot drive out darkness, ignorance cannot drive ignorance. Only the knowledge (light) can drive ignorance (darkness). We must always remember that no one can make us feel inferior without our consent. Thus, Gita stands as a beacon to show direction to the mankind.

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