

Essential Message of Bhagavad Gita

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- Three gunas – sattva (purity), rajas (action), tamas (dullness)
- Significant verses in Gita
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Introduction

- Ramayana and Mahabharata, two great epics of India
- Gita is part of Mahabharata (Bhishma Parva)
- Several thousand years old
- Vedas, 4 in number (Rik, Yajur, Sama, Atharva), are the oldest volume of knowledge and wisdom
- Upanishads form the last part of Vedas and contain the essential philosophy (also called Vedanta)
- Gita contains quintessential essence of philosophy of the Upanishads – and more
- Now Gita is a revered scripture in its own right

Introduction (cont.)

- Contains 18 chapters, 700 verses
- Contains teaching imparted by Lord Krishna to the warrior prince, Arjuna
- Krishna, a king and a friend of Arjuna, is supreme manifestation of universal consciousness
- BG Considered a lighthouse of eternal wisdom
- Teachings of BG transcend time and space – as significant today as it was when written
- Practical self-contained guide to day-to-day life
- Written in a poetic form, usually chanted
- Mostly in meter called Anushtup Chhanda

Anushtup Chhanda Rules

Each Shloka has four quarters. In every quarter:

- 6th syllable will be guru (dīrgha/long)
- 5th syllable will be laghu (hrasva/short) .
- 7th Syllable in 1st and 3rd quarter will be dīrgha (long)
- 7th Syllable in 2nd and 4th quarter will be hrasva (short).

Meditation on Gita

- सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः।
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥ ४ ॥
sarvopanishado gavo, dogdha gopala-nandanah
partho vatsah su-dhir bhokta, dugdham gitamritam mahat

The Upanishads are the cows milked by Gopāla (Krishna), and Arjuna is the calf. Wise and pure men drink the milk, the supreme, immortal nectar of the Gita.

- मकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लङ्घयते गिरिम ।
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्द माधवम् ॥ ८ ॥
Mookam karoti vaachaalam pangum langhayate girim;
Yatkripaa tamaham vande paramaanandamaadhavam.

I bow down to Sri Krishna, the source of all joy, whose compassion brings speech from the lips of the dumb and carries the lame over mountains.

Renowned thinkers on Gita

- Albert Einstein: When I read the Bhagavad Gita and reflect about how God created this universe everything else seems so superfluous.
- Dr. Albert Schweizer : The Bhagavad Gita has a profound influence on the spirit of mankind by its devotion to God which is manifested by actions.
- Sri Aurobindo : The Bhagavad Gita is a true scripture of the human race, a living creation rather than a book, with a new message for every age and a new meaning for every civilization.
- Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru: The Bhagavad Gita deals essentially with the spiritual foundation of human existence. It is a call of action to meet the obligations and duties of life, yet keeping in view the spiritual nature and grander purpose of the universe.
- Herman Hesse: The marvel of the Bhagavad Gita is its truly beautiful revelation of life's wisdom which enables philosophy to blossom into religion.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Bhagavad Gita is an empire of thought and in its philosophical teachings Krishna has all the attributes of the full-fledged monotheistic deity and at the same time the attributes of the Upanishadic absolute.
- Henry David Thoreau: In comparison, our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial.
- Rudolph Steiner: In order to approach a creation as sublime as the Bhagavad-Gita with full understanding it is necessary to attune our soul to it.

Battleground Setting

- Dialog took place in the middle of the battlefield of Kurukshetra (not in an ashram!)
- Armies of Kauravas and Pandavas face each other, ready for battle
- Lord Krishna (God incarnate) is Arjuna's charioteer
- Gita contains Krishna's response to Arjuna's confusion and moral dilemma
- Lord Krishna emphasizes to Arjuna his duties as a prince and a warrior, urging him to fight

Arjuna's Dilemma

- Arjuna sees across the battle line his own cousins, uncles, teachers (gurus) and elders
- He feels despondent since he does not want to kill all these people
- He says he would rather die or become a renunciate and attain salvation
- By killing the army, he would create thousands of widows in the society creating chaos
- He lays down the arms and refuses to fight

Symbolism of the Gita

- Same symbolism in Kathopanishad as well
- In the chariot of the body, the five horses are the five senses (tongue, eyes, ears, nose and skin)
- The reins, the driving instrument, symbolize the mind
- The charioteer (Krishna) is the pure intelligence
- The passenger (Arjuna) is the self (false ego)
- Life (body) is the chariot
- War of Kurukshetra = individual conflicts
- Kauravas/Pandavas = negative/positive tendencies

Main Message

- Actively resist evil
- Know that you are the eternal, spiritual self; all else is transient
- Stabilize the mind by overcoming desires
- Do your duty with non-attachment, as sacrificial offering
- Aspire to become “sthitaprajna” – a person established in supreme divine wisdom
- True renunciation is renunciation of doership
- Acknowledge presence of God in you and everything
- Surrender to God with devotion
- Know the truth about the three Gunas

Major Paths of Yoga

- Karma Yoga – yoga of action
- Jnana Yoga – yoga of knowledge, also referred to as Buddhi Yoga, Sankhya Yoga
- Bhakti Yoga – yoga of devotion
- Dhyana Yoga – yoga of meditation (mind) also referred to as Raja Yoga

Karma Yoga

- Treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat alike engage yourself in your duty and fight, thus you will not incur any sin. (2.38)
- Your choice is in action only, never in the result thereof. Do not be the author of the results of action. Let your attachment not be to inaction.(2.47)
- Do your duty to the best of your ability, O Arjuna, with your mind attached to the Lord, abandoning worry and selfish attachment to the results, and remaining calm in both success and failure. Evenness of mind is called yoga. (2.48)
- Do your prescribed duty, dedicating all work to God in a spiritual frame of mind, free from desire, attachment, and mental grief (3.30)
- He who gives up attachment to action and their fruits, is ever content, such a person though engaged in activity does nothing at all and incurs no Karmic reaction. (4.20)

Karma Yoga (cont.)

- Actions arise from the gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas). The knower of the gunas knows that all actions are caused by the triple modes of nature; only the ignorant thinks, "I am the doer" (Ch.3.27)

Jnana Yoga

- Arjuna, the one who knows this self to be indestructible, timeless, unborn, and not subject to decline, how and whom does that person kill? Whom does he cause to kill? (2.21)
- Just as a person puts on new garments after discarding old ones, the individual soul acquires new bodies after casting away the old ones. (2.22)
- The indweller of the physical body, the one who is self-controlled, having renounced all actions mentally (by knowledge), remains happily in the nine-gated city (the body) neither performing action, nor causing (others) to act. (5.13)

Bhakti Yoga

- Four types of virtuous ones worship or seek Me, O Arjuna. They are: The distressed, the seeker of Self-knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the enlightened one who has experienced the Supreme Being. (7.16)
- I personally take care of both the spiritual and material welfare of those ever-steadfast devotees who always remember and adore Me with single-minded contemplation. (9.22)
- Whosoever offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water with devotion, I accept the offering of devotion by the pure-hearted. (9.26)

Bhakti Yoga (cont.)

- One who remains the same towards friend or foe, in honor or disgrace, in heat or cold, in pleasure or pain; who is free from attachment; who is indifferent to censure or praise; who is quiet, and content with whatever one has, unattached to a place, a country, or a house; who is tranquil, and full of devotion, that person is dear to Me. (12.18-19)

Dhyana Yoga (Meditation)

- One must elevate and not degrade oneself by one's own mind. The mind alone is one's friend (if you control it) as well as one's enemy. (6.05-06)
- This yoga is not possible for one who eats too much or who does not eat at all, who sleeps too much or too little. (6.16)
- Wherever this restless and unsteady mind wanders during meditation, one should just witness it under the supervision and control of the Self. (6.26)

Dhyana Yoga (cont.)

- The best yogi is one who regards every being like oneself and can feel the pain and pleasures of others as one's own. (6.32)
- Undoubtedly, the mind is restless and difficult to restrain, but it is subdued by any constant vigorous spiritual practice such as meditation with perseverance and by detachment. (6.35)
- I consider the yogi-devotee who lovingly contemplates on Me with supreme faith and whose mind is ever absorbed in Me to be the best of all the yogis. (6.47)

Definition of Yoga

- (He) who looks upon opposites as equals, who has risen above duality, and thus freed himself from both vice and virtue, is a Yogi. Verily, work done to perfection is Yoga. Yoga is skill in action.— (Ch.2, V.50)
- ... Be even tempered in both success and failure. This mental evenness is Yoga. Indeed, equanimity is Yoga! – (Ch.2, V.48)
- "Yoga is known as the disconnection of the connection with suffering."- (Ch6, v.23)

Three Gunas

- Throughout Gita there is mention of the three gunas – sattva (purity), rajas (action), tamas (dullness)
- Psycho-physical energy threads that constitute material existence. These are the threads of reality that bind us to the world of change.
- Sattva is pure, illuminating and free from sickness. It binds the soul through attachment with happiness and knowledge (14.6)
- Rajas is full of passion and is born out of intense desire and attachment. It binds the soul through attachment with action (14.7)
- Tamas is the darkness and the crudeness in man. It is born of ignorance and cause of delusion. It binds the soul through recklessness, laziness and sleep (14.8)

Three Gunas (cont.)

- (One who has transcended the gunas) – is alike in pleasure and pain, remaining the same towards a piece of gold, or a lump of clay, towards the desirable and the undesirable, equal in defamation and self-adulation (14.24)
- in honor and dishonor, same to friends and foes, without any egoistic effort in performing actions, he rises above the gunas (14.25)

Justification for War

The pre-conditions for engaging in battle are:

- Arjuna should develop equanimity towards pleasure and pain, loss and gain, victory and defeat
- should surrender all his acts to Him (the verb used is 'sam+nyas'= to renounce as in the case of a sanyasin swami)
- should have his mind dwelling in the pure spiritual self, atman
- should be free of expectations
- should be free of the common obsession of 'mine'
- should void all feverishness from his being
- then he should engage in battle.

Other Significant Verses

- Humility, modesty, nonviolence, forgiveness, honesty, service to guru, purity of thought, word, and deed, steadfastness, self-control, aversion for sense objects, absence of ego, constant reflection on the pain and suffering inherent in birth, old age, disease, and death; (13.07-08)
- Detachment with family members, home, etc.; unflinching equanimity upon attainment of the desirable and the undesirable and unswerving devotion to Me through single-minded contemplation, taste for solitude, distaste for social gatherings and gossips, steadfastness in acquiring the knowledge of the Self, and seeing the omnipresent Supreme Being everywhere - this is said to be knowledge. That which is contrary to this is ignorance. (13.09-11)

Significant Verses (cont.)

- It is the lust, born out of passion, that becomes anger when unfulfilled. Lust is insatiable and is a great devil. Know this as the enemy. (3.37)
- Whenever there is a decline of Dharma (Righteousness) and a predominance of Adharma (Unrighteousness), O Arjuna, I manifest Myself - for protecting the good, transforming the wicked, and re-establishing world order (Dharma). (4.07-08)
- The two-fold committed life-style in this world, was told by Me in the beginning – the pursuit of knowledge for the renunciates and the pursuit of action for those who pursue activity. (3.3)

Ladder of Destruction

- One develops attachment to sense objects by thinking about sense objects. Desire for sense objects comes from attachment to sense objects, and anger comes from unfulfilled desires. (2.62)
- Delusion or wild ideas arise from anger. The mind is bewildered by delusion. Reasoning is destroyed when the mind is bewildered. One falls from the right path when reasoning is destroyed. (2.63)

Modern Applications

- Book titled, “Bhagavad Gita on Effective Leadership: Timeless Wisdom for Leaders” by Pujan Roka
- Business Week article – [Karma Capitalism](#) – “Has the Bhagavad Gita replaced The Art of War as the hip new ancient Eastern management text?”
- “[Bhagavad Gita and Management](#)” by M.P. Bhattathiry – a nicely written article
- Satish Modh – personality test and career guidance based on gunas - <http://trigunayoga.com/>