

Shrimad Bhagavada Gita: The Book of Answers to Moral, Spiritual, Psychological and Other Dilemmas

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Abstract:

How do we conduct ourselves? What does morality mean to us today? What text, if at all there be any, can be referred to when we are in a state of dilemma? These questions surface before us every now and then in the modern times when we are in the wake of absurdism, chaos, conflict and agitations. This paper intends to discuss these issues in the context of Shrimad Bhagvada Gita as a guiding text for those torn by conflicts. Focus is also paid to the consequences of ignoring a close reading and a careful understanding of The Gita in present times. Gita is a book of answers to our moral, spiritual, psychological and other dilemmas. It has the capacity to guide us through all odds of life. What is required is a close understanding of the coveted text. As is common with many popular texts, Gita has been equally misread as it has been read by lesser minds whose claims to intellect stand on baseless pillars. One of the concerns of this paper is to bring to light some of these misinterpretations and discuss the need for a sincere reading of Bhagvada Gita.

Keywords: Morality, ethics, spirituality, justice, ecology, etc.

INTRODUCTION

“To be or not to be?”, this is a question perplexing not just Shakespeare’s Hamlet but all of us. All of us at some point of time in our lives have been in such situations that demand crucial choices, often strong steps. It is a bright sunny Monday morning. A salesman is out for his daily sales business, with a typical smile on his lips, well groomed hair, polished shoes, ironed clothed, carrying all the glory of a salesman. He has some products to sell to his clients, he has prior appointments to meet, he has few deadlines to beat, if at all he is to get promotions and all that. Now on his way he witnesses an accident. somebody is seriously injured, all in blood. The salesman wants to extend hands of help but before he can convert his thoughts into action a train of thoughts initiates before him and he starts asking himself What if he gets late? He will miss the appointment which will disappoint his client which in turn will lead the salesman at loss of a client this will further frustrate the company’s boss for which the salesman works. He ultimately ignores and rides his way. Now this evokes a sense of guilt in the salesman but after sometimes he is convinced that he was duty bound and thus he could not stop. The salesman and his situation is just one example. Everyday life puts almost all of us in such a situation. But are we all always duty bound? Perhaps, no! Sometimes, in fact, often

times we ignore such situations in the name some or the other engagement. And when we are at the receiving end we cry about the world being so cruel, the times beings so tough and humanity being hopeless. Bhagvada Gita, our coveted scripture which is a guide, an answer book to almost all such moral dilemmas, warns us against the consequences of such an ignorant behaviour of ours when it says: “What goes around, comes around”. This paper intends to explore the consequences of ignoring the guidelines of Gita in our conduct of morality.

GITA: WHAT IT SAYS AND WHAT WE INTERPRET

The Gita, a wonderful scripture that has answers to almost all our problems, has been talked about at extreme lengths but the author of this paper believes, and it is her personal opinion, that had the teachings of Gita been practised in real life situations as much as it is talked about the world would have been so much better. As is the case with any other other popular text, there have been very many misinterpretations of the teachings of Gita. To quote one, we often hear people say Lord Krishna says “The soul can not be murdered, it is immortal”, fair enough and our next favourite statement is ‘to kill someone in our defence is justified by Gita’. Ever since I was a child I had heard this and till very late I even believed it. The

idea sounded fair to me and no sooner would I see an ant climb my body than I would kill it thinking that I was doing it in my self defence. And all this I did with the conviction that Lord Krishna says this and he can't be wrong. What then I did not know then, and most people fail to understand till this day, was the fact that what Gita deals with is a problem that is way too complex for such over simplifications and generalisations. People often use this coveted text for justifying their misdeeds. The contention is, people misread and misapply the wonderful teachings of Gita not always on purpose, most of the times our act of justifying the killing of snakes found in our kitchen gardens, or still simpler beings like ants, etc. are indicators of a complete ignorance of the real teachings of Gita. The act of killing an ant might not sound such heinous a crime but explaining it within the context of Gita certainly is one.

Modern world is facing so many problems, we have so many diseases which our scientists are having a very tough time dealing with. When we observe closely the nature of our problems we realise that our miseries are, speaking strictly logically, outcomes of our own actions. Mankind has been so unkind to the ecology that nature found it compulsory to send us strong messages. Our latest challenge, the Corona virus is again a strong message from our ecosystem. Even if we ignore the biological and medical

science explanation of this virus, one thing is certain, it is us who are responsible. It is our irresponsible behaviour that is, among other reasons, responsible for such outbreaks and disruptions of the normalcy. Gita teaches us, among several other things, to be kind to our fellow beings and which includes everything. Epidemics like the present one and other such are a result of our misuse rather abuse of natural resources. There is a growing lack of coordination between humans and other components of the ecosystem. The point that this paper intends to bring to attention is that all these calamities are an outcome of our growing greed which ultimately stems from our lack of moral values. And the reason of these attitudes is somewhere linked to our lack of proper understanding of wonderful scriptures like The Gita.

The turn of the century brought to the point of extinction many world species, war, radiation from nuclear reactors, rapid and unchecked industrialisation, thoughtless urbanisation, etc. are few of the factors that contributed to such situations. The last two viz., industrialisation and urbanisation lead to reckless cutting down of trees that has caused a tremendous amount of irreversible loss. The author of this paper is concerned with the reason behind such thoughtless actions. And she finds, among other things, the tarnishing of values in humans as the principle factor behind these.

Twentieth century witnessed the two great wars that changed the world forever. Fear, greed, jealousy, insecurity, corrupts human minds. Of all these things, lets talk about fear since fear, out of all these emotions, is the one most frequently used as an explanation for unethical and even cowardly acts of us humans. The author is not unmindful of the fact that it is a matter of national security that a country engages its resources and its human capital in the production of weapons of all sorts - nuclear or otherwise. She does not even mean to suggest that her country that is forever India should suspend all its weapon production activities. What is actually meant here is a hypothesis that what would happen if all the countries in the world start spending all the amount of money they currently spend on warfare on environmental up gradation. The very thought is so comforting and delightful! Shrimad Bhagwad Gita is also about Mahabharata the great war but what kind of a war? Is it the same war we fight today? Perhaps, no. Gita talks of a war that was fought because injustice was done. Injustice in terms of moral grounds. And there was a need to undo some wrongs. It was about ethics. Our wars are mostly about greed, lust for power, etc. However, if we closely observe, even the legend of Mahabharata has some gaps that are strictly moral in nature. If we take Mahabharata as a historical event and Bhadvad Gita as a historical treatise, who is the writer of this history? All that we have in Gita is from the point of view of

the winner. But who will tell us the point of view of the losers? Vyas Muni's version is one such version that sets in the entire historical account in a manner that is almost absolute binary. Whatever be the case, we would be motivated to chant the oft quoted lines of Bhagvat Geeta, where lord Krishna speaks to his disciple Arjuna, chapter IV line 7 and 8:

“Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya Glanirva Bhavathi Bharatha,

Abhyuthanam Adharmasya

Tadatmanam Srijami Aham'. Praritanaya Sadhunam

Vinashaya Cha Dushkritam Dharamasanthapnaya Sambhavami Yuge-
Yuge.”

The English translation goes on to say “whenever there is decay of righteousness O! Bharatha and a rise of unrighteousness then I manifest myself for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age.”

We can attain the ideal world only by first idealising ourself. We should broaden our mindset, break the manacles of caste, creed, sex or religion.

We should learn to behave to others the way we expect them to. We should emphasise on the idea of collective good, team spirit and combined efforts in everything we do. Above all, we should learn to be human beings.

The need of the hour is to take into account a holistic approach towards man's all round development. It is, therefore, necessary that factors beyond physical should be taken into consideration. All of us undergo a series of mental anxieties, at times; since we are mortals we have our bodily limitations but we, all of us, have souls which comes to rescue when we are left in despair by reasons beyond our control. Gita teaches us to stay calm and composed when faced by adversities. And of course, this holds good for all situations and in all walks of life. A person who is a manager at a company, a businessman, a lawyer, even a layman, is expected not to panic but be gentle, all the time. Krishna tells us to be self-motivated. It is only we who decide whether we are going to be stopped by the stumbling blocks in the way of our success or make them our stairs to the heaven of success. Gita teaches us the art of keeping ourselves motivated. Krishna has said, the mind is the repository of thoughts that shape our personality. A demotivated mind can damage both the person and the work place environment. Lord Krishna says to Arjuna in chapter VI verse 36:

“Asaṁyatātmanā yogo Duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ

Vaśyātmanā tu yatatā Śakyo 'vāptum upāyataḥ

For one whose mind is unbridled, self realization is difficult work. But he whose mind is controlled and who strives by appropriate means is assured of success. That is my opinion”.

CONCLUSION

Shrimad Bhagvada Gita is a guide to the young minds who aspire to not only become academic and workplace successes but also wish to lead a life of contentment, a life that is meaningful. When the world is in the wake of absurdism, Bhagvada Gita is like an artist's attempt to put meaning to our otherwise meaningless existence. It is a book of answers to all our dilemmas whether they be moral, ethical, psychological or spiritual or even something else. What is required today is a revisit, in all seriousness, to this great Indian text of wisdom. Hopes for a better world is the least that any reader of this text will take home. A lot of inferences can be drawn from the reading of Gita. Afore mentioned is the reading of Gita by the author of this paper. This paper has been purposely designed to leave scope for analysis, introspection and interpretation on the part of the read-

ers. There are more questions than answers here. And it is intended to induce self search as well as a search of the self.

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The Bhagavad Gita, the greatest devotional book of Hinduism, has long been recognized as one of the world's spiritual classics and a guide to all on the path of Truth. It is sometimes known as the Song of the Lord or the Gospel of the Lord Shri Krishna. According to Western scholarship, it was composed later than the Vedas and the Upanishads – probably between the fifth and second centuries before Christ. It is a fragment, part of the sixth book of the epic poem The Mahabharata. The Mahabharata tells of the Pandavas, Prince Arjuna and his four brothers, growing up in north India at the court of The Bhagavad Gita book. Read 2,021 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. The Bhagavad Gita is an early epic poem that recounts the conv... The Gita is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Krishna. At the start of the Dharma Yudhha (righteous war) between Pandavas and Kauravas, Arjuna is filled with moral dilemma and despair about – – – – – = The Bhagavad Gita = The Song of God, Anonymous. When comparing this one to the other holy books I've read and/or skimmed, I found this one quite insightful. As a professed atheist, this one probably speaks to me the most. The Bhagavad Gita ('the song of the Spirit' or 'the song of the Lord') contains teachings of Bhagavan Krishna in the form of a spiritual dialogue between Sri Krishna and his disciple Arjuna. The entire knowledge of the cosmos is packed into a mere 700 concise verses of the Gita. The Bhagavad Gita has a threefold reading: material, astral, spiritual, applicable to man on all levels of his being, his body, mind, soul. The astral is from the moral and psychological standpoint – man's character resulting from the astral Nature-born sensory and life-energy principles that influence the formation of habits, inclinations, and desires. And the spiritual interpretation is from the perspective of the divine nature and realization of the soul. (xxvi). Bhagavad Gita is a holy book because in order to understand ones – eternal poetic spirit – one must patiently read it as an – evolving theme – over eighteen chapters, instead of spotlighting a few chapters or scattered verses of one's liking. Life is a gift of God, so it is holy. Bhagavad Gita shows the way to lead happy peaceful life. So, it is holy. Shrimad Bhagwat Geeta is a holy book and is translated by Shri Krishna. It has every solution to every problems, it enlightens everyone who read it and grasp the extracts from it, and in this era of lies and sins, it is very useful. It is divine and eternal just like a God. It teaches the real Holy (Divine) nature of human being, all creatures and the world. It is a book that every human must follow and read.