

Decoding the Bhagavat Gita in the Global Lingua Franca

Prof. (Dr.) Deepika Dhand

Pro-vice chancellor

MATS University Raipur

Abstract

There are many interesting and great things about the Mahabharata as it is a historical one, and studying it is certainly a great thing to do. Lord Krishna gave us the Bhagavad Gita to read, and it is the gift of the Lord. The purpose of this paper is to present The Bhagavad Gita as it stands in the present day context. The Gita which we overhear is one which is narrated by a man with no authority but infinite sight (Sanjaya) to a man with no sight but full authority (Dhritarashtra). There is a difference between Ontology (as things really are), Epistemology (how we make sense of things) and Phenomenology (how we experience things) which makes truth complicated. Two thousand years ago, the Gita introduced Hinduism to the concept of Bhagavan. Arjuna needs an anchor, a support, someone to lean on, the comforting hand of God. And so Krishna introduces himself as God: the invisible beyond the visible.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita; Mahabharata; Ethical; Human & Moral.

Introduction

As one of the most influential contributions to the world, the Mahabharata has earned a reputation for its antiquity and for being regarded as one of the most inspiring works of art. It has been an integral part of Indian culture and civilization, and throughout the history of its existence, it has played a crucial role in shaping the lives of Indians. The epic conveys a relevant and redemptive message for modern man through its teachings and its discussions. Mahabharata is replete with a wealth of teachings for human beings, not only about being successful in this world, but also about the path that can be taken to reach the other world as

well. The main story and many of the stories within the Mahabharata are replete with wisdom throughout the whole of the book. None of the characters in the epic can claim to be flawless. One can learn from them what is right and what is wrong.

The relevance of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in modern times cannot be overstated, for it is a spiritual treasure that guides us in living a life of contentment and teaches us what we need to do to achieve this. It is nectar coming from the lips of Lord Krishna, and everyone of us should partake of this nectar, meaning that we should read and study the treasure kept by the Lord in this book. This scripture has universal applicability, and it is cosmopolitan in nature. This spiritual treasure is especially relevant in the modern, greed-torn world where everything is weighed on the touchstone of gain or loss.

The epic contains many lessons from which one can learn how to live and conduct oneself in various situations. For several centuries, it has served people well by inculcating in them a deep sense of reverence, devotion, and commitment to the path of righteousness and belief, leading them to intense spiritual aspirations culminating in one's salvation.

The Mahabharata succeeded in shaping the culture of India and her people in the past and continues to do so now because of its emphasis on the gospel of Dharma. This gospel runs through the ups and downs, twists and turns, and complex movements of the epic. Equally highlighted are the lessons that hatred breeds hatred, greed and violence lead inevitably to ruin, and that the greatest victory for a man or woman is the victory over himself. Bhagavad Gita is a philosophy that shows a way of life to the universe. In fact, the study of this scripture helps mankind lead a balanced life, and it guides us towards the supreme and ultimate truth.

Devdutt Pattanaik states in "My Gita" that the world into which we are born is imagined as a stage full of actors but with no script and no director. Everyone assumes they are

the hero but discovers they are not the protagonists of the play. But we revolted. We want our own script to be performed and our own dialogue to be heard. So we negotiate with fellow actors. Some succeed in getting heard by some people, while others fail. We cling to our scripts, submit to other people's scripts, and speak dialogues we do not want to, only to stay relevant and connected to the larger narrative, or at least to a subplot.

Part of the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita is a purely spiritual document that helps humanity achieve enlightenment and self-realization through everything connected with human beings and life on earth. The entire gist of the Bhagavad Gita can be considered an allegory to explain the fundamental truths of life. It is the foremost of all spiritual texts available on earth and the one and only one of its kind to explain real spirituality. In the Bhagavad Gita, many of the basic tenets that make up the Hindu scriptures are encapsulated. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in his "Introductory Essay" on the Bhagavad Gita, opines thus:

The teachings of the Sufis, with their long history of spiritual power, continue to serve as a light for those who seek illumination from its profundity of wisdom, which insists on a world wider and deeper than anything wars and revolutions could ever reach. Having been influential in the renewal of spiritual life, it has earned a place among the great scriptures of the world and is recognized as a major force in the renewal of spiritual life.

The greatness of the Gita is this: it is a guide for practical life, and it shows us how to live a life in the world and live a life like a lotus away from worldly mud and filth. The Gita teaches us renunciation not of the world but of wrong and selfish activities. Thus, it teaches us to renounce bad actions and live a selfless life. It never teaches us to renounce the world, but to renounce all negative thoughts and actions in the world. This scripture teaches us to live a saintly life away from materialism and greed, but it in no way exhorts us to leave the world. It teaches mankind to leave the pleasures of the senses and live a life of contentment and

meaningfulness away from the madness of the world. This Gita has taught us the highest philosophy of Karmayoga, and exhorts us to carry out the responsibilities and services that have been delegated to us with a sense of humility and selflessness, and to leave the results of our actions with the Almighty, and not to let those results dictate our lives. It teaches us how we will perform our duties and work without attachment while remaining in the world. Therefore, it teaches us to work incessantly without worrying about the fruit of our actions.

So it teaches us detachment from materialistic pleasures, and the Gita ordains us to perform our duties and work without caring for the results of our Karmas. Thus, the philosophy of Karmayoga is the greatest philosophy for leading a life of purpose and teaches people how to work and perform duties in a detached manner. We thus see through the Bhagavad Gita the birth of selfless service and service to mankind that gives us a sense of what it means to serve the people, and its reading and practice make us noble individuals so that we can work and perform duties with a sense of selfless devotion. Gita helps us to work and live in the world like saints, therefore, it exhorts us to live a detached life while performing our allotted duties and works in the world, as it is a source of instruction and guidance. According to this verse, it is your right to work, and the fruits of your labor should not bind you to worldly pleasures, even though you have earned them. So it teaches people not to renounce duties and work but to renounce selfishness while working and living in the world. The Gita can be said to be an empirical and scientific knowledge, which, by its very nature, guides our every day lives on a practical basis as we go about living them.

The Bhagavad Gita is a book that transcends all religions, and reading it as a book of religion does not quite explain its consistency and is in fact limiting it to a narrow boundary. Roopa Pai, in her speech on “Decoding the Gita, India’s Book of Answers,” explains that she believes the Bhagavad Gita was written long before any religion existed and it takes place in a

time prior to any major religious event. In her words, "The Gita predates organized religion, and organized religion predates the Gita." It was written 500 years before Jesus Christ, 1000 years before Mohammed, the prophet, and over 2000 years before Hinduism itself was a thing. So the Bhagavad Gita is not necessarily a religious book but a moral guide for all people around the world. The Bhagavad Gita has served as a source of moral guidance, generation after generation, for those who are in despair throughout history. The strength of the Gita lies in the fact that its tenets do not stop with the metaphysical but with the physical. It deals not only with the other world but also with this very world, not just with the afterlife but with this life itself.

The Mahabharata, which has the Bhagavad Gita as a part of it, is centered around the war between two sets of cousins. The Bhagavad Gita is the conversation between prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna before the commencement of the battle of Kurukshetra. During the preparations for the Great War, Arjuna loses his nerve and it hits him like a thunderbolt that he is given the task of killing the relatives of people who are very dear to him. When Arjuna lays down his arms and is about to leave the warfront, he is counseled by Krishna.

Unlike many warriors and heroes, Arjuna thinks before he acts. He hesitates to kill and wants to retreat from life and responsibility. Krishna tells him that, as a warrior, it is his dharma to fight. He goes on to explain the Samsaric cycle of birth and death. He says there is no true death of the soul, but simply a sloughing of the body at the end of each round of birth and death. The purpose of this cycle is to allow a person to work off his karma, accumulated through his actions. The process of decay, death, and rebirth is only one step in the vast and infinite cycle of life. One neither kills nor is killed. The soul merely casts off the old body and enters the new one, just as a person changes garments, and death is a mere illusion.

Krishna presents the main concepts of soul renunciation, selfless service, and meditation. Krishna says that a truly divine human never renounces all worldly possessions or simply gives up actions, but rather finds a place in completing actions without attachment. A warrior can perform his duty without doing wrong or polluting himself with the blood of his enemies. He has to do his duty with detachment, without concern for the personal consequences. One has to act without reflecting on the fruits of the act, forgetting desire, and seeking detachment. One must always do what is right without desiring success or fearing defeat. Krishna tells Arjuna that good deeds will not get one to heaven if the desire for heaven is the sole motivation for doing well.

The Gita ends with Krishna telling Arjuna that it is his duty to fight the Kauravas for his kingdom and to offer his duties in the deepest form of selfless service. A selfless person never falls for sensual pleasures, and he is always satisfied within himself. No misery can distract him, nor can any kind of material happiness. He is without attachment, fear, or anger and remains always aloof from the dualities of the world. As his mind is fixed on the supreme, he is always peaceful.

Arjuna argues and questions Krishna, but throughout the conversation, Krishna is neither offensive nor aggressive. This makes Gita a primer on the art of civilized life, which makes it a book for essential reading. Arjuna is told by Krishna to pick up his bow and begin fighting as soon as possible. If he does not do so, he would be violating his duty as a warrior, a king, and the leader of his clan. Krishna, as a true friend, points out Arjuna's weaknesses and limitations. He chides but maintains his poise and patience. He gives recommendations and advice, but he respects his friend enough to let him make the decision whether to fight or not. This may be considered a good characteristic of a friendship. There is no skill that can be mastered without practice, and no skill can be mastered without it. As we repeat the same act

over and over again, it becomes ingrained in our minds. One should constantly think and do the right things, so that it may also become a habit.

The Gita can be considered the best manual of friendship. It is a moral guide that reiterates the fact that one is rewarded for his hard work and commitment. Instead of wasting one's energy on transient matters, one should spend his time finding peace and contentment. The Bhagavad Gita serves as a career guide for a man since it teaches him that everything happens for a reason, so it is important for him to choose the right actions as well as to think deeply about his actions before taking them. The Bhagavad Gita, which is the flowchart for life, teaches men to consider the entire world as their home and all creatures as their family. This makes it the ultimate life manifesto, not only for individuals but also for governments. The Bhagavad Gita teaches us to focus on our efforts and to forego the result, and one should play only for the sake of playing and not to win. The universe gives us everything, and we must give it back in equal measure. We should always question our intent before acting.

The sufferings of the Pandavas clearly explain to us the fact, or hard truth, that the goal of life or perfection can be attained only through suffering. Just as impure gold is turned into pure gold by melting it in the crucible, so too is impure and imperfectly weak man rendered pure, perfect, and strong by being melted in the crucible of pain and suffering. They are blessings in disguise and also silent teachers. They turn us towards God, instill mercy in the heart, strengthen the will, and develop patience and the power of endurance, which are the prerequisites of God's realization.

Many philosophers compare the battlefield of Kurukshetra to the battleground that lies within each one of us. The Gita touches on topics of concern that continue to trouble us even today, like confusion, stress, addiction, restlessness, depression, exploitation, greed, anger, etc. Swami Sadashiva Tirtha, in his Bhagavad Gita for Modern Times: Secrets to

Attaining Peace and Harmony, states thus: There is a detail discussed in the Bhagavad Gita in which the person celebrates the love and bliss of the divine as it applies to his or her personal relationship with God in everyday life. This represents one of the most important values of the Bhagavad Gita that remain just as relevant for us today as when it was first written.

Gita also teaches humanity the yoga of knowledge as well as Bhakti yoga, which is total surrender and love for God. During the Kaliyuga, it is believed that surrender to the Almighty and love for the Almighty are the simplest ways to reach and attain God, and so Bhaktiyoga is the philosophy that is the simplest way to attain the Supreme Being. In fact, the philosophy of love and devotion is the sure way to attain God in this universe. It is the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, which is dedicated to Baktiyoga, meaning yoga of devotion. In this Kaliyuga, it is said that the easiest and fastest way to reach the Almighty is by being totally dedicated to him and loving him unconditionally. Thus, people observe total devotion and love for the Almighty to reach the ultimate goal and attain God. The importance and relevance of the Gita cannot be exaggerated in the modern world, as it has much practical value and relevance for mankind. Let us all read and study the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita in order to be successful in the world. When the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, faced any problem in life, he sought the solution in the Gita. The significance of the Gita can be rightly summarized in the words of Ashborun, who has said, "Burn all libraries of the world, for their essence is in the Bhagavad Gita."

The Bhagavad Gita is a treasure house of eternal truths, and its precepts are completely contemporary. It is universal and above all religions. Even western scholars have been enamored by the Bhagavad Gita, and it has inspired western thinkers such as Thoreau, Emerson, and Eliot. It provides teachings that can be applied in all walks of life, even in modern times. The Gita is one of the most logical scriptures that connects man to God in the most

rational way possible. It tells us how we should conduct ourselves in our day-to-day teaching, which can be centered on our activities in life, even in modern times. Day-to-day life, keeping at the center of activity offering, forming our duties with a sense of facilitator as a way of sacrificial offering and accepting God as the doer and facilitator, and we as mere instruments engaged in the act of liberation and self-realization who read The Bhagavad Gita regularly mentally, sincerity are apt to be benefited in many ways physically, materially, mentally, and spiritually. The Bhagavad Gita is as relevant today as it was centuries ago, and in many ways, perhaps even more relevant, due to the fact that life has become more complex and challenging due to the pressures we face in the modern era. Haresh Bakshi, in his Shrimad-Bhagvad Gita, rightly declares action, Arjuna symbolizes the entire human race in conflict as to (i) the right action, (ii) real human nature, and (iii) the means for the world, the action of action in life. These conflicts make the Gita, vulnerable in today's world, suffering from the destructive forces of ego, lust, greed, and ignorance. These forces have become stronger over time, and so the relevance of the Srimad Bhagvad Gita has, in fact, increased with time. Through the themes of the Gita, Krishna explains the causes of human suffering and methods of transformation. He does so by expounding on eternal truths. At the time when the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna took place, there were no religions per se. Therefore, the Gita is truly relevant for everyone at all times. Despite being more than five thousand years old, the scripture is quite contemporary in appearance.

There is no second opinion about the universality of the Bhagavad Gita. Varghese, according to Varghese, believes that "the Bhagavad Gita reveals to us the path to perfection, as well as the goal of life that each and every person will have to attain at some point or another of their lives." It is the universality of this truth, which enjoys universal acceptance, which exalts the Gita to the status of a Scripture universal."

In the present society, success depends on one's ability to make achievements. So people attach less importance to self-satisfaction in their jobs, and they believe that their success and failure depend on how others view their work. Everyone feels it is convenient to follow the path paved by others and is hesitant to create his own path due to the fear of criticism and non-acceptance from society. To tread on one's own path, mental strength is required. In fact, a successful person is someone who does not care about failure or success and works for enjoyment and satisfaction.

Conclusion

The Bhagavad Gita gives clarity to life. One must train the mind to engage in worldly activities and, at the same time, be able to withdraw the mind inward whenever needed. Our mainstream education does not give guidance on how to survive in times of difficulty and depression. It only provides knowledge about external factors in life. The Bhagavad Gita helps the seeker search for the real treasure within himself. If one studies the Bhagavad Gita along with his mainstream education, then surely it will transform him into an able and courageous person who can help many others reach that state. The Gita is the complete text of philosophy and shows us how to lead a life in this materialistic world where greed reigns supreme. Thus, Gita is the practical guide to leading a happy and contented life in this world. The Gita is the essence of the Upanishads because the Vedanta philosophy is made easy to understand through it. When the Upanishads are compared to cows, Gita takes the position of milk. When one has plenty of milk at disposal, one need not undergo the laborious task of maintaining cows. One who has studied and understood the Bhagavad Gita may be said to have caught the cardinal teachings of the Upanishads. Thus, Lord Krishna exhorts humanity to perform total devotion and practice devotion and love for God, and in this way we can attain the supreme Lord. Thus, we should have total devotion to God and surrender to Him, and in this way, we can reach God. So the yoga of devotion is a simple way to attain the supreme being, and therefore we should

perform devotion to God so that we will be successful in this Kaliyuga and reach the ultimate truth. So Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga are the two ways to realize God, and their description is given in the Gita along with other forms and systems of yoga.

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