

**A Hindu Scripture**

# **The Bhagavad Gita**

Translation and Commentary





This presentation could be read as a literary contribution and also as a religious document.



The Bhagavad-Gita

Translation and commentary by

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## INTRODUCTION

The Gita is a doctrine of universal truth. Its message is universal, sublime, and non-sectarian although it is a part of the scriptural trinity of Hindus. The Gita is very easy to understand in any language for a mature mind. A repeated reading with faith will reveal all the sublime ideas contained in it. A few abstruse statements are interspersed here and there, but they have very little to no direct bearing on practical issues or the central theme of Gita.

The Gita deals with the most sacred metaphysical science. It imparts the knowledge of the Self and answers two universal questions: Who am I, and how can I lead a happy and peaceful life in this world of dualities and complexities. It is a

book of yoga, the moral and spiritual growth for mankind based on the cardinal principles of the Hindu way of life.

Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life for people who want to follow certain principles and disciplines. In our humble view it is a culture more than a religion. Hinduism does not have any one founder and it does not have a Bible or a Koran to which controversies can be referred for resolution. Consequently, it does not require its adherents to accept any one idea. It is thus cultural, not creedal, with a history contemporaneous with the peoples with which it is associated.

Hinduism is a unique faith! The most obvious misconception about Hinduism is that we tend to see it as just another religion. To be precise, Hinduism is a way of life, a dharma. Dharma does not mean religion. It is the law that governs all

actions. Thus, contrary to popular perception, Hinduism is not just a religion in the tradition sense of the term. Out of this misinterpretation, have come most of the other misconceptions about Hinduism.

Over the years the people who followed these traditions have been misinterpreting a lot of ideas and beliefs. So by now many of the original ideas and ideals have lost their originality and have become either obsolete or unbelievable. There are many such elements in the Gita that can be treated as such but on the other hand there are many good and acceptable ideas that all human beings can understand and use according to their own intellect and wisdom.

Writings we now categorize as Hindu scriptures include not just books relating to spirituality but also secular pursuits like science, medicine and engineering. Some

can be believed but many are myths and legends to substantiate certain contentions. This is another reason why Hinduism defies classification as a religion per se. Further, it cannot be claimed to be essentially a school of metaphysics. Nor can it be described as 'other worldly'. In fact, one can almost identify Hinduism with a civilization that is flourishing even now and will establish itself in the future.

Words like Hindu or Hinduism are anachronisms. They do not exist in the Indian cultural lexicon. People have coined them to suit their needs in different points of history. Nowhere in the scriptures is there any reference to Hinduism. So people who still cling to these archaic ideas need to change and adapt and adopt the modern way of life to suit their current and future needs, situations and circumstances.

So for us the message of the Gita came to humanity because of Arjun's unwillingness to do his duty as a warrior because fighting involved destruction and killing. Non violence or Ahimsaa is one of the most fundamental tenets of Hinduism. All lives, human or non-human, are sacred. This immortal discourse between the Supreme Lord, Krishna, and His devotee-friend, Arjun, occurs not in a temple, a secluded forest, or on a mountain top but on a battlefield on the eve of a war and is recorded in the great epic, Mahabharat.

In the Gita Lord Krishna advises Arjun to get up and start to fight. This may create a misunderstanding of the principles of Ahimsaa if the background of the war of Mahabharat is not kept in mind. Therefore, we wish to give a brief historical description to clarify this idea of violence verses non- violence.

Almost all religions preach non violence and peace and yet we have seen the occurrence of wars in all scriptures including the world wars and other petty wars between two or more religious and political powers. Therefore, it is difficult to understand and reconcile the idea of non violence and the activities that the holy scriptures preach and promote. If that was the way of life of people then we should not blame the leaders and the countries of our modern world for promoting so many conflicts and wars. They have learnt all these violent activities from history and sadly history is repeating itself.

Let us look at the Hindu way of life. In ancient times there was a king who had two sons, Dhritaraashtr and Paandu. The former was born blind; therefore, Paandu inherited the kingdom. Paandu had five sons. They were called the Paandavs.



Ironically Dhritaraashtr had one hundred sons. They were called the Kauravs. Duryodhan was the eldest of the Kauravs.

After the death of king Paandu, the Paandavs became the lawful king. Duryodhan was a very jealous person. He also wanted the kingdom. The kingdom was divided into two halves between the Paandavs and the Kauravs. Duryodhan was not satisfied with his share of the kingdom. He wanted the entire kingdom for himself. He unsuccessfully planned several foul plays to kill the Paandavs and take away their kingdom. He unlawfully took possession of the entire kingdom of the Paandavs and refused to give back even an acre of land without a war.

All mediation by Lord Krishna and others failed. The big war of Mahabharat was thus inevitable. The Paandavs were unwilling participants. They had only two

choices: Fight for their right as a matter of duty or run away from war and accept defeat in the name of peace and non violence. Arjun, the gallant warrior, who was one of the five Paandav brothers, faced the dilemma in the battlefield whether to fight or run away from war for the sake of peace.

Arjun's dilemma is, in reality, the universal dilemma. Every human being faces dilemmas, big and small, in their everyday life when performing their duties. Arjun's dilemma was the biggest of all. He had to make a choice between fighting the war and killing his most revered teachers, gurus, very dear friends, close relatives, and many innocent warriors, or running away from the battlefield for the sake of preserving the peace and non violence. The entire seven hundred verses of the Gita is a discourse between Lord Krishna and the confused

Arjun on the battlefield of Kurukshetr near New Delhi, India, in about 3,100 years before Christ.

This discourse was narrated to the blind king, Dhritaraashtr, by his charioteer, Sanjay, as an eye-witness war report. Whether there was the presence of such technology in those days or not the idea of reporting wirelessly seems questionable. Even if Sanjay was given the skills and powers to perform this task by his guru or sage, we feel that to do distance reporting visually and orally with that accuracy one needed modern technology and equipments. However, we like the wisdom and knowledge that are contained in Sanjay's reporting.

The central teaching of the Gita is the attainment of freedom or happiness from the bondage of life by doing one's duty. Always remember the glory and greatness

of the creator, and do your duty efficiently without being attached to or affected by the results, even if that duty may at times demand unavoidable violence. Some people neglect or give up their duty in life for the sake of a spiritual life while others excuse themselves from spiritual practices because they believe that they have no time.

The Lord's message is to sanctify the entire living process itself. Whatever a person does or thinks ought to be done for the glory and satisfaction of the Maker. No effort or cost is necessary for this process. Do your duty as a service to the Lord and humanity and see God alone in everything in a spiritual frame of mind. In order to gain such a spiritual frame of mind, personal discipline, austerity, penance, good conduct, selfless service, yogic practices, meditation, worship, prayer, rituals, and study of scriptures, as well as

the company of holy persons, pilgrimage, chanting of the holy names of God, and Self-inquiry are needed to purify the body, mind, and intellect.

One must learn to give up lust, anger, greed, and establish mastery over the six senses (hearing, touch, sight, taste, smell, and mind) by the purified intellect. One should always remember that all works are done by the energy of nature and that he or she is not the doer but only an instrument. One must strive for excellence in all undertakings but remain calm in success and failure, gain and loss, and pain and pleasure. We are not saying that such a laborious task is easy and plausible but we are only relating such an acceptable philosophy.

The ignorance of metaphysical knowledge is humanity's greatest predicament. A scripture, being the voice of

transcendence, cannot be perfectly translated. Language is incapable and translations are defective to clearly impart the knowledge of the Absolute. While interpreting the Gita in another language it is difficult to even attempt to keep the style as close as possible to the original Sanskrit poetry and yet make it easy to read and understand. Many people have attempted to improve the clarity by adding words or phrases within parentheses in the English translation of the verses.

The exact translation of all the chapters and verses of the Gita for the convenience and understanding of the beginners is a very difficult task but it is possible. We suggest that all our readers ponder, contemplate, and act upon these verses. The beginners and the busy executives should first read and understand the meaning of these key verses before

delving deep into the bottomless ocean of transcendental knowledge of the Gita.

Whether the readers believe the narrative or not we feel that there are a lot of worthy ideas to appreciate. It is said that there is no human mind that cannot be purified by the repeated reading and study of the Gita, just one Chapter a day. Gita is a book of great knowledge for everyone but the readers should use their own intelligence to interpret and comprehend complexities and difficult concepts and ideas. We have read and interpreted the Gita as simple human beings and not as religious people.

This book is dedicated to all our teachers whose blessings, grace, and teachings have been invaluable for us. It is offered to the interested reader with love and devotion. Please accept it as our work of literary appreciation. Of course, if you too endeavour to repeatedly read this with

peace, happiness, and the true knowledge of the Self you will benefit from the wisdom that the Gita contains. We have benefited tremendously.

We used the Hindi version of The Bhagavad-Gita for our translation, understanding and commentary. Like the great warrior Arjun, we too have had our own dilemma but tried our best to appreciate various aspects of this great scripture. The knowledge and the wisdom that we have been able to gather over the years from this book have definitely enriched our family life.

It is easier to appreciate this piece of literature as a student and conduct your own assessment for its worth and acceptance. We loved to debate within our own conscience about the myths and legends that we found but we do not think that it is right to raise these with any other



religiously loaded devotee of Lord Krishna because we feel no one is right or wrong when it comes to interpreting scriptures and religious beliefs. We strongly feel that one should have the freedom to express ones views on such specific religious issues and go on with their way of life the way they have been enjoying.

A lot of our family successes can be rightly attributed to the rich knowledge, undisputed wisdom and perfect philosophies that are contained in The Bhagavad-Gita. We love to read the Book every now and then to refresh our minds and get new insights into our way of life. We hope all those who care to read our contribution will enjoy their participation.

One more thing should be said as conclusion and that is that any interpretation of text is an individual

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