

Why study the Gita?

Of all the sacred texts of Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita commands a pre-eminence. Hence we can boldly and emphatically assert that it is “the heart of Hinduism”. The Gita is the crest-jewel of the Mahabharatha. **The Gita is a scripture which tries to integrate the personality of the individual student and make him capable of facing dynamically all the challenges in his life.**

Man is an “intelligent animal”. His physical comforts and security form the materialistic aspect of his life. But he has a mind and an intellect and as a highly developed psychological being, he is restless and impatient with all his imperfections. It is here that the process of total satisfaction revealed in the Gita shines out as a Beacon Light for all lovers of “mankind and its destiny”.

From the materialistic point of view, man seeks a higher **standard of living**. But the scriptures and the rational philosophers clearly indicate that the happiness and glory of the world depend upon the **standard of life** of the individual.

The Gita not only indicates theories of the Hindu way of life but she reveals certain definite schemes by which every individual can work out his own self-improvement. The philosophical theories are given in simple language and the suggested schemes for self-improvement are unique in their variety and effectiveness.

In the Gita, we see the most successful mentoring relationship between Krishna and Arjuna.

On seeing close relatives and friends in the Kaurava army, Arjuna became depressed and got into a trauma. Arjuna stands for the younger generation. Their mental problems such as their restlessness, impossible aspirations, unending desires, utter disillusionments, suffocating despairs, depressing dejections and self-deluding sense of materialism in life are all depicted in Arjuna.

Krishna reminded Arjuna of his role. He was the leader, manipulator, motivator, mentor and influencer, all rolled into one. **Krishna’s psychological treatment for him is the main theme of the Gita.**

The Gita trains the younger generation to **study** the problems of life and to **evaluate** each of them correctly. This calls for good mental balance and intellectual application. Then the youth will be able to arrive at potentially creative judgements and constructive conclusions. The know-how is explained in the Gita. Thus the Gita is helpful in the ultimate development and growth of our young nation. A reverential study of the Gita is bound to enrich one’s mind and culminate in the dawn of transcendental wisdom.

There are many occasions in our lives when we are caught up in the rat race and we do

wonder about its relevance in the grand scheme of things. The Gita helps us perform our duties irrespective of the grand scheme of things.

Swami Dayananda's says:

"The strategy of invoking the Higher Being of Intelligence that lurks in each one of us and of defeating the dark forces of the ego and its dangerous henchmen is the "Discovery of Life" chalked out in the Bhagavad Gita".

The Gita is a practical code to man's life.

The Gita is much more than a scripture for intellectual appreciation. It is a positive pragmatic code to regulate man's life and to answer all situations. It is universal in character, dealing primarily with one who has to live in this world, love his neighbours and leave, when the call comes.

The Gita does give an answer to every problem, a man faces in life. The Gita never commands one what to do and does not also say anywhere "Thou shalt not". This is the beauty of the Gita. It just gives the pros and cons of every issue and allows the individual to take one's own decision. Do we not learn better that way?

We must remember that after listening to the Gita, Arjuna did not become a hermit! He fought a fierce war and won over his enemies. By following the Gita, a man undergoes a complete change of consciousness and there need not be a change in his outward appearance or lifestyle! It teaches the annihilation of desire and ego. It advocates selfless actions and different ways to control the mind and the senses.

Life has to be purposeful and the Lord's message in the Gita lays down the dictum that man should be free from malice and be friendly even to one who envies him. He should also be kind to those who have gone astray and remain ever-balanced. He should be forbearing and forgiving. The Lord says that man should cultivate equanimity even under the most disturbing circumstances.

Lord Krishna says,

"Look upon friends and foes alike, ignore both obloquy (disgrace or defamation) and honour, be indifferent to praise or blame."

The Gita contains the unwritten laws of the universe. So if you study the same in a logical manner, you will achieve salvation. But on the other hand if you are a devotee of Lord Krishna and read it with devotion, you will achieve salvation. So, the Gita will lead you to God both the intellectual way and the devotional way.

Devotion is a quality of the heart and not mere external symbolism. One can call it, a one way traffic where one always gives without expecting anything back in return. The

supreme devotee submits himself without expecting any reward. For him, life is wedded to daily activities.

Mere bland action is “Karma”, but when impregnated with desireless devotion and service, it turns into “Karma Yoga”, which is doing an act without expecting any return.

Desireless service is best. Lord Krishna says all acts should be consecrated to Him. We must have the attitude of “ Sarvam Krishnarpanamasthu”. As a devotee, one should perform his duties leaving the results to God. The core of His message to mankind runs thus:

“Take shelter in Me alone as the highest Divinity. I shall deliver you from all sins”.

The Macro-Vision of the Gita:

The mental and physical debility of the modern man, though called today’s problem is not new to the history of mankind. The same problem has already been discussed in the Gita and the solution is also given.

Let us take the case of today’s industrialist. He can be equated to the troubled, confused Arjuna when he first faced the opposing forces. The difficulties one encounters are defined differently, but facing the challenge is the same. Arjuna almost thought of retiring from the war. If today’s industrialist, under great pressure from the bank for loans and the government for permits, withdraws from his project, his vision to produce wealth for the society or nation is wasted!

When Arjuna confronted the same situation, Krishna admonished him saying that he should not run away, but boldly face the challenges.

In order to face challenges, a lot of courage is necessary. For this, the mind must be strong and poised enough to discover its own efficiency, ability and above all, how beautifully, it can perform even under stress. This ultimately ensures success in life – not running away from problems!

This equipoise comes about only when the mind acquires a **macro-vision**. The man understands his importance in life and the contribution, he owes to the world. He recognizes his own importance and learns that his duty is to do that particular job.

Micro-vision is often shallow and the views are self-centred. When the expansion leads to macro-vision, man understands, he is not a solitary individual, but one with the whole Universe and one with the Lord. He understands, the whole universe arises in Him, exists in Him and disappears in Him, just as the waves rise in the ocean, play and disappear again in the ocean. In macro-vision, we realise that all individuals are inter-related, Each one of us has individual responsibilities besides duty towards society. It is as though the whole world is a harmonious tapestry!

Let us take the example of our body. The body has different parts and each part has a function. But still they are a part of you. Harm befalls even if one part is injured! We live in our body which houses different parts with different functions. The same way, Life should be seen as One, expressing through diverse forms.

This is the necessary philosophy for today. We are no more in a safe world. An isolated incident happening in one part of the world has repercussions all over. The tragedy in the U S on Sep 11th, has proved this to us in no uncertain terms! All nations seem to be woven in one fabric!

The macro-vision does not come automatically to an individual, but has to be cultivated. Krishna had to teach the Gita to Arjuna to help him throw off his indecision and mental confusion. Arjuna rediscovered his efficiency and potency when his mind became calm and serene. We must note that Krishna did not alter the situation nor help Arjuna with new forces or allies. He talked to Arjuna to lift him out of mental confusion.

Situations do not ever change. The change has to be brought about in us by us! The problem no more exists, it becomes a sport or a challenge. The attitude of mental equanimity is necessary if one wants to become an industrial visionary or a developer of macro-economy. The micro-age is gone and now we talk of macro-economics. It is in us to make this change in our minds, in our view point and in our vision. For this we seek the help of the Gita!

Does the Gita teach us religion?

Religion is the art of living which can be pursued under all circumstances, at all places. This is, ultimately, the essence of all religions.

The Gita is a practical philosophy, which teaches how people can live with equanimity, composure and ease, and thus most effectively come to meet always their own personal, social and national problems. The Gita elaborately explains them all.

Religion is a great science and has a glorious utility in our daily life. We are not talking about the religion of doing puja and showing camphor. **We want to know the religion which helps us to discover our dormant vitality and inner strength to face life's challenges.** This is amply provided by the Gita.

True religion is the science that provides us a new inward courage of conviction to live honestly and serve others. **Religion is a scientific re-evaluation of life, says Swami Chinmayananda.** In ancient times, the Rishis retired to the forests in the Himalayas to evaluate the life of man. Today, scientists retire to the laboratories to investigate the

outer world. The Rishis took their own inner world of experience as the field of their independent search for Truth. So we see that the methods and the process of thinking are the same for both! The only difference is, the Rishis enquired “who is man? “, whereas scientists ask “what is the world?”

Religion can be defined as the technique of perfect living. This is the secret content of the text books of Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Buddhists. Unless a master indicates how a man can live successfully and gain a mastery over his own life, he cannot become a religious head. We can say that the Gita preaches religion because she elaborately explains how members of society can live with equanimity, composure and ease and can also meet their own personal, social and national problems. That Arjuna was cured after Krishna preached him the eighteen chapters of the Gita shows, that the religion in the Gita reveals a secret process which brings forth an effective personality out of even a shattered man of despairs and disappointments. After listening to Krishna, Arjuna did not withdraw from the war, but fought and emerged a winner!

Science has not been fully successful to teach us to turn our discriminating intellect on to our inner selves and analyse to arrive at a critical study. It is Vedanta which turns us to ourselves. Each man is a unique personality because his body, mind and intellect have distinct characteristics. In order to experience the world fully, he must learn the art of tuning these instruments properly to the world around him. We get the joy of real existence when the well-tuned instruments of man come in contact with the sets of things and beings, conditions and happenings in life. The Gita discusses in detail, the ways of tuning up our personality all by ourselves!

Vyasa conveys in the words of Krishna that religion is never to be practised in jungles or snow-capped mountains but if it is to become efficient and bless us with its happiness, must be lived at home, office, market place and parliaments!

“Living the full life” is the theme of the great masters like Shri Shankara, Shri Ramanuja and Shri Madhwa. They all explained in their philosophies the technique by which we can discover in ourselves a better harmony. The core of the Gita indicates the theories of the Hindu way of life and reveals schemes by which every individual can work out his own self-improvement. By learning and following the Gita to the extent possible, one learns to stand up against odds and emerge successfully in the end. We will grow out of our weakness to be a better person to face our own problems in life. In the very midst of confusing situations, how to train the mind and intellect to evaluate and judge explosive conditions, threatening challenges and suffocating situations? This know-how is explained exhaustively in the Gita. She helps us to discover the Higher Self, dormant within every one of us.

We emerge out of our inner gloom into an ample world and meet supreme success. Only the Gita way can accomplish this miracle. The process of total satisfaction revealed in her, shines out as a Beacon Light for all lovers of mankind and its destiny.

The Special Charm of the Gita

The Hindu culture has survived many millenniums, unlike many other different cultures which had withered away into chaos over a period of time. This is possible only because our culture has the required elasticity to embrace all the new dimensions into which our society grew, with the march of time.

We read in scriptures about the discussions held by the Rishis and their disciples, along river banks and many references are made to mountains, trees, silence and the spirit of retirement of the jungles. Thus Hindu culture was more associated with the hum of River Ganga and the hymn of the snow-peaks. There was a misconception that one should renounce the world and retire into silent contemplation and meditation without fulfilling one's duty. If this had been followed, our culture would have died away. This is totally against the **dynamic spirit of our culture**. It is here, that we realise the importance of Gita.

It is a practical hand-book of instruction on how best we can organize our ways of thinking, feeling and acting in everyday life. We learn to draw from ourselves productivity to enrich life outside and around us. Gita unfolds a way of life by living which, we can grow to be socially more productive and individually more poised and tranquil, pursuing a peaceful life.

Vigorous life expresses itself in problems. When we arrive at a solution, it is no more a problem. We require knowledge to meet life's challenges around us. With the help of the knowledge, we arrive at a solution and there is no more despair. Arjuna represents the youth who tend to take things and happenings as problems where there are none and feel despair.

It is our blessing that Gita is ready and willing to lift the young hearts from a state of confusion. Gita gives us a motherly embrace and helps us solve our problems. It gives us total security, which, we are not sadly aware of.

Gita is a ready-made text book which serves us where we are, whoever we may be, whatever be our problem. It serves us irrespective of place, time, caste and creed.

Gita indicates in detail, the ways of tuning up our personality all by ourselves. The core of the Gita contains the life-giving technique which can pour fresh vitality into the heart and muscles of the younger generation. The Gita way of life can accomplish the miracle of making man stand up even against odds and come out successful in the end. It teaches us the art of making right contacts with the world outside, since, sadly, the world has only its laws and no mercies! Gita expounds a science of reconstructing one's personality. It makes our inner personality whole and strong, gives us a new-found

confidence to meet any problem and we feel, certain of success and sure of victory. This is the special charm of the Gita.

Why is the Gita universal?

The Bhagavad Gita has come to occupy a supreme place because the teachings embodied possess eternal value and are universal in their applicability.

The setting of the Gitopadesa is the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Arjuna is the central figure, seated in a chariot and Lord Krishna is his charioteer. Arjuna humbles himself as a pupil at the feet of Krishna, raising him to the pedestal of a teacher. Arjuna's objection to fight is that the war will entail killing his elders and relatives. He does not mind being killed, if the war can be avoided. Thus he has overcome all desires and attachment to life. Now he has reached the state of mind when he is fit to receive true knowledge. Lord Krishna now teaches him. This is how the Gita has come to possess eternal and lasting value.

The teachings of the Gita contain the answer to the question often posed, namely, which should have preference, individual salvation or "Loka kshema" (public good). The Gita makes it plain that unless one is perfect oneself, one is not qualified to engage oneself in acts of "Loka kshema". A person who is himself subject to grief, anger etc cannot remove the like ills of others. The man who is subject to delusion is not qualified to rid the world of its delusions.

The only way to overcome grief and other infirmities is "self-knowledge". One should perform his duty without attachment and with resignation and this alone will prepare him for self knowledge. Such a person becomes perfect soul, who by his very presence, brings about "Loka kshema" in the truest sense of the term and most effectively.

Individual elevation will enable one to lift others. Thus the Gita becomes the eternal beacon for mankind. It embodies in itself an immediate solution to the pressing problems of man and carries a wonderful message of encouragement, hope, cheer and consolation. The Gita gives him a positive promise of salvation, making him fearless.

He finds that his mental weakness, exhaustion and fatigue reduce and his mind becomes calm and serene. When the mind is thus calm and serene, his efficiency increases; his performance, his attitude towards others, his vision of life as such, the way he meets challenges – all these acquire a new tempo and beauty. With these inner qualities, his activities gather a momentum that cannot but attract success in the modern material world.

Thus the Gita serves as triple treatise – a treatise on psychology, a text of ethics and a

book of philosophy. Its glory is undying. It never ceases to fascinate and have relevance. It is a profound text to be constantly read and digested.

Bhagavad Gita – An Introduction to the text

The title **Bhagavad Gita** means the song (gita) of the Lord (Bhagavan). The Gita is considered to be song-like because it is verse in form and therefore pleasing. It is easy to recite and to remember. The Gita is also pleasing because it has a subject matter that is highly desirable to all.

Another interpretation of the title of Gita is, this is a song with Bhagavan as its subject matter. This is similar to saying “electronic knowledge:” which is knowledge whose subject matter is electronics.

Thus we can take the title either way – Bhagavan’s Gita or Gita having Bhagavan as the subject matter.

Bhagavad Gita is a part of Mahabharatha which is composed by the great Vyasacharya who is supposed to be the incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

“Vyaasaaya vishNu roopaaya vyaasaroopaya vishNavae –

so says the Vishnu Sahasranamam.

Gita is in the form of a dialogue that took place between Lord Krishna, who is an avathara and Arjuna. In fact, all the teaching is in the form of a dialogue between teacher and student. The guru is Sri Bhagavan Krishna and the student is Arjuna called Partha here. Between both of them there is discussion known as **samvada**. The subject matter is **Brahma-vidya** and **Yoga-shastra**, in one word, **Vedanta**. So Gita is the body of knowledge, being taught.

In any dialogue, questioning is imperative. Beliefs have to be understood first to believe them! Questions are very important and are allowed. The Gita was presented as a dialogue between a teacher and a student to emphasize that the **subject matter is one for understanding, not for believing**. So Gita is called **Krishnarjuna Samvada**. It consists of 18 chapters, running to 700 shlokas. This is the condensed version of the entire vedic teaching (Upanishads) which is very vast and everybody cannot study.

The philosophical concepts in Gita may seem to the beginners in Vedanta as rather difficult to grasp. But this difficulty is a hurdle only to those who are unprepared to face the challenge and subject themselves to the necessary discipline of this great science of personality-reconstruction.

In fact every science has its own discipline of thought. Those who want to get the blessings offered by the science have to obey the disciplines!

Only a thirsty man enjoys water most.

A hungry man alone can really relish food.

Only a tired person understands the joys of rest.

Now, let us look at the staggering difference in the environments of the Upanishads and the Gita.

The Upanishads are the declarations of great seers upon the Eternal Truth. They were given out in the atmosphere of quietitude and in an inner mood of total dispassion. The students were also calm and cool, self-controlled and unagitated. So they could hear the words of wisdom with a quiet mind and a serene intellect.

This quiet environment is completely replaced in the Gita by the down-to-earth atmosphere of strife and stress, dust and fury, stress and strain, pulls and pressures.

Unlike the Upanishads, in the Gita, the Lord himself addresses the Pandava prince who is mentally agitated and intellectually confused. But the message in the Upanishads and the Gita are one and the same. The glory of Gita consists not in **what** it states, but **how** it states it.

Vyasa purposely employed this striking environmental set-up. The Upanishadic literature was intermingled with the flavour of the forest and the fragrance of the jungle. So people dynamically engaged in life, neglected religion. Vyasa saw the danger and deftly chose Lord Krishna as his mouth-piece to give out the immortal message of the Gita amidst the din and roar of a national war to a confused and confounded hero of the day. Thus Vyasa by his masterly and dramatic setting of the Gita has brought down religion from forests, mountains and rivers to the work-a-day world to bless man in his day-to-day existence

The background of the Gita has a symbolic meaning.

The noisy war atmosphere represents the empirical world marked by perpetual clash of ideas, interests, emotions, attitudes and violent conflicts between individuals and groups.

The teacher is Bhagavan wearing the mask of a charioteer in action. The suggestion here is that He, like being a charioteer, will navigate and guide the life of the individual who entrusts himself to His care.

The student is an individual with mental problems such as nameless restlessness,

impossible aspirations, unending desires, utter disillusionments, suffocating despairs and shattering confusions.

In the very midst of confusing situations and threatening challenges, how to train the mind to arrive at potentially creative judgements and constructive conclusions?

This know-how is explained exhaustively in the Bhagavad Gita.

How does the Gita begin?

The first chapter of Gita is broadly classified into two portions.

The first 27 verses give the context for the dialogue to take place. This portion is called **sangati-kathana**.

The second portion is from verse 28 to verse 48. This is called **samsara-varnana**. Here we get a description of **human bondage**, which is in the form of human dependence. This is called **samsara**.

In the first portion, the context of Mahabharata battle is presented. The sprawling battle-field of Kurukshetra is a flash point of not only a savage war but a trial of strength between dharma & adharma.

From the story of Mahabharata we know that all the Kauravas were adharmic and took to similar actions.

In Gita, they are called **atyayain**, which means the worst type of criminal.

Both the armies of Kauravas and Pandavas are arrayed against each other and it is at this juncture, the Bhagavad Gita begins.

Duryodhana comes to Dronacharya and briefs him about the important warriors on both sides and when he enumerates, we learn that Kaurava army is much more powerful than Pandavas both in number and strength.

Duryodhana, assessing the overall strength of the two armies, says

Aparyaptham thadasmaakam balam bheeshmaabhirakshitham

Paryaptham thvidamaethaashaam balam bheemabhirakshitham 1.10

The strength of our army (being greater) well protected by Bhishma cannot be overwhelmed, whereas the strength of these people in front of us (their battalions being fewer in number), even though protected by Bhima can be overwhelmed.

This shows the confidence Duryodhana has that his army could easily overwhelm the Pandavas and that he would win the war. He purposely mentions to Dronacharya the names of his adversaries (who are disciples of Drona himself), to cure Drona's possible

sense of complacency and to provoke him to heights of war-frenzy!
He also mentions the names of the heroes and warriors on his side, perhaps implying that it is the duty of Drona to protect and save them.

Though he says this, he feels insecure because he knows that dharma is not on his side.

Pandavas had the support of dharma which is represented by Lord Krishna.

Yathra yogaeshvara: krishno ysthra paartho dhanudhara: 18.78

So, they never felt diffident or insecure, but were very enthusiastic.

Bhishma understood Duryodhana's diffidence and just to produce some kind of joy in the hearts of the Kuru family, roared loudly like a lion. (Does not sound always allay fear?!) Then he sounded the beginning of the war by blowing his conch. At once all the other Kauravas also blew their conches.

Then Krishna sounded his conch called the Panchajanya and the Pandavas followed suit.

At that crucial time Arjuna felt like looking at the face of the people he was going to fight with. In fact Arjuna need not have done that, knowing they were his relatives.
But, if Arjuna had not desired so, Gita could not have come to us!

Arjuna commands Krishna:

**Saenayorubhayormadhyae ratham sthupaya mae(a)chyutha
Yaavadaethaan nireeksho(a)ham yodhdhukkhamaanavasthithaan
Kairmayaa saha yoddhavya-masmin raNasamudhyamae 1.21**

Oh, Achyutha, keep my chariot between the two armies while I see those who are arrayed, seeking battle, and know with whom I shall have to fight in this preparation for combat.

Krishna complies with the command, because now he is Arjuna's driver! Well, Krishna could have placed the chariot in front of Duryodhana or Karna; but he does not do so ! He places the chariot in front of Bhishma, Drona and others. When Arjuna faces them, his mind is poised to change gradually. The next half of this chapter deals with Samsara-varnana.

What afflicted Arjuna ?

Tension was slowly mounting up in the battlefield of Kurukshetra.
Duryodhana was showing signs of nervousness. It was a poignant moment; the shooting

had not yet started but was imminent. Bhishma understood Duryodhana's diffidence and therefore he enthused him by blowing the conch aloud! Now all other Kauravas blow their conch and Pandavas also blew, signalling the beginning of the war.

Just at that juncture, Arjuna feels like looking at the face of all the people in the enemies' side, who are all his relatives.

Arjuna suggests Krishna to place his chariot between the two armies so that he can see the champions of adharma lined up against him in the war. Krishna drives up the chariot and places it in front of Bhishma and Drona – who are also the Pandavas' teachers – and says,

Partha pashyaithaan samavaewthaan kurunithi

“Behold, Oh Partha all these Kurus gathered together.”

Krishna speaks only this one sentence in the first chapter.

Though brief, this one sentence quietly uttered, triggers of the entire Gita !

Arjuna gazed at Kaurava army as well as his own. They were all his relatives, friends and acquaintances. Suddenly he is thrown into a state of utter confusion, grief and doubts. For the first time, Arjuna realised the tragedies of a total fratricidal war and develops serious doubts whether the war is legitimate at all. His composure broke down.

Until now Arjuna was not emotionally upset. With his clear and bright intellect, he had analysed the situation. He knew, this was not a battle between relations, but between dharma (on Pandavas' side) and adharma on (Kauravas side).

All his life Arjuna, as a warrior, had waited for such an opportunity, where he knew the enemies' sly moves would be no match against his own mighty prowess. But when he came in front of Bhishma and Drona, his intellect was overwhelmed by emotion. His self-confidence deserted him and he was overwhelmed with grief.

Krupayaa parayaa(aa)vishta: 1.27

Arjuna was overwhelmed by supreme compassion.

He spoke thus:

**Dhrushtavaemam svajanam Krishna yuyuthsum samupasthitham
Seedanthi mama gaathraani mukham cha parichushyathi
Vaepathushcha shareerae mae romaharshascha jaayathae 1.28–29**

Seeing these, my kinsmen, O Krishna, arrayed, eager to fight, my limbs fail me and my mouth is parched; my body quivers and my hairs stand on end.

Thus we see, Arjuna enumerates all his symptoms. His steps become unsteady and his face is full of sweat. His speech becomes incoherent and his throat is parched. Now, the modern psychologists would say, the same symptoms are characteristic of what they would call “anxiety–state neurosis”.

About his mental break–up, he adds

Na cha shaknami avasthaathum bhramatheeva cha mae mana: 1.30

I am not able to stand, my mind is reeling, as it were.

The next few verses give conclusive proof of Arjuna’s hysterical state of mind. Krishna acted a typical psycho analyst and just allowed Arjuna to rattle on. Arjuna brought out all his pent up emotions as though he is in the grip of severe hysteria. Knowing that his dejection was magnified and compassion for his relatives misplaced, Krishna made no attempt to stop him.

Arjuna was drowned in blind grief and despair. His outburst was escapism. He was mentally shrinking from the thought of inevitable consequences and had an impulse to shirk the weight of responsibility. He was reduced to a mental wreck.

He was going in for a dangerous collapse of personality and was trying to take shelter behind superstitions, myths and beliefs. He starts passionately arguing his case for the withdrawal from the war. He said to Krishna

Nimiththani cha pashyami vipareethaani keshava

Na cha shraeyo(a)nupashyami hathvaa svajana–maahavae

I see bad omens, Oh Keshava, and I see no good in killing my own kinsmen in battle.

The cracks in Arjuna’s mental make–up slowly widened and his mental shrinkage and cowardice to face grave situations were obvious. He rationalises his intention of renouncing the war. His actions amount to the abdication of his duty as a Kshathriya.

Krishna understood that his individuality was shattered. But He was a picture of calmness. Though fully aware of the problem Arjuna is going through, He acted ignorant and wondered how Arjuna could fall a victim to feebleness.

Does Arjuna's dilemma, not happen to every one of us at some stage or other in life? When we face dire situations, we feel confused and confounded. We do not know the next course of action, when trapped in dejection and despair. We give ourselves very rational and logical excuses. Our intellect does not offer us the right line of action. How are we to break these chains of helplessness?

The treatment of such a natural, mortal illness of the inner mind is the theme of the entire Gita. The Gita gives completely scientific and cogent answers to these disturbing questions.

Thus we see that the great wisdom revealed in Gita owes its origin to the sudden and brief surge of grief that overpowers Arjuna.

Is Arjuna Disease universal?

We see in the second part of Gita first chapter that there was a break-up in Arjuna's personality when he faced the grave situation in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. His repressions and suppressions erupted from the deep layers of his personality. He lost his reasoning and mental balance completely. He felt dejected that he was unable to face the challenge.

Swami Chinmayananda aptly calls this Arjuna Disease!

This is a universal disease, natural to any man of action. It is also common to people of all creeds, cultures and races. What is the cure for this disease? The panacea for all these mental disillusionments is the subject matter of Gita, woven as a fabric in the eighteen chapters.

A special point of interest in our scriptures is that, the imperatives Thou shalt, Thou shall not are never used. The student has the freedom to question at every step and has a moral right to expect satisfactory answers from the teacher. Only the Gita gives answers to the whys and the wherefores regarding life and living. Thus Gita provides answers not only to Arjuna but to all those who find themselves in such a shattered mental condition.

Arjuna and his brothers had always been the under-dogs at every turn in their lives, suffering hardships caused by the Kauravas. So, he was itching to strike the Kauravas; but when he saw that they were intermingled with his own near and dear ones, Arjuna realized that he did not have the capacity to answer the call to the battle. His personality was broken at all levels and he was emotionally shattered.

Arjuna thought that by destroying his own people, he would be creating great confusion

in the society. He argued that, by going on with the war, he would be the cause of all confusions arising from adharma and therefore, he wanted to be no part of it.

We see that the moment Arjuna comes in front of Bhishma and Drona, his intellect was overcome by emotion.

This is the beginning of **samsara**. We read about this in the second section of the first chapter

Krupayaa parayaa(aa)vishto visheedannidamabraveeth 1.27

He was overcome by supreme compassion and sorrowing.

What is the **samsara** caused by dependence? One technical term used by Vyasa is **Krpayavishtah**

In this context **krpa** does not mean compassion, but means attachment. Attachment means depending on another person for our own security, happiness and comfortable feeling! Arjuna's attachment to Bhishma and Drona was intense. Attachment is a potential source of sorrow – if the person dies, we are very much affected by the loss. So we see that death is not the cause of sorrow, but our dependence on the person who died and our psychological weakness for that person is the cause of sorrow.

Samsara is caused by three technical terms.

Attachment is a problem. We often get confused between love and attachment. Love is a positive virtue. In attachment I depend on the other person, whereas in love, I allow another person to depend on me. Love is born out of independence and strength and there is less expectation. Attachment is born out of weakness, dependence and there are expectations. This is what Vyasacharya calls **Krpa**. Arjuna was overpowered by this attachment. The immediate consequence was

Vishidannidamabraveet

He spoke in grief.

Vishada means sorrow. That is why this chapter is called Arjuna–vishada–yoga.

So we see that sorrow is caused only by attachment.

This problem of attachment is universal. If the sorrow is intense,

It is shown in the body as, Arjuna says

Seedanthi mama gaathraani mukham cha parichushyathi

Vaepathushcha shareerae mae romaharshascha jaayathae 1.29

My limbs droop, my mouth dries up, my body trembles and hairs stand on end.

Psychosomatic diseases disturb the mind first and then the body.

The third problem is **delusion or confusion**.

The rational faculty takes a back seat.

Arjuna thinks, he will get papa by killing atayayins. Atayayins are people who commit cardinal sins. Duryodhana is a maha atayayin! But now that his mind is veiled, he thinks so.

According to dharma sastra an atayayin should be given capital punishments without even an enquiry!

So, thus we see that **samsara is caused by**

Attachment – Raga

Sorrow – Shoka

Confusion – Moha

Arjuna intensely experiences samsara and therefore decides not to fight this battle.

Hence at the end of the chapter we find

Aevamukthva(a)rjuna: sankhyaerathopastha upaavishath

Visrujya sasharam chaapam shoka-samvigna-manasa: 1.47

Arjuna sat down on the chariot in that battle, casting away bow and arrows, being grief-stricken at heart.

Do we not identify ourselves with Arjuna? Humanity is always marked by Raga, Shoka and Moha. We continue this bondage forever! We fall into traps of dejection and despair. Our intellect is clouded and offers us no line of right action.

Once we diagnose our disease, we must understand our problem is nothing but our own dependence.

Swami Dayananda says

The problem is you and the solution is you.

Krishna watches Arjuna going through samsara, but does not come to his rescue because there is a rule in our shastra which says;

Never advise a person unless he seeks advice.

That way, we lose our respect and value. The seeker must always ask for advice (the only exception is in the case of children).

So, now we see at the end of the first chapter, Arjuna has identified his problem, but he has not asked for Krishna's advice. So Krishna's teachings do not start in the first chapter.

The essence of the first chapter is presenting the context and Arjuna's discovery of his

problem as samsara. The treatment of such a natural, mortal illness of the inner mind is the theme of the entire Gita.

Why should we act? – Gita's answer.

So long as we are alive, we cannot but be active. Actions are flowing out of every living person. They should be organized, altered or disciplined so that these actions coming out of him bring about happiness in the community and a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction to the individual. This is called "the art of action".

Always action is the answer and not inaction. Running away from problems is cowardice and the result of cowardice is sorrow, shame and defeat. Courage lies in facing the situation and sublimity; splendour and success are the blessings of courage. It is a unique gospel on Karma-Yoga and teaches how to attain the great ideal of worklessness through work! Man should not renounce the work and social responsibilities, but he must learn to renounce the fruits thereof. The attachment to the work leads to suffering and bondage. One must learn to follow svadharma or one's assigned duties, without attachment to the work or its fruits.

Confusion arising from a total sense of frustration is a universal ailment. We have to rediscover ourselves with enthusiastic dynamism. Not only individuals, but even nations sometime enter into an overwhelming state of perplexity and frustration. But no one should sit inactive; as long as one is alive, one must act.

At moments of mental dejection, the human intellect always discovers arguments which are convincing to project our point of view. Even though we very often know it is cowardice, our own thoughts supply us enough excuses and reasons to justify our actions. We try to paint white our dark inner turmoil. One has to learn to face problems with faith in oneself. We must know to make our inner personality strong and tackle the problem with a new-found confidence.

The Gita helps us do this. She expounds a science of personality-reconstruction. We need this more than anything else. This is what is explained by Krishna to Arjuna.

We must act and crash into the problem. We must choose the right type of motive to inspire our activities and then the entire effort becomes rewarding in terms of the feeling of peace and the sense of fulfilment that come to us. Action is the expression of the glorious life in us. When we work joyously to reach a goal, our efficiency increases. Success in life depends not on proficiency, but only on efficiency. Our proficiency, when expressed through diligent and planned activities, becomes the play of efficiency in us.

Our country has intelligent workers and technicians who are more proficient than, say

the Japanese or the Malaysian people. But we cannot deny they have more efficiency whereas we have proficiency!

Thus we see, that to be more creative, proficiency must be transformed into efficiency. We must act diligently, whole-heartedly, with a motivation to improve and a spirit to outshine our own present abilities. **Self-improvement is the spirit of challenging yourself by yourself and unfolding the personality.** A man must perform the action essentially non-egoistic and objective and perform for the well being of others also.

Action is the signature of life!

One must act diligently, with the heart in the work, with a will to improve, a spirit to outshine ourselves! The spirit of challenging yourself by yourself is the secret of self-improvement and unfoldment of your entire personality. It is the spirit and the attitude which matter the most.

The Gita supplies anchorage to the confused youth, to the frustrated nations, to the worrying communities.

The following is the very call of the Gita;

**“ tasmaat uththishta Kaunteya
Yuddhaaya krta nischayah”**

Shed your fear, get up determined to fight and win.
Get up my country men – determined to fight to die, if need be, for the sacred Bharata.

Let us bear this call in mind and move ahead in life!