

The Bhagwad Gita: A Unique Science of Jnana, Karma and Bhakti Yoga

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Abstract – *The Bhagwad Gita literally means “the song of the lord” which is a conversation between Arjuna and Krishna in the battle field of Mahabharata. The Krishna represents the Supreme Being and Arjuna represents an ordinary being. Through Arjuna’s questions and Krishna’s answers the complete science of Yoga is revealed. In this Krishna mainly mentions about three forms of Yoga- the Jnana Yoga, the Karma Yoga and the Bhakti Yoga. The Jnana Yoga or the path of knowledge is a means of the attainment of moksha through attaining the knowledge of the self and the Supreme. It is also called as the highest form of Yoga. The rest two fulfills the purpose. Karma Yoga forms the central teaching of the Gita philosophy. According to which no being can escape actions or fruits of the karma done in the past or present only by performing Niskama karma one can attain liberation. Also, it is impossible to walk on the path of Jnana Yoga without walking on the path of Karma Yoga. The Bhakti Yoga is the perfected form of Karma Yoga, where a being performs selfless devoted action towards the lord. It is the path where one can be liberated by nurturing intense love and devotion towards the lord. Although, the Gita mentions about more forms of yoga like the Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, etc. but the Gita mainly inculcates these three forms of yoga at its very foundation, since, only through these three paths one can attain liberation. It is considered as a science because it describes the concept of Yoga in a systematic step by step way. However, the original purpose of yoga according to Bhagwad Gita is to connect one’s consciousness to the supreme consciousness by controlling one’s body, mind and senses; good health is just a by-product of the endeavor because a healthy mind resides in a healthy body.*

Key Words:- *Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Niskama, Consciousness, Liberation, Mahabharata, Knowledge, Divine self, Aham Brahmasmi, Tat Tvam Asi.*

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INTRODUCTION

The Bhagwad Gita is one of the most pious and important literature in the Hindu culture. It is called as “the song of the lord”, that is; which includes the entire teaching of this universe and its creation, life, death, dharma, adharma, rights and duties etc. by the lord himself. The Bhagwad Gita is a very simple yet practical teaching of life which is conceived to be have nurtured a very rational yet harmonious philosophy following which an ordinary man can lead a pious and peaceful life. It has been said about Bhagwad Gita that, one can find very solution to any life problem in Bhagwad Gita. There cannot be any problem that has not got its solution in the Gita. Bhagwad Gita gives an insight of a transcendental life while living within the practical world.

Thus, undoubtedly, Bhagwad Gita is the use solace of all the difficult times.

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi,” the Gita is universal mother whose door is wide open to anyone who knocks and further says that a true votary of the Gita does not know what disappointment is. He ever

dwells in perennial joy and peace that passeth understanding”.

The most important reason for its popularity is not just the reason that it consists the exact words of the lord or the revelation that have been made out by him but is that it is a rare combination of philosophy which has the three forms of yoga at its very foundation which makes Bhagwad Gita not just a religious scripture but a philosophy of life where an individual while leading a simple and ordinary life can experience the transcendental reality. It is the these three yogas- The Jnana Yoga, The Karma yoga and the Bhakti yoga and their teachings enables a simple and ordinary individual to live a divine life on this earth where one can get free from the cycle of birth and death.

In the words of Mahamana Malaviyaji, the Bhagwad Gita is a unique synthesis of the highest knowledge, the purest love and the most luminous action.

Although, Karma yoga forms the central teaching of the Bhagwad Gita, Bhakti yoga remains the purest

form of karma. One can follow up, whereas, the Jnana yoga is the highest of all, since, it encompasses the rest of two yoga forms which serves the sole purpose of the Gita philosophy which is 'enlightenment'.

The Gita can rightly be called as the representative of a unique synthesis of knowledge, action and devotion.

Man as a whole is a complex of three essential qualities of thinking, feeling and willing. The process of thinking represents his intellect, willing his will to perform actions and his feelings represents his emotions. The intellect gave rise to the philosophy of knowledge; will to the philosophy of action and emotions to the philosophy of devotion.

The Jnana yoga is the path of knowledge, the Bhakti yoga is the path of devotion and the karma yoga is the path of action.

The Jnana yoga is the highest ideal for the realization of the self while the other two Bhakti and Karma yoga are subservient to Jnana yoga. Let us understand these three forms of yoga one by one:-

1. *The Jnana Yoga-*

This is the highest of all forms of yoga. All the other paths are nothing but are the different manifestation of it, all of them whether the Bhakti yoga and karma yoga are subservient to it. The highest path, the Jnana yoga is the path of knowledge in which one attains the knowledge of the self, not-self and the divine. It is the means of the attainment of liberation of the individual self.

Etymologically, Jnana yoga is made up of two words-Jnana and Yoga, Jnana means 'knowledge' and yoga means 'union'. This knowledge is not some ordinary form of knowledge but is the knowledge where one tries to know the Brahman, to know that Brahman is to know one's own self "Aham Brahmasmi" or "I am the Brahman or absolute", the pure all pervading consciousness the non-doer and the silent witness is Jnana and yoga means "Union of the self with the Divine self". To realize one's self in everything is Jnana.

The importance of Jnana yoga lies in the very fact that it liberates man from the bondage of ignorance, avidya or ajnana. It is due to ignorance a person identifies himself with the body, mind and senses. All of these are illusory or unreal, transient and destructible.

Jnana yoga aims at making the individual realize by the means of knowledge that it is not different from Brahman. 'That Thou Art' or 'Tat Tvam Asi' or "You are that Brahman or absolute" is the knowledge

which will liberate man from the shackles of bondage.

However, it is not easy to realize the path of wisdom. It is just like walking on the edge of a sword. The path of knowledge is very difficult from all the sciences. It is meant for those whose hearts are pure whose intellects are sharp and who are sincere and earnest.

Thus, for those people who find Jnana yoga to be a very difficult path to walk on, they have the choice of Bhakti and karma Yoga. Let us just discuss about karma yoga.

2. *The karma Yoga-*

The karma yoga or the path of action, the Gita philosophy adores the path of the karma yoga. Karma yoga finds its justice only in the Bhagwad Gita. Karma yoga or the science of action is the best path of the ordinary people for attaining liberation. The karma yoga forms the very foundation of the Gita philosophy. It is the central teaching of the Gita. According to Gita, the Jnana yoga is only possible when karma yoga is attained. No being can renounce actions completely. The entire universe works on the principle of action. Bhakti yoga is also not contrary to karma yoga. Bhakti yoga, in fact, is specialized form of karma yoga.

The Gita uses the term 'Yoga' in the sense of union with the supreme or 'God'. Through karma yoga, it teaches the path of union through works, knowledge and devotion. The Gita does not teach in activism. It regards the performance of duties as better than renunciation of actions. It inculcates selfless, disinterested action or Niskama karma. Niskama karma is the science of karma yoga in Gita. But, the ideal of the Gita is not negativism or escapism. It is not negation of actions, but, performance of actions in a detached spirit. The Niskama or Anasakta karma yoga inculcates the spirit of Loksamgraha or the benefit of humanity.

Thus, by selfless actions, one becomes pure and is able to identify his real self. He realizes the ultimate reality. This is the realization of immortality through unselfish, disinterested deeds or karma yoga.

3. *The Bhakti Yoga-*

The Bhakti yoga or the path of devotion is a subservient path in order to attain the highest path or the path of wisdom. This path is a special form of karma yoga where action is being transformed in to emotional action or Bhava Karma. The path of Bhakti is the path of attaining union with God through intense love and devotion. Bhakti stands for love and supreme devotion to almighty God. This yoga is based on the emotional element of man's complete nature. Through this one can attain

liberation by intense feeling of love or devotion. Emotion when acted strongly is said that can melt the stones. Emotions have the capacity to awaken and activate the potential power of man. Love is something very natural to man. But, love ordinarily means finite objects which are transitory, perishable and unreal. Love, in this sense, is not pure love but attachment. Whereas, Bhakti or devotion is the purest form of love beyond this transitory world, a world of endless happiness. Bhakti marga is the way of pure love in which the objects of love or devotion is not the finite or the limited, but the supreme. This is love is universal love.

Although, Bhakti marga is thought of the most convenient and popular of all the paths because love, devotion, attachments are such feelings which are very natural to man. Hence, it does not require any special attitude or capacity or resources. The only attitude one needs within himself is the feeling of uncontaminated love for the objects of love or supreme consciousness. One has to identify the difference between attraction and adoration.

Thus, the Bhakti yoga is the path of liberation through pure love or devotion.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, from the above discussion it may be concluded that the philosophy of Gita not only inculcates the science of three forms of yoga- The Jnana yoga, karma yoga and Bhakti yoga but it comes up as a science.

The three paths of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma can be recommended so that one can choose among them according to one's own capacities and interest and ultimately attain liberation. In present respect, it will prove to be very beneficial as it teaches the philosophy of harmony, love and disinterested actions. These three paths might seem to be different from each other but in reality they are not. These three forms of yoga are complementary to each other and serve the purpose of liberation through the process of the finite with the infinite. Just as the different beam of light have the same source so as the different forms of yoga fulfill the similar purpose of liberation which are actually one but seems different.

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