

Concept of Shri Mad Bhagavad Gita

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OVERVIEW

The Bhagavad Gita is also referred to as Gita, is a 700-verse Hindu scripture that is part of the ancient Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. Due to its presence in the epic, it is classified as a Smṛiti text. However, those branches of Hinduism that give it the status of an Upanishad also consider it a Shruti or "revealed text". As it is taken to represent a summary of the Upanishadic teachings, it is also called "the Upanishad of the Upanishads." The context of the Gita is a conversation between Krishna and the Pandava prince Arjuna taking place in the middle of the battlefield before the start of the Kurukshetra War with armies on both sides ready to battle. Responding to Arjuna's confusion and moral dilemma about fighting his own cousins who command a tyranny imposed on a disputed empire, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and prince, and elaborates on yoga, Samkhya, reincarnation, moksha, karma yoga and jnana yoga among other topics.

Scholars roughly date the Bhagavad Gita to the period between 200 BCE and 200 CE, the Gita having been influenced by the soteriologies of Buddhism, Jainism, Samkhya and Yoga. Though the Bhagavad Gita, as a smṛiti, has no independent authority from the Upanishads (sruti), the Gita is in many respects unlike the Upanishads in format and content. The Bhagavad Gita occurs in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata and comprises 18 chapters from the 25th through 42nd and consists of 700 verses. The authorship of the Mahabharata as a whole is attributed to Vyasa, however in actuality it is a composite work of many authors over a period of time. The Gita itself is also the product of more than one author. Because of differences in recensions, the verses of the Gita may be numbered in the full text of the Mahabharata as chapters 6.25–42 or as chapters 6.23–40. According to the recension of the Gita commented on by Adi Shankara, the number of verses is 700, but there is evidence to show that old manuscripts had 745 verses. The verses themselves, using the range and style of Sanskrit Anustup meter (chhandas) with similes and metaphors, are written in a poetic form that is traditionally chanted. A manuscript illustration of the battle of Kurukshetra, fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, recorded in the

MAHABHARATA.

The Bhagavad Gita begins before the start of the climactic Kurukshetra war, with the Pandava prince Arjuna becoming filled with doubt on the battlefield. Realizing that his enemies are his own relatives, beloved friends, and revered teachers, he turns to his charioteer and guide, Krishna, for advice.

WAR AS ALLEGORY

There are many scholars and researchers who regard the story of the Gita as an allegory. For example, Swami Nikhilananda, founder of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, takes Arjuna as an allegory of Ātman, Krishna as an allegory of Brahman, Arjuna's chariot as the body, etc.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, in his commentary on the Gita, interpreted the battle as "an allegory in which the battlefield is the soul and Arjuna, man's higher impulses struggling against evil." Swami Vivekananda also said that the first discourse in the Gita related to war can be taken allegorically. Vivekananda further remarked, "This Kurukshetra War is only an allegory. When we sum up its esoteric significance, it means the war which is constantly going on within man between the tendencies of good and evil."

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Gita Dhyanam:

It contains 9 verses, The Gita Dhyanam is not a part of the main Bhagavad-Gita, but it is commonly published with the Gita as a prefix. The verses of the Gita Dhyanam (also called Gita Dhyana or Dhyana Slokas) offer salutations to a variety of sacred scriptures, figures, and entities, characterize the relationship of the Gita to the Upanishads, and affirm the power of divine assistance. It is a common practice to recite these before reading chapters of the Gita itself.

1. Arjuna-Visada Yoga:

It contains 47 verses. Arjuna requests Krishna to move his chariot between the two armies. When Arjuna sees his relatives on the opposing army side of the Kurus, he loses morale and decides not to fight.

2. Sankhya Yoga::

It contains 72 verses. After asking Krishna for help, Arjuna is instructed that only the body may be killed, as he was worried if it would become a sin to kill people (including his gurus and relatives), while the eternal self is immortal. Krishna appeals to Arjuna that, as a warrior, he has a duty to uphold the path of dharma through warfare. Krishna told Arjuna the three principles dharma, Atman and the Sharira (body).

3. Karma Yoga:

It contains 43 verses. Arjuna asks why he should engage in fighting if knowledge is more important than action. Krishna stresses to Arjuna that performing his duties for the greater good, but without attachment to results, is the appropriate course of action.

4. Jnana-Karma-Sanyasa Yoga:

It contains 42 verses. Krishna reveals that he has lived through many births, always teaching Yoga for the protection of the pious and the destruction of the impious and stresses the importance of accepting a guru.

5. Karma-Sanyasa Yoga:

It contains 29 verses. Arjuna asks Krishna if it is better to forgo action or to act ("renunciation or discipline of action". Krishna answers that both ways may be beneficent, but that acting in Karma Yoga is superior.

6. Dhyan Yoga or Atmasanyam Yoga:

It contains 46 verses. Krishna describes the correct posture for meditation and the process of how to achieve Samadhi.

7. Jnana-Vijnana Yoga:

It contains 30 verses. Krishna teaches the path of knowledge (Jnana Yoga).

8. Aksara-Brahma Yoga:

It contains 28 verses. Krishna defines the terms brahman, adhyatma, karma, atman, adhibhuta and adhidaiva and explains how one can remember him at the time of death and attain his supreme abode.

9. Raja-Vidya-Raja-Guhya Yoga:

It contains 34 verses. Krishna explains panentheism, "all beings are in me" as a way of remembering him in all circumstances.

10. Vibhuti-Vistara-Yoga:

It contains 42 verses. Krishna describes how he is the ultimate source of all material and spiritual worlds. Arjuna accepts Krishna as the Supreme Being, quoting great sages who have also done so.

11. Visvarupa-Darsana Yoga:

It contains 55 verses. On Arjuna's request, Krishna displays his "universal form" (Visvarupa), a theophany of a being facing every way and emitting the radiance of a thousand suns, containing all other beings and material in existence.

12. Bhakti Yoga:

It contains 20 verses. In this chapter Krishna extols the glory of devotion to God. Krishna describes the process of devotional service (Bhakti Yoga). He also explains different forms of spiritual disciplines.

13. Ksetra-Ksetrajna Vibhaga Yoga:

It contains 14 verses. In this chapter Krishna describes the (human) body as Kshetra, and tells one who knows this fact is a Ksetrajna. Krishna describes nature (prakrti), the enjoyer (purusha) and consciousness.

14. Gunatraya-Vibhaga Yoga:

It contains 47 verses. Krishna explains the three modes (Gunas) of material nature.

15. Purusottama Yoga:

It contains 20 verses. Krishna describes a symbolic tree (representing material existence), its roots in the heavens and its foliage on earth. Krishna explains that this tree should be felled with the "axe of detachment", after which one can go beyond to his supreme abode.

16. Daivasura-Sampad-Vibhaga Yoga:

It contains 24 verses. Krishna tells of the human traits of the divine and the demonic natures. He counsels that to attain the supreme destination one must give up lust, anger and greed, discern between right and wrong action by discernment through Buddhi and evidence from scripture and thus act correctly.

17. Sraddhatraya-Vibhaga Yoga:

It contains 28 verses. Krishna tells of three divisions of faith and the thoughts, deeds and even eating habits corresponding to the three Gunas.

18. Moksha-Sanyasa Yoga:

It contains 78 verses. In conclusion, Krishna asks Arjuna to abandon all forms of dharma and simply surrender unto him. He describes this as the ultimate perfection of life.

The influential commentator Madhusudana Sarasvati divided the Gita's eighteen chapters into three sections, each of six chapters. According to his method of division, the first six chapters deal with Karma yoga, which is the means to the final goal, and the last six deal with the goal itself, which he says is Knowledge (Jnana). The middle six deal with bhakti. Swami Gambhirananda characterizes Madhusudana Sarasvati's system as a successive approach in which Karma yoga leads to Bhakti yoga, which in turn leads to Jnana yoga.

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