

SRIMAD-BHAGAVAD-GITA

by

SWAMI SWARUPANANDA

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Swami Swarupananda, the first president of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, and late editor of the Prabuddha Bharata, compiled the present edition of the Bhagavad-Gita with the collaboration of his brother Sannyasins at Mayavati, and some of the Western disciples of Swami Vivekananda. The manuscripts were begun in 1901, and were ready for the Press by the end of 1903, but through unavoidable circumstances the publication was delayed. It was only after the passing away of Swami Swarupananda that the work was brought out in monthly instalments in the Prabuddha Bharata, and this work is now presented to the public in convenient book form, after being carefully edited and enlarged with additional comments.

The object of the compiler was to make accessible to the Indian public who are educated in English but have a limited knowledge in Sanskrit, and also to the Western world, an edition of the Celestial Gita, in which they will feel sufficient interest to follow the original text, and thus create a taste for the study and interpretation of holy Sanskrit literature. How far the compiler has been successful in his object can be gleaned from the following pages. His thoughtful comments following the commentaries of the great Acharyas, and illuminating sidelights thrown on intricate places, will, we trust, be of much help to the study of the Gita, especially to a beginner. An elaborate Index has been subsequently added.

A word of explanation as to the paraphrase is necessary here: Though the literal meaning of each word is given, yet to avoid the awkwardness of language and confusion of sense to a beginner, the equivalents of case terminals of such words as are used to qualify some other words in the sentence, are omitted in most cases.

We hope this edition will meet a much-felt want, not only in India but in all English-speaking countries.

The editors and publishers

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS
18th October, 1909

FOREWORD

THE Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita occurs in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata and comprises 18 chapters from the 25th to the 42nd. The discourse between Arjuna and Krishna on the battle-field, on the eve of the war which forms the subject-matter of the work, was strung together in seven hundred verses and put in its place in the body of his great history by Vyasa.

The Gita opens with Dhritarashtra's query to Sanjaya about the progress of events. In the second chapter of the Bhishma Parva, we find Vyasa offering the power of sight to the blind king, that he might see the war. Dhritarashtra declined to have it, saying he did not care to have eyes with which only to see the death of his own people; but he would like to hear what was happening. On this the great Rishi Vyasa said, that all the occurrences in connection with the war would be reflected in the mind of Sanjaya, and he would faithfully report them to Dhritarashtra.

The Gita is called an Upanishad, because it contains the essence of Self-knowledge, and because its teachings, like those of the Vedas, are divided into three sections, Karma (work), Upasana (devotion) and Jnana (knowledge).

The first chapter is introductory. The second is a summary of the whole work, e.g., in II. 48 and the connected Slokas, self-less work devoid of desire for fruits, is taught for the purification of the heart; in II. 61 and the connected Slokas devotion is taught to the pure-hearted, to qualify them further for the highest Sannyasa, which last is taught in II. 71 and the connected Slokas.

It is also usual to divide the work into three sections illustrative of the three terms of the Mahavakya of the Sama-Veda, "Thou art That" (Chhand. Upa., VI. viii. 7). In this view the first six chapters explain the path of work without desire for fruits, and the nature of "Thou." The next six chapters deal with devotion and the nature of "That." The last six describe the state of the highest knowledge and the nature of the middle term of the Mahavakya, in other words, the means of re-establishing the identity of "Thou" and "That."

The central teaching of the Gita is the attainment of Freedom, by the performance of one's Swadharma or duty in life. "Do thy duty without an eye to the results thereof. Thus shouldst thou gain the purification of heart which is essential for Moksha," - seems to be the keynote of Krishna's teachings to Arjuna.

It is well known why the Gita came into existence. It was owing to Arjuna's unwillingness to do his duty as a Kshatriya - to fight for a just cause - because it involved the destruction of his own people. Not that Arjuna did not recognise the justice and right of the cause, but he would rather renounce the world and try for Moksha than kill his relatives and friends. Krishna's characterisation of this weakly sentimental attitude of Arjuna is well known. He called it "Un-Arya-like delusion, contrary to the attainment alike of heaven and honour" and exhorted Partha to "yield not to unmanliness" but to "cast off this mean faintheartedness." (II. 2-3). "Could a coward who fails to do his duty, be worthy to attain

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Moksha?"- seems to be Krishna's rejoinder. Could a man not purified by the fire-ordeal of his Swadharna, could a renegade, a slave, attain Moksha? No! says the Lord. And this is the lesson we Indians have forgotten all these years, though we have been reading and discussing the Gita all the time.

S.

MEDITATION

1. Om! O Bhagavad-Gita, with which Partha was enlightened by the Lord Narayana Himself and which was incorporated in the Mahabharata by the ancient sage Vyasa, - the Blessed Mother, the Destroyer of rebirth, showering down the nectar of Advaita, and consisting of eighteen chapters, - upon Thee, O Bhagavad-Gita! O Loving Mother! I meditate.
2. Salutation to thee, O Vyasa, of mighty intellect and with eyes large like the petals of full-blown lotuses, by whom was lighted the lamp of wisdom, full of the Mahabharata-oil.
3. Salutation to Krishna, the holder of the Jnanamudra, granter of desires of those who take refuge in Him, the milker of the Gita-nectar, in whose hand is the cane for driving cows.
4. All the Upanishads are the cows, the Son of the cowherd is the milker, Partha is the calf, men of purified intellect are the drinkers and the supreme nectar Gita is the milk.
5. I salute Krishna, the Guru of the Universe, God, the son of Vasudeva, the Destroyer of Karma and Chanura, the supreme bliss of Devaki.
6. The battle-river, with Bhishma and Drona as its banks, and Jayadratha as the water, with the king of Gandhara as the blue water-lily, and Shalya as the shark, with Kripa as the current and Karna as the breakers, with Ashvatthama and Vikarna as terrible Makaras and Duryodhana as the whirlpool in it, - was indeed crossed over by the Pandavas, with Keshava as the ferry-man.
7. May the taintless lotus of the Mahabharata, growing on the waters of the words of Parashara's son, having the Gita as its strong sweet fragrance, with many a narrative as its stamens, fully opened by the discourses on Hari and drunk joyously day after day by the Bhramara of the good and the pure in the world, - be productive of the supreme good to him who is eager to destroy the taint of Kali!
8. I salute that All-bliss Madhava whose compassion makes the mute eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.
9. Salutation to that God Whom the creator Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra and the Maruts praise with divine hymns; Whom the singers of Sama sing, by the Vedas, with their full complement of parts, consecutive sections and Upanishads; Whom the Yogis see with their minds absorbed in Him through perfection in meditation, and Whose limit the hosts of Devas and Asuras know not.

INVOCATION (**)

O blessed Mother
Who showerest (upon us) the nectar of Advaita
In the form of (these) eighteen chapters!
Thou Destroyer of rebirth!
Thou loving Mother!
Thou Bhagavad-Gita!
Upon Thee I meditate.

Thee, O Vyasa, of lotus-eyes,
And mighty intellect,
Who hast lighted the lamp of wisdom
Filled with the oil of the Mahabharata,
Thee we salute.

O Thou who art the Refuge
Of the (ocean-born) Lakshmi,
Thou in whose right hand is the shepherd's crook,
Who art the milker of the divine nectar of the Gita,
To Thee, O Krishna, to Thee our salutation!

The Upanishads are even as the herd of cows,
The Son of the cowherd as the milker,
Partha as the sucking-calf,
And men of purified intellect the drinkers,
Of this, the supreme nectar, the milk of the Gita.

Thou son of Vasudeva,
Destroyer of Kamsa and Chanura,
Thou supreme bliss of Devaki,
Guru of the Worlds,
Thee, O Krishna, as God, we salute!

Of that great river of battle which the Pandavas crossed over,
Bhishma and Drona were as the high banks;
And Jayadratha as the water of the river;
The King of Gandhara the water-lily;
Shalya as the sharks, Kripa as the current;
Karna the mighty waves;
Ashvatthama and Vikarna dread water-monsters,
And Duryodhana was the very whirlpool;
But Thou, O Krishna, wast the Ferry-man!

This spotless product of the words of Vyasa,
This lotus of the Mahabharata, -
With the Bhagavad-Gita as its strong sweet fragrance,
And tales of heroes as its full-blown petals,
Held ever open by the talk of Hari, of Him
Who is destroyer of the taint of Kali-Yuga;
This lotus to which come joyously
Day after day the honey-seeking souls, -
 May this produce in us the highest good!

Him Whose compassion maketh the dumb man eloquent,
And the cripple to cross mountains,
Him the All-blissful Madhava,
 Do I salute!

To that Supreme One Who is bodied forth in Brahma,
In Varuna, in Indra, in Rudra and Maruts;
That One Whom all divine beings praise with hymns;
Him Whom the singers of Sama-Veda tell;
Him of Whose glory, sing in full choir, The Upanishads and Vedas;
Him Whom the Yogis see, with mind absorbed in perfect meditation;
Him of Whom all the hosts of Devas and Asuras
Know not the limitations,
 To Him, the Supreme Good, be salutation, -
Him we salute. Him we salute. Him we salute.

Footnotes

(* *) Another rendering of the "Meditation."

SRIMAD-BHAGAVAD-GITA

FIRST CHAPTER

Dhritarashtra said:

1. Tell me, O Sanjaya! Assembled on Kurukshetra, the centre of religious activity, desirous to fight, what indeed did my people and the Pandavas do? [*1]

Sanjaya said:

2. But then King Duryodhana, having seen the Pandava forces in battle-array, approached his teacher Drona, and spoke these words: [*2]

3. "Behold, O Teacher! this mighty army of the sons of Pandu, arrayed by the son of Drupada, thy gifted pupil. [*3]

4-6. "Here (are) heroes, mighty archers, the equals in battle of Bhima and Arjuna - the great warriors Yuyudhana, Virata, Drupada; the valiant Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana and the king of Kashi; the best of men, Purujit, Kunti-Bhoja and Shaivya; the powerful Yudhamanyu, and the brave Uttamaujas, the son of Subhadra, and the sons of Draupadi, - lords of great chariots. [*4]

7. "Hear also, O Best of the twice-born! the names of those who (are) distinguished amongst ourselves, the leaders of my army. These I relate (to you) for your information. [*7]

8. "Yourself and Bhishma and Karna and Kripa, the victorious in war. Asvatthama and Vikarna and Jayadratha, the son of Somadatta. [*8]

9. "And many other heroes also, well-skilled in fight, and armed with many kinds of weapons, are here, determined to lay down their lives for my sake.

10. "This our army defended by Bhishma (is) impossible to be counted, but that army of theirs, defended by Bhima (is) easy to number. [*10]

11. "(Now) do, being stationed in your proper places in the divisions of the army, support Bhishma alone." [*11]

12. That powerful, oldest of the Kurus, Bhishma the grandsire, in order to cheer Duryodhana, now sounded aloud a lion-roar and blew his conch. [*12]

13. Then following Bhishma, conches and kettle-drums, tabors, trumpets and cow horns blared forth suddenly from the Kaurava side and the noise was tremendous.

14. Then, also, Madhava and Pandava, stationed in their magnificent chariot yoked with white horses, blew their divine conches with a furious noise.

[15. Hrishikesha blew the Panchajanya, Dhananjaya, the Devadatta, and Vrikodara, the doer of terrific deeds, his large conch Paundra.

16. King Yudhishtira, son of Kunti, blew the conch named Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva, their Sughosha and Manipushpaka.

17. The expert bowman, king of Kashi, and the great warrior Shikhandi, Dhrishtadyumna and Virata and the unconquered Satyaki;

18. O Lord of Earth! Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra, all, also blew each his own conch.

19. And the terrific noise resounding throughout heaven and earth rent the hearts of Dhritarashtra's party. [*19]

20. Then, O Lord of Earth, seeing Dhritarashtra's party standing marshalled and the shooting about to begin, that Pandava whose ensign was the monkey, raising his bow, said the following words to Krishna: [*20]

Arjuna said:

21-22. Place my chariot, O Achyuta! between the two armies that I may see those who stand here prepared for war. On this eve of battle (let me know) with whom I have to fight.

23. For I desire to observe those who are assembled here for fight, wishing to please the evil-minded Duryodhana by taking his side on this battle-field. [*23]

Sanjaya said:

24-25. Commanded thus by Gudakesha, Hrishikesha, O Bharata, drove that grandest of chariots to a place between the two hosts, facing Bhishma, Drona and all the rulers of the earth, and then spoke thus, "Behold, O Partha, all the Kurus gathered together!"

26. Then saw Partha stationed there in both the armies, grandfathers, fathers-in-law and uncles, brothers and cousins, his own and their sons and grandsons, and comrades, teachers, and other friends as well.

27. Then he, the son of Kunti, seeing all those kinsmen stationed in their ranks, spoke thus sorrowfully, filled with deep compassion.

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