



INTRODUCTION TO BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

PŪRNA VIDYĀ VEDIC HERITAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

Invocation

ॐ सह नावतु ।
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु ।
मा विद्विषावहै ॥

om saha nāvavatu
saha nau bhunaktu
saha vīryaṅkaravāvahai
tejasvi nāvadhītamastu
mā vidviṣāvahaiḥ ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

Om

*Let Him protect us both
May He bless us with the bliss of
knowledge*

*Let us exert together
May what we study be well studied
May we not quarrel with each other*

Om

Peace...Peace...Peace

INTRODUCTION TO GĪTĀ
PART 2



Arjuna's Grief

- Arjuna collapsed, not out of fear, but he suddenly realized that he was about to destroy people some of whose company he would rather have
- He understood that many soldiers in Duryodhana's army were conscripted (by Duryodhana), given a "crash course" in fighting, and put on the battlefield as fodder for his arrows

Arjuna's Grief

- Arjuna knew there would be no victors in such a war
- When he won, it would be at the expense of his cousins, grandfather, teachers, friends, and kinsmen
- Arjuna and his brothers had lived a life of dharma. He also knew that Duryodhana and his brothers, with the exception of Vikarna, had lived a life of adharma
- So the fight was between adharma and dharma

Arjuna's Grief

- Arjuna's attachment to his kin and ordinary people confused him and he was suddenly unsure whether he should fight or withdraw!
- So, “what is right and what is wrong?” is an important question
- Another important question: “is this knowledge of right and wrong evident to an objective mind?”

Arjuna's Grief

- No one can claim that they are ignorant of what is right and what is wrong. The knowledge of what is right and what is wrong is universal!
- Dharma is based on the value of ahimsa (non-injury)
- Other values such as absence of deception, speaking the truth, compassion, absence of jealousy, absence of hatred, and so on are derived from ahimsa



Arjuna's Grief

- Both Duryodhana and the Pandavas had this knowledge of dharma but they had different priorities
- When one's priorities are in conflict with universal values, there is a likelihood that one may engage in adharmic actions (like Duryodhana) and comprise what is right for “what I like”
- We must be alert and watchful in our own lives!



Values

- Values can be (1) Universal; (2) Cultural; and (3) Individual
 - Universal values are known to all – “I do not want someone to hurt/harm me and so I should also behave likewise to others”
 - Cultural values and personal values are cultivated
- Money, power, fame, and influence are not universal values
- Sympathy, love, and compassion are universal values



Values

- Values are not absolute; this is true of universal value as well
- However, one should not go against universal values when pursuing cultural or personal values
- For example one can seek money but not at the expense of cheating or hurting another; that would be adharmic



Values

- Pandavas sought wealth, power and pleasure but did their best to conform to dharma
- Kauravas, led by Duryodhana, was so enamored by power that “the end justified the means” and led him to commit adharmic actions
- Discuss *preyas* and *śreyas*

Values: Conflict and Split

- What is the value of a value?
 - Personal value versus universal value
- *Am I mature* if I compromise morals to achieve wealth, power and fame?
 - No

Values: Conflict and Split

- What happens when I tell a lie?
 - I tell a lie (speak), which is an action - *doer*
 - The speaker is the *doer* (of the action of lying)
 - I also know (through a thought in my mind) that I told a lie - *thinker*
 - The *thinker* knows that a lie was told

Values: Conflict and Split

- What happens when I tell a lie?
 - The speaker-thinker split is created in my personality, which make me miserable and not able to fully enjoy the fruits of the action (lying)
 - This leads to loss of self-esteem
 - Repeated lies lead to a sense of worthlessness

Values: Conflict and Split

- To lead a wholesome life, it is best to follow dharma
- *The means to achieving one's goals are more important than achieving the end result itself*
- It leads to a stress-free life and helps one avoid the types of actions Duryodhana took repeatedly as recounted in the Mahabharata

The Mahabharata War

- One group was willing to compromise the means and go against dharma (fully knowing that dharma was most important)
- Another group was committed to maintaining the moral order or *dharma*
- This war takes place constantly in our minds between “what is right” and “what I like”

The Mahabharata War

- In the Gita, *Bharat* (India) is referred to as *Dharmakṣetra* because it is a place where dharma is important
- *Kurukṣetra* is the geographic location (just north of Delhi) where this great war took place
- All eyes were upon Arjuna, considered to be the greatest archer, and Kṛṣṇa, his charioteer

Body-Chariot Analogy

- The chariot is likened to the body
- The horses are likened to the senses (indriyani)
- The reins are likened to the mind (manas)
- The charioteer is likened to the intellect (buddhi)
- The one seated in the chariot is the master (swami)

Body-Chariot Analogy

- If the buddhi (charioteer) is not clear, then the body (chariot) may end up anywhere - except the desired destination
- The master (swami) has the choice of taking the body to artha, kama or mokṣa
- The charioteer (buddhi) educates the swami; the swami is only as good as the charioteer
- When the Lord is the charioteer (and you surrender to him), success is guaranteed because you will reach your desired destination without a doubt!

Arjuna's Problem

- Arjuna's problem was "...these are *my* own *people*..." because he was a cultured person; a mature person who saw what would happen
- Duryodhana also saw the same people but he did not have a problem because his value system was different; he wanted to win at all costs

Arjuna's Dilemma

- Arjuna could not retreat from battle; the code in battle in those days was “fight to win or lose”
- The loss was usually death; the win was usually hoisting the flag of victory after destroying the other army
- So Arjuna's eyes welled up and he became sorrowful out of compassion, not out of fear

Kṛṣṇa's Rallying Cry

- Kṛṣṇa addressed the distraught Arjuna and expressed his surprise at how he was conducting himself
- Essentially Kṛṣṇa said “...*hey Arjuna, what happened? This is not a time to talk; it is time to act. You are a kṣatriya and it is a prince's duty to protect dharma....*”

Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa be his Guru

- Chapter 1 and the first 10 verses of Chapter 2 are essentially a continuation of the Mahabharata and a description of the battle scene and the state of Arjuna's mind
- Then Arjuna said to Kṛṣṇa: "...I am your sisya; please teach me...."
- Only then did the Gita teaching begin in earnest (verse 11 of Chapter 2);

Types of Students

- Three terms in Sanskrit to describe a student
- **Vidyarthi**: One who wants to know but spends very little time in the classroom (in the teacher's company)
- **Antevasi**: One who lives with the teacher and wants to grasp but may not be able to grasp what is being taught
- **Śiṣya**: One who is truly qualified for study and therefore deserves to be taught

Śiṣya or Student

- Who is a student or *śiṣya*?
 - “...*śikṣa yogyah iti sisyah...*” or “...one who is worthy of the knowledge...”
- What are the qualifications of a student or *śiṣya*?
 - One with the fourfold qualification or “*sādhana chatuṣṭaya*”
 - (1) *viveka*, (2) *vairāgya*, (3) *śamādi śaktasampatti*, (4) *mumukṣutvam*

Essentials for Study

- *Śraddha*
 - Faith or trust in: the teaching; the teacher, and one's ability to learn
- *Bhakti*
 - Reverence to the teaching, the Guru, and Īśvara
 - Maturity to accept oneself and others as they are
 - Ability to see Īśvara in all and marvel at “everyday” miracles

Gītā Dhyānam

- Chanting the *Gītā dhyānam*
- Meaning and significance
- Why does Gītā occupy an exalted place in the scriptures?
- *Now let us revisit the Vision of the Gītā and reflect upon some questions...*

The Vision of the Bhagavad Gītā

- What is the fundamental problem?
- Why is it important to recognize and understand this fundamental problem?
- How can this fundamental problem be solved?

The Vision of the Bhagavad Gītā

- What does Arjuna's condition represent? How does Lord Kṛṣṇa remove Arjuna's confusion, conflict and ignorance?
- What is karma yoga? What is jñāna yoga? What is the role of bhakti (devotion)? Are they different? How are they related?
- How can Bhagavad Gītā help me grow and mature as human being?

Questions for Reflection

- What does the Mahabharata war represent?
- What does the chariot represent?
- What does the charioteer (Sri Kṛṣṇa) represent?
- What do the horses represent?
- What do the reins represent?
- Who does Arjuna represent?

Concluding Śānti Mantra

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

- Om pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇātpurṇamudacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ॥
Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

That is fullness, this is fullness. From that fullness this fullness came. From that fullness (when) this fullness (is) removed, what remains is fullness. Om peace, peace, peace