

The Bhagavad-Gita as a dialogue

Dr. M.G. Prasad

www.taranga.us

mgprasad@comcast.net

Introduction:

The Bhagavad-Gita (authored by sage Vyasa in Sanskrit language has 700 verses) is a unique conversation between the devotee Arjuna (representing the individual-self and Lord Krishna (representing the Cosmic-Self). The dialogue in the form of questions (by Arjuna) and the answers (by Lord Krishna) deal with the fundamentals of life and the reality, which has universal relevance at all times. Bhagavad-Gita is a hand book for living and life. Bhagavad-Gita is also termed as Gitopanishat, Bramha-Vidya (as it deals with the nature of Bramhan, the ultimate reality, and its attributes) and Yogashastra [as it expounds the various paths of achieving the goal (Yoga)].

The Bhagavad-Gita is the answers by Lord Krishna to the most profound questions (around 20) by the great devotee Arjuna. The dialogues are in poetic form (literally meaning Gita), which is well suited for recitation. The Gita is also considered as a literary classic in addition to its recognition as a classical representation of the perennial philosophy.

The Bhagavad-Gita is replete with concepts and their modes of applications. Some of the concepts are: Despondency, Various Features of steady wisdom, Interrelations between action and their qualities, Devotion and Knowledge, Achievement of Perfection, Various Mental Qualities, Glories and Attributes of the Universal-Self (Divine), Renunciation and its nature, Meditation, The Observer and the Observed, Divine and Demonic qualities, Mysticism an its Subtleties, Cause and Effect, Attributes of form and formless, Temporal and Eternal, Path and Goal, Faith and its Attributes, Freedom and its nature, Realization and its nature etc.

The Bhagavad-Gita appears in great historical Indian epic Mahabharata authored by sage Vyasa in Sanskrit language. The Mahabharata has 100,000 verses. The Bhagavad-Gita along with Upanishads and Bramha Sutras (aphorisms dealing with

Bramhan) form the Prasthanatraya, the triadic foundation of Vedanta. Also, Bhagavad-Gita is regarded as the quintessence of the Upanishadic literature.

In this article the Bhagavad-Gita is put in the form of a dialogue (questions and answers) in a brief form. It is intended that this article will enable readers to go deeper into the text. Questions asked by Arjuna are identified by Q and the answers given by Lord Krishna are identified by A. The chapter and verse numbers are also identified.

Q: Oh! Madhava, I cannot keep my body and mind steady. How can we be happy by hurting our own people? (1.30, 1.37, 1.45)

A: Oh! Arjuna, why do you have dejection during this crisis? (2.2)

Q: Please accept me as your disciple and clear my doubts and confusion. (2.7)

A: Your grievance is not appropriate and wise ones do not grieve over either the living or the dead. (2.11)

Q: What are the characteristics of a "sthita prajna?" (2.54)

A: A person of steady wisdom "sthitha prajna", having renounced all the desires of the mind is satisfied in the self. (2.55)

Q: If knowledge is better than action, why act? (3.1)

A: The two-fold path given by me is the path of knowledge to the discerning and the path of action to the active. (3.3)

Q: What makes a person commit sinful deeds as if by compulsion? (3.36)

A: The desire and anger, which would result form Rajoguna are all consuming and all-sinful. They are the enemies. (3.37)

Q: How could you have taught your ancestors? (4.4)

A: Many are births taken by Me and you. I know all of them, while you know not. (4.5)

Q: Which is better? Renunciation of action or yoga of action? (5.1)

A: Renunciation and performance of action, both lead to freedom. Of the two; performance of action is superior to its renunciation. (5.2)

Q: How to control mind, which is restless, fickle... (6.33, 6.34)

A: Mind is indeed restless and difficult to control but can be controlled by conscious repetitive effort and dispassion. (6.35)

Q: What is the fate of one who has fallen form yoga in spite of faith? (6.37, 6.38)

A: A yogi is never destroyed, neither in this world nor in the next. A doer of good does not tread the path of grief. (6.40)

Q: What is Bramhan, Adhyatma, Karma, Adhibhuta, Adhidaiva, Adhiyagna? How to know You at the time of death? (8.1, 8.2)

A: The imperishable is Bramhan. The subjective-self (Adhyatma) in individual is his nature. The creative force is Karma, which is the cause of existence and manifestation of all beings. (8.3). Adhibhuta pertains to perishable nature and Adhidaiva is the Purusha. Adhiyajna is Myself abiding in all beings. (8.4) One who remembers Me at the time of his or her death (leaving their body), will attain My Bhava (My Awareness) without doubt. (8.5)

Q: In how many forms and aspects of yours can I dwell upon? (10.17)

A: I shall tell you My Divine glories that are prominent. However, there is no end to the details of my manifestations (10.19). I am the self, seated in the heart of all beings. Also, I am the Beginning, the Middle and the End of all beings (10.20).

Q: If you find me fit, please reveal to me your imperishable form. (11.4)

A: Oh! Partha! Behold my hundreds and thousands of Divine forms of different colors and shapes (11.5).

Q: Adorations to you. What is your nature and activities? (11.31)

A: I am the mighty world-destroying Time now engaged in wiping out the world. Even without you, the warriors assembled here shall not live (11.32).

Q: Please resume to your normal form (from Universal form). (11.46)

A: Being pleased with you, I have revealed to you (through my power of yoga). My Cosmic form is luminous, universal and endless. This form has not been seen by anyone other than you (11.47).

Q: Now my mind is composed after seeing you again in normal form. (11.51)

A: It is by single-minded devotion alone that I can be known, seen in Reality and also entered into (11.54).

Q: Among the two devoted to God, with form (You) and without form, who is better in yoga? (12.1)

A: Those who having immersed their mind in Me and endowed with faith sincerely worship Me with consistent devotion are in my opinion best skilled in yoga (12.2)

Q: What are Prakriti, Purusha; Kshetra, Kshetrajna; Jnana, Jneya? (13.0 in some versions)

A: This body is called as Kshetra (the field) and knower of the field is Kshetrajna. Know Me, as the Kshetrajna of all the fields. The knowledge to be gained is that of both Kshetra and Kshetrajna. Prakriti is the cause of activity and its doer with the help of the senses. Purusha is the cause of experiences due to pleasures and pains (13.1,13.2,13.20).

Q: What are the characteristics of the one who has transcended three Gunas? (14.21).

A: He does not hate the light, activity and delusion and also does not long for them in their absence. He is said to have risen above Gunas whose response is same for honor and dishonor, friend and foe and also he relinquishes (the attachment to fruits of) his action. (14.22, 14,25)

Q: What is their position who acts by faith rather by scriptural reference? Is it of Satva or Rajas or Tamas? (17.1)

A: The shraddha (faith) is of the three kinds. They are innate and untutored. They are based on Satva, Rajas and Tamas. The Satvic adore Devas, the Rajasic adore Yakshas and Rakshasas and Tamasic adore Pretas and Bhutas (17.2, 17.4)

Q: Instruct me about the true nature of Sanyasa and Tyaga? (18.1)

A: The renunciation of Kamy Karma (actions for specific desires) is understood as Sanyasa and Tyaga is the abandonment of fruits of all actions. Tyaga is abandoning the fruits of necessary actions of Yagna, Daana and Tapas. This is my decisive view. Thus, most profound knowledge has been described to you by Me. After reflecting on this, act as you choose. (18.2, 18.4 to 18.6, 18.63)

Arjuna said: My delusions are cleared and my identity is regained. I shall follow your instructions. (18.73)

Sanjaya said:

“This wonderful dialogue that I have heard between great Partha and Lord Vasudeva is causing my hairs to stand.” (18.74)

“Through the grace of Maharishi Vyasa I have heard this profound description on yoga directly from Lord of Yoga (Sri Krishna) Himself.” (18.75)

“My conviction is that wherever Partha, the bearer of the bow and Lord of Yoga, Sri Krishna are; there will be prosperity, victory, happiness and steady wisdom. (18.78)

Dr. M.G. Prasad is a spiritual disciple of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru of Ashtanga Yoga Vijnana Mandiram, Mysore, India. Dr. Prasad is a professor of Mechanical Engineering at Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New Jersey. He has written four books on Hinduism. He lectures on Hinduism at schools, colleges, temples and churches.
