

## Introduction to Shreemad Bhagavad Geetaa

Shreemad Bhagavad **Geetaa**, a collection of **700 verses**, is part of **Bheeshma Parva** in the epic **Mahaabhaarata**. In these verses Kriṣṇa imparts the eternally beneficial knowledge to Arjuna and humanity. Kriṣṇa comes from Sanskrit root word '**Kriṣh** vilekhane', which means to **dig deeper**. Word 'kriṣhi' meaning agriculture, involving ploughing and sowing, is derived from the same root as well. 'Arjuna' comes from 'riju' root which means simple. During this whole conversation between Kriṣṇa and Arjuna, **Kriṣṇa is digging deeper into the mind of simple hearted Arjuna and is sowing the seeds of eternal knowledge.**

The dilemma faced by Arjuna is the **conflict between reason and emotions**. For example, take the case of a judge in the criminal court who has upheld the law of the land and has sent many hard core murderers to the gallows. This was done in spite of protests from various human right group calling for a moratorium on capital punishment. The judge so far was acting with reason and was performing his duty in maintaining the law and order in the society. One day, he finds his own son accused of a heinous murder. Now, the emotion of fear of losing his own son takes over and the judge all of a sudden starts singing chorus with the anti-capital punishment protestors. Arjuna has fought several wars during which he has slayed numerous enemies. Now, in this battle he finds himself against his own. Emotions ruling over him, he does not want to fight the war anymore. The message of Geetaa is about curbing emotions, maintaining consistency and letting reason rule in most difficult circumstances.

This dilemma is a common occurrence on daily basis for all human beings, which is the internal strife between the forces of good and evil. One's conscious is guiding one towards virtuous path however the emotions of greed, anger, ego, jealousy, attachment, lust, malice, deceit, laziness, stubbornness etc. try to dictate him/her towards thoughts and actions that are not so righteous. In this battle there are **100 Kaurvas representing numerous evil forces** against **5 Paṇḍavas representing the**

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**5 senses** through which we receive knowledge and perform actions. In order to remain virtuous in this daily battle, we have to carefully watch, the actions we are performing as well as our sources of knowledge that we are absorbing through our senses.

The venue of Geetaa is Kurukṣhetra, which consist of two words (*kṣhetra*) **the land where** (*kuru*) **deeds are done, where** (*kuru*) **doers reside**. Geetaa essentially is a discourse imploring us to act and act righteously. These verses are disbursing **eternal knowledge** and are meant to be understood and acted upon. These verses are **not prayers** and are not meant to be just sung. Just blindly chanting these verses without understanding their import is time wasted for nothing.

Geetaa is not a discourse applicable to just the followers of Hinduism only. The message it imparts is very secular in its approach and was provided for the entire humanity. Also Geetaa is not justifying violence. On the contrary Mahaabhaarata says “अहिंसा परमो धर्मः धर्म हिंसा तथैव च | *Ahinsaa paramo dharmah dharma hinsaa tathaiva cha*” Non- violence is the highest duty, violence is allowed only when it is for the protection of dharma. The definition of “dharma” i.e righteousness is, truth, justice and equality for all. Some individuals may say that upholding the faith and tradition of their particular sect is dharma. However, dharma can’t be bound by such a narrow definition. For an act to be according to dharma, it has to be beneficial to the entire humanity and other living beings as well. The acts of sectarian or selfish violence are not justifiable under the message of Geetaa.