

## **The Bhagavad Gita: A Synthesis of Vedic Wisdom**

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The Bhagavad Gita, often referred to as the Gita, stands as a timeless beacon of spiritual wisdom in Hindu philosophy. Nestled within the Epic "Iti HaAsa" Mahabharata, this sacred scripture is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and the warrior prince Arjuna, unfolding on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. As the charioteer of Arjuna, Lord Krishna imparts profound teachings that transcend time and space, offering insights into the nature of existence, duty, and the path to liberation. Rooted in the Vedas and Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita serves as a synthesis of ancient Indian wisdom, integrating philosophical insights with practical guidance for righteous living.

### **About the Vedas:**

The Vedas, considered the oldest sacred texts in Hinduism, comprise a vast body of knowledge encompassing hymns, rituals, and philosophical inquiries. Among the four Vedas – Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda – the Rigveda contains hymns (named Rik Mantras) dedicated to various deities. The Samaveda consists of melodies and chants derived from the Rik Mantras, while the Yajurveda delineates rituals and sacrificial practices deploying both Stotras of Sama Veda and Shastras of Rigveda. The Atharvaveda, often called the "Veda of Brahma," contains hymns for everyday life and spiritual practices as well as the Remedial Measures for various deficiencies in the conduct of Rituals and Life.

Quoting from the Vedas (Rigveda 1.164.46), very popular Mantra.

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहूरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान्।

एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः॥

Translation: "They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; and he is heavenly-winged Garuda. To what is One, sages give many a title; they call it Agni, Yama, Matarishvan." This verse from the Rigveda reflects the diverse manifestations of the divine, emphasizing the unity underlying multiplicity, a theme echoed in the Bhagavad Gita.

## Exploring the Upanishads:

The Upanishads, philosophical treatises, delve into the nature of reality, the self, and the ultimate truth. Derived from the Sanskrit root "Sadm सद्", with a pair of prefixes (upasarga) of "upa" (near) and "ni" (totally), the Upanishads signify the Contemplation about "Sat", Para Brahman in other words. The process involves Guru Upasatti, seeking the refuge and tutelage about the Supreme Knowledge from a competent Guru. These texts expound upon the Adwaita Vedanta, though various schools of thought such as Vishishta Advaita, Dvaita Vedanta and many others, offer different perspectives on the nature of existence.

Quoting from the Upanishads (Sama Veda - Chandogya Upanishad 6.8.7):

**तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो इति।**

"You are That Brahman (Absolute Solitary Supreme Being, Shvetaketu!!" - thus was the exposition of the Vedas; and therefore it is known as the Upanishad. By negation after negation, Shweta Ketu got Self-Realized. (The wise one who realizes the Self, attains immortality)

This famous statement, "Tat Tvam Asi" (You are That), illustrates the identity of the individual self with the universal consciousness, a core teaching of Adwaita Vedanta, which finds resonance in the Bhagavad Gita.

## Exploring the Bhagavad Gita:

Against the backdrop of the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita unfolds as a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, offering profound insights into the nature of existence and the path to liberation. Arjuna, overwhelmed by moral dilemma, seeks guidance from Lord Krishna, who imparts timeless wisdom that transcends the battlefield and resonates with seekers across ages.

**To describe the indestructability of the Self, Saankhya Yoga (2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of Gita), explains with various metaphors about the Permanence of the Aatman:**

**अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमकलेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।**

**नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः॥२.२४॥**

***acchēdyō'yamadāhyō'yamaklēdyōśoṣya ēva ca.***

***nityah sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalō'yam sanātanaḥ..2.24..***

To dispel the notion, that body demise is the end of life, metaphor of discarding old garbs to adorn new clothes is quoted.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृहणाति नरोऽपराणि।  
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही॥२.२१॥‘  
vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti narōparāṇi.  
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇā- n'yan'yāni sanyāti navāni dēhī..२.२२..

### **Excerpt 2 from the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2, Verse 47):**

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥

**"Karmanyevadhidhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana**

***Ma karma phala hetur bhur ma te sango 'stvakarmani."***

Translation: "You have the right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not supposed to be enamoured with the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction, laziness in other words."

This verse encapsulates the essence of Karma Yoga, emphasizing selfless action and detachment from the fruits of one's actions, a key teaching echoed throughout the Bhagavad Gita.

In the Vedic Practices of Yajna, we observe the basic pattern:

- a) sacrifice thru Aahuti (offerings thru Agni),
- b) Dakshina (Gift),
- c) Daanam (Charities) and feeding
- d) Renunciation (by symbolic action called Vishnu Kramana leaving everything and assuming the act of transcending the world)

### Synthesis of Vedic Wisdom:

The Bhagavad Gita serves as a synthesis of Vedic wisdom, integrating the philosophical insights of the Vedas and Upanishads with practical guidance for righteous living. It elucidates the concept of Dharma, duty or righteousness, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling one's responsibilities without attachment to outcomes. Just as the Vedas delineate the duties of individuals within society, the Bhagavad Gita provides a comprehensive framework for ethical conduct and leadership.

### **Excerpt 3 from the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Verse 21):**

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तदेवेतरो जनः।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते॥

*"Yad yad ācharati śrēṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janah  
Sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate."*

Translation: "Whatever action a great man, considered as the role model for the society performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues."

Quoting from Yajurveda: तस्मादेकं यन्तं बहवो(अ)नुयन्ति।

Therefore, you have to be responsible while carrying out your duties. You should understand that, your action stands as a factor of guidance for generations to come. Hence, don't be overwhelmed by temporary bouts of glut or glee.

This verse underscores the influence of exemplary conduct and leadership, echoing the ideals expounded in the Vedas and Upanishads.

### **Conclusion:**

The Bhagavad Gita stands as a luminous synthesis of Vedic wisdom, offering profound insights into the nature of existence and the path to spiritual realization. Rooted in the Vedas and Upanishads, it serves as a timeless guide for righteous living and ethical conduct, inspiring seekers on their journey towards liberation. As we delve into its verses, we are reminded of the eternal truths that permeate the fabric of existence, guiding us towards the realization of our innate divinity and ultimate union with the divine.

As the Vedic Texts are very vast, it would be technically and practically impossible for commoners to understand the purport and essence of the texts in entirety. Therefore, the Bhagavad Gita serves as a manual for righteous governance and leadership, offering timeless principles for ethical conduct and decision-making, based on the Vedic Philosophy.

Lord Krishna's guidance to Arjuna underscores the importance of moral integrity, wisdom, and compassion in the pursuit of righteous governance. These principles find resonance in the ethical teachings of the Vedas, which emphasize the harmonious coexistence of individuals and society.