



THE BHAGAWADGITA



a free rendering in English
with commentary
and
the Gita Text in Sanskrit

Suraparaju Radhakrishna Moorthy

Krishna Calling :

The Bhagawad Gita

*A Free Rendering in English
with Commentary
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by

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**Janani
Hyderabad**

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A Free Rendering in English
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at the feet of
Sai

Preface

This work hopes to serve an essential need. For long, we have read the Gita in the original or with the original. We were lost in the music and the majesty of the Sanskrit Verses. We looked at the words, read between the lines, recited the verses, cited them, and we also revelled in disputations about its abundant ambivalences. The present work does not attempt to recreate the beauty and the majesty of the original. It is a free rendering of the Gita carrying explanatory interpolations to make the sense immediately clear. Its aim is to focus more on the meaning behind the words than on the words themselves. It should help us to practise non-attachment to words and expressions. We do have strong attachments and aversions (*raga* and *dvesha*) to words. We literally line up behind them. A translation should help us to get behind the words. However, a translation cannot seek to supplant. It can only supplement.

The present commentary brings out the potentialities of the Gita in shaping and directing man's approach to life. The commentary's prominent features are :

- The translation is not done verse by verse but in passages dealing with a topic. This presentation is preferred in order to reflect the grand sweep of thought and the giant leaps of style of the original—this is a thing probably unattempted yet in English, in prose or in rhyme—and each chapter opens with an introduction and ends with a summing up.
- It focuses on the twin facets of self-development, secular and spiritual progress (*abhyudaya* and *nissreyasa*) at the individual level, and at the societal level (*brahma kshatre*).
- Its constant emphasis is on the necessity of transforming karma into karmayoga, turning the compulsive work into the cosmic vision.

— It focuses on the importance of the true context of the topic of the caste system in the Gita and its true significance at the metaphysical and the mundane levels. Probably for the first time the caste system mentioned by the Gita has been seen in its context, which is the Lord's statement of his 'divine birth and deeds' (*'janma karma ca me divyam'*. 4.9).

--- The real meaning of renunciation, which has a fascination for Arjuna who repeatedly raises the question and which the Lord repeatedly answers is repeatedly made clear. That renunciation consists in the realisation (*jnanam sannyasa lakshanam*) of the illusoriness of all action, and that it is not about giving up what one is doing is stressed throughout. Karma sannyasa is not renunciation of the karma (deeds) but of the karta (doer). The union of the doer and the deed is samsara, and their divorce is sannyasa. And, most importantly,

--- There is the continuous and consistent confluence of the three streams of karma, jnana and bhakti. The last word of the commentary is 'Love' (bhakti). Love removes the fangs of karma. Love's labour (karma) leads to enlightenment (jnana) and, only through love is God known (18.55).

The present work is passionate philosophy and devotional metaphysics. It is soaked in Sankara's interpretation of the Gita. My commentary is not however a translation of Sankara's Gita Bhashya. But it is mainly based on it. I have left out the disputations not relevant today and not essential to our understanding of the Gita. Though my commentary follows Sankara's, I have not denied myself, wherever possible, the benefit of drawing from several other commentaries, which though conflicting in themselves can enlighten and enrich our understanding of the Gita.

A little of my reading on the Gita surfaces in this work. Much remains merged.

- Suraparaju Radhakrishna Moorthy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Br.up	:	Brihadaranyaka Upanishad
Ch. up	:	Chandogya Upanishad
Katha.up	:	Katha Upanishad
Kaivalya.up	:	Kaivalya Upanishad
SGB	:	Sankara's Gita Bhashya
Sv. Up	:	Svetaswatara Upanishad

NOTE ON THE FONT

The text in translation is given in the italic type. Sanskrit words, except quotations, appear in the normal type and without diacritical marks.

Introduction

The Gita's Teaching Transcends Religion

The Gita addresses all mankind. It is not for a group, a sect or a section. And it does not ask you to believe. No religion is barred from its teaching. And no religion can claim it for itself. It goes beyond religion. It in fact begins where religion ends. It transcends religion. Its call is to rise above ritualistic religion. It is for him who is disillusioned with religion and its perishable fruits and turns away on a quest for the imperishable.

The Gita is God's own word. *Bhagavan Uvaca*. (Thus spake the Lord). **Even if the Gita is God's word, if He did speak, we would not hear Him. He may be shouting, we cannot hear a syllable. (It is not because of the din of the battlefield without. Within, the clamour of the senses is more deafening. It is only in the stillness of the senses that the voice of God can be heard.)** Even if we hear, we cannot know what He is saying. Different people would hear different things. What we are hearing is not what He is saying. When the one truth descends, it appears in different meanings. This is the truth about the transmission of truth into the human language, of the word into words, the akshara becoming aksharas.

The Revolution Wrought by Veda Vyasa

Veda Vyasa is the receiver and the recorder of this divine message. And he is as good as God. Vyasa is Vishnu, and Vishnu is Vyasa (Vyasaya Vishnu-rupaya vyasarupaya vishnave). He is another Krishna, Krishnadvaipayana. He is fluent in both the languages, the divine and the human, the mystic and the mundane. The Gita is an episode in the Mahabharata. And Vyasa was the writer. It is not important for us to consider the conjecture that the Gita was a later work cleverly inserted into the great epic. It has the stamp of Bhagavan Veda Vyasa. It is his work, part of his great epic. But, it has gained an unparalleled autonomy and stands by itself as one of the greatest works of spiritual literature of the world.

The creation of the Mahabharata must be viewed as a revolutionary act in its time. When the Vedas were a tangled web of countless branches, when the ritualists appropriated the Vedas, when the essence of the Vedic spirit was being lost, Vyasa handed to the masses the essence of the Vedas in the form of the Mahabharata. His reaching out to the masses may be compared to what Prometheus, in the mythology of the West, did to mankind. **Prometheus stole fire from the gods for the benefit of mankind. Vyasa brought the Vedic 'fire' to the non-elite common people.** This comparison, incidentally, throws some light on the difference between the Western and the Eastern cultures. Prometheus has been hailed as a revolutionary hero, a symbol of revolutionary spirit who dared to defy the gods for the welfare of mankind and faced their wrath. Shelley and Marx were among those who looked upon him as an apt figure to fire the hearts of men to selfless revolutionary daring deeds to bring about a better world. Prometheus suffered, in the western myth,

for his act. And Vyasa is here worshipped as Lord Vishnu. There is a misconception, meekly accepted by most of us, that the people of the East are conservative, slow and resistant to revolutions. The comparison of how Prometheus was tortured and how Vyasa is worshipped will show which people have the more evolved awareness to welcome and accept revolutions. In India, however, the revolution is more important than the revolutionary. In the West the reverse is true. Revolution in the West is through annihilation. In India, it is through assimilation.

Conflicting commentaries and their collective contribution

The Gita has engaged the best minds of each age, for ages. And after ages of exegeses, the central message of the Gita was obscured. The Gita which effected a wonderful fusion of the systems of philosophy of its time in a spirit of assimilation became a battleground for commentators, each reading their own sectarian systems into it. Sankara had to clear the confusion and restore the original fusion of the Gita. Several commentaries have been written on the Gita after Sankara, most of them attacking his exegesis. And it is now as necessary as it was in Sankara's time to attempt to get a clear vision of the meaning of the work. The commentaries that were written after Sankara are not all debris to be cleared. There is enough material in them to build anew and fortify the structure. Some of the greatest minds in our time have interpreted the work and added invaluable insights. Tilak, Gandhi, and Aurobindo, the best minds of our time, have written on them. And several other great spiritual seekers also threw light on the text. And we should draw from these commentaries to enlarge and enrich our understanding of the Gita.

It is but natural that commentaries continue to be written and it is also inevitable they differ. We choose according to our

inclinations. It is also natural that we take a world-view and want to see it in the text. The text means what we want it to mean. Not only a text, even the world means what we want it to mean. If you think the world is dead matter, it is dead matter. If you think it is God, it is God. What we want to see in a book is in a way already formed in our mind. However, one should rather enrich one's own view than seek to run down the other's. And there is always the necessity to alter, enlarge and enrich one's understanding. That door should never be closed. Certainly not in the spiritual understanding. The Indian mind has always been 'accused' of substituting annihilation with assimilation. It is a fair 'accusation'. The Indian mind seeks to absorb, adopt and assimilate rather than annihilate difference. After all the differences are about the ultimates which need not delay the journey. It is enough if we start the journey with a comfortable frame of mind. The choices we make, as has already been noted, are based on our inclinations, our svadharma which is based on manodharma, our mental make-up. The journey is long, and we have lives to go before we wake up. Till then it would be wise to affirm our manodharma and not seek to differ from the other's. When during the journey manas drops off from the manodharma, there is neither accord nor discord. For, accord and discord are both products of mind and language. And as long as we need the texts, the differences wont go away. Our effort should only be to minimise discord and strengthen accord. That is the spirit in which the present work attempts to collect the essence of the teaching of the Gita, based on Sankara's commentary, but drawing from several others, and with the focus more on the eternal essence than on those points which are not relevant to our present spiritual requirements.

Every word is potentially divine. But it would be long before we can read the manifested message. But that is the spirit with which we start on our quest till we are ready to read the divine message in every reading of the Gita, not looking too much at the word. **Bhakti, karma, dhyana, jnana have different looks. If we learn to look through them these dear words are all divine.**

God, and Nothing less than God

What does the Gita teach, world or God? Work or withdrawal? Arjuna asks this question again and again. And the question never ceased to be asked. The synonyms keep changing — pravritti, karma for the world, and jnana, nivritti, sannyasa, moksha for God. The Gita answers this question again and again whenever it is raised. And the answer is the same. **The Gita teaches God. And nothing less than God, the highest good, param nissreyasam.** In one sense, books cannot teach God. They can only destroy ignorance. That is, books can only teach ignorance. Gita teaches God in the sense that it teaches that the highest goal in one's life should be no less than God.

There are always two goals. Two paths. And two minds. The goals, world and God. The paths, worldly and unworldly. One mind incessantly wanting to work, the other intensely longing for liberation. Those who work for the world get the world, this and the other. A fat pay, here and there. The world never sleeps for these people. You can never tell them to relax. They find their relaxation and reward in the impressive bill at the nightly eat-out after the day's hard work. And the other man who reaches for God does not believe in lifting his hand, much less in exerting, for his next meal which he does not know from where or whether it

End of Preview.

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