

**THE CULTIVATION OF LOVE OF HUMANITY
THE QUENTESSENCE OF THE BHAGAVATGĪTA**

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S.N. Dasgupta concludes his article 'philosophy' thus, 'That philosophy should not remain merely a theoretic science, but should mould our entire personality and should drive us through the hard struggles of moral and spiritual strife on the onward path of self-realization and should ultimately bring us back again to the level of other men and make us share the common duties of social life in a perfect form and bind us with ties of sympathy and love to all humanity –this is the final wisdom of human thought". The idea of the great scholar is being discussed in this article in the modern context basing the philosophy of the Bhagavatgīta, which is the sum total of the wisdom of the Upaniṣads.

In the present society one can contemplate such circumstances, which will naturally boost anxiety, stress, strain and tension. No person lives contented. Every individual faces hardship. Each one thrives hard to withstand each situation, failing which he or she commits blunders like murdering kiths and kins, suicide etc. How can a person become a murderer? Who has given him the power to kill his beloved ones or himself? We should think about this. If this situation continues, nobody will remain here. It is a pitiable condition, that in our country, where the finest philosophies originated, where we are proud of having the philosophy of self-confidence and self-restraint, the people are so frustrated that they kill themselves or others. What a '*virodhābhāsa*'!

If we are analyzing the problem, we may arrive at the conclusion that most of the tragedies or misfortunes happen because of the people's failure in stress management. Today by the tremendous growth in information technology the whole world has become a village. Each and every sophisticated pleasure that people think as real pleasure is within the reach of our fingertips. Even then we see only the one side of the pleasure and fail to see the other side of it. Europeans arrive here to acquire some mental peace. The irony is that we, who have the treasure of peace, pursue western pleasures.

People especially the depressed fail to understand the real nature of their self. They believe that they cannot survive situations like the sad demise of the beloved one or loss of all the belongings etc, he or she thinks that without what they lost they cannot survive. The fact is that there is nothing in this world without which we cannot survive. Each individual has his own separate entity and all have powers to live alone. The fact is that we should recognize ourselves. We possess the potentiality to live as independent individuals. All the other factors, which one can achieve in this life, are transitory. Life is a boon bestowed upon us by the God Almighty. It should not be wasted for crying for lost things. First of all we should create self-confidence in us. This can be easily achieved from our great heritage. We are proud of having a prosperous heritage but fail to look into it.

Man according to the Upaniṣads is essentially the imperishable unborn eternal and self-luminous Being but due to ignorance he identifies himself with this body and mind and conceives himself as being subject to birth and death. It is this basic ignorance of his real nature or real self that makes man subject to time and all the sufferings of life including death. The following passage from the *kathopanīṣad* supports this view.

“The wise man relinquishes both joy and sorrow having realized, by means of meditation on the inner self that ancient effulgent One, hard to be seen, subtle, immanent, seated in the heart and residing within the body”¹.

In the introduction to his commentary on the *Brahma sūtra*, Sri Śāṅkara explains “subjects and objects, the self and the non self are so radically opposed to each other in motion and in practical life, that it is impossible to mistake one for the other. Yet this mistake is universal and we can never trace it to the source because in our common life we cannot exist without this initial error. When we say, for example ‘I am lean’, ‘I am blind’, or ‘I feel’, we identify the self with the non - self, which is the object. Thus the soul is erroneously identified itself with the finite body and mind. The ‘I’ or the ego is not, therefore, the real self because it is limited by the condition of the body and the sense. Nevertheless, the body is like any other material object and is, merely an appearance. If this is admitted, then the only truth that remains is the soul which is nothing but the ultimate reality”. This theory of Sri Śāṅkara is known as the theory of *Adhyāsa*. It is very well explained in the *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* that “In the beginning, dear boy, this was Being alone, one only, without second. Some say that, in the beginning this was Non-being alone, only without a second. From that Non-being arose being”². He continues “That Being which is this subtle essence [cause] even that this entire world has for its self. That is the true. That is the Ātman. That thou art. O Śvetaketu. Revered sir, please explain it further to me. So be it, dear boy, said the father”³.

Elsewhere it says “-That deity willed Well let me, enter in to these three deities through this living self [*Jīvātman*], differentiate name and form.”⁴

It is clearly explained here that the individual soul is nothing but reflection; it is in essence the supreme soul only. The nature of the supreme soul is *saccidānanda* i.e. the Ātman. It is illustrated as the source of all glories. However, the individual experiences unhappiness due to his ignorance of this real nature. The identity of the *Jīva* with the Supreme Being is explained in the following sayings like. *Tattvamasi* ⁵, *Aham Brahmāsmi* ⁶ *Ayamātma Brahma* ⁷. Etc.

It is illustrated that the Supreme Being alone is real. Then a question that may arise is that if the Brahman, the one without a second is real, then from where these many which we experience in our day-to-day life through our senses come from? The answer is that all this is happening through ignorance, *Māyā* or illusion. It has no reality, for it disappears when the knowledge of the true nature of Brahman is realized. It is just like seeing a snake on a rope in the darkness. This wrong perception is due to sheer ignorance, which is the cause of all this duality. The Brahman is being mistaken for the world. On account of such ignorance the individual soul identifies itself with its adjuncts [*upādhis*], like body, sense etc... that are only super imposed on it. This identification makes the soul think that it is the doer, enjoyer etc... though the truth is that it is none of these and thereby it comes under the sway of birth and death, happiness and misery etc...

The only way to get rid of *Māyā* is to attain the true knowledge of the self. True knowledge is only attained through a series of birth and re-births. All the pilgrimages, austerities, worships chanting etc... only help us to attain *cittasuddhi*. With this *cittasuddhi* one can attain maximum knowledge. Only a knowledge of real nature of the self 'produces' liberation from the worldly existence. This is the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* elucidated or expounded by Sri Śankara. Let it be

there: All these are not for the common people but for the enlightened few.

We, the ordinary people from the outset of our life began to experience sorrow and till death we will be experiencing sorrows. When any unfortunate incident occurs some people get frustrated and usually decide to end their life. They think that suicide alone is the means for getting rid of their sorrows. They fail to understand that they are not at all empowered to end their lives by themselves, because life is a very precious one which should be kept very piously and which is the means for attaining the knowledge of the self and thereby attaining the supreme goal of one's life.

The very aim of one individual is to recognize his real nature and its real potentiality of his real nature and to teach his fellow beings how to attain the goal, failing which the very birth of the individual becomes invalid. Therefore, first of all we should realize the aim of our birth and try to reach the supreme goal and thereby do a social service. Then only the very birth of an individual becomes fruitful. It is not an easy task to attain the supreme goal. We have to take births after births for it. Nevertheless, in this life itself we can understand this phenomenon and thus thereby lead a stress free life. We can share this knowledge with our fellow beings.

If anyone has to face a blow of fate naturally he begins to blame fate or anybody else and then start leading a life filled with distress. This is not advisable and here comes the helping hand of the sacred Gīta. The practice of the principles of the Gīta is the only panacea for all the 'diseases' that a man has to face in this dreadful universe, where there are abundant opportunities for the self-restrained! For establishing the statement we should go back to the situation where Lord Kṛṣṇa

expounded the Gīta to his disciple Arjuna. As all of us are aware that Lord Kṛṣṇa advises a confused Arjuna, whether he has to fight against his preceptors and relatives or lead the life of a *Samyāsi*. Now - a - days each and every one of us may face this kind of situations - whether we may act according to our tenets of duty or we may evade those duties and keep silent. Should we enter the field of Karma or should we withdraw from our duty on seeing the hardships of the world? Arjuna says: "My inborn nature has been tainted by the vice of faint-heartedness and my mind confused with regard to duty, I am asking you. Tell me that which is beneficial for me; I am your disciple. Please instruct me. Who have put myself to you." 9? Sri Kṛṣṇa answers: 'you grieve over those who should not be grieved for, and yet speak like the learned; wise men do not sorrow over the dead or the living". 10

Arjuna is trying to keep away from his duty of 'killing' his kinsmen thinking that he is going to kill his preceptors and relatives under the pretext of doing his duty. In such a critical state Kṛṣṇa instructs:

"Weapons do not cut It; fire does not burn It neither does water wet It; nor does the wind dry it." 11 Kṛṣṇa continues affirming that Arjuna should perform his duty "Having regarded to the law of your own life, you ought not to be waver; for there is nothing more welcome for a man of the warrior class than a righteous war". 12

All these are eye openers to the fact that doing one's duty is the most essential thing. The rest is meaningless. Kṛṣṇa further speaks on how we should do our duty.

"Treating alike victory and defeat, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, get ready for fight, then; fighting thus you will not incur sin". 13

Here he says the secret for avoiding unhappiness if one's duty ends in disaster. The famous '*Karma mantra*' occurs in the second chapter of the Gita.

“Your right is to work only, but never to the fruit thereof. Be not instrumental in making your actions bear fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction.”¹⁴.

Kṛṣṇa continues saying one should discharge his duty like a '*Sthitaprajñā*'. He defines *Sthitaprajñā* as:

“He who is unattached to everything, and meeting with good and evil, neither rejoices nor recoils, his mind is stable”¹⁵.

Sri Kṛṣṇa introduces mainly two ways for attaining the sublime goal in life- '*Jñānamārga*' or the path of knowledge and '*Karmamārga*' or the path of Karma, as the means of self-realization. Between these two ways the latter is advisable for the common people like us, for we have to overcome so many hardships before getting along the sacred path.

In this context confusion may arise: if all the karmas are '*Bandhahetu*' why should we concentrate on Karmas? The answer is that: *bandhahetutvābhāvāt*.¹⁶ i.e. action which is entrusted on the god is not bounding. Kṛṣṇa gives strength for doing one's duty thus:

“Therefore you do perform your allotted duty; *for* action is superior to inaction. Desisting from action, you cannot even maintain your body”.¹⁷

Lord Kṛṣṇa observes: if all the people in the earth begin to accept the path of '*Jñāna*' discarding Karma the equilibrium of the universe will begin to shatter or tumble down. The same idea is expressed here:

Arjuna "He who does not follow the wheel of creation thus set going in this world i.e.; does not perform his duties, sinful and sensual, he lives in vain".¹⁸

He continues:

"Arjuna, there is nothing in all the three worlds for me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by me, yet I continue to work".¹⁹

He says-

"Therefore, go on efficiently doing your duty without attachment. Doing work without attachment man attains the Supreme."²⁰

Even Lord Kṛṣṇa is doing his duty, even though he has nothing to obtain from his duty. The reason Kṛṣṇa says is that by performing his duties, people will also follow the path and do their duties.

This is the instance of the vein of thought runs through the Indian minds from pre-Buddhist times. The cultivation of love of humanity was one of the dominant characteristics not only of the Gīta, Buddhism and Jainism but also of Yoga and most systems of Indian theism.

He says-

"For whatever a great man does, that very thing other men also do; whatever standard he sets up; the generality of men follow the same."²¹

Kṛṣṇa gives suggestion on how we should do our duty, for getting rid of the bondage of karma.

"Attraction and repulsion are rooted in all sense-objects. Man should never allow himself to be swayed by them, because they are the two principal enemies standing in the way of his redemption."²²

He stresses the need of doing one's own duty and not the duty of other. He says doing others duty is not at all advisable.

“Ones own duty though devoid of merit, is preferable to the duty of another well performed. Even death in the performance of ones own duty brings blessedness; another's duty is fraught with fear”.²³

Presently this type of tendency is seen growing all over the world-avoiding one's own duty and doing others duty. Kṛṣṇa refers to the secret of non-attachment to our duties as Karma:

“The *Karmayogin*, who is contented with whatever is got unsought, is free from jealousy and has transcended all pairs of opposites, and is balanced in success and failure, is not bound by his action.”²⁴

We should trust God while entrusting the duty of bestowing the fruits of our actions. Here the Biblical statement, ‘Thy belief saveth thee’ is to be noted. Lord Kṛṣṇa Says-

“He who lacks discrimination, is devoid of faith, and is at the same time possessed by doubt is lost to the spiritual path. For the doubting soul, there is neither this world nor the world beyond, nor even happiness.”²⁵

For a stress free living we should create self - confidence in us. Here the idea of Swāmi Vivekānanda is very significant.

The 6th chapter the verse declares-

“One should lift oneself by ones own effort and should not degrade oneself; for ones own self is ones friend, and ones own self is ones enemy.”²⁶

We should first of all create trust in us. We should understand our strength and weakness. This will help us to find out the right path for our right living. If we can judge ourselves, the personal victory will be easy. We should determine the goal and then find the means to reach that

goal. It will be very easy after wards. We can see certain people in this country who do not have self-confidence. We should understand the fact that we can become what we earnestly want to become. For this we should first of all trust ourselves, love ourselves, and understand our drawbacks and capacities. If we face one tragedy, we must immediately survive it and rise with more mental preparedness to face the next.

All of us wish 'Yogakṣema'. *Yogakṣema* means-

*Alabdhasya Lābho Yogah, Labdhasya
Parrakṣaṇam Kṣemah* ²⁷

Acquiring what is not yet acquired is called Yoga and protecting what is acquired is called *kṣema*. We, the common people are trying hard to acquire something and trying hard to protect what we had achieved. Sri Kṛṣṇa says entrust that job on him and do one's duty first. In the 9th chapter he says:

"The devotees, however, who loving no one else constantly think of Me, and worship Me in a disinterested spirit, to those ever united in thought with Me, I bring full security and personally attend to their needs."²⁸

In this verse we can see that the great Lord takes a hardship away from us. It is not so easy to acquire anything and protect that thing. Sri Kṛṣṇa says- "I will do that for the devotee, who entrust the fruits of their labour on me. I will do that favors for them". Here it is clarified that the only duty of a devotee is to do his own duty

Another conspicuous problem that our society faces is that certain people hurt others. This is a type of violence. In the Gita Arjuna asks why people are hurting others or doing harm to others.

"Now impelled by what does man commit sins even involuntary as though driven by force".²⁹ Sri Kṛṣṇa answers-

"It is desire begotten of the element of Rajas, which appears as wrath; nay, it is insatiable and grossly wicked. Know this to be the enemy in this case."³⁰

Both desire [*Kāma*] and anger [wrath] are the two causes of every misfortune that happens in this world. Both of these should be annihilated. By abolishing these two evils we can live in peace and harmony and thereby lead a stress free life. Only a stress free man can lead a socially committed life.

Self-knowledge has become the necessity of our age. Among all kinds of knowledge, the self-knowledge is most vital. All other forms of knowledge are secondary. Man's action, feelings, reasoning, thinking etc... depend upon the idea of the self, i.e. if a man thinks that self is mortal he will act only according to that concept. Conversely if he regards his self-immortal and eternal then his approach to life will be different. The man, who thinks that his soul is immortal, will not hurt his fellow beings, which are actually not different from himself. During the present age, where science and technology have reached the apex, there is a chance of misusing the knowledge for doing harm to others. The scientific discoveries have remitted in the higher standard of living of the mankind. Good aspects should be accepted and inherent evils should be discarded. For this intellectual development and ethical awareness are necessary. This necessitates the need of simultaneous scientific and philosophical progress

We are going now through a period of plenary chaos, which complete confusion. We present we are going through a period of complete confusion. This can be easily avoided by the coalescence of self-knowledge with information technology. Despite all our achievements,

we feel some kind of dissatisfaction resulting in absolute failure of all our technological achievements. The frustrated persons sometimes resort to slaughter of the mankind. This has to be prevented. The only solution for all this is the sagacious study of Srimat Bhagavatgita. The privileged group of people like us, who had the opportunity to assimilate the great treasure of our traditions, should emerge and make the common people aware of the real nature of the self. This can avoid the tragedy of being dragged to the depth of arrant destruction of the whole mankind. Let us work together for building a peace-loving healthy generation and thereby keep the coming generation with the boost of self-knowledge. By doing this we can put into practice what the great scholar Das Gupta dreamt, ' That philosophy should not remain merely a theoretic science , but should mould our entire personality and should drive us through the hard struggles of moral and spiritual strife on the onward path of self-realization and should ultimately bring us back again to the level of other men and make us share the common duties of social life in a perfect form and bind us with ties of sympathy and love to all humanity –this is the final wisdom of human thought”

Foot notes

1. *Kathopaniṣad* 1.2.12
2. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*: 6.2.1
3. *Ibid*: 6.8.7
4. *Ibid*: 6.3.2
5. *Ibid* 6.8.7
6. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.4.10
7. *Māndūkyopaniṣad* [2.]
8. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* V.109.
9. *Bhagavat gīta.* 2.7
10. *Ibid*: 2.11

11.	Ibid:	2.23
12.	Ibid.	2.31
13.	Ibid:	2.38
14.	Ibid.	2.47
15.	Ibid.	2.57
16.	<i>Śāṅkarabhāṣya</i>	
17.	<i>Bhagavat Gīta</i>	3.8
18.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.16
19.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.22
20.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.19
21.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.21
22.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.34
23.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.35
24.	<i>Ibid.</i>	4.22
25.	<i>Ibid.</i>	4.40
26.	<i>Ibid.</i>	6.5
27.	<i>Śāṅkarabhāṣya on Gīta</i>	9.22
28.	<i>Bhagavat Gīta</i>	9.22
29.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.36
30.	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.37

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4. Paul Deussen *Sixty Upaniṣads of the Veda* [Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1897]
 5. Perrett, *Indian Philosophy, theory of Value* [New York, London, Garland Publishing, Inc.2000]
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 8. Sadananda: *Vedānta Sāra Varanasi*, Kṛṣṇa Das academy
 9. *Cultural History of India*, ed by AL.Basham, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1997.
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