

# Sri Bhagavad-Gita

The Honey-Elixir for Humanity



## INTRODUCTION

Invitation to a spiritual journey  
for the true import of Sri Bhagavad-Gita

(Learning Through Conversation)

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## INTRDOUCTION - Learning Through Conversation

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Approach to Sri Bhagavdgita

## § The Journey

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The glory of Sri Bhagavad-Gita is immense and truly beyond the limits of all descriptions. As the gem arisen out of the vast ocean of *Mahabharata*, the magnum-opus of Sage Vyasa, Sri Bhagavad-Gita is universally revered as the song of Lord, the revelation of supreme truth for solving the most fundamental problem of all human-kind. It is not a text of a specific religious belief or a doctrine from a particular school of thought but the knowledge-supreme that provides everyone the path for perfection, total-freedom and complete-fulfilment.

Starting from Bhagavan Sri Adi Sankara, numerous saints and scholars have spread the glory of Sri Bhagavad-Gita (Gita) with their eloquence and elucidations. There is an abundance of literature and teachers, available and growing, to impart the knowledge from Gita, yet it can never be enough!

An ancient Sanskrit verse asserts that in the writings of noble and virtuous authors, rest the angels of “meaning” whose refuge is in the words and the hiatus therein, only to show-up again, whenever a sincere aspirant attempts to learn diligently, appearing in front, dancing gleefully, revealing the newer and deeper meaning every time, fitting the maturity and spiritual earnestness of the aspirant. Perhaps that is why, like a kaleidoscope, Gita shines so many varied perspectives and newer insights with its never-ending treasure of wisdom for every sincere seeker, at every time. That is why there can never be a ‘once-and-for-all interpretation’ for Sri Bhagavad-Gita.

It is because of its immense potential, one life-time can never be enough to comprehend all that is contained in the Gita; yet one’s life-time could be totally in vain, if at least an attempt to understand the import of Bhagavad-Gita is not made. Thanks to so many inspired teachings on Gita by many scholars, we are able to read, listen and contemplate, at least, on some of those diverse interpretations.

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**A**iya, the Atma-Guru residing within the deep cavities of the aspirant's heart, is always available at the times of need. As a friend, philosopher and guide, Aiya lights that extra spark to reorient the life-journey and refine life-goals. Like a 'bee' that earnestly searches and collects nectar from varied flowers, tasting it, and at the same time, preserving as honey for everyone's consumption, the 'bee' in Aiya is offering the pot of Bhagavad-Gita- honey, in which every bit of text-proper is covered, with elucidation for easier digestion.

My quest of understanding Sri Bhagavad-Gita and his promise for leading me to witness the unravelling of Sri Bhagavad-Gita within the canvas of mind had led me to take up the spiritual journey with Aiya. At the foot-hills of Himalayas near the holy city of Rishikesh, along the shores of fleeting Ganges, is the large banyan-tree, with its vast branches nested as the canopy over the sky, where we have arranged to meet every evening for the next 18 nights of contemplation.

Please come along and join this pilgrimage! Your unwavering commitment to learn and the generosity to open your heart are the only requirements; in return is the feast of Sri Bhagavad-Gita, the honey-elixir in all its pristine purity to consume. To cherish the vibrancy and the taste of each drop, we have Aiya's enlightening-comments, culminating the essence of learning and experience. Doubts that arise when and where are addressed then and there.

May we begin the journey!

## § Prayer I

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The first evening has arrived. I sat with Aiya on the large stone under the glorious banyan tree. The hazy early evening stars have lazily appeared on the sky, twinkling.

Aiya said “Well, open your mind and upon it, may the vision of what we are about to study, project! May we listen intensely to the voices that we shall hear! May we, transporting ourselves in time-and-space, visualize together, gain vivid observation and learn! May we freely raise our doubts, share our perspectives and mutually learn! May we pray to Lord Krishna! May we pray to great Sadgurus! May we start every session with a prayer to steer us to supreme knowledge! May the benign grace lead us to the truth!”

Saying thus, Aiya closed his eyes and started chanting the *dhyaṇa shlokā* of Sri Bhagavad-Gita. I too followed suite. The Evening was fading away and the breeze of early night changed its direction, gently now washing our faces.

Oṃ  
pārthāya pratibodhitāṃ bhagavatā nārāyaṇena svayaṃ  
vyāsenā grathitāṃ purāṇamuninā madhye mahābhāratam |  
advaitāmṛtacvarṣiṇīṃ bhagavatīm aṣṭādaśādhyāyinīṃ  
amba tvāmanusandadhāmi bhagavadgīte bhavedveṣiṇīm || 1 ||

O Mother Bhagavad Gita,

*You are the teaching imparted to Arjuna by the very Lord Narayana Himself, Complied by Vyasacharya, the very incarnation of Vishnu, who has given us the Purānas, as Bhagavad Gita, occurring in the middle of Mahabharata, showering the honey-elixir of Non-dual infinite truth, in eighteen chapters, the destroyer of Samsāra! You are Mother Sarasvati, nourishing my mental and intellectual faculties, May I meditate upon you!*



## § The Purpose

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Although I have read Sri Bhagavad-Gita before, I am yet to grasp the true import. So I hastened with my basic doubt on the merits of learning Bhagavad-Gita.

“Aiya, I know the setting is the battlefield with the parade of soldiers on both sides and on a beautiful chariot is Lord Krishna, holding the reins of white horses that are poised, with Arjuna standing on the Chariot, raring to fight. I know this is where the Lord teaches Arjuna and His teachings revered as Bhagavad-Gita, ‘the song of God’. My doubt is, if the teaching is to help the plights of Arjuna who is being challenged with a bloody battle, how is it relevant to us? Our situations vary, the contexts differ and therefore, what makes Bhagavad Gita, which is offered to Arjuna, the warrior, to be the universal teaching for the mankind?”

“Reasonable question”, Aiya Said.

“Understanding the context of battlefield and the condition of Arjuna are quite essential in order to realize the very nature of human-problems. Only then one could appreciate the significance of Bhagavad-Gita as the teaching to whole mankind. That is why starting with the observation of the battlefield and the plight of Arjuna – who is the dominant speaker in the 1st chapter, is critical for our learning. Let us witness the first chapter and at the end of it, if you are not convinced of the true benefits of learning Bhagavad-Gita, then of course, you can decide!”

Aiya continued.

“Technically, Bhagavad-Gita begins only when the Lord starts to speak later (from 2nd chapter). Bhagavan Sankara’s elucidation on Gita also begins only then. But there are good reasons why our learned sages have asked us to learn from the battlefield and the problems for Arjuna, precisely to address the common doubt that you have raised.”

“Ok Aiya, I have read Mahabharata before and know the background of this battle. I am aware that it was the last resort for the Pandavas to claim what was rightly belonged to them. Was it not?”

“Yes. But we are not going to be dwelling on the story of the long running feud between the Kauravas clan, led by Duryodhana on one side and the five broth-

ers, Pancha Pandavas led by Yudhishtra on the other. Our focus is on Arjuna, who is taken to represent 'the aspirant' amongst us, seeking perfection, and 'the battlefield', the ordeals of embodied life in this world."

I was earnestly listening.

"The entire Bhagavad-Gita is the cure for the fundamental human-issue which appears as different types of problems, driving us to search for different types of solutions."

"Does Bhagavad-Gita provide solution to every problem of human-kind?", I asked with wonder.

"Of course, but how you may wonder! To solve a problem is one thing but to dissolve a problem is completely a different thing. Dissolving the problem requires the true understanding of the root-cause of the problem and the ways to address it. Vedanta identifies the root-cause of all human-problems and also gives its 'only' possible cure. This very essence of Vedanta is what is elaborated in Gita to equip us to deal with it, so that all our sufferings end."

"What is it Aiya? Also why this problem applies only to the human race?"

"Let us first know the name of this unique problem and then understand why it is only the human-problem. It is called *Samsāra*".

He continued.

"Samsāra refers to a vicious cycle of entrapment where we are forever in search of happiness, as we always lack fulfilment. In other words, Samsāra is like going on a blindfolded trip seeking happiness out of everything in the world but without knowing where it is! We all are trapped in this vain search"

"I don't reconcile with this Aiya. I am not blindly searching as I go for what I need. I just want to live happily and I look for ways to support this goal. Do you call this as Samsāra?"

"We all have different names to what we search for except that we tend to believe what we are seeking is going to make us happy. It could be knowledge, money, health, love, relationship, depending on the scope of our need and the intensity of our desire! We search for different things at different times, but the very acqui-

sition of what we have searched for so long eventually does not end our quest. It is because the objects of desire that we went after and acquired, after some point of time, stop giving us the happiness that we expected of them. So we continue to seek something else. Don't you agree?"

"Yes Aiya, our needs and desires change. Is it not a sign of progress and refinement of our goals?"

"Correct! In fact, the scriptures have analysed this perpetual quest of human-beings and concluded that the search is actually for a state of recognition that there is nothing else needed to be happy. This state of bliss would mean an end to the need for searching externally anymore. The very end of desire means the release from the entrapment of viscous search of happiness. This recognition of eternal fulfilment is called *Anandā* which liberates. It is the truth or *Sat* and knowing this truth and identifying oneself with the knowledge of truth is called *Cit*"

I must have drawn a blank-face by then as Aiya paused for a while and touched me on the shoulders.

"Listen, what we are inherently seeking is liberation, freedom from Samsāra. That freedom is called '*mokshā*' or '*mukti*'. This is the subtlest of the truth and the cognition of this truth at once releases us from the bondage."

I pleaded, "Aiya, I am truly lost. When you mentioned about the perpetual lack of fulfilment, I sort of recognize with it as we all are always looking for something better in everything. But now you say that we seek liberation to be free from bondage etc., I am confused. What is this bondage? If it is all about the cycle of birth and death, then I don't agree as it is only a human-problem. All forms of life do go through this cycle of birth and death. So what is bondage and what is liberty that only the human-beings need to address?"

"I understand your question. All life-forms: the plants, insects, animals and human-beings – all share the same road map for their embodied existence like 'birth' and 'death' and in between the needs 'to eat', 'to sleep' and 'to breed'. These natural instincts are common to all life-forms and only these animating conditions define them as '*Jivā*.' or the 'life-form' and collectively as '*Jiva-rāsi*' or 'all varieties of life-forms'. Yet, amongst them, the human-beings are very special. Do you know why?"

I thought of answering, but kept quiet, as Aiya continued.

“Only the human-beings have the evolved form of self-awareness. We are the only life-form that exhibit self-consciousness as one knows and say ‘I am a human-being’. Animals and plants don’t do that. They have no self-identity except for their inherent physical instincts.”

“Yes Aiya. Does self-identity alone make us superior amongst the life-forms?”

“Yes, self-identity is due to the evolved state of consciousness which also expands the mind and intellect. With these enhanced faculties, human-beings are able to rule other life-forms and also the world.”

“So where is the problem?”

“As we take the self-identity and subsequently the ownership of things around us, we also take ownership for our actions and the results. That’s where the problem starts. On the contrary, other life-forms act only on their natural instincts to fulfil, such as hunger, sleep or on the impulse to breed; they do not act on desires for pleasure. Since those life-forms have no self-identity or ownership of their actions, they also don’t have any sense of right or wrong; so their actions are not to be judged as virtuous or sinful. Their life on earth is to simply expend their embodied duration under the protection of Lord, the power of nature. But our case is different”

“Aiya, you sound as if the evolved capabilities of our mind and intellect are somehow a limitation!”

“Not at all, those are indeed our greatest assets; in fact, they verily define who we are. But while giving distinct advantages compared to other life-forms, those also may lead to many deficiencies”

“Like what, Aiya?”

“Many! Have you ever seen a stray-dog being jealous of a pet-dog at a well-to-do home? No, animals don’t have such feelings. In a butcher’s shop, while one animal is being slaughtered, the other stays calm, happily eating, not worried about it being the next to be slaughtered. Why? They don’t fear for the future. Of course, like us, animals are also subjected to death, disease and pain due to ailment etc., but these are only at physical level; they don’t have sorrow, the ailment of the mind. Fear of what will happen in the future is only a human-weakness. Only humans have thoughts leading to greed, miserliness, rage, jealousy, ar-

rogance etc.”

“Yes Aiya, why such feelings occur? I don’t plan to be greedy or jealous but these things happen naturally”

“Yes, that is the intrinsic nature of mind. No parent deliberately teaches the child to hide truth, but don’t we see children lie? What makes them to do so?”

“Agree Aiya! That is why I am saying that it is in the nature and not our fault”

“But with our intellect, don’t we seek to influence and change the nature? We have to act. In the garden, you intently seed and nurture the plants of your desire, but there come innumerable weeds! Don’t you persist to remove those weeds as those come, and also explore the ways to prevent their recurrence! Our mind is also like the soil of a fertile garden for us to tend.”

Aiya looked at my face and said.

“Listen carefully, every ‘thought’ is a natural seed that germinate and grow in our mind. If you carefully analyse, you don’t think what to think! All thoughts just happen and as those come; we identify with those, own up those and act.”

“Aiya, I sort of understand. Sometimes I don’t even know why I am fearful of the future or why certain thoughts arise that unsettle my peace. Is that the reason, you said that we are all entrapped?”

“The state of being driven by such vices, what the scriptures enumerate as *kāma*, *krodhā*, *lobhā*, *mohā*, *mata*, *māscharya* keep us in the constant fear of the future or grief over the past, and with the ceaseless desires! All these represent Samsāra. Now tell me, don’t you consider this as a unique problem for the human-race alone? Don’t you therefore think a way to cut free from this entrapment as the primary, or the only, goal of our life?”

“Yes Aiya, if there is a solution to Samsāra, then knowing about it is the foremost step. But I always viewed the words ‘mokshā, mukti’ etc. refer to some sort of freedom available only after death. That is why many of us don’t really seek mokshā! After all, I want to live long in this world!” - This I said somewhat sheepishly.

Aiya laughed.

“Long may you live my friend! But do realize, mokshā or liberation from Samsāra should be sought the very moment one knows of its possibility. Tell me, if mokshā means leading a life without any fear of the future, completely fulfilled with virtuous qualities and be able to take control of your life, would you still prefer mokshā only after your death?”

“No Aiya, in this life and in this world”

“Then at, what age you would want to learn about mokshā and the tools and qualifications required for it? Would you wait for your retirement?”

I hesitated to answer. Aiya continued.

“Listen, The truth of Vedanta – which reveals to you the effects of Samsāra and the way to steer clear of its evil impact – must be grabbed as early as possible so that every aspect of our embodied life is beautiful and fulfilled. Embodied life is to enjoy. Veda considers ‘*dehā*’ is for ‘*bogā*’. But true enjoyment is possible only when we don’t loss ourselves in the act of enjoyment and also not driven by the uncontrolled weeds of our mind. This is the knowledge that we all should acquire when we are young so that the rest of our life is full of fun.”

“Yes Aiya”, I ceded lamenting inside how long I have lost in this goal.

“This knowledge is unfortunately not imparted formally in our academic institutions as their focus is on the art and science of handling the material-world. So, we need to augment such scholarship with spiritual-knowledge. The most elegant as well as the exhaustive teaching of this supreme knowledge is contained in Sri Bhagavad-Gita, which it conveys so beautifully. Interestingly, starting from Vedanta, all great spiritual texts of India follow a method of dialogue, usually between the teacher and disciple, to smoothly transmit the knowledge. So is Sri Bhagavad-Gita which is all revealing and all fulfilling!”

Aiya remained silent for a while and then said. “Don’t worry, we shall learn all about this, straight from the words of Lord. We will witness the unravelling of Sri Bhagavad-Gita. However, to really understand how the words of the Lord matter directly to your day-to-day life, you must intensely observe the plight of Arjuna and relate his with that of your personal ordeals. That is how the essence of Bhagavad-Gita could be internalized as the cure to your problems and a boost to your personal transformation.”

I briefly bowed to Aiya and sat down at his feet.

The crescent moon of ashtami thithi was shining on the dark sky as the breeze carried the mild chillness of the fleeting Ganga, gently caressing our faces. As I closed my eyes, magically there was stillness spreading across the canvas of my mind. I tuned to Aiya's words while the grand vision of Kurukshetra emerged.



**Next**



**Part -01**



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