

World Management Lessons from India

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Abstract

One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is Holy Gita which is considered to be one of the first revelations from God. The management lessons in this holy book were brought in to light of the world by divine Maharshi Mahesh Yogi and the spiritual philosophy by Sr. Srila Prabhupada Swami and humanism by Sai Baba. Maharishi calls the Bhagavad-Gita the essence of Vedic Literature and a complete guide to practical life. It provides "all that is needed to raise the consciousness of man to the highest possible level." Maharishi reveals the deep, universal truths of life that speak to the needs and aspirations of everyone. Arjuna got mentally depressed when he saw his relatives with whom he has to fight. (Mental health has become a major international public health concern now). To motivate him the Bhagavad Gita is preached in the battle field Kurukshetra by Lord Krishna to Arjuna as a counseling to do his duty while multitudes of men stood by waiting. It has got all the management tactics to achieve the mental equilibrium and to overcome any crisis situation. The Bhagavad Gita can be experienced as a powerful catalyst for transformation. Bhagavad gita means song of the Spirit, song of the Lord. The Holy Gita has become a secret driving force behind the unfoldment of one's life. In the days of doubt this divine book will support all spiritual search. This divine book will contribute to self reflection, finer feeling and deepen one's inner process. Then life in the world can become a real education—dynamic, full and joyful—no matter what the circumstance. May the wisdom of loving consciousness ever guide us on our journey. What makes the Holy Gita a practical psychology of transformation is that it offers us the tools to connect with our deepest intangible essence and we must learn to participate in the battle of life with right knowledge.

The Holy Gita is the essence of the Vedas, Upanishads. It is a universal scripture applicable to people of all temperaments and for all times. It is a book with sublime thoughts and practical instructions on Yoga, Devotion, Vedanta and Action. It is profound in thought and sublime in heights of vision. It brings peace and solace to souls that are afflicted by the three fires of mortal existence, namely, afflictions caused by one's own body (disease etc), those caused by beings around one (e.g. wild animals, snakes etc.), and those caused by the gods (natural disasters, earth-quakes, floods etc).

Mind can be one's friend or enemy. Mind is the cause for both bondage and liberation. The word mind is derived from man to think and the word man derived from manu (sanskrit word for man).

"The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy."

There is no theory to be internalized and applied in this psychology. Ancient practices spontaneously induce what each person needs as the individual and the universal coincide. The work proceeds through intellectual knowledge of the playing field (jnana yoga), emotional devotion to the ideal (bhakti yoga) and right action that includes both feeling and knowledge (karma yoga). With ongoing purification we approach wisdom. The Bhagavad Gita is a message addressed to each and every human individual to help him or her to solve the vexing problem of overcoming the present and progressing towards a bright future. Within its eighteen chapters is revealed a human drama. This is the experience of everyone in this world, the drama of the ascent of man from a state of utter dejection, sorrow and total breakdown and hopelessness to a state of perfect understanding, clarity, renewed strength and triumph.

Mind is very restless, forceful and strong, O Krishna, it is more difficult to control the mind than to control the wind ~ Arjuna to Sri Krishna

INTRODUCTION

Management has become a part and parcel of everyday life, be it at home, in the office or factory and in Government. In all organizations, where a group of human beings assemble for a common purpose, management principles come into

play through the management of resources, finance and planning, priorities, policies and practice. Management is a systematic way of carrying out activities in any field of human effort.

Its task is to make people capable of joint performance, to make their weaknesses irrelevant, says the Management Guru Peter Drucker. It creates harmony in working together - equilibrium in thoughts and actions, goals and achievements, plans and performance, products and markets. It resolves situations of scarcity, be they in the physical, technical or human fields, through maximum utilization with the minimum available processes to achieve the goal. Lack of management causes disorder, confusion, wastage, delay, destruction and even depression. Managing men, money and materials in the best possible way, according to circumstances and environment, is the most important and essential factor for a successful management.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA

There is an important distinction between effectiveness and efficiency in managing.

- Effectiveness is doing the right things.
- Efficiency is doing things right.

The general principles of effective management can be applied in every field, the differences being more in application than in principle. The Manager's functions can be summed up as:

- Forming a vision
- Planning the strategy to realize the vision.
- Cultivating the art of leadership.
- Establishing institutional excellence.
- Building an innovative organization.
- Developing human resources.
- Building teams and teamwork.
- Delegation, motivation, and communication.
- Reviewing performance and taking corrective steps when called for.

Thus, management is a process of aligning people and

getting them committed to work for a common goal to the maximum social benefit - in search of excellence.

The critical question in all managers' minds is how to be effective in their job. The answer to this fundamental question is found in the Bhagavad Gita, which repeatedly proclaims that "you must try to manage yourself." The reason is that unless a manager reaches a level of excellence and effectiveness, he or she will be merely a face in the crowd.

OLD TRUTHS IN A NEW CONTEXT

The Bhagavad Gita, written thousands of years ago, enlightens us on all managerial techniques leading us towards a harmonious and blissful state of affairs in place of the conflict, tensions, poor productivity, absence of motivation and so on, common in most of Indian enterprises today – and probably in enterprises in many other countries.

The modern (Western) management concepts of vision, leadership, motivation, excellence in work, achieving goals, giving work meaning, decision making and planning, are all discussed in the Bhagavad Gita. There is one major difference. While Western management thought too often deals with problems at material, external and peripheral levels, the Bhagavad Gita tackles the issues from the grass roots level of human thinking. Once the basic thinking of man is improved, it will automatically enhance the quality of his actions and their results.

The management philosophy emanating from the West, is based on the lure of materialism and on a perennial thirst for profit, irrespective of the quality of the means adopted to achieve that goal. This phenomenon has its source in the abundant wealth of the West and so 'management by materialism' has caught the fancy of all the countries the world over, India being no exception to this trend. My country, India, has been in the forefront in importing these ideas mainly because of its centuries old indoctrination by colonial rulers, which has inculcated in us a feeling that anything Western is good and anything Indian is inferior.

The result is that, while huge funds have been invested in building temples of modern management education, no perceptible changes are visible in the improvement of the general quality of life - although the standards of living of a few has gone up. The same old struggles in almost all sectors of the economy, criminalisation of institutions, social violence, exploitation and other vices are seen deep in the body politic.

THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM

The reasons for this sorry state of affairs are not far to seek. The Western idea of management centres on making the worker (and the manager) more efficient and more productive. Companies offer workers more to work more, produce more, sell more and to stick to the organisation without looking for alternatives. The sole aim of extracting better and more work from the worker is to improve the bottom-line of the enterprise. The worker has become a hireable commodity, which can be used, replaced and discarded at will.

Thus, workers have been reduced to the state of a mercantile product. In such a state, it should come as no surprise to us that workers start using strikes (gheraos) sit-ins, (dharnas) go-slows, work-to-rule etc. to get maximum benefit for themselves from the organisations. Society-at-large is damaged. Thus we reach a situation in which management and workers become separate and contradictory entities with conflicting interests. There is no common goal or understanding. This, predictably, leads to suspicion, friction, disillusion and mistrust, with managers and workers at cross purposes. The absence of human values and erosion of human touch in the organisational structure has resulted in a crisis of confidence.

Western management philosophy may have created prosperity – for some people some of the time at least - but it has failed in the aim of ensuring betterment of individual life and social welfare. It has remained by and large a soulless edifice and an oasis of plenty for a few in the midst of poor quality of life for many.

Hence, there is an urgent need to re-examine prevailing management disciplines - their objectives, scope and content. Management should be redefined to underline the development of the worker as a person, as a human being, and not as a mere wage-earner. With this changed perspective, management can become an instrument in the process of social, and indeed national, development.

Now let us re-examine some of the modern management concepts in the light of the Bhagavad Gita which is a primer of management-by-values.

UTILISATION OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The first lesson of management science is to choose wisely and utilise scarce resources optimally. During the curtain raiser before the Mahabharata War, Duryodhana chose Sri Krishna's large army for his help while Arjuna selected Sri

Krishna's wisdom for his support. This episode gives us a clue as to the nature of the effective manager - the former chose numbers, the latter, wisdom.

WORK COMMITMENT

A popular verse of the Gita advises “detachment” from the fruits or results of actions performed in the course of one's duty. Being dedicated work has to mean “working for the sake of work, generating excellence for its own sake.” If we are always calculating the date of promotion or the rate of commission before putting in our efforts, then such work is not detached. It is not “generating excellence for its own sake” but working only for the extrinsic reward that may (or may not) result.

Working only with an eye to the anticipated benefits, means that the quality of performance of the current job or duty suffers - through mental agitation of anxiety for the future. In fact, the way the world works means that events do not always respond positively to our calculations and hence expected fruits may not always be forthcoming. So, the Gita tells us not to mortgage present commitment to an uncertain future.

Some people might argue that not seeking the business result of work and actions, makes one unaccountable. In fact, the Bhagavad Gita is full of advice on the theory of cause and effect, making the doer responsible for the consequences of his deeds. While advising detachment from the avarice of selfish gains in discharging one's accepted duty, the Gita does not absolve anybody of the consequences arising from discharge of his or her responsibilities.

Thus the best means of effective performance management is the work itself. Attaining this state of mind (called “nishkama karma”) is the right attitude to work because it prevents the ego, the mind, from dissipation of attention through speculation on future gains or losses.

MOTIVATION – SELF AND SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

It has been presumed for many years that satisfying lower order needs of workers - adequate food, clothing and shelter, etc. are key factors in motivation. However, it is a common experience that the dissatisfaction of the clerk and of the Director is identical - only their scales and composition vary. It should be true that once the lower-order needs are more than satisfied, the Director should have little problem in optimising his contribution to the organisation and society. But more often than not, it does not happen like that. (“The

eagle soars high but keeps its eyes firmly fixed on the dead animal below.”) On the contrary, a lowly paid schoolteacher, or a self-employed artisan, may well demonstrate higher levels of self-actualisation despite poorer satisfaction of their lower-order needs.

This situation is explained by the theory of self-transcendence propounded in the Gita. Self-transcendence involves renouncing egoism, putting others before oneself, emphasising team work, dignity, co-operation, harmony and trust – and, indeed potentially sacrificing lower needs for higher goals, the opposite of Maslow.

“Work must be done with detachment.” It is the ego that spoils work and the ego is the centrepiece of most theories of motivation. We need not merely a theory of motivation but a theory of inspiration.

The Great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941, known as “Gurudev”) says working for love is freedom in action. A concept which is described as “disinterested work” in the Gita where Sri Krishna says,

“He who shares the wealth generated only after serving the people, through work done as a sacrifice for them, is freed from all sins. On the contrary those who earn wealth only for themselves, eat sins that lead to frustration and failure.”

Disinterested work finds expression in devotion, surrender and equipoise. The former two are psychological while the third is determination to keep the mind free of the dualistic (usually taken to mean “materialistic”) pulls of daily experiences. Detached involvement in work is the key to mental equanimity or the state of “nirdwanda.” This attitude leads to a stage where the worker begins to feel the presence of the Supreme Intelligence guiding the embodied individual intelligence. Such de-personified intelligence is best suited for those who sincerely believe in the supremacy of organizational goals as compared to narrow personal success and achievement.

WORK CULTURE

An effective work culture is about vigorous and arduous efforts in pursuit of given or chosen tasks. Sri Krishna elaborates on two types of work culture – “daivi sampat” or divine work culture and “asuri sampat” or demonic work culture.

- Daivi work culture - involves fearlessness, purity, self-control, sacrifice, straightforwardness, self-denial, calmness, absence of fault-finding, absence

of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of envy and pride.

- Asuri work culture - involves egoism, delusion, personal desires, improper performance, work not oriented towards service.

Mere work ethic is not enough. The hardened criminal exhibits an excellent work ethic. What is needed is a work ethic conditioned by ethics in work.

It is in this light that the counsel, “yogah karmasu kausalam” should be understood. “Kausalam” means skill or technique of work which is an indispensable component of a work ethic. “Yogah” is defined in the Gita itself as “samatvam yogah uchyate” meaning an unchanging equipoise of mind (detachment.) Tilak tells us that acting with an equable mind is Yoga.

(Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 1856-1920, the precursor of Gandhiji, hailed by the people of India as “Lokmanya,” probably the most learned among the country's political leaders. For a description of the meanings of the word “Yoga”, see foot of this page.)

By making the equable mind the bed-rock of all actions, the Gita evolved the goal of unification of work ethic with ethics in work, for without ethical process no mind can attain an equipoise. The guru, Adi Sankara (born circa 800 AD), says that the skill necessary in the performance of one's duty is that of maintaining an evenness of mind in face of success and failure. The calm mind in the face of failure will lead to deeper introspection and see clearly where the process went wrong so that corrective steps could be taken to avoid shortcomings in future.

The principle of reducing our attachment to personal gains from the work done is the Gita's prescription for attaining equanimity. It has been held that this principle leads to lack of incentive for effort, striking at the very root of work ethic. To the contrary, concentration on the task for its own sake leads to the achievement of excellence – and indeed to the true mental happiness of the worker. Thus, while commonplace theories of motivation may be said to lead us to the bondage or extrinsic rewards, the Gita's principle leads us to the intrinsic rewards of mental, and indeed moral, satisfaction.

WORK RESULTS

The Gita further explains the theory of “detachment” from

the extrinsic rewards of work in saying:

- If the result of sincere effort is a success, the entire credit should not be appropriated by the doer alone.
- If the result of sincere effort is a failure, then too the entire blame does not accrue to the doer.

The former attitude mollifies arrogance and conceit while the latter prevents excessive despondency, de-motivation and self-pity. Thus both these dispositions safeguard the doer against psychological vulnerability, the cause of the modern managers' companions of diabetes, high blood pressure and ulcers.

Assimilation of the ideas of the Gita leads us to the wider spectrum of “lokasamgraha” (general welfare) but there is also another dimension to the work ethic - if the “karmayoga” (service) is blended with “bhaktiyoga” (devotion), then the work itself becomes worship, a “sevayoga” (service for its own sake.)

Along with bhakti yoga as a means of liberation, the Gita espouses the doctrine of nishkama karma or pure action untainted by hankering after the fruits resulting from that action. Modern scientists have now understood the intuitive wisdom of that action in a new light.

Scientists at the US National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, found that laboratory monkeys that started out as procrastinators, became efficient workers after they received brain injections that suppressed a gene linked to their ability to anticipate a reward. The scientists reported that the work ethic of rhesus macaques wasn't all that different from that of many people: “If the reward is not immediate, you procrastinate”, Dr Richmond told LA Times.

(This may sound a peculiarly religious idea but it has a wider application. It could be taken to mean doing something because it is worthwhile, to serve others, to make the world a better place – ed.)

MANAGER'S MENTAL HEALTH

Sound mental health is the very goal of any human activity - more so management. Sound mental health is that state of mind which can maintain a calm, positive poise, or regain it when unsettled, in the midst of all the external vagaries of work life and social existence. Internal constancy and peace are the pre-requisites for a healthy stress-free mind.

Some of the impediments to sound mental health are:

- Greed - for power, position, prestige and money.
- Envy - regarding others' achievements, success, rewards.
- Egotism - about one's own accomplishments.
- Suspicion, anger and frustration.
- Anguish through comparisons.

The driving forces in today's businesses are speed and competition. There is a distinct danger that these forces cause erosion of the moral fibre, that in seeking the end, one permits oneself immoral means - tax evasion, illegitimate financial holdings, being “economical with the truth”, deliberate oversight in the audit, too-clever financial reporting and so on. This phenomenon may be called as “yayati syndrome”.

In the book, the Mahabharata, we come across a king by the name of Yayati who, in order to revel in the endless enjoyment of flesh exchanged his old age with the youth of his obliging youngest son for a thousand years. However, he found the pursuit of sensual enjoyments ultimately unsatisfying and came back to his son pleading him to take back his youth. This “yayati syndrome” shows the conflict between externally directed acquisitions (extrinsic motivation) and inner value and conscience (intrinsic motivation.)

MANAGEMENT NEEDS THOSE WHO PRACTICE WHAT THEY PREACH

“Whatever the excellent and best ones do, the commoners follow,” says Sri Krishna in the Gita. The visionary leader must be a missionary, extremely practical, intensively dynamic and capable of translating dreams into reality. This dynamism and strength of a true leader flows from an inspired and spontaneous motivation to help others. “I am the strength of those who are devoid of personal desire and attachment. O Arjuna, I am the legitimate desire in those, who are not opposed to righteousness,” says Sri Krishna in the 10th Chapter of the Gita.

IN CONCLUSION

The despondency of Arjuna in the first chapter of the Gita is typically human. Sri Krishna, by sheer power of his inspiring words, changes Arjuna's mind from a state of inertia to one of righteous action, from the state of what the French philosophers call “anomie” or even alienation, to a state of

self-confidence in the ultimate victory of “dharma” (ethical action.)

When Arjuna got over his despondency and stood ready to fight, Sri Krishna reminded him of the purpose of his new-found spirit of intense action - not for his own benefit, not for satisfying his own greed and desire, but for the good of many, with faith in the ultimate victory of ethics over unethical actions and of truth over untruth.

Sri Krishna's advice with regard to temporary failures is, “No doer of good ever ends in misery.” Every action should produce results. Good action produces good results and evil begets nothing but evil. Therefore, always act well and be rewarded.

My purport is not to suggest discarding of the Western model of efficiency, dynamism and striving for excellence but to tune these ideals to India's holistic attitude of “lokasangraha” - for the welfare of many, for the good of many. There is indeed a moral dimension to business life. What we do in business is no different, in this regard, to what we do in our personal lives. The means do not justify the ends. Pursuit of results for their own sake, is ultimately self-defeating. (“Profit,” said Matsushita-san in another tradition, “is the reward of correct behaviour.” – ed.)

A NOTE ON THE WORD “YOGA”.

Yoga has two different meanings - a general meaning and a technical meaning. The general meaning is the joining together or union of any two or more things. The technical meaning is “a state of stability and peace and the means or practices which lead to that state.” The Bhagavad Gita uses the word with both meanings. M.P.Bhattathiri.

Let us go through what scholars say about Holy Gita.

“No work in all Indian literature is more quoted, because none is better loved, in the West, than the Bhagavad-gita. Translation of such a work demands not only knowledge of Sanskrit, but an inward sympathy with the theme and a verbal artistry. For the poem is a symphony in which God is seen in all things. . . . The Swami does a real service for students by investing the beloved Indian epic with fresh meaning. Whatever our outlook may be, we should all be grateful for the labor that has lead to this illuminating work.”

Dr. Geddes MacGregor, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Philosophy University of Southern California

“The Gita can be seen as the main literary support for the

great religious civilization of India, the oldest surviving culture in the world. The present translation and commentary is another manifestation of the permanent living importance of the Gita.”

Thomas Merton, Theologian

“I am most impressed with A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's scholarly and authoritative edition of Bhagavad-gita. It is a most valuable work for the scholar as well as the layman and is of great utility as a reference book as well as a textbook. I promptly recommend this edition to my students. It is a beautifully done book.”

Dr. Samuel D. Atkins Professor of Sanskrit, Princeton University

“As a successor in direct line from Caitanya, the author of Bhagavad-gita As It Is is entitled, according to Indian custom, to the majestic title of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. The great interest that his reading of the Bhagavad-gita holds for us is that it offers us an authorized interpretation according to the principles of the Caitanya tradition.”

Olivier Lacombe Professor of Sanskrit and Indology, Sorbonne University, Paris

“I have had the opportunity of examining several volumes published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and have found them to be of excellent quality and of great value for use in college classes on Indian religions. This is particularly true of the BBT edition and translation of the Bhagavad-gita.”

Dr. Frederick B. Underwood Professor of Religion, Columbia University

“If truth is what works, as Pierce and the pragmatists insist, there must be a kind of truth in the Bhagavad-gita As It Is, since those who follow its teachings display a joyous serenity usually missing in the bleak and strident lives of contemporary people.”

Dr. Elwin H. Powell Professor of Sociology State University of New York, Buffalo

“There is little question that this edition is one of the best books available on the Gita and devotion. Prabhupada's translation is an ideal blend of literal accuracy and religious insight.”

Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins Professor of Religion, Franklin and Marshall College

“The Bhagavad-gita, one of the great spiritual texts, is not as yet a common part of our cultural milieu. This is probably less because it is alien per se than because we have lacked just the kind of close interpretative commentary upon it that Swami Bhaktivedanta has here provided, a commentary written from not only a scholar's but a practitioner's, a dedicated lifelong devotee's point of view.”

Denise Levertov, Poet

“The increasing numbers of Western readers interested in classical Vedic thought have been done a service by Swami Bhaktivedanta. By bringing us a new and living interpretation of a text already known to many, he has increased our understanding manifold.”

Dr. Edward C Dimock, Jr. Department of South Asian Languages and Civilization University of Chicago

“The scholarly world is again indebted to A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Although Bhagavad-gita has been translated many times, Prabhupada adds a translation of singular importance with his commentary.”

Dr. J. Stillson Judah, Professor of the History of Religions and Director of Libraries Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California

“Sri Prabhupada's edition thus fills a sensitive gap in France, where many hope to become familiar with traditional Indian thought, beyond the commercial East-West hodgepodge that has arisen since the time Europeans first penetrated India.

“Whether the reader be an adept of Indian spiritualism or

not, a reading of the Bhagavad-gita As It Is will be extremely profitable. For many this will be the first contact with the true India, the ancient India, the eternal India.”

Francois Chenique, Professor of Religious Sciences Institute of Political Studies, Paris, France

“It was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us”

Emerson's reaction to the Gita

“As a native of India now living in the West, it has given me much grief to see so many of my fellow countrymen coming to the West in the role of gurus and spiritual leaders. For this reason, I am very excited to see the publication of Bhagavad-gita As It Is by Sri A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. It will help to stop the terrible cheating of false and unauthorized 'gurus' and 'yogis' and will give an opportunity to all people to understand the actual meaning of Oriental culture.”

Dr. Kailash Vajpey, Director of Indian Studies Center for Oriental Studies, The University of Mexico

“The Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive one, of the summaries and systematic spiritual statements of the perennial philosophy ever to have been done”

_____Aldous Huxley

“It is a deeply felt, powerfully conceived and beautifully explained work. I don't know whether to praise more this translation of the Bhagavad-gita, its daring method of explanation, or the endless fertility of its ideas. I have never seen any other work on the Gita with such an important voice and style. . . . It will occupy a significant place in the intellectual and ethical life of modern man for a long time to come.”

Dr. Shaligram Shukla Professor of Linguistics, Georgetown

University

“I can say that in the Bhagavad-gita As It Is I have found explanations and answers to questions I had always posed regarding the interpretations of this sacred work, whose spiritual discipline I greatly admire. If the asceticism and ideal of the apostles which form the message of the Bhagavad-gita As It Is were more widespread and more respected, the world in which we live would be transformed into a better, more fraternal place.”

Dr. Paul Lesourd, Author Professeur Honoraire, Catholic University of Paris

“When I read the Bhagavad-Gita and reflect about how God created this universe everything else seems so superfluous.”

Albert Einstein

“When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon, I turn to Bhagavad-gita and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. Those who meditate on the Gita will derive fresh joy and new meanings from it every day.”

Mahatma Gandhi

“In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavad-gita, in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial.”

Henry David Thoreau

“The Bhagavad-Gita has a profound influence on the spirit of mankind by its devotion to God which is manifested by actions.”

Dr. Albert Schweitzer

“The Bhagavad-Gita is a true scripture of the human race a

living creation rather than a book, with a new message for every age and a new meaning for every civilization.”

Sri Aurobindo

“The idea that man is like unto an inverted tree seems to have been current in by gone ages. The link with Vedic conceptions is provided by Plato in his Timaeus in which it states 'behold we are not an earthly but a heavenly plant.' This correlation can be discerned by what Krishna expresses in chapter 15 of Bhagavad-Gita.”

Carl Jung

“The Bhagavad-Gita deals essentially with the spiritual foundation of human existence. It is a call of action to meet the obligations and duties of life; yet keeping in view the spiritual nature and grander purpose of the universe.”

Prime Minister Nehru

“The marvel of the Bhagavad-Gita is its truly beautiful revelation of life's wisdom which enables philosophy to blossom into religion.”

Herman Hesse

“I owed a magnificent day to the Bhagavad-gita. It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“In order to approach a creation as sublime as the Bhagavad-Gita with full understanding it is necessary to attune our soul to it.”

Rudolph Steiner

“From a clear knowledge of the Bhagavad-Gita all the goals of human existence become fulfilled. Bhagavad-Gita is the manifest quintessence of all the teachings of the Vedic scriptures.”

Adi Shankara

“The Bhagavad-Gita is the most systematic statement of spiritual evolution of endowing value to mankind. It is one of the most clear and comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever revealed; hence its enduring value is subject not only to India but to all of humanity.”

Aldous Huxley

“The Bhagavad-Gita was spoken by Lord Krishna to reveal the science of devotion to God which is the essence of all spiritual knowledge. The Supreme Lord Krishna's primary purpose for descending and incarnating is relieve the world of any demoniac and negative, undesirable influences that are opposed to spiritual development, yet simultaneously it is His incomparable intention to be perpetually within reach of all humanity.”

Ramanuja

The Bhagavad-Gita is not separate from the Vaishnava philosophy and the Srimad Bhagavatam fully reveals the true import of this doctrine which is transmigration of the soul. On perusal of the first chapter of Bhagavad-Gita one may think that they are advised to engage in warfare. When the second chapter has been read it can be clearly understood that knowledge and the soul is the ultimate goal to be attained. On studying the third chapter it is apparent that acts of righteousness are also of high priority. If we continue and patiently take the time to complete the Bhagavad-Gita and try to ascertain the truth of its closing chapter we can see that the ultimate conclusion is to relinquish all the conceptualized ideas of religion which we possess and fully surrender directly unto the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati

“The Mahabharata has all the essential ingredients necessary to evolve and protect humanity and that within it the Bhagavad-Gita is the epitome of the Mahabharata just as ghee is the essence of milk and pollen is the essence of flowers.”

Madhvacharya

Yoga has two different meanings - a general meaning and a technical meaning. The general meaning is the joining together or union of any two or more things. The technical meaning is “a state of stability and peace and the means or practices which lead to that state.” The Bhagavad Gita uses the word with both meanings. Lord Krishna is real Yogi who can maintain a peaceful mind in the midst of any crisis.”

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi.

Karma, Bhakti, and Jnana are but three paths to this end. And common to all the three is renunciation. Renounce the desires, even of going to heaven, for every desire related with body and mind creates bondage. Our focus of action is neither to save the humanity nor to engage in social reforms, not to seek personal gains, but to realize the indwelling Self itself.

Swami Vivekananda (England, London; 1895-96)

“Science describes the structures and processes; philosophy attempts at their explanation.-----

When such a perfect combination of both science and philosophy is sung to perfection that Krishna was, we have in this piece of work an appeal both to the head and heart. “
_____Swamy Chinmayanand on Gita

I seek that Divine Knowledge by knowing which nothing remains to be known!" For such a person knowledge and ignorance has only one meaning: Have you knowledge of God? If yes, you a Jnani! If not, you are ignorant. As said in the Gita, chapter XIII/11, knowledge of Self, observing everywhere the object of true Knowledge i.e. God, all this is declared to be true Knowledge (wisdom); what is contrary to this is ignorance.”

Sri Ramakrishna

Maharishi calls the Bhagavad-Gita the essence of Vedic

Literature and a complete guide to practical life. It provides “all that is needed to raise the consciousness of man to the highest possible level.” Maharishi reveals the deep, universal truths of life that speak to the needs and aspirations of everyone.

Maharshi Mahesh Yogi

The Gita was preached as a preparatory lesson for living worldly life with an eye to Release, Nirvana. My last prayer to everyone, therefore, is that one should not fail to thoroughly understand this ancient science of worldly life as early as possible in one's life.

--- Lokmanya Tilak

I believe that in all the living languages of the world, there is no book so full of true knowledge, and yet so handy. It teaches self-control, austerity, non-violence, compassion, obedience to the call of duty for the sake of duty, and putting up a fight against unrighteousness (Adharma). To my knowledge, there is no book in the whole range of the world's literature so high above as the Bhagavad-Gita, which is the treasure-house of Dharma not only for the Hindus but for all mankind.

--- M. M. Malaviya

References

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