

# Message of the Gita



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Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy  
gokulmuthu@gmail.com, +919844101047

## **Message of the Gita**

The Bhagavad Gita gives the essence of the Vedas, which is the foundation of Hinduism. Thus, the message of the Gita is the message of the Vedas, which is the message of Hinduism.

The purpose of life is to “Be happy and help others”, which is possible only by being good and doing good.

### **The Goal**

In any situation in life, you have the freedom to choose to be happy. (2.11) Problems will be there. You have to do your duties and try to solve the problems. But, that does not mean that you should not be happy. Happiness is an attitude, which is independent of the people, objects and situations in your life. If you choose to be happy, you can be happy anywhere, anytime and in every situation. To understand and assimilate this fact, and implement it in everyday life is the only way to a happy and peaceful life. The barriers that prevent this are like:

(i) Lethargy

- (ii) Attachment to people, objects and situations
- (iii) Lack of control over the mind and the sense organs
- (iv) Absence of proper understanding of yourself, God and the world

Gita takes you systematically across all these hurdles.  
(5.7)

### **Who are you?**

You are fully responsible for your life. Whatever you face in your life is because of your own past thoughts and actions in this or a previous birth. (6.41 to 6.44)  
You have the freedom to decide your current thought and action. The result would be based on your current thought and action, and your past thoughts and actions. (2.47)

The body and mind are your instruments to act and think. (15.9) So you are different from them. You are the person who uses these to experience the world and express yourself in the world. You are the person who decides what to do. Like any other instrument or utility, like fire, electricity, nuclear energy, etc., if you keep them under your control, they will be your

friend. You can achieve a lot with them. If you let them out of your control, they will be your enemy. They can bring you downfall. (6.5, 6.6)

When the body dies, you will take the mind with you to a fresh new body. (15.8) You cannot escape or lose the results of your thoughts and actions. You will experience the results in this birth or in some future birth. Changing bodies is like discarding worn out clothes and stepping into fresh new ones. (2.22) Death is just another event in the cycle of changes that you need to go through like birth, childhood, youth, adult and old age. (2.13) In reality, you are never born and will never die. (2.20) These changes belong to the body only.

## **Who is God?**

God is the universal principle which includes everything that exists. The entire material universe is the physical body of God. All the thoughts of all the minds put together is the mind of God. The physical and moral laws of the universe are the Will of God. (7.4 to 7.7) God is also the essence of everything. God is the liquidity in liquids, heat in the fire, intelligence in the intelligent, strength of the strong, etc. (7.8 to

7.11) God is also the Consciousness that is the core of every conscious being. As Consciousness, God powers the various living beings into self-conscious activity, just like electricity powers various appliances connected to the circuit. (18.61, 13.2, 10.20)

There is nothing that exists apart from God. God is the material cause of this world, like clay is the material cause of a pot. God is also the sentient cause of the world, like potter is the sentient cause of a pot. (10.20) Just as waves arise, exist and merge back into the ocean, everything arises, exists and merges back in God.

With this understanding, God can be addressed by any name, and worshipped through any form and ritual. (7.21) This depends on the context and the wish of the worshipper. When starting something, God is worshipped as Ganesha. When doing business, God is worshipped as Lakshmi. When studying, God is worshipped as Saraswati. When considering yourself as an Indian, God is considered as Mother India. When considering yourself as an earthling, God is considered as Mother Earth. When you consider yourself as the doer of action, God takes the role of the bestower of the fruits of the action. If you

consider yourself as a Vaishnava, God would be Vishnu. If you consider yourself as a Shaiva, God would be Shiva. You can worship God as Father, Mother, Child, Master, Friend, Teacher, etc.

Whenever faith in goodness is endangered greatly, God incarnates to establish the power of goodness and the faith in it. (4.7, 4.8) God can be worshipped through these incarnations also.

## **Karma Yoga**

God is the Universal principle. So, when you take several roles as an individual in life like father, brother, student, citizen, etc. based on your context, it is God alone who takes various roles as the corresponding counterpart from the Universal level to match your individual role. (7.21) So everything that you do is an interaction with God only. Everything that you do is a gift to God. Everything that happens in your life is a gift from God. (9.27)

To work against the hurdles mentioned before, three disciplines should be followed – yagna (duties), daana (charity) and tapas (virtues). (18.5)

**Yagna – Five Duties** (This list is from the Vedas. There is a reference to this in the Gita in 3.11, 4.28.)

**1. deva yagna** – Duty to environment – Take care of nature. Don't pollute. Plant trees. Conserve resources. Pray every day to God thanking for all the good things in your life. Visit temples regularly. (9.26, 17.14)

**2. bhuta yagna** – Duty to other creatures – Take care of animals. Treat them with dignity. Preserve them. Avoid harming them.

**3. manushya yagna** – Duty to society – Take care of people. Treat everyone with dignity. Donate to and involve in social service activities. Help people. Pay fairly for services availed from people.

**4. pitru yagna** – Duty to lineage – Take care of parents, grand-parents, children, grand-children, etc. Respect old people. Help them. Pray for the wellbeing of departed ancestors. Be kind to young children. Donate to and involve in orphanages and old-age homes.

**5. rishi yagna** – Duty to culture – Take care of teachers. Acquire, develop and disseminate knowledge. Help education of children and adults. Donate to and involve in schooling of underprivileged children. Support the study and development of



science, mathematics, literature, arts, music, dance, philosophy, religion, etc. Celebrate cultural and religious festivals.

## **Daana – Charity**

Have a habit of regularly donating money, time, things, knowledge, etc. to people who are in need of them. Give with humility and as a duty, without expecting any benefit out of it. (17.20)

**Tapas – Ten Virtues** (This list is from Patanjali Yoga Sutras. Gita gives the same contents in different forms in different lists in 13.7 to 13.11, 16.1 to 16.3, 17.14 to 17.16.)

**1. satya** – Don't tell a lie. It is not necessary to speak all the truth that you know. But when you speak and act, there should be perfect alignment between your knowledge, intention, words and action.

**2. ahimsa** – Don't take advantage of the weakness of others. It is not possible to live without hurting smaller life forms. You should try to be as harmless as possible. You should not wish harm to anyone. Follow non-violence in thought, word and deed. Also, positively help people.

**3. brahmacharya** – Don't have indecent and inappropriate attitude towards the other gender. The appropriate attitude towards everyone is to look upon people as thinking and feeling human beings, and not as physical entities. Also, this translates to chastity for householders and celibacy for all others.

**4. asteya** – Don't have any unfair possession.

**5. aparigraha** – Don't have possessions or consume things beyond what is reasonably necessary. Lead a simple life.

**6. soucha** – Maintain everything neat and tidy. This applies to environment, body and mind.

**7. santosha** – Always be cheerful and contented. Don't keep complaining about everything. Have positive attitude. Be pleasant in thought and word.

**8. tapas** – Maintain discipline in life. Wake up, eat, go to sleep, etc at the right times. Have control on what you eat, read, see, hear, speak, think, etc. (6.16, 6.17) Practice meditation every day to better understand your mind and be able to regulate your thoughts. (6.11 to 6.14)

**9. swadhyaaya** – Entertain healthy thoughts. Have a habit of reading good books, thinking deeply about them and discussing with like-minded people.

**10. ishvara pranidhaana** – Believe in the fairness of the world – “As you sow, so shall you reap.” Do

everything as an offering (arpana) to God and face everything as a gift (prasaada) from God. Face success with humility and failure with dignity.

It is fine to have other constructive desires also and pursue them, provided they fulfill three criteria:

- (i) Legal, ethical and harmless
- (ii) Moderate, such that they do not disturb the performance of yagna, daana and tapas properly in a selfless manner
- (iii) Non-binding, such that anxiety is not created during the pursuit, arrogance is not created if successful, and dejection or anger is not created if unsuccessful. (2.48, 2.56)

You should contribute more than you consume. By following the disciplines of yagna, daana and tapas pure mind is attained. (18.5) A calm mind that is capable of concentration and strong interest in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge are signs of mental purity. (6.27) Such a mind itself would assure a high quality life with great peace.

To imbibe these ideas, and pursue and sustain a lifestyle of yagna, daana and tapas, it is essential to

have the company of holy people and other like-minded people.

## **Worship at Home**

Gita gives detailed instructions for meditation. (6.11 to 6.14) Here is a simple procedure that everyone can do at home.

Reserve a small room or a cupboard to keep the items of worship. Place the pictures or images of the deities which are the favourite of the people in your family. Place them neatly and artistically.

Fix a time for worship. It can be in the morning or evening or both. You should reserve at least fifteen minutes for worship. It is better to always do your worship at the same time every day. It will be preferable to avoid other sounds from outside during this time.

You can sit on the floor or on a chair. Keep a small mat made of cloth to place on the floor or chair when you sit to worship. (6.11) Do not use this cloth for anything else. It is preferable to sit on the floor. When you sit, your body, neck and head should be in a

straight line. (6.13) Your whole body must be relaxed.

Choose a name of God or a mantra that you like or got from your Guru. There are several popular ones like – Om Nama Shivaaya, Om Namo Naaraayanaaya, Om Namo Bhagavate Vaasudevaaya, Om Shri Raam Jai Raam Jai Jai Raam. Once you have chosen, you should not change your choice often.

Follow this procedure everyday:

1. Keep a lamp lit during the worship.
2. Pray for the welfare of everyone in the world.
3. For a few minutes, sing or chant a stotra or devotional song. Remembering the meaning when you chant will give additional benefit.
4. Be silent for a few minutes with closed eyes.
5. Visualizing the presence of God in the center of the chest, chant the name or mantra that you have chosen 108 times. It is better to chant in the mind without any movement of the lips or tongue. If it is not possible, you can chant in as low voice as possible.
6. Read a few pages from any book on devotion or spiritual life. Various books which give stories of devotees of God, stories illustrating the teachings

of Vedanta, incidents in the lives of saints, conversations with saints, lectures and letters of spiritual advice are all available for this. You can even read this book every day for this purpose. You can also listen to a devotional or spiritual lecture.

7. Bow down before God such that your head touches the ground. Thank God for all the good things that you have got in life. Pray for the knowledge and strength to lead a virtuous and compassionate life that is useful to others and peaceful to yourself. Apply basma or kumkum or something similar on your forehead as the sign of your prayer and surrender to God.

You can also write the name of God 108 times in a notebook reserved for this purpose. When the notebook is full, cut the pages into small pieces, make paper flowers out of them and make a garland out of those flowers and give in the nearby temple.

By keeping God as the goal in life, living a righteous life, offering all that you do as a gift to God, accepting all that you face as a gift from God and worshipping God every day, you will develop devotion to God.  
(9.34)

This devotion will help you to face the ups and downs of life with a calm mind. You will develop all virtuous qualities. You will get purity and peace of mind. Such a devotee is a favourite of God. (12.13 to 12.19)

## **Way of Life**

All rituals, traditional customs, festivals, stories, legends, pilgrimages and art forms of Hindus are designed to imbibe these principles in life and purify the mind. Engaging with them knowing how they are connected to the principles given above will lead to a rich cultural, emotional, intellectual and fulfilling life. Here are some ways to do this.

1. Do the five duties, give in charity and follow the ten virtues as described in this booklet.
2. Do daily worship as described in this booklet.
3. Be familiar with the stories of Raamayana, Mahaabhaarata, stories of devotees in the puraanaas, incidents in the lives of saints, etc.
4. Memorize some important verses of the Gita. You can start with verses referred in this booklet. Traditionally, chapter 12 and 15 are taken for memorizing first.
5. Visit a nearby temple or ashram at least once a

week.

6. Go on a pilgrimage to a holy place at least once a year.
7. Celebrate and support all the important festivals with devotion and social involvement.
8. Visit a nearby temple or ashram on festival days and personally significant days like birthday, anniversary, first day of school, work, exam, etc.
9. Learn some form of classical music, bhajans or chanting.

## **Next Step**

After the mind is purified sufficiently, seek a teacher, serve him and systematically learn from him the knowledge about the real nature of yourself and your relationship with God. (4.34) This will give you the conviction that happiness is your real nature and it does not depend on any people, objects or situations. This will give complete fulfillment within you. (2.55)

**Sri Krishna Arpanam Astu**