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Development of Self: the Context of Shrimadbhagavad-Gita

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Abstract

Shrimadbhagavad-Gita is a sacred Hindu scripture, considered among the most important holy book in Sanskrit literature and Indian philosophy and spiritual significance. It is considered as the answer of all questions for human's confusion. It describe about eternal truth of Atman. The body is composed of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space which are destructible. But the real Self (Atman) of everybody is indestructible. Self is not born, does not die in any time and as well as born also. It is birth less, eternal and ancient. In this paper I seek to analyse the concept and dimension of Self and Self development in the context of Shrimadbhagavad-Gita.

Key Words: *Shrimadbhagavad-Gita, Shri Krishna, Arjun, Self, Self Development, Sthita-Prajna, Yoga, Action, Sthita-prajna.*

Sarvopanishado gavo dogdha gopalnandanah /

Parttho vatsah su-dhir bhokta dugdham gitamritam mahat //¹

“This Gitopanishad, Bhagavad-gita, the essence of all the Upanishads, is just like a cow, and Lord Krishna, who is famous as a cowherd boy, is milking this cow. Arjuna is just like a calf, and learned scholars and pure devotees are to drink the nectarine milk of Bhagavad-gita.”² The word Gita means the divine song or the song of God. The famous English poet Sir Edwin Arnold called the Bhagavad-gita as ‘The song Celestial’. Indian Rishis and philosophers gave another title ‘Moksha Shastra or Scripture of liberation’. It is a sacred Hindu scripture, considered among the most important holy book in Sanskrit literature and Indian philosophy and spiritual significance. It is taken from *Bhisma Parva* of the Mahabharata written by *Veda Vyasa* which is comprises of 18 chapters out in seven hundred verses. *The Mahabharata* is a great epic and *Veda Vyasa* wrote it through the hands of the God of wisdom, *Ganesha*. Lord Krishna is the teacher and *Arjun* is his pupil.

Development is not just adding to knowledge but an impact on behavior. An educated man tries to know and understand like these questions –

- What I am?
- What do I want to?
- What I love?
- What is my life's work? etc.

All these questions are not easy because it is very difficult to find out what is incorrect and what is correct. *Yama* says to *Nachiketa* –

Anyat sreo 'nyad utaiva preyas-

Te ubhe nanarthe purusm sinitah /

Tayoh sreva adadanasya sadhu

Bhavti hiyate 'rthad ya u preyo vrinite //³

Means which is the highest value (*sreyas*) is one which is pleasant here and now (*preyas*) is another. Serving different purposes, the two make men blind. Of the two, well is it for him who chooses *sreyas*. He fails his aim that chooses *preyas*. Both *sreyas* and *preyas* approach man. The wise, fully serving them, discriminates and choose *sreyas* in preference to *preyas*. The stupid, interested in worldly well-being, choose *preyas*. *Swami Muni narayan* states in regard of *Sreyas* and *preyas*-figurative personified – approach man to be accepted by him, instead of his searching for them,

implying that such possibilities appear in practical life quite naturally and abundantly. Man is free to choose, with the guidance only of his own value notions. The word 'manusya' means man, literally the progeny of *Manu* - one who thinks- is especially significant, for what makes man formulate his value notions and determine what he prefers is his thinking. To discriminate good and evil, right and wrong is a sign of thought.⁴ According to *Srimadbhagavad Gita*, there is no existence for that which is unreal. There is no non existence for that which is real. And the correct conclusion about both is perceived by those who perceive the truth.⁵

- a. Create meaning in our life and work.
- b. Help and coach others on your purpose.
- c. Understand your personal bottom line in a changing world.
- d. Develop our vision of success and descent life.
- e. Create meaning full dialogue, family and friends around.

Srimadbhagavad-Gita is considered as the answer of all questions for human's confusion. It has not only the religious value but all moral, social, political and human values. One should learn the contents of this. The contents and the names of the chapters of *Srimadbhagavad-Gita* are as follows :-
Chapter one – Yoga of *Arjuna's* sorrow (*Arjun vishad-yoga*) Description of the warriors of the two armies, the conches sound, Surveys of the armies by *Arjuna* and the depression of *Arjuna* are described in this chapter.

Chapter two – Name of this chapter is Yoga of Eternal wisdom or *Sankhya Yoga*. In this chapter *Arjuna* expresses confusion. *Shri Krishna* describe about eternal truth of *Atman*. He elaborates the need to fight according to the warrior's dharm. Desireless action or *nishkama karma* and the person of steady wisdom or *sthita prajna* are also analyzed in this chapter.

Chapter three – This chapter is called Yoga of Action or *Karma yoga*. In this chapter, action and the benefit of acting with detachment, the nature of sacrifice, wheel of the dharma as universal law for the well being of all, wise and ignorant action, qualities of *the karma yogi*, *karma yoga* in practice etc. explained by *Lord Krishna*.

Chapter four – The title of this chapter is Yoga of renouncing action in knowledge or *Jnana Karma Sannyasa yoga*. The imperishable yoga, descent of *the Avatar*, power of *karma*, and self-realized soul, different kinds of sacrifice and effectiveness of the knowledge, different kinds of sacrifice are taught in this chapter.

Chapter five – The name of this chapter is renunciation through action or *karma sannyasa yoga*. Renouncing desires, action of integration, the joy of harmony, action as duty and the way of knowledge, beyond mind and the freedom of meditation are highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter six – This chapter is called Yoga of Mediation or *Dhyan Yoga*. In this chapter, attributes of *the yogi* and *sanyasi*, self-effort, practice of meditation, bliss of equality of the highest yogi, mind control like point are discussed.

Chapter seven – It is Yoga of Knowledge and wisdom or *jnan yoga*. Discriminative Knowledge, *apara prakriti* and *apara pra prakriti*, presence of *purush* are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter eight – this chapter is called Yoga of Imperishable *Brahman* or *Akshara Brahma Yoga*. *Lord Krishna* has discussed in this chapter about cycles of continuity, consciousness, fear and death, reality, ways of practice, the process of dying, time and paths of light and darkness.

Chapter nine – The name of this chapter is Yoga of the Confidential Kingly Yoga or *Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga*. In this chapter, divine cosmology, God and nature, action as creation and devotion are analyzed.

Chapter ten – It is Yoga of Divine Splendor or *Vibhuti Yoga*. In this chapter we find the source and powers of the divine, devotion and the effects of knowing divine powers, *Arjun* asks to see the divine glory and *Krishna* reveals the ongoing infinite powers of existence.

Chapter eleven – The name of this chapter is Yoga of the cosmic vision or *Vibhuti Yoga*. In this chapter, we find *Arjun* asks *Lord Krishna* to show him cosmic form, *Krishna* reveals the beginning less universe, *Arjuna's* loving gratitude, karma and cosmic action, after death experience, God with form and true spiritual experience.

Chapter twelve – It is called Yoga of Devotion or *Bhakti Yoga*. In this chapter *Lord Krishna* discussed about *Bhakti Yoga*, pure devotional service to *Krishna*, *Saguna* and *nirguna Bhakti* and qualities of devotee (*bhakta*).

Chapter thirteen – This chapter is called Yoga of the Knower and known or *kshetra kshetrajnya Vibhaga Yoga*. In this chapter, differences between *kshetra* and *kshetrajnya*, qualities of knowledge, *jneyam* (Brahman), *prakriti* and *purush*.

Chapter fourteen – Name of this chapter is Yoga of Dividing the three Qualities or *Gunatrya Vibhaga Yoga*. In this chapter main talking issues are - supreme wisdom and origins of the universe, nature and effects of *triguna* (*satva, rajas and tamas*) and liberation (moksha)

Chapter fifteen – This chapter is Yoga of the Supreme Self or *Purushottam Yoga*. The ultimate purpose of Vedic knowledge to detach *samsara* and path to *paramartha*, the person as the self *jivatman, paramatman* and *purushottama* are main talking points in the chapter.

Chapter sixteen – it is called Yoga of Discerning the light and Dark Paths or *Daivasur Sampad Vibhaga Yoga*. In this chapter, qualities of divine nature, demonic nature respective results in both natures and laws of the science of spirituality (*shastra*) are discussed by *Lord Krishna*.

Chapter seventeen – this chapter is called Yoga of the Three Qualities of the Faith or *Sradhatrya Vibhaga Yoga*. In this chapter, three types of faith, three kinds of worship, three kinds of sacrifice (*yajna*), austerity (*tapa*), charity (*dana*), significance of purify of heart and lead to pure faith in Krishna and importance of *sradha* in every action are explained by *Lord Krishna*.

Chapter eighteen – name of this chapter is Yoga of Liberation through Renunciation or *Moksha Sannyasa yoga*. In this chapter *Lord Krishna* explains the meaning of surrender and Renunciation, cause of karma, three kinds of knowledge, action, intellect, will and happiness, duties of four *varnas*, *Brahman*, the power of *Maya*, unconditional loving surrender unto *Krishna*. *Arjuna*'s answers Krishna's question and declares he is free of doubt.

We are aware that the content of Gita arises out of question relating ethical values of *Arjun*. In the *kurukshetra*, he shows the armies with his intimate relatives, friends and teachers like *Dronacharya, Bhishma Pitamaha* etc. in both armies ready to fight without any hesitation to sacrifice their lives. He becomes emotional and fails in his strength. On one side thinks about his duty of maintaining the social order and on another side he worries about his family, relatives, army and *kuladharma*. He thinks that with destroying the dynasty, the eternal family traditions is vanquished, being destroyed then rest of the whole family becomes involved in irreligion. He says to *Krishna*, O *Krishna*! When irreligion prevails, the women of the family become polluted, corrupt, when women become corrupt there arises intermixture of classes. An increase of this mixing of classes and unwanted children leads the hellish life both for the family and destroyers of the family tradition. Forefathers of the family also fall down because the performances for offering them foods and waters (*pindodakakriyah*) are entirely stopped. He argued that how he can fight against his family members and relatives. He refuses to fight. This would create very bad and unreligious situation in the society. *Arjun* is a *Kashatriyan* means the member of a warrior caste.

Lord Krishna begins the highest teaching on the Self '*Atman*' and reality. As the Self we are eternal in all the three periods of time, viz., past, present and future. Of course the plural 'we' is used with reference, to the bodies which are different, it does not mean that there are more Selves than one. The bodies alone are perishable, but not the inner essence which is the Self.⁶

The body is composed of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space which are destructible. But the real Self (*Atman*) of everybody is indestructible. Self is not born, does not die in any time and as well as born also. It is birth less, eternal and ancient. It is not slain when the body is slain. Just as a person when gives up worn out old cloths and puts on other new dress, even so does the embodied self-give up descript bodies and enter other new ones. This self is indeed incapable of being cut, being dried. It is eternal, all pervading, stable, immovable and primordial.⁷ Knowledge is the essence of soul. The self is beyond *Gunas* and their modifications. Self-real zed person is not touched by happiness and pain and becomes *Sthita-Prajna*.

Each birth offers us a different set of circumstances to experience living and purify our minds and emotions that we might work through our confusion and proceed toward wisdom. Each life offers something new, something needed; a different vantage point in time and space to discriminate what is real from what is unreal. This brings us closer to clarity- the clear, formlessness eternal, timeless, unchanging unity – the one beyond all word and description. When there is no more impurity, in our inherent wholeness is no long covered. We reclaim our true identity as an unsegmented segment of the totality. Then there is no more need to reincarnate, unless we consciously choose to descend to help humanity⁸.

The Gita teaches how to achieve harmony with divinity in the midst of disharmony by subduing all outward energies and remaining in equanimity with pairs of opposites like pain and pleasure, aversion and attraction, success and failure etc. The focus of *the Gita* is moderation and its aim is the total surrender of man before the Supreme while continuing to perform his duties in the spirit of Yoga. *Bhagavad-gita* teaches us how to understand our self. In present era, the main objective is to achieve money, status and power. This is the most common objective for human to develop themselves. The goal is to do, to be creative and to live according to our principles, autonomy creativity and integrity. In this situation stress and frustration are the major issues for the society. In modern life of town life style does not allow us to provide some time to understand or to know about Self. It results depression, frustration etc. There are many psychologists who are working on personality development and stress free life all depend on *the Upanisadic* study and *the Gita*. *The Gita* teaches us to acquire our basic need to supreme bliss. In order to achieve these, a change in the personality of the individual is required. There are three dimensions to such changes.

- Comprehension
- Compassion
- Courage

A person observes environment around him and tries to get an insight as to why such things happen. Such insight gives direction to the efforts, the individual can make. This is what we mean by comprehension, compassion is the sympathy a person may have for less fortunate and needy people. Courage enables a person to stand up and face challenges. *Radhakrishnan* says all religions require us to look upon life as an opportunity for self-realization – ‘*atmanstu kamaya*’. When mankind awakes to the truth, universal brotherhood will follow, the at-one-meant with the great fountainhead of all creation. One whose life is rooted in the experience of the Supreme spontaneously develops love for all creation. He will be free from hatred for any man. He will not look upon human beings as though they were irresponsible things, means to other peoples’ interests. He will boldly work for a society in which man can be free and fearless, a subject, not an object. He will oppose terror and cruelty and stand by the outcast and refugee. He will give voice to those who have no voice⁹.

Karma yoga teaches us how to reach an inner space where we will one day be free of cause and effect. The present moment is existence in now, free from the personal belongings of the past and nervousness for the future. Through training the mind, the heart and hand in the way of Karma yoga, we can prepare ourselves to discover the eternal presence. Thus, the third discourse reveals how action can become yoga¹⁰. God realization is also not possible without self surrender.

Our all religious literature is meant for human beings not for animals. Men must be intelligent to realize the importance of being. He should realize the aim of his life, and this direction is given in all Vedic literatures, and essence is given in Bhagavad-Gita. All of ethical and moral values clearly described in *Shrimadbhagavad-Gita*. If we properly utilize the instructions of Bhagavad-Gita then our whole life will become purified, and ultimately we will be able to reach the destination which is the material sky¹¹.

Yad gatva na nivartante tad dham paramam mama /

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