

The Bhagavad Gita

(excerpts)

Translated by Kâshinâth Trimbak Telang (1882)

The Bhagavad Gita, probably composed circa 300 BC or earlier, is one of the central texts of Hinduism. The text tells that Krishna is the supreme god of the universe and relates a conversation between Krishna and the warrior Arguna (Arjuna). The work details many of the central themes of Hinduism. It explains the importance of selflessness and meditation, proclaiming that the development of devotion (the love of God) is necessary for true happiness. For more, see:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/index.htm>.



Chapter I

Dhritarâshtra said:

What did my (people) and the Pândavas do, O Sañgaya! when they assembled together on the holy field of Kurukshetra, desirous to do battle?

Sañgaya said:

Seeing the army of the Pândavas drawn up in battle-array, the prince Duryodhana approached the preceptor, and spoke (these) words: 'O preceptor! observe this grand army of the sons of Pându, drawn up in battle-array by your talented pupil, the son of Drupada. In it are heroes (bearing) large bows, the equals of Bhîma and Arguna in battle--(namely), Yuyudhâna, Virâta, and Drupada, the master of a great car, and Dhrishtaketu, Kekitâna, and the valiant king of Kâsî, Purugit and Kuntibhoga, and that eminent man Saibya; the heroic Yudhâmanyu, the valiant Uttamaugas, the son of Subhadrâ, and the sons of Draupadî--all masters of great cars. And now, O best of Brâhmanas! learn who are most distinguished among us, and are leaders of my army. I will name them to you, in order that you may know them well.

...

Arguna said:

Seeing these kinsmen, O Krishna! standing (here) desirous to engage in battle, my limbs droop down; my mouth is quite dried up; a tremor comes on my body; and my hairs stand on end; the Gândîva (bow) slips from my hand; my skin burns intensely. I am unable, too, to stand up; my mind whirls round, as it were; O Kesava! I see adverse omens; and I do not perceive any good (to accrue) after killing (my) kinsmen in the battle. I do not wish for victory, O Krishna! nor sovereignty, nor pleasures: what is sovereignty to us, O Govinda! what enjoyments, and even life? Even those, for whose sake we desire sovereignty, enjoyments, and pleasures, are standing here for battle, abandoning life and wealth--preceptors, fathers, sons as well as grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, as also (other) relatives. These I do not wish to kill, though they kill (me), O destroyer of Madhu! even for the sake of sovereignty over the three worlds, how much less then for this earth(alone)? What joy shall be ours, O Ganârdana! after killing Dhritarâshtra's sons? Killing these felons we shall only incur sin. Therefore it is not proper for us to kill our own kinsmen, the sons of Dhritarâshtra. For how, O

Mâdhava! shall we be happy after killing our own relatives? Although having their consciences corrupted by avarice, they do not see the evils flowing from the extinction of a family, and the sin in treachery to friends, still, O Ganârdana! should not we, who do see the evils flowing from the extinction of a family, learn to refrain from that sin?

Chapter II

Saṅgaya said:

To him, who was thus overcome with pity, and dejected, and whose eyes were full of tears and turbid, the destroyer of Madhu spoke these words.

The Deity said:

How (comes it that) this delusion, O Arguna! which is discarded by the good, which excludes from heaven, and occasions infamy, has overtaken you in this (place of) peril? Be not effeminate, O son of Prithâ! it is not worthy of you. Cast off this base weakness of heart, and arise, O terror of (your) foes!

Arguna said:

How, O destroyer of Madhu! shall I encounter with arrows in the battle Bhîshma and Drona--both, O destroyer of enemies! entitled to reverence? Not killing (my) preceptors--(men) of great glory--it is better to live even on alms in this world. But killing them, though they are avaricious of worldly goods, I should only enjoy blood-tainted enjoyments. Nor do we know which of the two is better for us--whether that we should vanquish them, or that they should vanquish us. Even those, whom having killed, we do not wish to live--even those sons of Dhritarâshtra stand (arrayed) against us. With a heart contaminated by the taint of helplessness, with a mind confounded about my duty, I ask you. Tell me what is assuredly good for me. I am your disciple; instruct me, who have thrown myself on your (indulgence). For I do not perceive what is to dispel that grief which will dry up my organs after I shall have obtained a prosperous kingdom on earth without a foe, or even the sovereignty of the gods.

Saṅgaya said:

Having spoken thus to Hrishîkesa, O terror of (your) foes! Gudâkesa said to Govinda, 'I shall not engage in battle;' and verily remained silent. To him thus desponding between the two armies, O descendant of Bharata! Hrishîkesa spoke these words with a slight smile.

The Deity said:

You have grieved for those who deserve no grief, and you talk words of wisdom. Learned men grieve not for the living nor the dead. Never did I not exist, nor you, nor these rulers of men; nor will any one of us ever hereafter cease to be. As, in this body, infancy and youth and old age (come) to the embodied (self), so does the acquisition of another body; a sensible man is not deceived about that. The contacts of the senses, O son of Kuntî! which produce cold and heat, pleasure and pain, are not permanent, they are ever coming and going. Bear them, O descendant of Bharata!

...

Your business is with action alone; not by any means with fruit. Let not the fruit of action be your motive (to action). Let not your attachment be (fixed) on inaction. Having recourse to devotion, O Dhanaṅgaya! perform actions, casting off (all) attachment, and being equable in success or ill-success; (such) equability is called devotion. Action, O Dhanaṅgaya! is far inferior to the devotion of the mind. In that devotion seek shelter. Wretched are those whose motive (to

action) is the fruit (of action). He who has obtained devotion in this world casts off both merit and sin. Therefore apply yourself to devotion; devotion in (all) actions is wisdom. The wise who have obtained devotion cast off the fruit of action; and released from the shackles of (repeated)births, repair to that seat where there is no unhappiness. When your mind shall have crossed beyond the taint of delusion, then will you become indifferent to all that you have heard or will hear. When your mind, confounded by what you have heard, will stand firm and steady in contemplation, then will you acquire devotion.

Arguna said:

What are the characteristics, O Kesava! of one whose mind is steady, and who is intent on contemplation? How should one of steady mind speak, how sit, how move?

The Deity said:

When a man, O son of Prithâ! abandons all the desires of his heart, and is pleased in his self only and by his self, he is then called one of steady mind. He whose heart is not agitated in the midst of calamities, who has no longing for pleasures, and from whom (the feelings of) affection, fear, and wrath have departed, is called a sage of steady mind. His mind is steady, who, being without attachments anywhere, feels no exultation and no aversion on encountering the various agreeable and disagreeable (things of this world). A man's mind is steady, when he withdraws his senses from (all) objects of sense, as the tortoise (withdraws) its limbs from all sides. Objects of sense draw back from a person who is abstinent; not so the taste (for those objects). But even the taste departs from him, when he has seen the Supreme. The boisterous senses, O son of Kuntî! carry away by force the mind even of a wise man, who exerts himself (for final emancipation).

Restraining them all, a man should remain engaged in devotion, making me his only resort. For his mind is steady whose senses are under his control. The man who ponders over objects of sense forms an attachment to them; from (that) attachment is produced desire; and from desire anger is produced; from anger results want of discrimination; from want of discrimination, confusion of the memory; from confusion of the memory, loss of reason; and in consequence of loss of reason. he is utterly ruined. But the self-restrained man who moves among objects with senses under the control of his own self, and free from affection and aversion, obtains tranquillity. When there is tranquillity, all his miseries are destroyed, for the mind of him whose heart is tranquil soon becomes steady. He who is not self-restrained has no steadiness of mind; nor has he who is not self-restrained perseverance in the pursuit of self-knowledge; there is no tranquillity for him who does not persevere in the pursuit of self-knowledge; and whence can there be happiness for one who is not tranquil? For the heart which follows the rambling senses leads away his judgment, as the wind leads a boat astray upon the waters. Therefore, O you of mighty arms! his mind is steady whose senses are restrained on all sides from objects of sense. The self-restrained man is awake, when it is night for all beings; and when all beings are awake, that is the night of the right-seeing sage. He into whom all objects of desire enter, as waters enter the ocean, which, (though) replenished, (still) keeps its position unmoved,-he only obtains tranquillity; not he who desires (those) objects of desire. The man who, casting off all desires, lives free from attachments, who is free from egoism, and from (the feeling that this or that is) mine, obtains tranquillity. This, O son of Prithâ! is the Brahmic state; attaining to this, one is never deluded; and remaining in it in (one's) last moments, one attains (brahma-nirvâna) the Brahmic bliss.

Chapter VII

The Deity said:

O son of *Prithâ*! now hear how you can without doubt know me fully, fixing your mind on me, and resting in me, and practising devotion. I will now tell you exhaustively about knowledge together with experience; that being known, there is nothing further left in this world to know. Among thousands of men, only some work for perfection; and even of those who have reached perfection, and who are assiduous, only some know me truly. Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, understanding, and egoism, thus is my nature divided eightfold. But this is a lower (form of my) nature. Know (that there is) another (form of my) nature, and higher than this, which is animate, O you of mighty arms! and by which this universe is upheld. Know that all things have these (for their) source. I am the producer and the destroyer of the whole universe. There is nothing else, O *Dhanañgaya*! higher than myself; all this is woven upon me, like numbers of pearls upon a thread. I am the taste in water, O son of *Kuntî*! I am the light of the sun and moon. I am 'Om' in all the Vedas, sound in space, and manliness in human beings; I am the fragrant smell in the earth, refulgence in the fire; I am life in all beings, and penance in those who perform penance. Know me, O son of *Prithâ*! to be the eternal seed of all beings; I am the discernment of the discerning ones, and I the glory of the glorious. I am also the strength, unaccompanied by fondness or desire, of the strong. And, O chief of the descendants of *Bharata*! I am love unopposed to piety among all beings. And all entities which are of the quality of goodness, and those which are of the quality of passion and of darkness, know that they are, indeed, all from me; I am not in them, but they are in me.

Chapter X

Yet again, O you of mighty arms! listen to my excellent words, which, out of a wish for your welfare, I speak to you who are delighted (with them). Not the multitudes of gods, nor the great sages know my source; for I am in every way the origin of the gods and great sages. Of (all) mortals, he who knows me to be unborn, without beginning, the great lord of the world, being free from delusion, is released from all sins. Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from delusion, forgiveness, truth, restraint of the senses, tranquillity, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, and also security, harmlessness, equability, contentment, penance, (making) gifts, glory, disgrace, all these different tempers of living beings are from me alone. The seven great sages, and likewise the four ancient *Manus*, whose descendants are (all) these people in the world, were all born from my mind, (partaking) of my powers. Whoever correctly knows these powers and emanations of mine, becomes possessed of devotion free from indecision; of this (there is) no doubt. The wise, full of love, worship me, believing that I am the origin of all, and that all moves on through me. (Placing their) minds on me, offering (their) lives to me, instructing each other, and speaking about me, they are always contented and happy. To these, who are constantly devoted, and who worship with love, I give that knowledge by which they attain to me. And remaining in their hearts, I destroy, with the brilliant lamp of knowledge, the darkness born of ignorance in such (men) only, out of compassion for them.

Arguna said:

You are the supreme Brahman, the supreme goal, the holiest of the holy. All sages, as well as the divine sage Nârada, Asita, Devala, and Vyâsa, call you the eternal being, divine, the first god, the unborn, the all-pervading. And so, too, you tell me yourself, O Kesava! I believe all this that you tell me (to be) true; for, O lord! neither the gods nor demons understand your manifestation. You only know your self by your self. O best of beings! creator of all things! lord of all things! god of gods! lord of the universe! be pleased to declare without, exception your divine emanations, by which emanations you stand pervading all these worlds. How shall I know you, O you of mystic power! always meditating on you? And in what various entities, O lord! should I meditate on you? Again, O Ganârdana! do you yourself declare your powers and emanations; because hearing this nectar, I (still) feel no satiety.

The Deity said:

Well then, O best of Kauravas! I will state to you my own divine emanations; but (only) the chief (ones), for there is no end to the extent of my (emanations). I am the self, O Gudâkesa! seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end also of all beings. I am Vishnu among the Âdityas, the beaming sun among the shining (bodies); I am Marîki among the Maruts, and the moon among the lunar mansions. Among the Vedas, I am the Sâma-veda. I am Indra among the gods. And I am mind among the senses. I am consciousness in (living) beings.

Chapter XII

That devotee of mine, who hates no being, who is friendly and compassionate, who is free from egoism, and from (the idea that this or that is) mine, to whom happiness and misery are alike, who is forgiving, contented, constantly devoted, self-restrained, and firm in his determinations, and whose mind and understanding are devoted to me, he is dear to me. He through whom the world is not agitated, and who is not agitated by the world, who is free from joy and anger and fear and agitation, he too is dear to me. That devotee of mine, who is unconcerned, pure, assiduous, impartial, free from distress, who abandons all actions (for fruit), he is dear to me. He who is full of devotion to me, who feels no joy and no aversion, who does not grieve and does not desire, who abandons (both what is) agreeable and (what is) disagreeable, he is dear to me. He who is alike to friend and foe, as also in honour and dishonour, who is alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, who is free from attachments, to whom praise and blame are alike, who is taciturn, and contented with anything whatever (that comes), who is homeless, and of a steady mind, and full of devotion, that man is dear to me. But those devotees who, imbued with faith, and (regarding) me as their highest (goal), resort to this holy (means for attaining) immortality, as stated, they are extremely dear to me.