



BLESSINGS

GITA JAYANTI

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Dear
Divine
Soul,

It is now the holy
and divine time
of Gita Jayanti.
Sometimes
people refer to
this holiday as
the “Birthday of

the Bhagavad Gita;” however, divine wisdom cannot be said to take birth! One cannot really say that the Divine Song has a birthday. Actually, Gita Jayanti is the anniversary of the day, nearly 6000 years ago, when Sanjaya recited the words which Bhagwan Shri Krishna spoke to Arjuna, on the battlefield in Kurukshetra, for the blind King Dhritarashtra. Along with the epic of the Mahabharata, this Divine Song was transcribed into words by Veda Vyasji for the benefit of humanity.

As Paramhansa Yogananda (one of the great spiritual leaders of India who spread the message of the Gita to the West) said, “The Bhagavad Gita is the most beloved scripture of India, a scripture of scriptures. It is the Hindu’s Holy Testament, the one book that all masters depend upon as a supreme source of scriptural authority.” The Gita provides wisdom and upliftment, comfort and solace to people of all ages, from all walks of life, from all corners of the Earth.

“Bhagavad Gita” literally means Song of God, Song of the Soul, Song of the Spirit. Like any truly divine song, the language of the original lyrics and the

religion of the original singer are irrelevant. For once it has been written and sung, the song itself becomes alive, bursting forth across oceans and mountain ranges, breaking all barriers of caste, creed, nationality. Such is the power of a divine song. However, as the original “singer” of the Gita is Bhagwan Shri Krishna, Himself, this is the holiest and most sacred of all the songs of God. Therefore, its power to transform, to heal, to uplift is as limitless as the Singer.

Mahatma Gandhi said, “When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad-Gita... I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies and my life has been full of external tragedies. If they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of Bhagavad-Gita.”

The Gita consists literally of 700 shlokas divided into 18 chapters. It has been said that the Upanishads are the cows, Krishna is the cowherd, Arjuna is the calf, and the Gita is the milk. But, it is not just any milk. This milk is nectar that flowed from the Gods with the power to heal the sick, comfort the lonely, guide the lost, uplift the fallen and bring peace to the troubled. The milk is gentle and pure enough for a baby, but strong enough for a warrior.

The Gita was spoken as Arjuna surveyed the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Suddenly the great warrior was dismayed and lay down his arms. He told Krishna that he could not fight. “I see in the opposing army my cousins, my uncles, my revered

teachers. It would be better to renounce the kingdom than to fight with those who are so close to me," he bemoans. Thus begins the Bhagavad Gita. But the teachings of the Gita are not applicable merely to life on a battlefield, when war with our relatives is imminent. Rather the true battlefield is within us. Through the story of Arjuna and the battle, Bhagwan Shri Krishna gives us lessons for our lives. The real Kurukshetra is within us. Each of us is Arjuna, struggling with right and wrong, temptation, fear and frustration. Our bodies are our chariots, being driven all too frequently by our senses as the horses. The mind, ego, desires, lust and greed are the evil Kaurvas with whom we must do righteous battle, from whom we must not shy away in fear. If we give the reins of our lives to God (as Arjuna made Krishna his divine charioteer), we will surely be victorious.

The Gita is a "Map of Life" for it clearly shows us not only the destination but also the clearest and best path to reach there. However, like any good map, the Gita does not give us only one path. Rather, throughout the Divine Song, Bhagwan Krishna explains how - through devotion, through wisdom, and through action - one can reach the ultimate destination of union with God. For different temperaments He lays out different paths, all the while reminding us that true, earnest yearning and pure, surrendered love for God are the surest and simplest way to attain liberation.

The lessons of the Gita do not require one to be a great scholar or a great philosopher. Nor do they demand decades of exacting penance to earn God's favor. Rather, Bhagwan Krishna offers infinite and eternal comfort by His words, "whoever comes to me with devotion will attain me."

A central message of the Gita is "Thou Art That;" we are all part and parcel of God. We are His divine children and He lives within us. To explicate this message, the Gita is divided into 3 sections, each of which goes into detail of one word of "Thou Art That."

The first section, made up of the first 6 chapters, details "Thou." The section is about who we, as people, are. It instructs us how to live, how to be and the nature of our beings. This section is dedicated to "Karma yoga", the path of selfless service and action.

The second section is details "That." It talks about the Divine, the nature of the Divine. This section is dedicated to "bhakti yoga," the path of devotion.

The third section explains "Art", the nature of being. It elucidates the connection between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. It is the section dedicated to "jnana yoga" the path of knowledge and wisdom.

The Gita explains that, although different people have different temperaments which are suited to different paths, ultimately the truth is one. The destination is one, although the paths may vary. So, the Gita does not espouse one path over another. Rather, it teaches us that each of the 3 paths leads to God - but people should follow the path which is most suited to their own individual temperaments.

The Gita teaches us to be *ast*, *vyast*, *mast* and *swasth*. What do I mean? First, as we read the words, as the voice of Bhagwan Shri Krishna speaks to us, we become "ast", emerged in God. The Gita becomes the blanket that wraps itself around us in the cold, dark of night. His words speak to us through the Gita, comforting us, teaching us and guiding us.

Then, as we study the message and the wisdom of the Gita more, we learn how to be "vyast". "Vyast" – in essence -means "doing while being, and being while doing." This is Bhagwan Shri Krishna's message. So many people today assume that a spiritual path is one of idleness, one of silent contemplation high on a mountain top. But, Krishna teaches otherwise. We should be the hands that do God's work - this is Karma Yoga.

We should not only be divine, but we should DO divine. “Serve, serve, serve, do your duty on Earth.” But, again, “vyast” is a different kind of “doing” than most people do. It is “being” while “doing.” What does this mean? It means having your work be prayer, be meditation. All the time your hands are doing, your mind should be being. Have His name be on your lips and in your heart, and have His work be on your hands.

From ast and vyast, we become “mast” – ever happy, ever joyful, ever blissful. When you are immersed in Him and His work is flowing through you, what else can you be? When you are “ast”, “vyast”, and “mast”, you automatically are “swastha” or completely healthy, and in perfect balance. But swastha does not imply only perfect physical health; rather, it is a full health of body, mind, soul and spirit. Every pain, every ache, every discomfort becomes prasad as you lay it in His lap. His love and His presence dissolve all that hurts both within and without. Your body and your soul become in perfect harmony.

The central message of the Gita is to perform your duties diligently and piously, but without any expectation for what the result will be. You must till the soil, plant the seeds, water and tend the seedling, and take care of the tree without any thought of how much fruit this tree will bear. You must be God's gardener, carefully tending the garden but never becoming attached to what will blossom, what will flower, what will give fruit or what will wither and die. Expectation is the mother of frustration, but acceptance is the mother of peace and joy.

Bhagwan Shri Krishna says, “Stand up! Do divine! Be divine! Don't expect, but accept!” Life is about the journey, not about the destination. If the reins of your life-chariot are in His hands, you will be ever happy, ever peaceful. This is the lesson of ultimate surrender that we must take to heart. Put all your assets in the Divine Insurance Company, and you will always be taken care of.

The message of the Gita is as relevant for people living in India and also the West today as it was for the people of India more than 5000 years ago. It is as relevant for Hindus as for people of all other religions. It teaches Hindus how to be better Hindus, but it also teaches Muslims to be better Muslims, Christians to be better Christians, and Jews to be better Jews. For, if something is really “truth,” it must be universal. Truth is not limited to a religious framework. If it is truth, it must pertain to all. Such is the profound truth of Bhagwan Shri Krishna's words.

Like Mother Ganga, like the rays of the sun, the Bhagavad Gita does not discriminate. Mother Ganga does not bring water to only Hindus' farms. The sun does not shine only on Hindus' flowers. Similarly, the Gita does not provide light and inspiration to only Hindus' minds and souls.

Aldous Huxley said, “The Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind.” Sometimes it seems that today people in the West actually need this wisdom even more than people in India. People in the West seem to hold even more tenaciously to their agendas, their expectations and their desires. The message in much of the West is “If you work hard, you will succeed, you will become prosperous.” So, people don't work for the sake of being God's hands. They work to reap the benefits, and when the benefits don't come or don't come quickly enough, they are frustrated.

It seems that people everywhere need both the message and the comfort of the Gita a great deal. The lives of people today seem colored by indelible scars. I hope they will all turn to the Gita as the remover of pain and the bestower of light.

The Gita provides the guiding principles for both peace in this life as well as for ultimate salvation. When I entered into customs in Japan, I saw a sign

that said, "Follow the rules, and enjoy your stay." While it is simple and common, it is also profoundly true. The rules for our lives are laid out in the scriptures: do divine, be divine, serve without expectation, love all, hate none, heal all, hurt none, see the Divine in all, surrender to God, be honest, be humble, remember that He is the real Do-er and we are only His tools.

When we follow these rules our lives overflow with joy and love and peace. It is when we ignore these commandments or amend them to suit our own agendas that we bring pain and turmoil into our lives. The Gita is a complete yet concise listing of all the teachings ("rules") necessary to achieve self-realization in this life as well as eternal salvation and liberation.

Additionally, because it was sung by Bhagwan Shri Krishna, Himself, the Gita has the miraculous ability to give the reader exactly the answer and meaning he/she was searching for. So, if you open it today in the midst of a crisis at work you will come upon a passage that will speak something different to you

than when you open it a year from now, looking for comfort after the death of a parent. Similarly, youth will find a different jewel in the treasure chest than adults will. But, it is still a jewel from the ultimate treasure chest.

The Bhagavad Gita shows us the way to live with God, to live with each other and to live with Mother Earth in peace and harmony. This wisdom and insight is as changing as the River Ganga, able to address the concerns of each generation, yet as stable and everlasting as the Himalayas themselves.

I pray that today, at this sacred time, you will all spend some time reading the Gita. But don't only read the words. Rather, immerse yourself in the message and the meaning of the Gita. Let it touch you and transform you.

With love and blessings.

In the service of God and humanity,

Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji