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State Level Seminar on

'Cultural Aspects in Indian Literature'

Sponsored by
Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune

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Department of English

Shri Marutrao Ghule Patil Shikshan Sanstha's

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विद्यावार्ता: Interdisciplinary Multilingual Refereed Journal Impact Factor 6.021 (IIJIF)

A literary study of Bhagavad Gita

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ABSTRACT

The background of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is most important component in the epic Mahabharata in composed by Shri Veda Vyasa Muni more than 5000 years ago. "The Bhagavad Gita" is "The song of the Bhagavan" often referred to as simply the Gita, and a supreme scripture that is part of the Hindu epic Mahabharata. This scripture contains the conversation between Lord Krishna, the guide and Arjuna, the mighty warrior, on a variety of theological and philosophical issues. This research paper focuses on the greatness and the literariness of the poem.

INTROCUCTION

The Bhagavad Gita is also called Gitopnishada and is a section of an ancient Indian epic poem that was originally recited orally. It is a literary form written in Sanskrit language and called one of the treasure of India. Lord Krishna, the great advisor to mankind through the medium of Arjuna. Arjuna was a typical person in the material world. He was in dilemma as he was forgetful of his real duties in life. Therefore Krishna spoke the sacred teachings of the Bhagavad Gita for the upliftment and purification of Arjuna and all humanity. The Gita begins before the start of the climatic Kurukshetra war where the Pandava Prince Arjuna is filled with doubt on the battlefield. After realising that his enemies are his own relatives, beloved friends and revered teachers, he turns to his charioteer and guide Lord Krishna for advice. By responding to Arjunas confusion and moral dilemma, Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior, elaborating on a variety of philosophical concepts.

The Bhagavad Gita is a poem written in the sanskrit language. Its 700 verses are structured into several ancient Indian poetic meters, with the principal being the shloka (Anushtubh chanda). Each shloka consists of a couplet, thus the entire text consists of 1,400 lines.

Each shloka line has two quarter verse with exactly eight syllables. Each of these quarters is further arranged into "two metrical feet of four syllables each", state Flood and Martin. The metered verse does not rhyme. While the shloka is the principal meter in the Gita, it does deploy other elements of Sanskrit prosody. At dramatic moments, it uses the tristubh meter found in the Vedas, where each line of the couplet has two quarter verse with exactly eleven syllables.

Swami Vivekananda also emphasised that the first discourse in the Gita related to the war could be taken allegorically. Vivekananda further remarked, "this Kurukshetra War is only an allegory. When we sum up its esoteric significance, it means the war which is constantly going on within man between the tendencies of good and evil." In Aurobindo's view, Krishna was a historical figure, but his significance in the Gita is as a "symbol of the divine dealings with humanity", while Arjuna typifies a "struggling human soul." Swami Krishnananda regards the characters and the circumstances depicted in the Bhagavad Gita as symbolic of various moods, vicissitudes, and facets of human life. He highlights the universal applicability of the Gita to human life by saying that "It is not the story of some people that lived sometime ago but a characterisation of all people that may live at any time in the history of the world." Swami Chinmayananda writes, "Here in the Bhagavad Gita, we find a practical handbook of instruction on how best we can re-organise our inner ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in our everyday life and draw from ourselves a larger gush of productivity to enrich the life around us, and to emblazon the subjective life within us."

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, in his commentary on the Gita, interprets the battle as "an allegory in which the battlefield is the soul and Arjuna, man's higher impulses struggling against evil." Swami Nikhilananda, takes Arjuna as an allegory of Ātman, Krishna as an allegory of Brahman, Arjuna's chariot as the body. Eknath Easwaran writes "The language of battle is often found in the scriptures, for it conveys the strenuous, long, drawn-out campaign we must wage to free ourselves from the tyranny of the ego, the cause of all our suffering and sorrow". Unlike any other religious scripture, the Bhagavad Gita broadcasts its message in the centre of the battlefield. The choice of such an unholy ambience for the delivery of a philosophical discourse has been an enigma to many commentators.

The Bhagavad Gita is the compilation of Arjuna's questions and moral dilemma, Krishna's answers and insights that elaborate on a variety of philosophical concepts. The compiled dialogue goes far beyond the "a rationale for war", it touches on many human ethical dilemmas, philosophical issues and life's choices. The Gita though set in the war context in a major epic, the narrative is structured for the abstract to all situations; it wrestles with questions about "who we are, how we should live our lives, and how should we act in the world". It deals with "purpose of life, crisis of self-identity, human soul, human temperaments, and ways for spiritual quest".

The Bhagavad Gita is a well-known gospel. Very few might have not heard the name, 'Bhagavad Gita', for it is almost universally accepted as a scripture, not merely in a sense of holiness or sanctity from the point of view of a religious outlook, but as what has been regarded as a guide in our day-to-day life, which need not necessarily mean a so-called religious attitude of any particular denomination. We are likely to read this epic as a story, like a drama or a play, for our diversion and emotional satisfaction. But this epic of which the Bhagavad Gita is an episode is not a story come from a grandmother to a child, though it is narrated in the fashion of a dramatic performance with images and artistic touches of characters which portray the various facets of human thinking and attitude. As I mentioned a little earlier, the message of the Bhagavad Gita is not religious in the common-sense meaning of the term; it does not teach any 'religion', if by religion we mean the so-called faiths of the world that are prevalent today, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam or any sectarian cult, though under an outer cloak we may imagine that it is a Hindu scripture. It is a scripture that has originated in India, may be by an accident or a contextual necessity in the history of the universe. But it is not meant only for the people of India; it is for all people, and for all times. It is, therefore, not a message that Krishna gave to Arjuna so that we can just set it aside as something relevant to those times and not applicable to these days.

Conclusion

The Bhagavad gita is not only spiritual text, but it is fine piece of literature and one of the complete source of knowledge and happiness.

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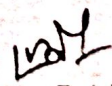
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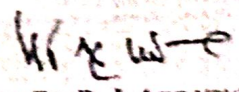
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