

For Bhagavad Gita Hindus: A Guide to the Blessed Path

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1 Disclaimer:

This exploration is profoundly inspired by the Bhagavad Gita and the enlightening teachings of Lord Krishna, embodying the wisdom and insights of ancient sages (Rishis). It's worth noting the words of Lord Krishna, "Whenever righ-

teousness wanes and unrighteousness increases, I send myself forth." (Bhagavad Gita, 4.7). Our humble endeavor is to present these teachings with clarity and fidelity to the authentic essence of Dharma. We earnestly seek guidance and blessings for our efforts to be in line with these revered teachings.

2 Introduction:

Continuous devotion to the Supreme Divine (Brahman) isn't a transient act but demands us to emulate the virtues exemplified by Lord Krishna in all aspects of life. The Bhagavad Gita mentions, "To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me." (Bhagavad Gita, 10.10) Lord Krishna embodies true devotion, underscoring sincerity in every action. Our journey isn't about mere perfection but in earnestly seeking His mercy and guidance. "Knowledge is superior to blind action; meditation is superior to knowledge; renunciation of the fruits of actions, to which meditation leads, is still superior." (Bhagavad Gita, 12.12)

3 Trusting in God's Provision:

The Supreme Divine provides for every being. Every creature, great or small, finds its sustenance from the Universal order. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, "All beings find their sustenance in food, and food is born of rain." (Bhagavad Gita, 3.14) As devotees, when we fully immerse ourselves in devotion with a sincere heart, doors of understanding and wisdom open. "Those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form—to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have." (Bhagavad Gita, 9.22)

This trust and reliance on the Divine are not limited to material provision; it extends to spiritual sustenance and guidance. Lord Krishna emphasizes the significance of righteousness and moral behavior, "One who neither hates nor desires the fruits of his activities is known to be always renounced. Such a person, free from all dualities, easily overcomes material bondage and is completely liberated." (Bhagavad Gita, 5.3) Our righteousness and Dharma are deeply interwoven with our compassion and mercy towards all of creation. To tread this path is to place our complete trust in the Divine's wisdom and decree.

4 Recognizing the Supreme Divine Within and Throughout the Cosmos:

In the vast tapestry of the cosmos, Lord Krishna's omnipresence underscores an intimate connection with every living being. As He pro-

claims, "I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness," (Bhagavad Gita, 15:15). This universe, shimmering with Divine attributes, is not merely an external showcase but a direct manifestation of His cosmic play or Leela. Herein lies the foundational tenet of the non-duality (Advaita) philosophy: that there is an underlying unity between the Divine and the universe. In essence, Advaita, translated as 'not-two', postulates that there is no true separation between the Divine and His creation.

Every aspect of this creation, from towering mountains to meandering rivers, pulsates with His very essence. As He declares, "I am the beginning, middle, and end of creation," (Bhagavad Gita, 10:20). To understand this interconnectedness and unity, we're beckoned to walk the path of Dharma (righteousness) which He represents, "For the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked, for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being age after age," (Bhagavad Gita, 4:8). Our odyssey in life involves discerning the Divine's imprints in all aspects of creation and staunchly adhering to the principles of righteousness. We're reminded: "Among thousands of men, scarcely one strives for perfection; and of those who strive and succeed, scarcely one knows Me in truth," (Bhagavad Gita, 7:3). Each gesture of kindness and reverence we offer is a tribute to Him. As we immerse ourselves in recognizing the divine essence within and around us, we hold steadfast to the wisdom: "Whatever happened, happened for the good. Whatever is happening, is happening for the good. Whatever will happen, will also happen for the good," (Bhagavad Gita). By revering all of creation and recognizing it as an expression of the Supreme Divine — while understanding it is not Him in entirety — we truly fathom the profound teachings of non-duality.

5 Selfless Action, Reverence, and Devotion: Following the Teachings of Krishna

Lord Krishna, with His boundless wisdom, not only encourages us to walk the path of righteousness but also shines a light on the significance of selfless service or Karma Yoga. Central to Karma Yoga is the principle of performing one's duties and actions without attachment to the outcomes or results. Krishna elucidates this concept, saying, "Act without attachment to the fruits of action," (Bhagavad Gita, 2:47), guiding us to act from a space of pure intention and humility.

True service is not merely external actions but is deeply rooted in an inner understanding. Recognizing that every act we perform is infused

with the energy of the Divine empowers us to serve with devotion and sincerity. This understanding is captured in Krishna's words: "I am the strength of the strong, devoid of passion and desire," (Bhagavad Gita, 7:11).

In light of Karma Yoga, autonomy and individual free will are to be respected. Lord Krishna acknowledges the diverse paths that each soul may take, yet He underscores the sanctity of righteous action, emphasizing: "Better is one's own dharma, though imperfectly performed, than another's dharma well performed," (Bhagavad Gita, 18:47). This encourages us to act with integrity, fairness, and equanimity. Doubt can be a deterrent to righteousness, as He clarifies: "There is neither this world, nor the world beyond, nor happiness for the one who doubts," (Bhagavad Gita, 4:40).

Marriage, seen as a divine union in Hinduism, serves as an arena to practice the principles of Karma Yoga. Recognizing and revering the divine essence in our partners fosters a harmonious relationship rooted in mutual respect, guided by the understanding that "The Supreme Divine is seated in the hearts of all," (Bhagavad Gita, 15:15).

The family framework in Hindu tradition holds ample opportunities for practicing selfless service. The reverence shown towards elders, the love shared among kin, and the lessons of dharma all come alive within familial bonds. Krishna's interactions with family members like Arjuna and Balarama in the Mahabharata highlight these values. "Respect for mother, father, and elders is considered the highest duty of the householder." (Mahabharata, Anushasana Parva).

Neighbors and community members provide yet another platform for the expression of Karma Yoga. Embracing diversity and understanding, Hindu teachings consistently encourage treating everyone with respect and compassion. This universal principle is eloquently expressed: "One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of righteousness." (Mahabharata, Shanti Parva 167.9).

The expansive canvas of Krishna's teachings also envelops our relationship with all of creation. His guidance drives us towards a deep reverence for nature and every living entity, as He states: "For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me," (Bhagavad Gita, 6:30). This sentiment underlines the interconnectedness of all beings and elements of nature, reminding us of the divine play (Leela) of Krishna, urging us to care for and honor each facet of creation.

6 Embracing Forgiveness, Love, and Acceptance in Light of the Bhagavad Gita and Hindu Dharma:

Krishna's Infinite Compassion: Our understanding of Lord Krishna's teachings begins with recognizing the unity of all beings in the divine. Among His attributes is infinite compassion. He declares, "To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me." (Bhagavad Gita, 10.10). This divine compassion is guidance for seekers to adopt in their interactions with others.

Prayer for Forgiveness: Being aware of our innate tendencies and human flaws, we consistently turn to the Divine, reflecting upon, "As the ignorant act with attachment to action, O Bharata, so should the wise act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world." (Bhagavad Gita, 3.25). This reflection serves as a reminder of our duty to exercise forgiveness and selflessness towards all beings.

Mandate to Kindness: Upholding kindness and righteousness is at the heart of Dharma. "By non-violence, they proceed towards eternal virtues, while by the renunciation of desires they are freed from bondage." (Bhagavad Gita, 16.2-3). This teaching illuminates the path for seekers, emphasizing the importance of kindness even when faced with challenges.

Love for the Sake of the Divine: The true essence of love in Hinduism is loving all beings as manifestations of the Divine. The great sages have emphasized, "The same Atman dwells in all beings; therefore, one who feels the joys and sorrows of others as one's own is the highest yogi." This teaching underscores the importance of sincere and selfless love among seekers.

The Call to Forgive: As we ardently seek the Divine's guidance and forgiveness, we're also inspired to forgive others. "As a mirror is covered by dust, the intellect gets covered by our own desires and anger. Through steadfastness and self-discipline, one can cleanse the intellect and perceive the unity of all life." (Derived from Bhagavad Gita, 3.38-41). In emulating this divine wisdom, we draw nearer to enlightenment and realization.

Our path in Hindu Dharma, illuminated by the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures, directs us to manifest divine teachings of compassion, love, and forgiveness. This not only deepens our connection with the Divine but also establishes a foundation of unity and oneness with all of creation. By embodying these divine qualities, we align ourselves more closely with the eternal

truths of Dharma.

7 Prioritizing Divine Guidance: Navigating Through Dharmic Tradition

Central Role of Gita: Lord Krishna's teachings stand paramount. He reminds us, "This is the scripture of yoga, the sacred dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna; here is a revelation, a science, and the practice of righteousness" (Bhagavad Gita, 10.2). While the interpretations of ancient sages (Rishis) offer invaluable insight, they must always be aligned with the Gita's teachings. No understanding should overshadow the text's clear directives on the path to Dharma.

The Way of Dharma: Lord Krishna guides Arjuna, saying, "Perform your duty equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called yoga." (Bhagavad Gita, 2.48). Thus, the path of Dharma, as articulated by Lord Krishna, is the primary source of guidance after the Gita.

Role of the Rishis: The ancient sages serve as models due to their profound insights and spiritual wisdom. Their interpretations are taken to understand the primary sources better, not to replace or supersede them. As mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad, "The wise have a firm foundation in spiritual wisdom; they have ascended to the pinnacle of knowledge," (Chandogya Upanishad 7.1.3). However, it is imperative not to elevate any interpretation above Lord Krishna's teachings, for as Krishna himself declares in the Gita, "To those who are constantly devoted and who worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me," (Bhagavad Gita 10.10).

Beware of Blind Following: Respect the wisdom of the Rishis but avoid blind allegiance to any particular interpretation. As the Rigveda suggests, "Let noble thoughts come to us from every side," (Rigveda 1.89.1), indicating the importance of a diverse understanding. Every believer is accountable for their understanding and actions. The pursuit of truth and Dharma requires discernment and personal reflection. As Lord Krishna advises Arjuna in the Gita, "Ascertain the truth by pondering it in your own heart and through discussions with wise people," (Bhagavad Gita 18.63).

Discerning Inner Voices: Every seeker must navigate the dual nature of desires, distinguishing between one's higher self (Atman) and the fleeting desires of the mind. Lord Krishna advises, "The senses are higher than the body; the mind is higher than the senses; the intelligence is higher than the mind; and the Atman is higher than the intelligence." (Bhagavad

Gita, 3.42). Additionally, in the Katha Upanishad, it's mentioned, "The good is one thing; the pleasant is another. These two, having different ends, bind a man. It is well with him who clings to the good; he who chooses the pleasant, misses his end." (Katha Upanishad, 1.2.2). This speaks to the importance of discerning between the transient, pleasant voices of worldly desire and the enduring, good voice of the divine.

Continuous Search for Knowledge: The Bhagavad Gita encourages a continuous quest for understanding, as Lord Krishna declares, "Among thousands of men, scarcely one strives for perfection; and of those who strive and succeed, scarcely one knows Me in truth." (Bhagavad Gita, 7.3). Regular reflection upon the Gita and consultation with wise teachers are essential for deepened comprehension.

Maintaining Unity: While there may be diverse interpretations, the core teachings and beliefs derived from the Gita remain consistent. Embrace the wisdom of the ancient sages and the diversity in understanding that has existed within Hindu scholarship. This diversity, rooted in sincerity and upholding Dharma, strengthens the tapestry of Hindu thought.

In conclusion, the Dharmic tradition seeks authentic practice and understanding. While valuing the guidance of ancient sages and recognizing the need for discernment against potential misunderstandings, allegiance must foremost be to the teachings of the Gita. This balanced approach will help followers remain clear and convicted in their path of faith.

8 Closing: Embracing Dharma, Devotion, and Divine Compassion in the Cycle of Life

Recognizing the Journey of the Soul: The Bhagavad Gita illuminates our understanding of life's transient nature: "Just as one discards old clothes for the new ones, the soul discards old bodies and wears new ones." (Bhagavad Gita, 2.22). Every fleeting moment is a step in the eternal journey of our soul, reminding us of our

sacred role in the cosmic order.

The Path of Self-Realization: Imbibing the teachings of Lord Krishna, the discerning recognize the underlying unity among all beings. "He who perceives Me everywhere and beholds everything in Me never loses sight of Me, nor do I ever lose sight of him." (Bhagavad Gita, 6.30). This underscores the importance of cultivating inner purity, with a heart overflowing with love, compassion, and understanding.

Devotion and Compassion: The Srimad Bhagavatam emphasizes the importance of unwavering Bhakti, stating, "By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world." Recognizing and adoring the Divine presence in all of creation, holding compassion for every being, is a paramount step toward achieving Moksha. This devotion helps us mirror the infinite compassion of Vishnu, paving our path to liberation.

Life's Divine Role: Each one of us is a participant in the grand Lila of the cosmos. Echoing this, the Gita states, "Whatever a great person does, others will follow. Whatever standards they set, the world will pursue." (Bhagavad Gita, 3.21). Being aware of this, we are encouraged to live our lives in alignment with Dharma, reflecting values that uplift ourselves and others.

Harmonizing Actions and Intentions: While we recognize the inevitable cycles of creation and dissolution, our individual journey is intricately woven with our karmas and intentions. The Gita elucidates, "Actions do not bind one who has renounced actions and who is free from doubts through knowledge." (Bhagavad Gita, 4.41). Thus, may we act with discernment, ensuring our hearts resonate with love and our actions reflect Dharma.

To conclude, our temporal existence in this body is just a brief chapter in the vast expanse of our soul's journey. Through unwavering devotion, seeing the Divine in all, and adhering to Dharma, we prepare ourselves for the ultimate union with the Supreme Divine, achieving Moksha.