

"Hinduism as I know it entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being ... When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the *Bhagavad Gita*, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of tragedies and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita.

(Mahatma Gandhi. *Young India*: June 8, 1925)

Krishna This body, Arjuna, is called the field. He who knows the field is called the knower of the field.

Know that I am the knower in all the fields of my creation; and that the wisdom that sees the field and the knower of the field is true wisdom.

Hear from me briefly what the field is and how it is, what its changes are and whence each one comes; who is the knower and who is his power.

[The *Bhagavad Gita*, trans Mascaro, v 13 L 1-2]

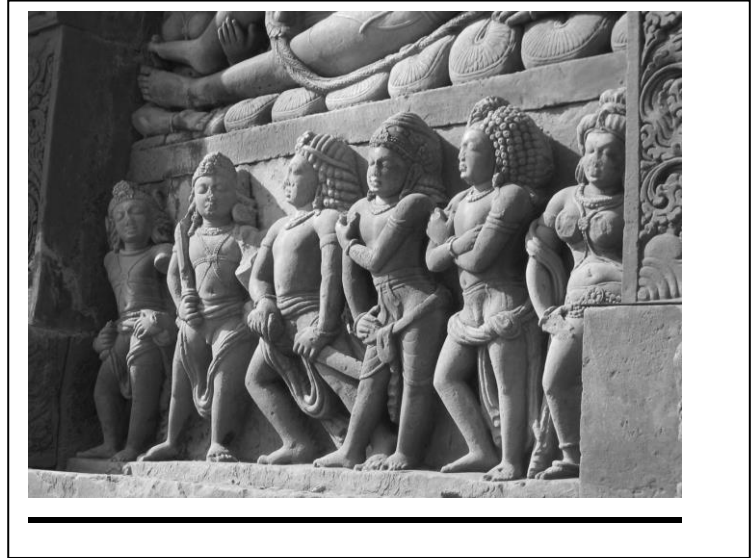
The Bhagavad Gita:

Song of the Lord

rta – means to join properly – refers to that which is properly ‘joined’ or ordered in proportional sequence, sometimes used as rule, truth or lore as in natural order, regulating and coordinating the universe and every zone and thing inside it. It is described in the Rig Veda as a harmony that is manifest in everything but – like the Tao – throughout all as the ground of all form it is inseparable within that all. Thus it links to the Logos of Greek and Christian philosophy.

O Indra, lead us on the path of Rta, on the right path over all evils.
(Rig Veda 10.133.6)

In the Upanishads *rta* or ultimate reality separates into *dharma* and *karma*. These are the individual responsibility or duty – dharma (that which supports or upholds) and the web of action reaction responding to it – *karma*, the universe self balancing and harmonising its natural flow. Our individual *dharma* is therefore what we



must do in this life to harmonise and re-balance the *karma* or universal order that we have disrupted by unbalanced, displaced or negative action. *samsara* is the cycle of births and deaths as the web of consequences from disharmonious living. This can be re-balanced and is ultimately to be escaped as *maya* – non reality - illusion or dream.

Brahman is the universal spirit and Atman is the individual Self. Differing opinions exist amongst scholars regarding the etymology of these words. Brahman probably comes from the root *brh* which means "The Biggest ~ The Greatest ~ The ALL". Brahman is "the infinite Spirit Source and fabric and core and destiny of all existence, both as manifested and unmanifested and the formless infinite substratum and from whom the universe has grown". Brahman is the ultimate, both transcendent and immanent, the absolute infinite existence, the sum total of all that ever is, was, or shall be. The word *Atman* means the immortal perfect Spirit of any living creature, being, including trees etc. The idea put forth by the Upanishadic seers that Atman and Brahman are One and the same is perhaps, one of the great contributions made by Indian philosophy to the thought of the world.

The Gita

Books are like rainbows to be thankfully received in their first impression . . . I owed - my friend and I - owed a magnificent day to the Bhagavat Geeta. It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spake to us, nothing small or unworthy but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us.

(*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. x, p. 360.)

The Gita is a self contained poem, or song, in Sanskrit from circa 400 B.C. , 18 chapters or 700 verses long. It is part of the Mahabharata, (100,000 verses, 1.8 million words) but is readily considered to be able to stand completely separate and alone, so much so that it has been thought to have even been added later or perhaps written separately.

It begins on the battlefield of Kurukshetra with two great opposing armies both drawn from one dynasty, so that close family members are on both sides preparing to battle for supreme rulership over the region.

The ways leading to the delivering union with God are not two, but three – the way of works, the way of knowledge and the way of devotion. In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna instructs Arjuna in all three paths – liberation through action without attachment; liberation through knowledge of the Self and the Absolute Ground of all being with which it is identical; and liberation through intense devotion to the personal God or the divine incarnation.

(Aldous Huxley, Per. Phil. p148)

How, O Krishna, shall I fight in battle with arrows against Bhishma and Drona, who are fit to be worshipped, O destroyer of enemies? Better it is, indeed, in this world to accept alms than to slay the most noble teachers. But if I kill them, even in this world all my enjoyments of wealth and desires will be stained with blood. I can hardly tell which will be better: that we should conquer them, or they should conquer us. My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity, my mind is confused as to duty. I do not see that it would remove this sorrow that burns up my senses even if I should attain prosperous and unrivalled dominion on earth or lordship over the gods. I will not fight.”

Below is an abridged version of an arrangement of verses of the Bhagavad Gita made by Sri Ramana Maharshi that gives an overview of the essential message of the Gita

.1)

To him who was thus overcome
By pity, and whose eyes were filled
With tears, downcast and despairing,
Madhusudana spoke these words: (2:1)

2)

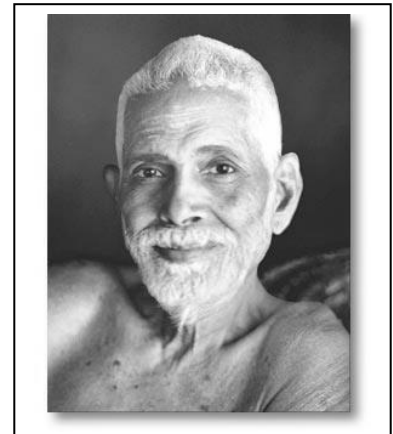
This body is known as the Field,
And he who knows it thus is called
The Knower of the Field by those
Who know of both Field and Knower. (13:1)

3) Know Me also, O Bharata,
To be the Knower in all Fields.
The knowledge of Field and Knower
I consider as the knowledge. (13:2)

4) I am the Self abiding in
The heart of all beings; I am
The beginning, the middle, and
Also the end of all beings. (10:20)2

5) Of that which is born, death is sure,
Of that which is dead, birth is sure.
Over the unavoidable,
Therefore you never should lament. (2:27)

6) Neither is the Self slain, nor yet does it die,
Nor having been will it e'er come not to be,
Birthless, eternal, perpetu'l, primeval,
It is not slain when'er the body is slain. (2:20)



7) This self cannot be cut, nor burnt,
Nor wetted, nor dried: 'tis changeless,
All-pervading and unmoving,
Immovable, eternal self. (2:24)

8) That by Which all is pervaded'
Know That is indestructible.
There is none with the power to
Destroy the Imperishable. (2:17)

9) The unreal never comes to be,
The real does never cease to be.
The certainty of both of these
Is known to those who see the truth. (2:16)

22) Above the body are senses;
Above the senses is the mind;
Above the mind is intellect;
Above the intellect: the self. (3:42)

23) Thus, knowing Him Who is above
The intellect, and restraining
The self by the Self, then destroy

That enemy, that foe: desire. (3:43)



24) As fire reduces wood to ash,
In the same way, O Arjuna,
The fire of knowledge does reduce
To ashes all karma' know this. (4:37)

25) Whose undertakings are devoid
Of plan and desire for results,
Whose actions are burnt in the fire
Of knowledge' him the wise call wise.
(4:19)

26) Released from desire and anger,

With thoughts restrained, those ascetics
Who know the Self, find very near
The bliss of Brahma-nirvana. (5:26)

27) With intellect set in patience,
With the mind fastened on the self,
He gains quietude by degrees:
Let him not think of any thing. (6:25)

28) Whenever the unsteady mind,
Moving here and there, wanders off,
He should subdue and hold it back'
Direct it to the Self's control. (6:26)

29) Controlling sense, mind, intellect;
With moksha as the supreme goal;
Freed from desire, fear, and anger:
Such a sage is for ever free. (5:28)

35) He who abandons all desires
Attains peace, acts free from longing,
Indifferent to possessions
And free from all egotism. [3](#) (2:71)

36) He who agitates not the world,
And whom the world agitates not,
Who is freed from joy, envy, fear,
And worry'he is dear to Me. (12:15)

37) The same in honor and disgrace,
The same to friend and enemy,
Renouncing all undertakings'
He has gone beyond the Gunas. (14:25)

38) He who is content in the Self,
Who is satisfied in the Self,
Who is pleased only in the self:
For him there is no need to act. (3:17)

39) He has nothing to gain by acts;
Nothing to gain by inaction;
And no need of any being
For any purpose ever. (3:18)

40) Content with what comes unbidden,
Beyond duality, envy,
The same in success or failure,
E'en though acting, he is not bound. (4:22)

41) O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in
The hearts of all beings, causing
Them by His Maya to revolve
As if mounted on a machine. (18:61)

42) O Bharata, with all your heart
Take refuge in Him; and you shall
Surely attain unto supreme
Peace and the eternal abode.

Krishna reveals himself as God to Arjuna in ch 11

See now the whole universe with all things that move
and move not, and whatever thy soul may yearn to see,
see it all as one in me. . . .

The light of a thousand suns suddenly arose in the sky,
and Arjuna saw in that radiance the whole universe in
its variety, standing in a vast unity in the body of the
God of gods. . . .



I see thee without beginning, middle or end; I behold thy infinite power, the power of
innumerable arms. I see thine eyes as the sun and moon. And I see thy face as a sacred fire
that gives light and life to the whole universe in the splendour of a vast offering.

But Huxley specifically draws our attention also to this next aspect ;
Ah my God I see all gods within your body; Each in his degree, the multitude of creatures;
See Lord Brahma seated upon his lotus, See all the sages and the holy serpents.

Now with frightful tusks your mouths are gnashing, Flaring like the fires of doomsday
morning.

North South, east and west seem all confounded, Lord of devas, world's abode have mercy . .

. Swift as many rivers streaming to the ocean, Rush the heroes to your fiery gullets,
Moth like to meet the flame of their destruction. Headlong these plunge into you and perish .

..

Tell me who you are, and where from the beginning. You of aspect grim, be gracious.
Take my homage, Lord From me your ways are hidden.

I am come as time, the waster of all peoples, ready for the hour that ripens to their ruin...

God who is spirit can only be worshipped in spirit and for his own sake; but God in time is normally worshipped by material means with a view to achieving temporal ends. God in time is manifestly the destroyer as well as the creator; and because this is so, it has seemed proper to worship him by methods which are as terrible as the destruction he himself inflicts. Hence in India, the blood sacrifices to Kali in her aspect of 'Nature - as - Destroyer'; hence the offerings of the children to the Molochs so denounced by the Hebrew prophets, and hence the human sacrifices practised, for example, by the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Druids, the Aztecs. In all such cases the divinity addressed was a god in time or a personification of Nature, which is nothing other than Time itself the devourer of her own offspring; and in all cases the purpose of the rite was to obtain a future benefit or to avoid one of the enormous evils which Time and Nature ever hold in store. [Per.Phil. p191]

