

International Seminar
on
Universal Welfare and the Eternal
Philosophy of Bhagavad Gita

3rd to 5th December 2019

REPORT



KURUKSHETRA UNIVERSITY KURUKSHETRA

(Established by the State Legislature Act XII of 1956)

('A+' Grade, NAAC Accredited)

4th International Gita Seminar (3-5 December, 2019)

REPORT

Rejuvenated by the benevolent sun and pleasant winter of November, the pious land of Kurukshetra once again experienced the footsteps of tourists, artists, scholars, connoisseurs, knowledge-seekers and all those who witnessed the grandeur of International Gita Mahotsav held from 23rd November to 10th December, 2019 on the banks of Brahma Sarovar. During the festival, Kurukshetra University, the glorious gem of the city, organized 4th international seminar on the theme 'Universal Welfare and the Eternal Philosophy of Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita' from 3 to 5 December, 2019. The theme inspired to have a look on serious global issues of today's era and seek for their sustainable solutions with keen foresightedness of the scholars. The aim of the seminar was to spread the welfare philosophy of Gita among the people, especially the youth in order to attain a long lasting influence of the teachings of lord Krishna. To achieve this outcome, a special session 'open House' (*Gita - Sansad*) was introduced for the first time in the seminar to involve undergraduate and postgraduate students so that they become motivated to study and understand the auspicious scripture and become more mature and wiser citizens.

Inaugurated by Hon'ble Governor of Haryana, Sh. Satya Dev Narayan Arya and graced by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttarakhand , Sh. Trivendra Singh Ravat and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, Sh. Manohar Lal Khattar, the seminar

received representation of scholars from various disciplines from all the globe, researchers of different fields and students from all streams. The seminar was divided into eight technical sessions along with Inaugural and valedictory sessions and was concluded as a multi-disciplinary event having wider social impact. Renowned international and national speakers of Gita were invited as resource persons in the seminar to deliver lectures. Funded by the Govt. of Haryana, it ended as a mega academic event touching the heights as well as the depth of the message of Gita. An outcome based report of different sub-themes and sessions is as follows:

International Perspective on Bhagavad Gita

We all know that Gita is one of the most widely - read scriptures of the world. It has been translated into many languages and has been commented upon by the scholars of various religions and streams. A panel discussions of foreign scholars was organized in order to achieve a general perception about how Gita is understood in other countries. The discussion led to the conclusion that Gita is a great scripture which can inculcate among people a deep sense of duty, dedication, devotion, highest quality of self-discipline and above all a vision of comprehensiveness in place of individuality. The scholars were of the view that the philosophy of Gita is the only way out today to attain global peace because it teaches us to live in harmony, to think about larger interest and to act for universal welfare.

Music and Bhagavad Gita

Indian music could not remain uninfluenced by our ancient *granthas* like Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Gita. „Shrimadbhagavad Gita“ means the divine song sung by lord Krishna himself which inspires us to lead a life full of devotion, action and knowledge. The path of devotion has great impact on our traditional music. Similarly music too has a remarkable contribution towards the growth of bhakti cult and philosophy in India. The message of Gita is best conveyed through musical compositions like *bhajans* and songs because music helps in concentration and gives peace of mind. The interrelationship of music and Gita can also be known if we look upon the names of some modern Ragas which are named after the various titles of Lord Krishna such as kanhara, Bihari, Shyam Kalyan, Mohan Kalyan , Krishna Kalyan , Govardhani Todi and so on . Here are some main points that were discussed in the seminar related with the above theme-

(a) Music and spirituality: Indian traditional music plays a key role in spreading spirituality of our Vedic culture since music is above the differences of caste, race, religion etc. It has the capacity to unite people together as well as to unite them with one supreme God.

(B) Globalization of Bhagavad Gita through Music: Gita *shlokas* when sung in musical manner and heard by the people of far away places, become popular among the scholars as well as the folks. To attain this popularity, Gita shlokas are

chanted by a big number of school children during Gita Mohatsav and this has become an important feature of the festival since many years.

(C) Stress release through Bhagavadgita and Music: In today's world people are stressed up due to higher level of expectations from themselves and many other reasons. In Shrimad Bhagvad Gita , Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to leave everything upon God and just do his duty. The important thing is performing your duties without worrying about the results. This message conveyed with music helps in stress-release.

Self-Engineering and Philosophy of Bhagavad-Gita

The concept of righteousness in Gita leads a man towards holistic approach in every field of life. He gets rid of his tendencies of hoarding and over exploiting the resources. Gita teaches us the ways and means to live healthy and happy life by cleaning the mental pollution caused by materialism and competition. It engineers our „Self“ to make us a wise and contented person rather than being greedy and over ambitious. It teaches us universal brotherhood. Following points emerged under this theme in the seminar: -

(a) Stability of mind: In the second chapter of Gita lord Krishna defines the meaning of '*sthita-prajna*' or a person with controlled and stable mind. Bhagavad-Gita is a combination of both *para* and *apara vidya* (worldly knowledge and highest knowledge) as described in *Mundakopanishad*. Hence it is capable to make a balance or an equilibrium between body, mind and soul. Such a balanced and

stable person is called '*sthitaprajna*' who knows what action and when should he perform.

(b) Skill Development: Gita gives the concept of developing mental skills defining it as yoga (*Yogah karmasu kaushalam*). A person has two type of sentiments called Geo sentiment - love for territorial affinity and socio sentiment - love for caste, community and religion. Both need to be controlled by adopting combat strategies like patience, controlling desires, devotion to God, performing good actions through knowledge of three pulling forces, *sattva, rajas and tamas*.

(c) Right leadership: Right leadership is the forever need of the world and Gita provides the best leadership model. Man can improve his leadership qualities with the role model of lord Krishna who took the lead in Mahabharata when the question of universal welfare was in difficulty.

(d) Community mobilization: Gita is capable to create intrinsic and social motivation for philanthropic purposes, thereby mobilizing community services. Community mobilization is a pre requisite for any desirable development of society. The values imbibed in Gita perceived from the philanthropic context tend to make us effective facilitators.

(e) Work life balance: Inculcation of inner engineering through Gita can pave the way for sustainable happiness and balance between work and life. Today, people work for long hours to earn lot of money and forget to give time to themselves and their family. In the end they become frustrated lots due to unrest. Gita teaches us

not to go beyond one's limits and be satisfied with whatever prosperity does one have.

(f) Yoga and Pranayama: Indian philosophy lays stress upon both physical and mental repair because only a healthy person can think positively and for the benefit of the entire universe. Gita prescribes yoga, pranayama and meditation for physical and mental healing. In the sixth chapter of Gita, lord Krishna says that a person who has control over meals, entertainment, action, sleep etc. achieves that state of yoga where there is no suffering.

(g) Extremism versus minimalism: Today extremism seems to prevail in every walk of life. People want everything in bundles, but Gita teaches us to use minimum resources for livelihood. Gita follows our Vedic concept of enjoying life without possessiveness for things. In nutshell Gita is the best building material for engineering the Self.

Gita as perceived by commentators

As we know that Gita has a large number of commentaries written by Sanskrit scholars as well as scholars of other languages, its study is incomplete if we do not understand the commentators' perspective. Though Gita philosophy is related to our Upanishads and Vedanta philosophy yet with the perception of the commentators, it is said to belong to four different streams of Vedantic thought:

(1) *Shaiva* philosophy on the basis of *Gitarthasangraha* of Abhinavagupta & another one of Anandavardhan , (II) *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy on the basis of

commentaries of Shankaracharya , Madhusudan and Shridhara (III) *Vishishtadvaita* on the basis of the commentaries of Ramanujacharya and Yamunacharya and (IV) Shuddhadvaita on the basis of commentary of Vallabhacharya. Apart from these Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Lokmanya Tilak, Vinoba Bhave, Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo and many modern Indian thinkers wrote commentaries on Gita from their own point of view.

(a) Transforming the era and Bhagavad-Gita:- Gita's transcendental philosophy is capable to bring positive changes in the world. It gives the world the ideals of dharma and Nyaya, truth and devotion. It is because of Gita that the whole world is looking towards our ancient wisdom to bring universal peace and harmony and considering India as „*Vishva guru*’.

(b) From Extrospection to Introspection: Gita guides us to return to spirituality or *adhayatma* where the question „who am I“ may be solved. The outside world appeals to us a lot but being impermanent it gives us sorrows, whereas the inner world being permanent takes us to liberation.

(c) Emotional Intelligence: The teachings of lord Krishna help us to become emotionally wise to handle disturbing situations. Arjuna's despondency is removed when he understands the fundamental truth that we live in delusion if we think we can overcome death. Death of physical body is unchangeable while the soul never

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dies and is real. Moreover, Gita helps in developing our mindset in such a manner that we act with foresightedness having a vision and mission.

(d) Importance of Bhakti: Lord Krishna describes Bhakti (devotion) with *ananya* (no other thought except God) and *sharanagata* (be dependent upon god) to achieve highest spiritual goal. Faith and devotion are key components of a healthy society.

(e) Gita and Environment: In the tenth chapter of Gita, excellence of everything called as '*vibhuti*' of lord Krishna such as *peepal* among the trees (*vrkshana* *ashvattho'ham*), *Ganga* among the rivers, *Himalaya* among the mountains and so on. Knowing this we must learn to respect nature and all beings in order to save the future for our next generations.

Open House

A Special session for Youth was introduced this year in which students were supposed to present papers or participate in discussions over the issues concerning youth like education, self-employment, stress management etc. under the theme "Self-organizing: The Bhagavad-Gita perspective". A Team of students of various departments organized the event and brought some conclusions as below:

- (a) Gita must be read to understand and develop creativity among students. Creativity includes sensitivity, flexibility, coherence, organizing ability and swot analysis.
- (b) Gita must be included in the syllabus as a Compulsory paper in all streams.

(c) Youth of the nation must learn lessons from the example of Arjuna and should not be emotionally weak. They should rather be strong enough to stand against social stigma like dowry, sexual harassment and other social abuses.

Bhagavadgita for Psychological well-being

Universal welfare being the main theme of the seminar, it becomes imperative to deliberate upon the well-being of all. The convenience and comforts provided by material world does not guarantee psychological well-being to the human beings. The vicious cycle of more and more material things distracts us from mental peace and bliss which results in sufferings and chaos.

(a) Counseling and Bhagavadgita: In this context various authors have contributed to discuss and highlight the directive counseling and practical lessons of high relevance as provided by Bhagavad Gita to fight psychological collapse and establish peace and harmony at interpersonal & personal levels. Bhagavad Gita is not only meant for spiritual aspirants but also provide lessons to regulate our daily life and conduct.

(b) Bhagavadgita as spiritual guide: It teaches us how to cope with pain and pleasures of life leading to creation of peaceful and stress free state of mind. Bhagavad Gita guides us how to overcome the enemies of our soul, to attain the ways to contentment & serenity, peace of mind, self-mastery over one's desires and emotions and hence ultimately leading to psychological well-being. The Bhagavad Gita is a true spiritual guide which provides answers to all the dilemmas

& questions of human life. Research contributors in the seminar discussed various verses of Bhagavad Gita emphasizing to develop a positive attitude so as to have emotionally and psychologically rich life.

Business Disruptions and Transformations: Solutions from Bhagavad Gita

In the modern world, business organizations keep on facing new challenges as well as opportunities which may result in wide variety of significant transformations. Business disruptions have become normal feature of corporate sector nowadays, may it be under compulsion or by choice, which may further create upheavals leading to inefficiencies and mismanagement. Today's corporate world is getting involved into conducting workshops and training sessions on motivation, leadership, time management and stress management for the benefit of their employees.

(a) **Modern Management and Gita:** Dedicated and efficient manpower being one of the valuable assets of an organization, the philosophy of Bhagavad Gita constitutes the various concepts of modern management like mission, vision, motivation, excellence in work, goal achievement, time planning and decision making. It can play a significant role in handling the turmoil and uncertainty resulting out of business disruptions and transformations.

(b) **The Notion of Corporate Social Responsibility:** Scholarly articles and research papers related to the above said theme have analyzed the effective

blueprint for owners, managers, their actions, orientation, duties and responsibilities towards self, subordinates and towards organization for accomplishment of its vision and mission, in light of the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita. They have also discussed the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility(CSR) - an ethical notion, being inherent in teachings of Bhagavad Gita. Practicing the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita in day to day life provides the future course of action thereby leading to adoption of various characteristics which may help in combating disruptions and transformations in business.

(c) Organizational Skills: The authors have also highlighted the various verses of Bhagavad Gita providing key directions to attain good leadership qualities and achieve higher level of virtuous action at individual as well as corporate level. Adopting the teachings of Bhagavad Gita can redefine the way with which organization work with different and exemplary perspective, thereby transforming the organization towards excellence of the highest order.

Apart from the above said sub-themes, many other academicians and researchers have contributed their papers on various topics like extremism & its solutions, woman entrepreneurship, global recession, welfare economics, tourism, theology, role of education, emotional intelligence, stress management, ecological consciousness etc. in relation to Bhagavad Gita. All the contributors have analyzed and highlighted the significance of the teachings of Bhagavad Gita in solving varied problems that the world faces from time to time. Bhagavad Gita is India's

most divine gift to mankind & its teachings are apparently so universally human & significant to all ages and cultures. It constitutes knowledge and practices to provide lasting and sustainable solutions for wellbeing of all.

The Seminar concluded with notable remarks of hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Dr. Kailash Chandra Sharma that the purpose of holding this seminar is to spread a message of harmony and world peace among people of different backgrounds who meet and discuss various universal issues and develop an insight of universal welfare philosophy of Bhagavad Gita. International Gita Seminar is a very successful event of the University because various departments are involved to organize the technical sessions and the resource persons too are from variety of thrust areas. I am hopeful that this time also it will certainly conclude to create Gita's global influence regarding Universal Welfare in the present day scenario. The Vice Chancellor congratulated the organizing committee for its success.

Compiled by:

Prof. Vibha Aggarwal

Dr. Khushwinder Kaur



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