

Introduction to Bhagavad Gita #1

BG and Vedanta are not separate—they're one and the same.

Review previous classes—this information builds upon previous lessons on Vedanta

Review: Sources of our spiritual knowledge (See Tenets of Hinduism)

1. Śruti: Vedas

- *Karma kanda*: pure action; acquiring something you don't already have. Normal way of doing karma.
- *Jñāna kanda*: For people who understand about spiritual progress, Vedas and BG point out you need to view life slightly differently: view accomplishments that are already accomplished. Praptasya Prapti. Source of happiness is not outside of you.

2. Smṛiti: Bhagavad Gita

- Translates the Vedas for us.
- Same topic as Vedanta but specializes teaching Vedanta to an active householder.

4 Ashrama/stages of ones life (each 25 years). Infrastructure for making progress:

1. **Brahmacaryam**: Life of study. Children should study without encumbrances (not have to earn money). Dependent upon somebody else.
2. ****Grihastha**: Householder. What Gita focuses on.
 - Translate what you have learned into some profession. Develop a family.
 - Conflicts/competition are a big part of this stage. Life is like winning a war.
3. **Vanaprastha**: Retirement: starting to disengage
 - Lessening conflict and attachments. Key element of conduct w/others is friendship, not attachment. Start to treat your spouse/children as friends.
4. **Sannyasa**: Internal renunciation. Stage of independence—another source of solace/peace.

If you study a lot but don't complete understanding before the body falls, chances are in the next life you will not even enter into *grihastha*. You'll remain alone and become *sannyasi* from the very beginning.

BHAGAVAD GITA

A treatise specifically mentioned for *Grihastha Ashrama*

Set-up

Gita is meant for one who is a good person, friendly and ethical, but who is still not happy. Gita is not meant for one who is unethical—who lies, cheats, and is angry.

The character of Arjuna fits this profile: he is a good person, but is not happy. He is facing a warlike situation w/immense pressure to make decisions. He is conflicted:

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- He is the leader of the Pandavas, who are good people. He's protecting their *dharmas*/righteousness;
- But the Kauravas he is fighting are also the wise teachers who have taught Arjuna all the skills he has!
- So... who does he protect?

Kṛṣṇa is a very successful king and wise person, an *avatara* of *Īśvara*, and is here to fulfill certain things. Both Duryodhana (leader of Kauravas) and Arjuna approach Kṛṣṇa for help. Kṛṣṇa was asleep and Arjuna was the first person he saw upon waking. And so, Arjuna gets to make the first choice: one gets Kṛṣṇa as an advisor, the other gets Kṛṣṇa's entire army. Arjuna chooses Kṛṣṇa without even blinking.

Lesson: Go for wisdom (Kṛṣṇa's counsel) over accomplishments/power (the huge army). Wisdom here: inquire—is this giving you happiness?

Focus: think, rather than do.

Structure of the Gita

18 Chapters

Ch. 1-6 Highlight *jīva*/individual/microcosm

Ch. 7-12 Highlight *paramātma*/macrocosm

Ch. 13-18 Highlight identity b/t *tvam* and *tat*

Fundamental lesson/*tātparyā* (same as the Vedas), the *mahāvākya*: ***tat tvam asi***.
You and That are one and the same.

Tat = That. Something which might not be clear to you, but you will see eventually.

Tvam = You. Living person. What God is. Microcosm = macrocosm.

Asi = Are.

Gita is the solution to an equation—one which doesn't appear the same, but upon solving becomes equal. *Jivātma* = *Paramātma*. The seemingly enclosed room space = total space.

Essence of the Gita: You think yourself to be a limited person, but that is not true. Your identity is focused on 4 walls and viewing yourself w/limitations that are not yours. Instead, see yourself to be *paramātma*, total space (walls included in the space—does not limit the space). It's a shift in identity. *Praptasya Prapti*.

Chapter 1 - Ch. 2, verse 10

Defines context of the Gita. The story of Pandavas and Kauravas and Arjuna's pain. The topic of Arjuna's conflict: *vishada yoga* (*yoga* = topic)

Chapter 2, verse 11

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Beginning of teaching. Serves as a bookend, along w/Ch. 18. These 2 bookends are summaries of the whole Bhagavad Gita (Tell them what you'll talk about→talk about it→summarize in the end).

Arjuna takes off armor and tells Kṛṣṇa he's not doing it, then asks Kṛṣṇa to lead him. Unless a person asks for this knowledge, don't give it to them. But if someone asks for it, you'd better give it to them! Arjuna tells Kṛṣṇa, "I am your student," to which Kṛṣṇa admonishes him with feigned anger and calls him a fool.

Chapters 3-17

Goes into details.

Chapter 18

Words only meaningful if you study the other 17 chapters. Bookend w/Ch. 2.

*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śharaṇam vraja
aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣhayiṣhyāmi mā śhuchaḥ* (Ch. 18, v. 66)

Instead of focusing on external accomplishments, trust yourself that you alone are enough to give you happiness. You are the source of happiness.

2 Elements to keep in mind throughout:

1. **Viveka:** particular form of thinking involved in distinguishing 2 things that look alike. Different from *vicāra*, general thinking (politics, etc.). Multiplicity of things brought into binary format.

We need to develop a heightened sense of *viveka* (e.g., watching a movie and knowing it's just a movie; dog getting confused when seeing reflection in mirror).

My giving reality to the world is due to a lack of *viveka*. The world is a lower reality than me. Misplaced reality, like thinking you're a wave but you're the water.

2. **Vairāgya:** Ability to make sure the *viveka* is effective. A "self-test."

A confirmation that you have *viveka*: I understand the difference b/t higher and lower reality given in my mind-body complex. If I don't understand it yet, at least I'm aiming towards it.

Vairāgya will show if you don't have *viveka* yet.

EX: Häagen-Dazs ice cream every time you pass the shop—provides relief, but only for 10 minutes.

Litmus test of *vairāgyam*: Is my joy coming dependently from myself, or do I depend on outside things that are controlling me? If I have to do fewer things to be happy, I'm making progress.

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Ch. 2.54 A: How do I recognize a realized person? What does he look like?

K: Ridiculous way to understand—it doesn't matter. When you are dependent on outside thoughts/things, you don't have an understanding of the freedom you are... yet. But once you do... it doesn't matter what the outer looks like. It's your inner freedom. This is called inner renunciation.

Doesn't mean run off to an ashram! That life isn't easy—and external *sannyasa* doesn't mean anything. Again, outer renunciation is not important. It is the inner renunciation that matters.