



MIND MANAGEMENT IN BHAGAVAD GITA

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Abstract: *The Bhagavad Gita (known as Gita) means “Song of God” in Sanskrit. It is perhaps the most famous, and definitely the most widely-read, ethical text of ancient India (written approximately 500-200 BC). As an episode in India’s great epic, the Mahabharata, The Bhagavad Gita now ranks as one of the three principal texts that define and capture the essence of Hinduism; the other two being the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. This 700-verse Hindu scripture is a very comprehensive compendium of the whole Vedic tradition and it is considered to be one of the most important texts in the history of literature and philosophy.*

The teacher of the Bhagavad Gita is Lord Krishna, who is revered by Hindus as a manifestation of God (Parabrahman) Himself, and is referred to within as Bhagavan, the Divine One.

Key words: *Bhagavad Gita - sage Veda Vyasa --ancient India- the essence of Hinduism- Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras- Vedic tradition- Lord Krishna- Arjuna.*

1. Introduction :

The Bhagavad Gita (known as Gita) means “Song of God” in Sanskrit. It is perhaps the most famous, and definitely the most widely-read, ethical text of ancient India (written approximately 500-200 BC). As an episode in India’s great epic, the Mahabharata, The Bhagavad Gita now ranks as one of the three principal texts that define and capture the essence of Hinduism; the other two being the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. This 700-verse Hindu scripture is a very comprehensive compendium of the whole Vedic tradition and it is considered to be one of the most important texts in the history of literature and philosophy.

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The context of the Gita is a conversation between Lord Krishna and the Pandava prince Arjuna taking place on the battlefield before the start of the Kurukshetra War. Responding to Arjuna’s confusion and moral dilemma about fighting his own cousins who command a tyranny imposed on a captured State, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and prince, and elaborates on different Yogic and Vedantic philosophies, with examples and analogies. This has led to the Gita often being described as a concise guide to Hindu theology and also as a practical, self-contained guide to life. During the discourse, Lord Krishna reveals His identity as the Supreme Being Himself (Svayam Bhagavan), blessing Arjuna with an awe-inspiring vision of His divine universal form.

The direct audience to Lord Krishna’s discourse of the Bhagavad Gita included Arjuna (addressee), Sanjaya (using Divya Drishti (or divine vision) gifted by the sage Veda Vyasa to watch the war and narrate the events to Dhritarashtra), Lord Hanuman (perched atop Arjuna’s chariot) and Barbarika, son of Ghatotkacha, who also witnessed the complete 18 days of action at Kurukshetra. One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is Holy Gita which is considered to be one of the first revelations from God. The spiritual philosophy and management lessons in this holy book were brought in to light of the world by many great Indian saint’s effort and they call the Bhagavad-Gita the essence of Vedic Literature and a complete guide to practical life. It provides “all that is

needed to raise the consciousness of man to the highest possible level” and Self improvement means self guided improvement in physical, mental, social spiritual and emotion.

The Bhagavadgita puts a great emphasis on the control of the mind. The mind is likened to the sixth sense, and described as fickle and unstable by nature. As an aspect of Nature, the human mind personifies the phenomenal world, its impermanence and instability.

In Bagavat Gita Arjuna compares the mind to wind and says:

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥ ¹

Arjun speaks for us all when he describes the troublesome mind. It is restless because it keeps flitting in different directions, from subject to subject. It is turbulent because it creates upheavals in one’s consciousness, in the form of hatred, anger, lust, greed, envy, anxiety, fear, attachment, etc. It is strong because it overpowers the intellect with its vigorous currents and destroys the faculty of discrimination. The mind is also obstinate because when it catches a harmful thought, it refuses to let go, and continues to ruminate over it again and again, even to the dismay of the intellect. Thus enumerating its unwholesome characteristics, Arjun declares that the mind is even more difficult to control than the wind. It is a powerful analogy for no one can ever think of controlling the mighty wind in the sky.

And then, Lord Krishna concurs:

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥ ²

Shree Krishna responds to Arjun’s comment by calling him Mahābāho, which means “Mighty armed one.” He implies, “O Arjun, you defeated the bravest warriors in battle. Can you not defeat the mind?”

Shree Krishna does not deny the problem, by saying, “Arjun, what nonsense are you speaking? The mind can be controlled very easily.” Rather, he agrees with Arjun’s statement that the mind is indeed difficult to control. However, so many things are difficult to achieve in the world and yet we remain undaunted and move forward. For example, sailors know that the sea is dangerous and the possibility of terrible storms exists. Yet, they have never found those dangers as sufficient reasons for remaining ashore. Hence, Shree Krishna assures Arjun that the mind can be controlled by vairāgya and abhyās.

Vairāgya means detachment. We observe that the mind runs toward the objects of its attachment, toward the direction it has been habituated to running in the past. The elimination of attachment eradicates the unnecessary wanderings of the mind.

Abhyās means practice, or a concerted and persistent effort to change an old habit or develop a new one. Practice is a very important word for sādhas. In all fields of human endeavor, practice is the key that opens the door to mastery and excellence. Take, for example, a mundane activity such as typing. The first time people begin typing, they are able to type one word in a minute. But after a year’s typing, their fingers fly on the keyboard at the speed of eighty words a minute. This proficiency comes solely through practice. Similarly, the obstinate and turbulent mind has to be made to rest on the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord through abhyās. Take the mind away from the world—this is vairāgya—and bring the mind to rest on God—this is abhyās. Sage Patanjali gives the same instruction:

abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ ³

“The perturbations of the mind can be controlled by constant practice and detachment.”

2. Senses Make the Mind Restless :

The restlessness of the mind is caused by the activity of the senses which bind the mind to the sense objects through desire. So the mind cannot be stabilized unless the senses are controlled and the mind is detached from the sense-objects through the cultivation of detachment or "vairagya." We come across this prescription in the following verses.

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥
विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥
विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥
यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥
तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ।
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥
ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
सङ्गात्सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥
क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥
रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।
आत्मवश्यैर्विधियात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥⁴

Attempting to quench the cravings of the senses by supplying them with their desired objects is like trying to douse a fire by pouring clarified butter on it. The fire may be smothered for a moment, but then it flares up with redoubled intensity. Hence, the Śhrīmad Bhāgavatam states that desires never go away when they are fulfilled; they only come back more strongly:

**na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogena śhānyati
haviṣhā kṛiṣṇa-vartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate** ⁵

“Fulfilling the desires of the senses does not extinguish them, just as offering oblations of butter in the fire does not extinguish it; instead, it makes the fire blaze even stronger.”

These desires can be compared to an itch in the body. The itch is troublesome and creates an irresistible urge to scratch. But scratching does not solve the problem. For a few moments, there is relief, and then the itch returns with greater force. Instead, if someone can tolerate the itch for some time, it begins losing its sting, and dies down slowly. That is the secret for getting peace from the itch. The same logic applies to desires as well. The mind and senses throw up myriad desires for happiness, but as long as we are in the game of fulfilling them, happiness remains illusory, like the mirage. But when we learn to discard all these desires, to find happiness in God, the mind and senses make peace with us.

So an enlightened sage intelligently masters the senses and the mind. The illustration used in this verse is that of the turtle. Whenever it encounters danger, the turtle protects itself by drawing its limbs and head inside its shell. After the danger passes, the turtle again extracts its limbs and head and continues on its way. The enlightened soul possesses similar control over the mind and senses and can retract and extract them according to the needs of the situation.

When one gives up eating, as in a fast, the desires of the senses become feeble. Similarly, in sickness one loses interest toward the objects of enjoyment. These states of dispassion are temporary, for the seed of desire remains within the mind. Again when the fast is terminated or the sickness goes away, the desires return.

What is this seed of desire? It is the intrinsic nature of the soul for the divine bliss of God, of whom it is a tiny fragment. Until it gets that divine bliss, the soul can never be contented, and the search for happiness will continue. Sādhaks (spiritual aspirants) may forcibly restrain their senses with their will power, but such restraint is temporary because it does not extinguish the internal flame of desire. However, when the soul engages in devotion toward God, and gets divine bliss, it experiences the higher taste for which it had been craving since infinite lifetimes.

raso vai saḥ rasam hyevāyam labdhvā 'nandī bhavati . ⁶

“God is all-bliss. When the soul attains God, it becomes satiated in bliss.” Then, one naturally develops dispassion toward the lower sensual pleasures. This detachment that comes through devotion is firm and unshakeable.

Thus, the Bhagavad Gita does not teach a dry suppression of desires, instead it teaches the beautiful path of sublimation of desires by directing them toward God. The senses are like wild horses that have been newly harnessed. They are impetuous and reckless, and hence, disciplining them is an important battle that sādhas have to fight within themselves. Therefore, those desirous of spiritual growth should carefully strive to tame the indulgent senses, which are colored with lust and greed, or else they have the power to sabotage and derail the spiritual process of even the most well-intentioned yogis.

The word yuktaḥ (united) indicates “absorption in devotion,” and mat paraḥ means “toward Lord Krishna.” The word āsīta (seated) may be understood figuratively here to mean “situated or established.” Having said that the impetuous mind and senses need to be tamed, Shree Krishna now reveals the proper engagement for them, which is absorption in devotion to God.

Anger, greed, lust, etc. are considered in the Vedic scriptures as mānas rog, or diseases of the mind. We are all aware of the diseases of the body—even a single bodily ailment has the power to make one’s whole day miserable—but we do not realize that we are being continuously tormented by multiple mental ailments. And since we do not recognize lust, anger, greed, etc. as mental diseases, we do not try to cure them. Psychology is a branch of human knowledge that attempts to analyze these ailments and propose solutions to them. However, both the analysis and the solution presented by western psychology leave much to be desired, and appear to be gross approximations of the reality of the mind.

In this and the subsequent verse, Shree Krishna has given perfect and penetrating insight into functioning of the mind. He explains that when we repeatedly contemplate that there is happiness in some object, the mind becomes attached to it.

Now attachment seems quite innocuous by itself. But the problem is that from attachment comes desire. If one is attached to drinks, the desire for drinks comes repeatedly to the mind. If one is attached to cigarettes, then thoughts of the pleasure of smoking cigarettes repeatedly flow in the mind, creating a craving for them. In this way, attachment leads to desire.

Once desire develops, it gives birth to two more problems—greed and anger. Greed comes from the fulfillment of desire. If you satisfy desire, it leads to greed.” Thus desire is never eliminated by satiating it:

**yat pṛithivyām vrīhi-yavam hiraṇyam paśhavaḥ striyaḥ
na duhyanti manaḥ-pṛitīm puṁsaḥ kāma-hatasya te** ⁷

“If one person were to get all the wealth, luxuries, and sensual objects in the world, that person’s desire would still not be satiated. Hence, knowing it to be the cause of misery, an intelligent person should renounce desire.”

On the flip side what happens if the fulfillment of desire is obstructed? It gives rise to anger. Bear in mind that anger does not arise by itself. It is created from the obstruction of desire; and desire arises from attachment, while attachment comes from contemplation of the sense objects. In this manner, we see how the simple act of contemplating the pleasures of sense objects leads downward to the twin diseases of greed and anger. In the next verse Shree Krishna continues the chain further down, and explains the consequences of anger.

Anger impairs judgment, just as the morning mist creates a hazy covering on the sunlight. In anger, people commit mistakes that they later regret, because the intellect gets clouded by the haze of emotions. People say, “He is twenty years elder to me. Why did I speak in this manner to him? What happened to me?” What happened was that the faculty of judgment was affected by anger, and hence the mistake of scolding an elder was made.

When the intellect is clouded, it leads to bewilderment of memory. The person then forgets what is right and what is wrong, and flows along with the surge of emotions. The downward descent continues from there, and bewilderment of memory results in destruction of the intellect. And since the intellect is the internal guide, when it gets destroyed, one is ruined. In this manner, the path of descent from divinity to impiety has been described beginning with contemplation on the sense objects to the destruction of the intellect.

The entire downward spiral leading to ruin begins with contemplating happiness in sense objects. Now, the urge for happiness is as natural to the soul as thirst is to the physical body. It is impossible to think “I will not contemplate happiness anywhere,” because it is unnatural for the soul. The simple solution then is to envision happiness in the proper direction, i.e. in God. If we can repeatedly revise the thought that happiness is in God, we will develop attachment toward him. This divine attachment will not degrade the mind like material attachment; rather, it will purify it. God is all-pure, and when we attach our mind to him, the mind will also become pure.

Thus, whenever Shree Krishna asks us to give up attachment and desire, he is referring only to material attachment and desire. Spiritual attachment and desire are not to be given up; in fact, they are most praiseworthy. They are to be cultivated and increased for purification of the mind. The greater the burning desire we develop for God, the purer our mind will become. The jñānīs who propound the worship of the undifferentiated attributeless Brahman do not understand this point when they recommend giving up all attachments. However, Shree Krishna states: “Those who attach their minds to me with unadulterated devotion rise above the three modes of material nature and attain the level of the supreme Brahman.”⁸ He repeatedly urges Arjuna to attach his mind to God in many verses ahead,⁹

Attachment and aversion are two sides of the same coin. Aversion is nothing but negative attachment. Just as, in attachment, the object of attachment repeatedly comes to one’s mind; similarly, in aversion, the object of hatred keeps popping into the mind. So attachment and aversion to material objects both have the same effect on the mind—they dirty it and pull it into the three modes of material nature. When the mind is free from both attachment and aversion, and is absorbed in devotion to God, one receives the grace of God and experiences his unlimited divine bliss. On experiencing that higher taste, the mind no longer feels attracted to the sense objects, even while using them. Thus, even while tasting, touching, smelling, hearing, and seeing, like all of us, the sthita prajña is free from both attachment and aversion.

3. How to control the mind :

Then Sri Krishna explains to How to control the mind by Yoga techniques to stabilize the mind. Yoga means to put together and is used in Indian scriptures as to describe (a) the state of being the Ocean of Bliss as well as to describe (b) practices to attain mastery and to become aware of your own being as the Divine.

योगी युञ्जीत सततमात्मानं रहसि स्थितः ।
एकाकी यतचित्तात्मा निराशीरपरिग्रहः ॥
शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरमासनमात्मनः ।
नात्युच्छ्रितं नातिनीचं चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरम् ॥
तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः ।
उपविश्यासने युञ्ज्याद्योगमात्मविशुद्धये ॥
समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः ।
सम्प्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन् ॥

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः ।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ॥
युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः ।
शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति ॥
नात्यश्रतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्रतः ।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥
युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥
यदा विनियतं चित्तमात्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ।
निःस्पृहः सर्वकामेभ्यो युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा ॥
यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता ।
योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगमात्मनः ॥ 10

It is explained as follows:

"Let the yogi constantly keep his mind concentrated in his self, sitting alone in a secluded place, self-controlled, desire less and without any sense of possessiveness.

"In a clean place placing his firm seat, neither too low nor too high, covered with soft cloth, deer skin and kusa grass.

"There upon, sitting on that seat, with single pointed concentration, keeping his mind, senses and activities under firm control, he should practice yoga for self-purification.

"Holding the body, the neck and the head equally firm (straight) and fixed, concentrating his gaze on the tip of his nose and not distracting himself

"With peaceful mind, fearless, practicing brahmacharya (vows of celibacy), mind subdued and established in Me, the Yogi should sit and make Me his ultimate goal.

"Practicing thus, ever established in the Self, with ordained mind the Yogi attains the highest peace and nirvana in My world.

"Yoga is neither for the voracious eater nor for the poor eater. It is neither for the excessive sleeper or for the excessive sleepless.

"He who has appropriately controlled his diet and recreation, appropriately performs all his works, appropriately controls his waking and sleeping periods, his yoga reduces his sorrows.

"When the disciplined mind is established in the self, and when one becomes impervious to all the desires, he is said to be established in Yoga.

"A lamp in a windless place is the metaphor that can be used to describe a Yogi whose mind is under control and who is united with his inner Self.

"The state in which the mind ceases its movements restrained by the performance of the yoga, in which the (lower) self realizes the (Higher) Self and is satisfied in the Self,

"That state in which he finds unlimited happiness, in which the intellect understands the transcendental (that which is beyond the senses) and wherein established he never moves from truth"

4. Still your mind :

This takes more effort than the first practice and I can give you here only a hint into the direction. There are many practices that you can do. All involve a change of habit and honesty and a loving attitude with yourself.

1. Set the goal right

According to the Bhagavad Gita all attachments other to God and all desires are giving endless reasons for the mind to think. The cure is to eliminate all desires and only to keep only the desire for Self-Realization.

Self-Realization is the realization that you are the Divinity Within you. This Divinity is the same in everybody else and that even the separateness is an illusion and that we are all the very source of Bliss itself.

2. Self-Inquiry

By doing self-inquiry you are able to track down the source of every thought in your mind and dissolve it. Thus, your mind becomes calmer and calmer and still eventually. Here some ideas for inquiring about the roots of your most prevailing thought habits:

Investigate your thoughts and get to the root desire. See which Divine Quality in yourself can give you that desire that you are searching in vain in the outside world. Investigate in painful past events and search for the learning in them. Make the learning of painful past events your treasure and your light.

Investigate in fears of the future and surrender trustfully to the Divinity Within Yourself. Your Higher Self always knows the next step, and it knows it in the PRESENT. Investigate in false concepts of the world and false concepts you have about yourself. Which concepts are you comparing yourself against? Give unconditional love for yourself and others. Take out the judgment and guilt. They lead to nowhere. Trust that your inner voice will prompt you to do the most beneficial actions for all and lead you on the perfect path for you.

3. Become the watcher of your mind

Another possibility is to watch your thoughts. Know that you are different from your thoughts. That they are only temporary and your essence is not your thoughts. This means: Your mind is still running and doing its thing. But you are not really interested in it. You let it run and you don't judge yourself for having thoughts. To watch your thoughts may be difficult in the beginning and repeating the name of your chosen form of God could be much easier at the beginning. Start practicing to watch your thoughts in a meditation and later it will be a practice which you can do in any situation, in fact, it will be second nature to you.

And after all – who is the one in you who watches your thoughts.

5. Concentrating the Mind on God is the Solution :

Lord Krishna gives the following assurance to his devotees.

इहैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं पश्याद्य सचराचरम् ।
मम देहे गुडाकेश यच्चान्यद् द्रष्टुमिच्छसि ॥
न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।
दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ॥ 11

"I rescue them, O Partha, whose minds are set upon Me from the ocean of mortal samsara (worldly life).

Upon Me fix your mind, in Me operate your intelligence and thereafter without doubt you shall live in Me only.

we come across the definition of austerity of mind as follows.

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥ 12.

"Mental satisfaction, gentleness, silence, self-control, purification of thoughts, this is called the austerity of mind." We eventually become of what we think of.

6. Conclusion :

If you are able to control your mind and to even still it, you will not be prompted to act in this world for the sake of fulfilling your egoistic desires and attachments. All wars are fought first in the mind and must be won first there too. The Hindu holy book Bhagavad Gita has not only been a



source of inspiration for the spiritual, but its astute management policies hold true for all human situations.

The mind is like a child; a child is attracted to everything. It wants everything but not all things are good for it. Some things are even harmful...so the parent must discipline...Sometimes the child becomes angry and cries but the parent is determined to give the best thing even if at first it seems uncomfortable to the child. In a similar way the intelligence and the spiritual being that we are must control the mind. The mind is attracted to so many material things and everywhere we look, someone is telling us that if just have one material thing or another then we will be happy...but it always proves to be false.

No matter how much we get, still we're dissatisfied. So the mind must be disciplined and by practice we must learn to pull it away from those things that are not good for it. Detachment is helpful because if we can understand that real happiness comes not from material things, but rather from a loving relationship with Krishna, then we can become detached from all the pushings of material desires and we can control the mind.

Therefore "constant practice and detachment." Ultimately, we must develop a higher taste. Lord Krishna says,

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥¹³

"The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness."

Foot Notes:

1. Bhagavad-Gita Chapter VI, Verse 34
2. Bhagavad-Gita Chapter VI, Verse 35
3. Yog Darśhan 1.12 [v26]
4. Bhagavad-Gita Chapter II, Verses 58-64)
5. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (9.19.14) [v49]
6. Taittirīya Upaniṣhad (2.7.2)[v50]
7. Bhāgavatam 9.19.13) [v55]
8. Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14.26
9. Bhagavad Gita Chapter 8.7, 8.14, 9.22, 9.34, 10.10, 12.8, 11.54, 18.55, 18.58, 18.65, etc.
10. Bhagavad Gita Chapter 6. 10-19
11. Bhagavad Gita Chapter XI, 7 & 8
12. Bhagavad Gita Chapter 17, -16,
13. Bhagavad-Gita Chapter 2:59)

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