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Greatness of Exposing & Listening to Bhagavadgītā

Krishna has divulged the greatest spiritual secret of Oneness, emphasizing that the sincere seeker or the earnest devotee must abandon all plural religious or secular considerations: “Leave all prescriptions, however much they may relate to good or bad, virtue or vice, do’s or don’ts. And hold on to the One.” This was the summary statement he made in this regard. In understanding and applying this dictum, we should not forget the scene and its compulsions, which led to Krishna’s dialogue with Arjuna.

The war cry had already been raised. Discharge of arrows was the only act to commence. It was then that at Arjuna’s behest, Krishna drove his chariot and stationed it right in front of Bheeshma and Drona. That was sufficient for Arjuna to crumble mentally and intellectually. It was a confrontation, unprecedented in every way, unthinkable too by any standard. Can any human mind think of killing one’s own beloved grandfather and teacher? At the same time, the war and all its consequences would necessarily have to be faced. Wherein would lie the solution?

Krishna had to, however, find an answer. He was never given to failure. If there is a problem, it must have a solution too. War is not a new episode in human life. Like birth and death, war too is quite in the nature of life’s events. As long as people find a cause for fighting, and an occasion comes up for it, can war be ruled out?

It became a crisis because Arjuna had to confront the grandfather and teacher, who even now in the war-front, were loving him and blessing him for victory! In the absence of enmity, can war be? But it was, it is, a

reality. To think of killing such venerable men was impossible for anyone. Arjuna's spirits sank, and he began to lament about the sinful consequences to follow. Krishna had to console him, instill in him the ultimate vision of human life, imbuing strength, clarity and resolve, to fight confidently. It was an out of the way event. But does not many a conflict face one in this world? For all of them, there must be a scriptural as well as rational human solution.

For a fearful and suspicious mind, what except a full-fold assurance from someone trusted, dear and near, like Krishna, can work? Thus he divulged the greatest Truth of human life and the world.

“Nurture the thought of Oneness, which is the ultimate Truth of existence; and in that light and confidence, leave all kinds of plural notions, however great and edifying these may be.” This is an assurance coming from Krishna, not only to Arjuna, but to every seeker. Remember the close relationship between them. The distressed Arjuna looked to Krishna for relief. And Krishna had been speaking to him for quite a while. From the talk, Arjuna should have known how deep, vast, penetrating and benevolent Krishna's vision was. They were already close friends and brothers-in-law. Now they had become a faithful disciple and a benevolent Teacher – a new bond, rare in the human world.

It is in such a background that Krishna divulged the truth of human life. But he adds quite emphatically five more verses, as a safeguard for what he has just now disclosed. In a way, these also represent the *phala-śruti* (resulting benefit) of the entire dialogue, which is a full-fledged spiritual exposition, to be studied, understood and followed by seekers in particular and others in general.

Fitness for receiving spiritual instructions

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ॥

*idaṃ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana ।
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyaṃ na ca māṃ yo'bhyaśūyati ॥*

(18.67)

This gospel is never to be instructed to one who is not austere, not a devotee, not aspiring to listen, or who begrudges (is skeptic of) the Supreme.

Krishna is clear that whatever he has said is not for all and sundry. It is specially meant for those, who have the grace and sublimity of an austere life. They should be humble and discreet enough to understand that there is something deeper than what the senses bring in the form of perceptions and delights. The real treasure for human life is hidden within, in the mind and the heart. Intelligence, which alone can seek wisdom and its treasure, is the means to access it.

The one who recognizes this fact, or believes it, cannot but be fond of austerity and devotion. Either he may opt for them willfully, or may take to it due to hereditary influence. In the presence of an austere grace alone, the dialogue of Bhagavadgītā will have its destined appeal and reward.

Krishna emphasizes that no benefit will accrue by thrusting the message on anyone. Only when right aspiration or longing is there, the message need be divulged or imparted. Willingness to receive and absorb the truths is very important. With that the right measure of humility must also be present.

Anyone who lacks regard for the spiritual wisdom, as well as for the Knowers and Teachers, should not be brought within the orbit of the dialogue. Let them be at a safe distance. Krishna has his distinct elegance in saying that he is not hankering after imparting the message to one and all. **Those who need, and earnestly so, are alone the fit recipients of the gospel.**

Śaṅkara puts it clearly in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi: the Knowers are so fulfilled, that though merciful to the core, they do not go out of the way to preach the Soul-wisdom anywhere and everywhere. After all, it is the greatest wisdom and only those who can receive, absorb and get enriched by it need be told about it. Śaṅkara says that the Knower is truly a friend, a benefactor for those who come with humility (*bandhuḥ ānamatām satām* - śloka 33). One has to seek the refuge of the Knower or Sadguru

in all humility and devotion. Only then the Knower interacts with him, and tries to give enlightenment.

This means that spiritual instruction is not meant for the bad, the wicked, the cruel and the unloving. Spirituality is the crowning fulfillment of human life. It will be fitting and harmonious with those, who are given to the noble canons of virtue, righteousness, restraint and moderation. The ultimate truth should not, in any way, be a ground for licentiousness in any matter.

Kaṭhōpaniṣad, from which Krishna has drawn substantially in this dialogue, makes the point very clear that spiritual wisdom is meant for the deserving. Yama's words are quite specific:

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।

नाशान्तमानसो वाऽपि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥

nāvīrato duścāritān-nāśānto nāsamāhita: ।

nāśāntamānaso vā'pi prajāñānenainam-āpnuyāt ॥

(Kaṭhōpaniṣad I.ii.24)

Whosoever refuses to eschew viciousness, who is not composed, not integrated in regulating his senses, or is agitated by the worldly perceptions, cannot accomplish this by (mere) knowledge.

The seeker must have a mind that is ready to absorb the subtle teaching. To that extent, he should be free of undue sensory indulgences. He must also have a controlled, moderated personality and behaviour.

Supreme Truth is not something to be grasped merely by one's intellectual sharpness. Nor is it a matter for academic study alone. It is true that intelligence helps in understanding the domain of the Self, by receiving the words of wisdom from the Knower. But that hearing must be followed and strengthened by the sublimity and restraint of the senses, mind and will.

The majesty of jñāna-yajña

Krishna's exposition, being rational and philosophical, carries all the

scriptural relevance and the consequent sanctity and sublimity. His words conform to the land's cultural heritage. His teaching extols the traditional bond between the Teacher and the disciple. He also clarifies how great, unique and rewarding is the dialogue. Exposing it to true devotees and seekers itself becomes a full-fledged means to gain merger with the Supreme:

य इमं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः ॥

*ya imaṃ paramaṃ guhyaṃ madbhakteṣvabhidhāsyati ।
bhaktiṃ mayi parāṃ kṛtvā māmevaiṣyatyaśayaḥ ॥*
(18.68)

He who disseminates this most profound Truth to my devotees, performs the best devotional offerings to Me. By that, he reaches Me, no doubt.

Here too, Krishna uses the words '*paramaṃ guhyam*'. This means that the message carries a high level of spiritual secrecy or profundity, because it frees the mind from all the usual tensions and entanglements. It authorizes one to leave all plural distracting thoughts, without worrying about their sinful nature or otherwise, and take to the idea and inspiration of Oneness.

In this way, it liberates even the most sinful person and bestows absolute redemption (ref: 4.36, 9.30). Thus, in seeking and gaining redemption, the wicked is brought at par with the virtuous. Is there seemingly a grave contrast? But this is the fact, the truth. Only, the wicked must be ready to eschew wickedness forever.

Krishna is particular that while imparting the message of Bhagavadgītā, one must have unflinching devotion to the Supreme. Devotional weddedness and loyalty alone empower one to impart the message. Only when coming from such a one, the words will have their ineffable touch of divinity and inspiration. Then alone the seeker will be led to pursue the teaching with tenacity and purpose. For such an exponent, there is no need for taking up any other *sādhana*, help or blessing. By

virtue of his fondness and dedication towards what he does, he will attain the Supreme, no doubt.

Krishna says something more to show how great is the pedestal of such a one, who is committed to the exposition of the great message of Bhagavadgītā:

न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।

भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ॥

na ca tasmān-manuṣyeṣu kaścin-me priya-kṛttama: ।

bhavitā na ca me tasmād-anya: priya-taro bhuvi ॥

(18.69)

Therefore, among the humans, there is none who loves the Supreme better than him (the exponent of this gospel). Nor shall there be anyone on the earth dearer to the Supreme than him.

Among all the humans, none will be dearer to the Supreme than such a rare, excellent Knower-exponent, who is able to reveal the spiritual wisdom of the dialogue to the listeners. The Soul-gospel will remain hidden or unknown, unless it is brought to light by one who has realized it - its worth and utility. If and when a seeker is able to pursue the teachings and realize the supreme Truth, the only real task before him is to expose it with irresistible fondness to humanity, helping as many people as possible to have a redeeming touch of the Soul.

Such a mission of dissemination is invaluable by all standards. Its worth and elegance are infinitely more than any kind of material wealth or bequest. One to bequeath such an inestimable treasure, must first possess it in abundance. **The exposition of Bhagavadgītā has verily to be done by Knowers and Seers.**

Krishna says there is none greater than such an exponent, who devotes his life for the mission of imparting spiritual message, especially of Bhagavadgītā. Nor one greater will ever be born. This means the highest task and mission for a pious, noble, righteous person is to imbibe the

spiritual wisdom and dedicate himself wholesomely to its dissemination.

To complete the benefits of learning, realizing and imparting the gospel, Krishna has to say:

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।

ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥

adhyeṣyate ca ya imaṃ dharmyaṃ saṁvādam-āvayo: ।

jñāna-yajñena tenāham-iṣṭa: syām-iti me mati: ॥

(18.70)

I am also pleased by him who performs the Jñāna Yajña, the study of this precept, in the form of our dialogue. This is my considered view.

To study the dialogue, which is extremely righteous, noble and spiritual, like any other book of knowledge, is itself a full-fledged jñāna yajña. Krishna has already pointed out that jñāna yajña is loftier than dravya yajña (material sacrifices). Also, it is a fact that all kinds of rituals and ceremonies will have their fulfillment only in wisdom or jñāna (4.33).

Jñāna or viveka is the goal. The seeker must note that any kind of ritualistic addiction, however promising or adorable the rituals may be, will only hinder and delay the dawning and growth of viveka, discrimination, which is the core of spiritual wisdom and elevation. Krishna has been emphasizing this all along (2.45, 6.44, 7.23, 9.25).

Viveka implies stern indifference to all kinds of rituals, which promise worldly prosperity or posthumous rewards like heaven. The seeker should have the depth of discrimination to discard all such temptations and eulogistic statements.

Do not, therefore, seek any other means like yāgas and yajñas enjoined by the Vedas. Be focussed on the study of Bhagavadgītā. **Be given to reflection and contemplation on its message. That will be the most rewarding pursuit for you.** The intelligential pursuit is the highest in human life. This will please the Supreme the most. Leave all other

cravings and involvements.

Sādhana through devout listening

What more? To study the message in essence, to expose it and to realize it in all spiritual detail – all these are indeed rare. At the same time, it also implies that when rightly exposed, it is possible for people to listen to the gospel and be rewarded. Any pious person will like to listen to the exposition. Such an attunement has its own merits and charms. It offers nourishment to the mind and heart, as it did for Arjuna. It also caters to the intelligence, because there is such a strong rationality. It is also philosophical, making any intellectual its votary.

Many, therefore, will come and listen to the gospel. What is the merit and blessing of such listening? Does it help one in anyway? Not all will have the time and ability to read and understand the dialogue on their own. But they have the earnestness and interest to devoutly listen to the talks and expositions. Is there any benefit and reward for it?

Krishna has clear views on this also:

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।

सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम् ॥

śraddhāvān-anasūyaś-ca śṛṇuyād-api yo nara: ।

so'pi mukta: śubhāllokān-prāpnuyāt-puṇya-karmaṇām ॥

(18.71)

Also, whosoever listens to this discourse with attention, and is free from envious distractions, becomes liberated.

He too attains the auspicious worlds of the meritorious.

Even listening to the Bhagavadgītā dialogue and its message is highly rewarding. It takes away the dross of the mind, enriches one with holiness and virtue, which in turn, will make him deserve the highest attainment.

What does this mean? Even those, who are given to rituals, should take to listening to the Bhagavadgītā exposition. Such listening or reading will itself bestow on them what the Vedic rituals eloquently

promise. In that way also, listening and reading Bhagavadgītā is very relevant and rewarding.

See how beautifully Krishna pacifies, encourages and exhorts people to become spiritually oriented. It is admirable to note how Krishna, Vyasadeva, and the epic authors, present their thoughts before the readers. This is where our epics stand distinct, as an ennobling and elevating literature. They involve the readers so well that by the very involvement, their minds and hearts get purified, the intelligence becomes sharp and discreet, resulting in a process of inner refinement.

