

Geeta Jayanti

Birthday of Bhagavad Geeta

On December 6th, 2011 is Geeta Jayanti, the birthday of Bhagavad Geeta. So you may ask what you mean by birthday. How can a book have a birthday? This was the day that Lord Krishna sang the Geeta to Arjun. Geeta Jayanti, or the birthday of the Bhagavad Geeta, is a very holy day that is celebrated throughout India by all the admirers and lovers of this most sacred scripture. The birthday falls on the Ekasashi (eleventh day) of the bright half of the month of Margaseersha (December-January), according to the Hindu almanac. It was on this day that Sanjaya narrated to King Dhritarashtra the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, and thus made the glorious teachings of the Lord available to us, and to people of the world, for all time. Veda Vyasa put the words sung in the Geeta in writing so that the records can be available to us. Veda Vyasa love for mankind can be seen in his preserving this great song for us.

The Geeta Jayanti marks one of the greatest days in the history of mankind. Nearly six thousand years ago on that day a dazzling flash of brilliant light (thought) lit up the firmament of human civilization. That flash, that marvelous spiritual effulgence, was the message of the Bhagavad Geeta, given by the Lord Himself on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Unlike ordinary flashes of light which die away after a split-second, this brilliant flash of that memorable day has continued to shine through the centuries, and even now illumines the path of humanity on its onward march to perfection.

Reason for Geeta's Birth

Most people will tell you that the reason Lord Krishna had to tell the message of Geeta to Arjun was because Arjun was confused and did not want to fight. To a large extent that is true, however, there is another great reason for the reciting of the Geeta by Bhagavan Krishna to Arjun. We have to understand the circumstances surrounding this time. This was the time of war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas when the Geeta was born. The Pandavas were the rightful heirs to the empire but the Kauravas did not want to relinquish the throne. The Kauravas were not even willing to part with a pin head's worth of land. So many people, like Veda Vyasa, Vidura, Vasudev, Krishna's father, Krishna himself tried to reason with Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritarashtra, to avoid the war. But Duryodhana's and Kaurava's arrogance, greed and jealousy would not allow any reason to work. Eventually, the battle line was drawn and everyone went to war. Just before the war started, Arjun asked Shree Krishna, his charioteer, to place his chariot between the two armies so Arjun can study all the people assembled there. Everyone at the battle line knew that Shree Krishna and Arjuna were in a discussion and only after the discussion was over that war began.

The start of Bhagavad Geeta is done by Dhritarashtra and the end is by Sanjay. Dhritarashtra was the head of the Kauravas and Sanjay was Dhritarashtra's charioteer. Sanjay was in the employment of Dhritarashtra. We need to be clear on the relation between Sanjay and Dhritarashtra. This was not some boss-employee relation, where the worst that can happen is the employee gets fired. Sanjay was in the service of a royal family. If the king was upset or unhappy, the heads of those in service would roll. In this kind of a relationship, Sanjay conveys the last message to king Dhritarashtra. In it he says to the king, "Wherever, there is Shree Krishna, Yogeshwar (The one and only Brahman) and Partha (Arjuna), the archer, I know there will surely be victory, fortune, morality and welfare." Just take a moment to think about who is

delivering what message to whom. Here Sanjay, the employee, is telling king Dhritarashtra, the employer, about the outcome of the war to be fought. He is telling the king that you are going to lose; you are going to pay dearly for your folly. Sanjay is advising the king to call off the war. Just like Arjun and Shree Krishna delayed the war for the discussion, Dhritarashtra could have asked for a time out and called Duryodhana to advise him about the outcome of the war. But Dhritarashtra did nothing.

Characters in the Bhagavad Geeta

There are four characters in the Bhagavad Geeta that have dialogs, namely king Dhritarashtra, his charioteer Sanjay, Arjuna and Shree Krishna, avatar of Brahman. All these four characters were Grahasthya, householders. Shree Krishna, the guru (teacher), is a householder, Arjun, the shishaya (student), is a householder, Sanjay, the narrator, is a householder, and king Dhritarashtra, the listener, is a householder. All these characters were husbands and fathers. They were part and parcel of society; just we are part of society. We need to understand that the message in Bhagavad Geeta is meant for us. Bhagavad Geeta is not only for spiritual development but also a guide for a person, in society, on how to live a purposeful and fulfilling life that takes us closer to God.

Let us look at each one of the character one at a time. The first one is king Dhritarashtra, who listens to the message, but does not act at all. King Dhritarashtra is like most of us, we also listen, we like what we hear, but when it comes to following or implementing or practicing we fail. All of us have reasons like, I am not ready, I cannot do it, I am not capable, I do not have time, I am tired, I will do it later, etc. We have so many excuses that we hold ourselves back. The second character is Sanjay, king Dhritarashtra's charioteer, who listens and understands. He is like one in a million who understands Lord Krishna's message and it transforms him and makes him fearless that he can truthfully tell king Dhritarashtra the outcome of the war. He understands who he is and where he stands in this creation. He is not bothered by the outcome his truthfulness and what his fate maybe. Very rare are individuals like him.

The third character is Arjuna, the fearless gung-ho warrior, who was all set for battle. But his soft side overtook him when he saw his relatives and realized their misfortune because of the war. He could not take the responsibility for their demise and turned to Shree Krishna for help. Lord Krishna explained to Arjuna his role in this creation, Arjuna, the one in a billion, surrenders to God and after getting enlightenment, and does God's bidding. Arjuna realizes that he has to become an instrument, in the hand of God, and trust God to do the right thing for all concerned.

Message of Geeta

The Geeta is living since the messages in it are applicable today as they were applicable to Arjuna some six thousand years ago. The nature of human beings has not changed that much that the message is not valid any more. Even then Shree Krishna told Arjuna to shun greed, anger and intense desires because they were doors to hell and that are still applicable today.

Bhagavad Geeta is called the nectar of the Upanishads because it contains the highest, most important and practical knowledge extracted from all the Upanishads. The message in Geeta appeals to all humanity regardless of race, creed age or religion. To say that Bhagavad Geeta is only religious philosophy is wrong; it contains the ultimate knowledge on how to live life that takes us closer to God.

The Geeta teaches us who we are and how we can rise above the world of duality that has pairs of opposites and truly acquire eternal happiness and immortality. Geeta teaches us to be action oriented that emphasizes the rigid performance of one's duties in this world. Life is not easy but life can be made to be a joy with the right perspectives and actions. It teaches that life is a struggle, but we must not let the outside touch our inner core, Atman, who we are. We have to learn to renounce the fruits of actions as offerings unto God.

Bhagavad Geeta is a source of power and wisdom that strengthens us when we are weak, and inspires us when we are dejected and feeble. It teaches us how to resist unrighteousness and follow the path of virtue and righteousness. Geeta is not merely a book, but a living voice that carries an eternal and vital message to mankind. The wisdom contained in the Geeta comes from the infinite source of knowledge, the Absolute truth as told by God.

The supreme message of Geeta is to be ever merged in the eternal, unbroken and continuous consciousness of the Absolute truth. It tells us to be always conscious of the Divine, to feel the Divine presence and live in the awareness of Brahman being in us as well as everyone and everything else. Such an attitude of mind will release us forever from the clutches of illusion and frees one from all fear. When we walk away from Brahman, we fall into illusion, we become fearful, we become depressed and we start losing hope.

Bhagavad Geeta tells us about dwelling God within everyone and everything. This creation is contained in God and we should develop reverence, gratitude and appreciation for God for all He does for us.

The Geeta is a great source of practical knowledge or wisdom. It tells in simple language, how we can, over many births, reach salvation or Moksha. Geeta is the ultimate authority on the Law of karma and the transmigration of the Atman. It explains why we keep coming back to earth and that our destiny is in our own hands. In the Geeta, God makes a promise to all who are devoted to Him, He says, "I will not forsake my devotee." Even if we understand one slok and implement it in our lives, we have leapt over many undesirable lives. The message in Geeta is that of hope and comfort. Once you start getting in tune with God, you will understand that each slok is full of God's love for us. He promises that no matter how bad we are, there is hope for us because He loves us. All we have to do is crawl towards God and He will run towards us and take care of us. Such is the most illuminating message of the *Gita*, seeking to lead man to a life of perfection even while performing his ordained role here. Long has this message been neglected by man. Forgetting the Lord, the world has turned towards sense indulgence and love for money. The mantra now a day is, "If you have the wealth (money) then fulfill your desires." A terrible price has been paid. The Lord warns us against heedlessness: "If, out of egoism, thou wilt not hear, then thou shalt perish".

The study of the Geeta alone is sufficient for the purpose of scriptural study. You will find in it a solution to all your problems. The more you study it with devotion and faith, the deeper will your knowledge become, the more penetrative would be your insight, and the clearer your thinking. Even if you live in the spirit of one verse of the Geeta, all your miseries will come to an end and you will attain the goal of life—immortality and eternal peace.

Geeta Jayanti falls on Ekadashi (eleventh day of the new or full moon cycle). On Ekadashi we are supposed to fast to gain control over our desires. Especially on Geeta Jayanti, one should fast and at least read a chapter from the Geeta. Whether you understand it or not, should not matter. With enough reading, you will begin to understand the message in it. Keep a copy of Geeta with you and read at sloks that can inspire you. If you pay attention, you will start noticing you that

you will get closer to God. You will also be able to recognize God's interaction with you on a daily bases.