


The Timeless Bhagavad Gita

by Isaac Bentwich, MD

What is it about the Bhagavad Gita, a 700-verse Hindu scripture in Sanskrit that has captivated so many of the world's most brilliant scientists, musicians, poets, thinkers, and spiritual teachers? For two and a half millennia, the Gita (meaning Divine Song) has been one of the world's most trusted guides for inner spiritual growth, beloved by spiritual seekers worldwide. Beethoven, Leonard Cohen, Carl Jung, Emerson, Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Deepak Chopra, Michael Singer, and so many others credit the Gita



as a magnificent source of wisdom and inspiration. Robert Oppenheimer, a theoretical physicist, considered one of the “fathers of the atomic bomb,” is quoted as saying the Gita is “the most beautiful philosophical song existing in any known tongue.” Best-selling New York Times author Eckhart Tolle praises it as “one of the greatest spiritual treasures of humanity.” I join these people in their great devotion to the Bhagavad Gita.

In contemplating how the Gita has been so beloved by so many, I found that just as Arjuna and Krishna were on the “battlefield of the soul,” I believe that this ancient inner guide is more relevant than ever in addressing the unique challenges we face in the modern world. Gita’s message is meant for ordinary people, like you and me, who are living in this hectic, troubled, yet beautiful world, at this time of great evolution.

I spent twelve years translating the Gita—which felt much like peeling layers of an onion—focusing on one layer at a time. I’ve intended my translation

to be a simple, practical guide for inner development by crystallizing the key messages of each verse, as they apply to our time, peeling away distracting layers of complex terminology and foreign culture.

If you seek a practical, Wisdom-guide to facilitate your inner journey, I invite you to explore the Gita. I know that Gita’s lofty ideals are not at all exaggerated or utopian—I’ve had the incredible fortune to sit at the feet of Teachers, who for me are shining examples of Gita’s principles in action. When you meet men and women like these, their humility and kindness melt your heart, and the clear light that flows through them enlightens your soul.

May we all continue to learn and evolve, and to help and support one another on our inner journeys, toward our Inner-Self.

Living Life Wisely

Gita teaches the art of living life wisely. So, our journey starts from the most pragmatic aspect of our lives — Action. Our lives are so immersed in

Action (and more so in reaction) that we tend to be mesmerized by our current drama-of-the-day, and therefore miss the bigger picture, the dynamics of Action itself.

Our actions (and thoughts!) are so completely driven by Ego that a false conviction sets in that we are Ego and that there's nothing we can do about it. Gita's Action Path helps you better understand the nature of Action, empowering you to transform your activity from ego-driven actions and thoughts that shackle you, to selfless ones that gradually set you free.

You cannot avoid activity, says the Gita. But make sure you work selflessly. Work for work's sake alone. We each have our life's-work, our Calling. Find and embrace your life's Calling. Enjoy work itself, thereby enjoying the present moment. It is futile to obsess over the past, or fret about work's future results – says the Gita – “but one who works, unattached — senses and mind held under rein; merits highest

regard, O Prince” — this is true Yoga-of-Action.

Yoga of Action

PRINCE:

But Master, if you assert that
Wisdom is better than Action;
Then why do you tell me to do
Such dreadful deeds of
destruction? ^[1]

Your words seem contradictory,
The confusion they stir in my
mind;
Tell me one certain way, Master,
By which one may reach the
Divine. ^[2]

MASTER:

Seekers of enlightenment, in this
world, Prince,
Have two paths, for two
personality types:
Wisdom Path for the mature,
reflective,
And Selfless Action for those
who're still active.
Non-action can never achieve
The action-less state on its own;
Nor can perfection be attained
By renouncing action alone. ^[4]

No one can rest for a moment
From the action of body and
thought;

Nature's-Facets compel us to act
Hence our life with action is
fraught. ^[5]

One who curbs action of body
But harbors desires in thought;
Is a deluded hypocrite,
Wisdom in this – there is not. ^[6]

But one who works, unattached,
Senses and mind held under rein;
Merits highest regard, O Prince,
This is true Yoga-of-Action. ^[7]
Action surpasses inaction,
Act, from natural Duty, don't
abstain;
Why even your very own body,
Without action, you cannot
sustain. ^[8]

This world by its actions is chained,
Save when the action's performed
as prayer;
Perform all acts as prayer,
therefore,
And for action's fruits never care. ^[9]

At creation's dawn, each soul was
given
A natural-born Calling, its own
ordained part;
'Your wishes be granted' said the
Creator,
'If your Calling's Duty you perform,
pure of
heart'. ^[10]

Pursuing your Calling honors God,

Upon you – God's light will shine;
By honoring one another,
One attains to – the Divine. ^[11]

* * * If you would like to read
all of Chapter Three, click
here: [www.newgita.com/
chapter3](http://www.newgita.com/chapter3)

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a longtime practitioner
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physician in Western and
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Bentwich has studied the
Bhagavad Gita for thirty-four
years. The purpose of his
new translation is to make
the Gita more accessible and
relevant to contemporary
readers. He presents the
mesmerizing melodiousness,
meter, and rhyme of the
Sanskrit original, and this
version is crafted for both
men and women. For more
information about ***Gita: A
Timeless Guide for Our Time***
(June 21, 2019), please visit:
NewGita.com