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## TEACHINGS OF BHAGAVAD - GITA FOR WORLD PEACE

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### Abstract:

*This research paper is an attempt to analyze the conditions for a peaceful social order compatible with the individual flowering and development of a global civilization from Indian point of view. The viability of an integrated approach to life, livelihood and social relations has been explored in the light of the Bhagavad-Gita. The author further elaborates how the Bhagavad-Gita leads to the feasibility of peaceful co-existence through the emphasis on Swabhava and Swadharma aspects of the being and helps the development of the sense of human unity. It has been further shown how proceeding very psychologically, the Gita teaches the philosophy of inner and outer peace in the most practical way and helps an individual establish a harmony with the outer world by leading a life of increasing awareness of the limitations of the human instruments, but at the same time, increasing the intensity of perception so as to let the cosmic intelligence work through the human instrument for peace and prosperity. The author asserts that this is also the whole purpose of education for development of a truly global civilization. Quoting Sri Aurobindo, J.Krishnamurti, Swami Sharanananda and Swami Ranganathananda the author elaborates the process of attainment of peace at individual as well as social/ global level in the light of the Gita. As the Gita rightly observes –peace comes out of right understanding, right resolve and right actions in the total process of living, it is imperative for us to work in this direction if we want peace to prevail on earth. Finally it concludes with the positive note that in the Indian view, peace becomes the way of life from which emerges peaceful creative co-operation of the individuals and societies for establishing righteousness on this planet leading to the development of a global civilization.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Indian approach to human development has mostly been a co-ordinated and peaceful approach to all the aspects of life in its totality. In the Vedic hymns, the cosmic consciousness permeating all existence has been evoked time and again for letting all energy of human beings concentrate and help in flowering of a co-operative intelligence. ‘*Aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvatah*’ – *Rigveda I-89-I (Let noble thoughts come to us from every side)* symbolizes the call of man for the confluence of this all pervading consciousness for evolution of human intelligence.

Similarly the mantra-*Sahna vavtu sahnau bhunaktu sah viryam karvavahai tejasvina vadhitamastu ma vidvisamahai* सहनाववतु सहनौ भुंनक्तु सह वीर्यं करवावहै, तेजस्विनावधितमस्तु मा विद्विशामहै –

also encompasses the essential unity of mankind as well as the basic need for co-operation for collective welfare. The four stages of life- as devised by Indian approach –were also geared towards the uninterrupted flow of universal energy for the growth of individual to the state of steadfastness of wisdom / *prajna* leading man to what Sri Aurobindo calls ‘Perfect Perfection’.

The Bhagavad-Gita, which is regarded as the gist of Indian spiritual heritage and the essence of Vedanta, throws unique light on human predicament and shows the Sunlit Path for a holistic approach to life on earth in its varied colours. It provides in a nutshell the essence of scientific spirituality for establishing oneself in bliss of knowledge or *स्थितप्रज्ञ (sthitprajna)* state of awareness amidst all the seeming paradoxes of life. It stresses that when one works with yogic attitude in life, one becomes a potent source of peacefulness for oneself as well as for others around him. This ultimately leads to a society which is instrumental in establishing world peace from which emerges a globally viable/acceptable civilization based on generosity, dutifulness, non-

attachment to the fruits of actions and working of the cosmic intelligence through human instruments.

**WORLD PEACE- What and Why?**

World peace is ideally a condition of absence of conflict among the various groups of individuals and societies around the world. This is a very hypothetical condition, which has not been largely materialized in human history so far. But it does not in any way mean that it cannot be established at all. The very yearning of almost every human being for a peaceful world around him is the promise for such a realization. World peace is something which can evolve out of the life of peace loving and peace seeking individuals and societies. It cannot be brought about by any ordinance of a world body. As evident by so many instances all over the world so far, the momentary peace brought about by any force or outward legislation makes way for greater conflict eventually. Hence a paradigm shift is needed in our approach to world peace. This calls for the investigation of various factors responsible for a peaceful social order.

Peace is basically a necessary pre-condition for creative and contented life on earth. Without peace in life, optimum individual development is not feasible. It is the result of harmonious co-ordination of all elements of any system-human or mechanical- towards the greater/ higher purpose of the system. When the higher purpose is kept in the field of view, co-ordinated action of all elements becomes possible relatively easily leading to peace within and without. Also, when an individual earnestly seeks to establish peace in oneself, this very seeking is the quest for manifestation of the 'Self'. The focus on the nature of the 'self' leads to more contemplative approaches to all aspects of life and slowly a harmony is established between the inner and the outer world of man. As beautifully pointed out by The Mother, 'stepping back' then becomes a habit and conflicting responses are easily avoided in our responses in day to day life. Hence a sincere seeking itself has the power to create channels of creative co-operation of individuals leading to better and peaceful social order.

**INSIGHTS FROM THE BHAGAVAD-GITA:** Although, we claim to be global village through smart connectivity of high fidelity technology, when it comes to co-operation for solving global problems like carbon emission, pollution, unemployment, hunger etc, we verb easily lose sight of the reality of human unity and indulge in politicization of the problem to such an extent that the divisions are more prominent than ever before. Hence, the only way out is the process of education, which aims at producing whole human beings committed to human unity by experiencing the spiritual unity of mankind. The Gita emphasizes on the level of the soul as essence of human being and education which establishes peacefulness within and without along with a sincere commitment for righteous action. It says,

*श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं, तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः;*

*ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परमं शान्तिः नाचिरेणाधिगच्छति. (4.39)*

Shraddhavan labhate Jnanam, tatparah samyatendriyah;  
Jnanam labdhva param shantih nachirenadhigachchhati;

True Education is attained by one who is endowed with Shraddhha (faith plus) and is having readiness for learning added with control over senses.

These are the essential elements of education which need to be integrated in modern education system.

**FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR A PEACEFUL SOCIAL-ORDER/WORLD PEACE:**

In general it is a matter of commonsense that peaceful social order is not possible without peaceful life of individuals in a society. Hence our focus must be on factors for a peaceful individual life. Apart from satisfaction of material needs, there are certain areas of fulfilment in life which are essential for peace at individual level. Also whatever be the areas of interest of an individual, the

need for being of service to our immediate society, the need of recognition of one's individuality and the need for being able to understand one's true self should be fulfilled properly at successive stages of human development. As Dyer (1997) points out, the ultimate stage is that of the stage of spirit and one must attune to that level for real fulfilment in life.

Of late it is being realised that despite material prosperity, human beings continue to have conflict of one kind or the other. These conflicts get manifested in one way or the other disrupting peaceful interactions and inter-relations at social and global levels. When probed carefully, the seeds of conflict seem to lie within human psychology. Hence one needs to focus more on inner (psychological) cleansing than mere outer adjustment for establishing peace and serenity in oneself, which alone can eventually lead to peace outside. The Bhagavad-Gita declares:

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम नात्मानं वसादयेत;

आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः .

Uddharet atmanatmanam natmanam avasadayet

Atmaiva hy atmano bandhur atmiva ripuratmanah—VI.5

'Raise yourself by yourself, do not let yourself down, for you alone are your own friend, you alone are your own enemy'.

बन्धुरात्मात्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः,

अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत्.

Bandhuh atmatmanah tasya yena atma eva atmano jitah

Anatmanah tu satrutve varteta atmaeva satruvat.----- VI.6

'One becomes one's own friend when one has conquered oneself but o the unconquered self he is inimical and becomes like enemy.'

Here the need and importance of disciplining inner energies has been emphasised. Those who discipline their inner energies, they become their own friends. Those who do not do so, they become as it were, their own enemy. Thus when one becomes peaceful within by disciplining inner energies, one automatically facilitates peace in and around oneself which further ensures peaceful co-operation of individuals and societies leading to world peace.

### **INDIVIDUAL FLOWERING VERSUS SOCIAL UNITY: GUIDELINES FROM THE BHAGVAD-GITA:**

Individual flowering and social unity are two sides of the same coin. When individuals grow inwardly, their creative contribution to society becomes very fruitful not only materially but also spiritually. The fabric and web of human inter-relationship gets beautified and strengthened through such individuals. This helps in social cohesion and human unity in the long run. The Bhagavad-Gita, as the fountainhead of eastern psychology, conveys that wisdom in its entirety, which leads man to inward flowering alongwith collective welfare. On one side it teaches detachment and renouncing of fruits of action, whereas on the other it strongly advocates utmost efficiency in action, one- mindedness and dedication of each and every thing to the lord of the universe seated in all forms of existence. It exhorts the typical human representative of the age to attain self- purification and yogic attitude amidst the most trying circumstances of life. Performing our duties with a sense of commitment for लोकसंग्रह lokasamgraha and (with) यज्ञभावितः yajnabhavitah ( an attitude of sacred sacrifice) while keeping our mind fixed on inner purification seems to be the key concept of the Bhagavad-Gita in the context of holistic human development.

Social unity is brought about by a collective consciousness towards social being of all individuals. When the aspirations of each member or most of the members or the leading members of a society is in consonance for collective goodness, it creates an environment of creative co-operation minimizing conflicts and maximizing togetherness amongst them. But this is not possible without a minimum level of attitudinal orientation in true spirituality. As the Gita points out, the satvik

disposition has to be brought about in forefront of our life. In fact, the individual has to cleanse himself through means suitable to his temperament( स्वभाव-Swabhava) for performing his duties (स्वधर्म-Swadharma) in disinterestedly dedicated ways. This in turn calls for nurturing of the true response- potential of the individual in early years of education and training with श्रद्धा-shraddha, sincerity and receptivity. This is a concept contrary to mechanical or automatic social conditioning, which leads individuals as per the impact of outer influences and leaves one dry within, manifesting itself in various forms of cravings for happiness with the help of external means. Righteous social unity is possible when the individual understands his role, responsibility, limitations as well as the importance of society in his growth. As the Gita says-

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर,  
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः.  
Tasmad asaktah satatam karyam karma samachara  
Asaktohyacharankarma paramapnoti purusah;-III.19

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः,  
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि.  
Karmanaiva hi samsiddhimasthita janakadayah  
Lokasamrahamevapi sampasyankaertumarhasi;- III.20

These two verses establish the importance of dutifulness for individual as well as collective welfare in order to realise the spiritual unity with God and with this world of beings who dwell in Him and in whom He dwells (Sri Aurobindo,p128.).

### **HUMAN UNITY AND EMERGENCE OF A GLOBAL CIVILIZATION:**

At the level of spirit, all religions and realised souls declare that all beings are one. But to realise it oneself practically, one has to put in efforts of righteous resolve, righteous actions and righteous understanding in the total process of life. As the taste of sugar has to be realised oneself, no amount of description by others will suffice for anyone else, similarly the sense of human unity is to be realised by one's own personal journey in one's day to day life, livelihood and social relations.

Whenever our lower/surface nature is slowly controlled and the higher nature finds manifestation, then slowly spiritual culture enters. We evolve into better and still better human beings. All culture is the product of the discipline of the impulses, and culture is specifically a human phenomenon. By judicious discipline, guided by reason and love of truth, man manifests the higher and higher aspects of nature, first the human, then the divine, from within oneself. Real civilization itself is the product of a little dominance of this higher nature over the lower one. This yoga of manifestation of the divine nature of man is what the Gita describes and can be termed as the Spiritual Evolution of human beings, out of which comes tremendous peace and harmony in the world. A spiritual community evolves, which has as its goal the highest possible development of each of its members, as well as that of the spiritual community itself as a whole. Indeed it aspires to contribute, at least indirectly, to the ultimate welfare of all beings.

Thus we find that the perennial psychology of the Bhagavad-Gita helps us free ourselves from the quagmire of emotionality, egotistical preoccupation and self delusion. It helps us in realising our fullest potentials for the unfoldment of consciousness. It deals with analyzing and training the internal processes of the human being so that one becomes creative in the external world and attains a state of dynamic tranquillity at the same time.

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