



Pandit Nilakantha's View on Bhagavad Gita with Special Reference to Karma Yoga

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ABSTRACT

Pandit Nilakantha was an ardent exponent of the Bhagavad Gita. Pandit Das was an out-rationalist and accepted nothing unless supported by reason. According to him, True knowledge of the universe, as well as the determination of duties of mankind, are narrated in Gita. Therefore, Gita Dharma is Universal. This has been the concept of the people of India for a long time. They have upheld their civilization and culture through this concept. Being conscious of each other's duties has been the root cause of the evolution of this culture. Nobody should aspire to accumulate or gain wealth unduly. Determining one's duties, as society needs, if all works accordingly, the stream of civilization will flourish and flow without any interruption. On the contrary, if all are swept away in the irrepressible current of greed and passion and lay their claims to rights and enjoyments with a cry, it is mine and not yours, there will be chaos in the trend of development, the society will lose its status and progress will be hampered. Indian civilization has been following this principle.

Key words: action, duty, dharma, principle, wisdom

The Bhagavad Gita instructs men about each of the important duties one by one and tries to prove these by attributing these qualities to an imaginary God from another world. As a result, they depend more on faith and unfounded devotion than on knowledge. For instance, Gita has nowhere said, that "one should marry so many times, you must return the thing to whom it belongs, as a son you must respect your parents, you should not tell lies, you should not kill living beings, should not touch such things, such animals and such men, etc." At the same time, it cannot be denied that these things are not found in Gita Dharma. If one follows Gita Dharma, one can easily and correctly know how to act in every circumstance. Gita Dharma in essence is spiritual. Man has eternal ties with the universe, in this context. With the understanding of the circumstances and the ties, he can perform his actions perfectly. Indians call this an Aryan civilization. Founded on this principle, this civilization has been progressing steadily. None of the other civilizations of the world has progressed so well, for such a long time. There is apprehension that, this progress may get derailed if there are impediments in its path and the leaders go astray in the path of irresistible desire and yearn for enjoyment.³ At that time, it was necessary to stress the people towards Aryan Dharma. Sri Krishna has only done that in Gita.

Duryodhana, the Kaurava prince in his irrepressible desire, (lobhohatacetasah) denied even a place in the kingdom to the Pandavas and wanted everything for himself. Sri Krishna approached and asked only five villages for the Pandavas. Duryodhana did not agree to this. It was seen that the Aryan Dharma was in danger. If anybody else would have caused this, matters would have been resolved. But very great persons of the country stood behind Duryodhana in the battle of Kurukshetra. To uphold Aryan Dharma and the duties of Kshatriyas, Sri Krishna, along with Pandavas faced Duryodhana on the battlefield. But Arjuna realized the grave situation, once he was on the battlefield. Somehow, Sri Krishna would have convinced Arjuna to fight, because of his personality, laying stress on the issues of weakness and dishonor, but Arjuna introduced an alternative path in Aryan Dharma. It is an established norm of Aryan Dharma, to seek alms as an ascetic, renouncing the world. Why should Arjuna not follow that path, but invite bereavement by killing his kinsmen and teachers? Great weakness is of course hidden in this. Because it is argued that renunciation is the way to escape sorrow. Why should I beget such a sense of scorching sorrow, to possess a kingdom, instead of becoming an ascetic? Arjuna said this⁴, seeing Arjuna's anxiety to drive away from the sorrow by following an approved and established path of renouncing action, Sri Krishna smiled and set out explaining, how to redeem sorrow. With a smile

One should not grieve for the dead- the soul is eternal-it is dishonorable to relinquish action in sorrow. Sri Krishna said- There is nothing to be sorry for when a man dies. It is the soul that resides in the body; when the body perishes, there is no decay or growth of the soul, nobody dies, the soul gets transferred to another body, and the soul is not attached to the 'pleasure-pain' experience of the senses, he who realizes this and remains indifferent to 'pleasure and pain' is wise. The body is born and ceases to live the soul leaves a body and assumes another body, nobody should grieve for one who is killed or for the one who kills, he who thus understands is liberated by renunciation. One who becomes an ascetic to escape sorrow is not an ascetic.

Hence, keeping the self in its ideal or Brahman in meditation, the wisdom becomes single, concentrated and performing actions in that wisdom is Yoga. Explaining the relation between action and its rewards in yoga, He describes yoga. Arjuna, you are deluded to imagine that you will suffer from grief as a result of killing kinsmen in this action. You may act, but is the result in your hand? You may act with all the care and skill, but will you get the reward

as expected? You are to perform certain actions as your social obligations. At present, to perpetuate the dharma is your duty. Action will yield result, this result will accrue from this action, such thoughts will develop an attachment and also a passion for the result. In that circumstance, you cannot concentrate on the action. Imagining all the time results, one would not be able to decide which deed, he should do, and such a man would be in a dilemma, overcome by greed. In those circumstances, man loses his self-confidence. Therefore, abandon that passion, perform your work (duty), remaining equal in success or failure, whether you achieve the result or not. If work is performed by remaining equal in success or failure, then it may be said that you have achieved the yoga state in Karma. This poise is yoga.¹⁹ Work done wisdom of yoga. That work can never reach the level of Karma done in the wisdom of yoga. Therefore, hold on to the wisdom of yoga. Those who work for fruits of action, become choosy for good and bad rewards all the time and think that deviation in the expected reward, they are very inferior indeed and unmanly.²⁰ A man possessed with the wisdom of yoga, need not be choosy, for him what is good and what is bad? Therefore, you remain firm in Yoga. Yoga is a skill in action.²¹

There are two paths for man to follow. One is that of desire or enjoyment, the other is that of abstinence or renunciation. While one finds its expression on rights, the other on his duties. But it would be wrong to assume that there will be societies where one thrives, while the other disappears, society follows the ideals of one or the other, this much we must understand. There will be renunciation within enjoyment, again in societies guided by the ideals of renunciation and duty. There are instances of claiming enjoyment and rights and achieving the same. Because desire is inborn, it is involuntary and natural. From the moment of his birth, man thrusts into his mouth whatever he gets and till his death, this desire lingers. Instances have come to notice that a man following the path of restraint, throughout his life, expresses the desire to eat something, he had abstained from and breathes his last only after eating the same.

Therefore, there is no escape from the desire for the mortal man. Abstaining from such desires alone, will not be effective. Therefore, the Aryans in India made duties the ideal of their life. Even though abandonment was included in this, nobody remains out of action stating that 'I am abandoning'. Granting that, a common man will not thrive in traditions. Giving up something is not natural. But in aligning one with the cause of the universe, if one does his duties, his attention will remain inward and not outward. This is the Aryan Way.

The senses of a human being are of one nature, uncontrollable. Desire seated in the senses gradually possesses the mind and intellect and eclipses the self or the character of the person. Senses are governed by thoughts; Senses must be sanitized from corrupt thoughts and gradually self-purified. The key to control of the senses or the self is renunciation (tyaga), and to practise it, one must keep the self away from enjoyment. One must pay attention to his duties in the world, and regulate your activities by determining your duties. Keep away from desire or your narrow interest and pay attention to your duties. With your mind engrossed in what to acquire and preserve, there will be no uplift of self. Tranquility is lost and the self is subject to base instincts and indiscipline. The self is deluded in desire, but being steadfast in one's duty, his interest is no doubt served; and at the same time, similarly, everyone in the society whether he works for himself or others, for whatever consideration, cannot even acquire pleasure isolating the self or himself from others. You must give away your acquisition to others.³⁵ Everyone's interest is served easily if each performs his duty. The development of society will progress with ease and perfect peace if each one fulfils the needs of the other. Self will be purified if this is the ideal. The Lord has said of this ideal, 'Satisfied with fulfilling of interest in whatever one receives, not jealous over other's wealth, even-minded in pleasure and pain of the world, mind fixed on righteous duties and responsibilities, man can undo the bonds of desire for action'³⁶ In his wisdom of duty, he has to consider what he has to give to the world or society and perform the action, that is his sacrifice. The person is not merged with the universe. The person does not exist in the universal state. The person is the giver, he strives to develop himself to perfection.

The Lord has said; therefore, one is attached to this action or pleasure because it is dear to him and necessary. Renouncing that attachment, which causes dereliction of duty and freed from the bonds of action, fixing the mind on the righteous path of self-development, if one acts for the sake of sacrifice, he will not incur sin, since the action with its result is dissolved.³⁷ In whatever righteous actions one does not wish to incur sin, he sacrifices his desire, attachment, etc. in those actions. Offering wealth, yoga, studies, knowledge and whatever in which, man seeks liberation, in everything it is a sacrifice - offering of one's self and action as a duty and preceding, succeeding ones). Suppose, after giving someone wealth, you ask for some service in return or offer a loan with interest, practice pranayama before attending a feast to cleanse the stomach practice yoga to acquire occult power for subjugating others, or study scriptures to gain prominence

In this, there is a great synthesis of the person and the universal being. Let the universal being be the Sun, uninterruptedly he is doing his duty, there is no desire, nor attachment, nor any concern about loss and gain, nor any other nothing in his duty to protect or kill anybody. In the sacrifice of Brahma or as a part of universal development, they are firm and fixed in their duties, free of attachment and desire. The great display of universal actions occurs amidst the endless growth and decay, preservation and wastage, development and destruction in the relative movements of the firm duties of the universal beings. This is the great sacrifice of Brahma or offering of self or expression of the self in the actions, similarly, the person would also attain the state of sacrifice in offering his self in the actions. Creation is a great display of self-manifestation and sacrifice. Perpetual duty is the status and base of the sacrificial act. Man is also a part of that universal development. He would regulate his actions, sacrificing himself in the endless manifestation or the movement of eternal relative duties of the universe. This is his salvation. This is his sacrifice from two sides. On one side, it is manifesting his personality in the actions or traditions of duty and offering himself in the sacrifice. On the other, it is expressing his personality as an essential part of the universal

The turbulent actions calm down; there are no bonds of action, in the absence of bonds, there is salvation and freedom from the entanglement of actions. Action is the cause of the world or the cycle of birth and death. It is the cause of the pair of opposites i.e., pleasure and pain, etc.; rather the sufferings are due to the opposites such as pleasure and pain etc. Therefore, in salvation, for eternity, there will be no fears of such sufferings. There is no rebirth in salvation (Brāhmisthiti). It must be pointed out here that social conditions influence the development of personality and svadharma. Now, in the world, it is commonly understood as the nation or nationalism, if you speak of society. Man has to regulate his works or is compelled to act, from that angle. In today's modern civilization, man is not independent to develop or act. This is not the place to analyze this condition in the context of the evolution of the

'rights-oriented' Aryan dharma. But it is not difficult to surmise that in this the human duties are not compatible with the universal duties. Whatever is necessary for the benefit of the nation, the State gets it done. Man, conditioned to that subjugation, does his duties. The State needs an army to plunder others. Therefore, all will become soldiers. He preaches religion, as a priest. He is being used in that way. If Jesus atones for the sins of the tribals and negros in their areas, its consequence may be in the aid of plunder by certain nations. The traders (vaishyas), in their desire to loot some nation, will seek the help of the soldiers (Kshatriyas) and priests (Brahmins). Labourers (Sūdras) will work in factories against all odds and bear the miseries under the charms of nationalism. The law puts to use everyone, whether they will it or not. In these cases, the scope of realizing svadharma is very much limited and restrained. However, the social discipline in India was different. There, in hermitages (ashrams) or under the influences of family traditions, the personality grew independently during daily necessities and the practice of one's multitude of duties. There is no need to explain that in greater detail. But this much can be said, the influence of the family and the parents helped the development of the personality to a large extent. The duties of a son played an important role. Vedas say, 'Do not impart the principles of Veda to anybody other than a stern disciple and a son. The son was always a disciple, that is, he was alert in accepting the

An Individual's duty or bounden duty is the reflection of self-development and evolution in the universal sacrifice. The nature of svadharma is self-dedication or sacrifice in fulfilling one's duty. There is no consideration of loss or gain in self-dedication as if this is a consistent charitable deed. This is without desire, without attachment. There is no respite from this because one has no desire for the same. This duty is always filled with meditation and effort. There is no consideration or thought for pleasure and pain and loss and gain. Equanimity in opposites is its only condition. To do one's duty in sacrifice, meditation and charity, with equanimity in opposites is the universal religion. In this alone, creation exists and is ever-growing. If this chain is disrupted, there will be disorder and chaos in the creation.

Man is a social being and being social, he is bound to protect society by protecting moral orders. Man is responsible for both social order and social crisis. Social progress is rooted in the discipline of individuals. The collective psyche is enriched by the individual's pursuit of social harmony and discipline. 'Live and let live' is the hallmark of social concern. However, this concern has been disputed by the psychic conflicts and confusions of the human mind. In the name of modernity, the social members have made themselves the slaves of circumstances. Sacrifice and respect for others are necessary for a good society, otherwise peace will be a misnomer. Ignorance is the root cause of suffering as well as social crisis. A man should come out of his dogmatic slumber and work for social well-being. Due to a lack of proper knowledge man fails to discriminate between opposites of value paradigms. The apparent opposites of value paradigms are contextually significant. Due to a lack of practical wisdom man fails to fit into contextual emergency. Blind adherence to the rigorous rule-deontological moral principles has no significance if that is not useful and meaningful in the given context. The praxis is equally important to the paradigms. The social life of man is value-centric. The concern of proper application of values in the proper contexts needs a mind of equanimity. The man, who is disturbed in his mind, fails to find a solution to his mundane difficulties. The modern man is confused and frustrated only because he fails in desire management. Undesirable desires breed unnecessary attachment and mislead a person into bondage. Desire is necessary for human existence but passionate desires should be controlled by proper education. Education is meant for freedom. Freedom is the postulate of morality and social concern. Every moment man finds himself at the crossroads confronting dialectics of moral paradigms. This is called the moment of moral dilemma.

The *Bhagavat Gītā* has given all scope for human freedom through *Svadharma* and at the same time helps attain the ultimate freedom from all bondage through *Nishkamākarma*. *Svadharma* is contextually good having social concern but not free from the scope of bondage and attachment. So, the highest goal of life is to perform our actions in society in the sense of duty. A man should have true wisdom of his nature that he is nothing other than the Supreme Self. The ego arises when we are ignorant and forgetful of our spiritual nature. When this ignorance is dispelled, there is the experience of the infinite bliss of the All-Full-Consciousness. When desires are absent in the mind, the thought breeding ends. When thoughts are removed, actions and reactions do not exist. This state is called actionlessness – *Naishkarmya Siddhi*. An intellect that is attached to sensuous things of the world outside knows no peace within itself. To attain peace of mind should be purified and groomed to be steady in wisdom. Individual life is not alien to the social life. The social concern of transformed personalities aims at the growth and transformation of an individual's peaceful life. At the same time, an individual having a mind of equanimity can create an ideal society.

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