

ONLINE

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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

December 21-23, 2020

On the occasion of
INTERNATIONAL GITA
MAHOTSAV
2020



REPORT

Sustainable Existence

&

Shrimad-Bhagwad Gita Philosophy



Organised by

Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra
(Established by the State Legislature Act XII of 1956)
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Kurukshetra, Haryana, India

Gita International Seminar Report
(21-23 December, 2020)
Sustainable Existence and Shrimad-Bhagawadgita Philosophy

Part I

The moderate cold weather of the month of *Margashirsh* (Nov.-Dec.) with auspicious sun adds to the beauty of the celebrations of International Gita Mahotsav at Kurukshetra. Warm lights at night at sacred Brahma Sarovar pulling out the chill of winters to some extent give a picturesque view having serenity and spirituality on one side and grandeur and exhilaration on the other. The complete ambience spreading positive vibes truly justifies the words of Lord Krishna in the 10th chapter of Gita that I am Margashirsha among the months. The Pious month, one of the *vibhuti*s of Lord Krishna inspires us to indulge in self-introspection, to value spirituality, to think about universal welfare and to think more clearly and objectively. Having these objectives in mind Kurukshetra University along with Kurukshetra Development Board organises International Gita Seminar every year on the occasion of Gita Jayanti. This year held from 21st to 23rd December 2020, it took the form of a webinar due to corona pandemic, but even the cruel pandemic could not hamper the enthusiastic and wide participation of the people from all the globe. The broad theme of the 5th Gita International seminar was '**Sustainable Existence and Bhagawadgita Philosophy**', which was inspired by the current situation of the world where a continuous fight against covid-19 is going on. Spread of Corona pandemic not only snatched and threatened the lives of people but also gave rise to many psychological and emotional issues in the society. Some people are fighting like warriors, some are worried about future and some are facing financial crises. This scenario compelled the thinkers to bring out some positive answers from Bhagawadgita philosophy by considering to take such a theme of the seminar that relates with these issues. The concept of sustainable existence is seeded in Shrimadbhagawadgita philosophy which reveals the meaning of life and death, body and soul, *dharma* and *adharma* and helps to overcome many conflicts and dilemmas of human minds. Following is the outcome-based report highlighting the main points discussed in various sessions of the seminar.

1. Human Values in Geeta and Sustainable Development:

Our Vedic rishis preached that the development of a society should be all pervasive. They gave us the values to live together in unity, to worship God for welfare of all and to

enjoy the resources without possessiveness. Bhagawadgita gives us the gist of the Vedas and Upanishads. It reconciles different paths of spirituality into one. It tells that there is one Supreme God who takes care of all activities of the world especially the order of action and recompense. This theory of selfless karma with knowledge of truth and devotion for God frames the basis of human values that can make a strong and sustainable society.

(a) **Knowledge of Truth:** Knowledge of truth means to understand who we are. We are not the body but the soul which is eternal. We are actually limited version of God. When we achieve this perception, we feel oneness with all beings and start practising humanity. Humanity as a whole is represented in the personality of Arjuna who is taught Dharma by Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna makes him realize that one should perform actions for bigger cause, for sustainable growth and for universal welfare. Sustainable growth means equitable distribution of resources or to meet the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations.

(b) **Bhagawadgita and Humanity:** Importance of study of Bhagawadgita is related to the fact that scientific and technical progress and achievements of civilization in various spheres of social life are accompanied by the loss of moral and ethical values, which are leading to degradation of a person and a spiritual being. In this situation, Bhagawadgita in its most methodical way can teach what humanity means. Humanity is a vision that surpasses all differences of caste, creed, race, rich and poor. It is an idea of quality of life with a concept of co-existence.

(c) **Yajna and human values:** Lord Krishna gives a detailed description of Yajnas which were performed to bring health and prosperity for all beings. All kinds of yajnas are deeply connected with spirituality as they inculcate the divine feeling of giving or dedicating oneself to the cause of dharma. People perform four types of yajnas according to their inclination; they donate money or articles in *dravya yajna* to remove poverty; some perform austerity *tapoyajna* to achieve control over senses; some other take the path of yoga (*yoga yajna*) while the most dedicated ones go for true knowledge *jyana yajna*. All of them are elevated souls as they set the values of selfless living for the mankind and the environment.

2. Role of Bhagawadgita in Building a Conscious Planet:

Since long it is being observed that man has stopped thinking about others in the journey of life. His sole focus is on making money and attain physical enjoyments.

Unfortunately, he does not seem to be sensitive towards others' miseries and towards the environment. Natural calamities and disturbance in climatic conditions have started to warn the man that he should now stop the over exploitation of resources and be contented and conscientious. Bhagawadgita can play a very important role in building a conscious planet.

(a) Understanding the world: Gita ultimately leads to the conscious understanding of the world. This means that every human being who studies Gita attains a different perception to look upon the world. He finds that each and every component living or non-living is important being a part of God's creation. A truly divine human being finds peace in completing action in the highest service to God, by completing his dharma. Meditation is one of the ways to free oneself from worldly possessions. One of the purest forms of meditation comes when a person is able to free himself from selfish action. However, he must also focus on the divinity in his actions. Basically, Krishna is stating that when someone realizes divine union with him in meditation, he understands the true nature of the world.

(b) Knowledge of Self: If one knows one's real self, only then he can reflect upon the genuine needs of nature, society and oneself. Consequently, he can take appropriate action to make an ideal society and healthy environment. Knowledge of Self leads to ultimate bliss and such person achieves harmony with nature and fellow beings. The spiritual philosophy of Gita thus sensitizes a person towards environment, gives eternal wisdom and leads to sustainable existence.

(c) Vedanta and Gita: Gita puts before us a gist of Indian Philosophy especially the Vedanta system of thought in which concept of only one Supreme God is given. The omnipresent, all pervasive God is present inside as well as outside us. He is the master of all human beings, responsible of Creation and Destruction. He blesses His devotees with love and peace, but prefers those who are wise and learned. It is the knowledge and understanding of reality that leads a person to eternal bliss.

3. Importance of Strategic Leadership for Sustainable Development: Bhagawadgita Perspective:

From the very beginning of Mahabharata Lord Krishna has set an example of a leader with sharp intellect and foresightedness. He is shown to be having supernatural powers, but he is wise who very well knows how and when to use these powers. A remarkable difference between Lord Krishna's perception and others' understanding of

situations can be observed all throughout. We all are aware that Pandavas victory over Kauravas in Mahabharata was due to Lord Krishna and his strategic leadership. *Dharma* of a ruler or a king is found narrated in many ancient Indian texts like Vedas, Smritis and other texts. A king should be well educated, disciplined, strong and sensitive for the people of his region. Chanakya in Arthashastra has described the need for strategic leadership not only for winning but for creating a peaceful society. In today's world when war-like situation has occurred due to the pandemic and many other problems, it has become very important to have strategic leaders who can make policies for sustainable existence of all living and non-living components. In the period of pandemic, a good leader can make policies to let the people become less vulnerable and be prepared to fight against the disease.

A good leadership can lead an organisation to a great height through nourishing talent by creating space and agenda for others. For this our scriptures give the concept of four kinds of strategies: *sama*, *dama*, *danda*, *bheda*. Out of these four, *danda* is the most important for a leader to manage different types of people, to curb the doers of wrong deeds, to remove corruption and to maintain justice. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that I am *Danda* among the four strategies. Sanjay after depicting the whole scene of Mahabharata war, concludes that where there is Lord Krishna, there is victory, prosperity, grandeur and sustainable existence.

4. Bhagawadgita and its influence on Literatures in English:

It is a well-known fact that Shrimadbhagawadgita has influenced people of various countries, and it has been translated in many languages of the world. Being an ancient text, it has greatly influenced the authors of Indian literature as well as western literature. Literature a mirror of society plays a vital role in conveying a social message that might be difficult to reach out to people via any other source. An individual must read Gita as literature to experience the essence of spiritual poetry. Many great western authors like R.W. Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, W.B. Yeats, Walt Whitman, Robert Browning, William Wordsworth, Shakespeare, John Milton seem to be influenced by perennial thoughts of Bhagawadgita. Famous lines of a poem, "The woods are lovely dark and deep/ but I have promises to keep /and miles to go before I sleep" express that there is a spiritual journey that everyone has to complete. A Similar message is conveyed by lord Krishna to Arjun When he says that it is a duty of every person to perform action till the end of life. Gita has also been compared with modern writings of English literature like

The Alchemist, where the character Santiago has been compared with Arjuna.

In fact, importance of Gita lies in its multivalent quality. It enables man to liberate himself from all limiting factors and reach a state of perfect balance, inner stability and mental peace, complete freedom from grief, fear and anxiety, He who drinks nectar of Gita attains ever lasting peace and perennial joy. It also inculcates creativity with a strong foundation of righteousness. It is a gospel of the whole world meant for generality of mankind.

Part II

The remarkable efforts of human beings have brought about revolutionary changes making their lives better and convenient. Modern life constitutes the exploitation of natural resources at massive scale implying the existential issues to other beings and the question of sustainability for human race itself. Nature has its own ways to set the things in order and the current pandemic Covid-19 is a perfect example which highlights the limitations of human being as a superior being. Covid-19 brought the life to a near standstill in major regions of the world, thereby severely affecting the industrial as well as services sector around the globe. Under such circumstances, it becomes more imperative to stress upon the issue of sustainable existence so as to face the challenging times in the light of divine knowledge. The ancient Indian history is full of vast experiences, ideas and thoughts guiding the humankind towards harmonious development of all beings.

Shrimad Bhagawadgita provides the sublime and thought-provoking knowledge which helps to understand the true meaning of life. In this context, the present seminar aims at gaining and spreading the valuable lessons of sustainable existence as enshrined in Bhagawadgita. Among others, the main themes of the seminar related to tourism, business management and commerce highlights the importance of philosophical and spiritual guidance of Shrimad Bhagawadgita in adopting the sustainable approach while fighting the challenging business situations. The scholars and academicians have contributed their research articles on various sub themes of the seminar.

5. Revisiting Bhagawadgita in Times of COVID-19: Lessons for Leadership, Business and Society

The critical situation brought about by Covid-19 has compelled the leaders and businessmen to adopt the critical thinking in new ways that differ from the sole motive of materialistic life. The leadership lessons from Bhagawadgita offer a way forward to overcome self-defeating attitude and to embrace rather than avoiding the formidable

challenges so as to become an effective leader. Bhagawadgita stresses upon the development of core values, positive character, emotional intelligence and use of inner wisdom to take correct decisions.

Shrimad Bhagawadgita emphasizes the significance of *Karma* and guides to perform your prescribed duty without any entitlement to the fruits of actions. In the times of pandemic when business risks and uncertainties prevail all over the world, business ethics can play a pivotal role in fighting the present situation. Bhagawadgita provides the ethical and spiritual solutions to all the dilemmas of life. All qualities of a good leader guiding the society constitute honesty, confidence, and commitment, selfless effort as a *karmayogi*, leading by example, sacrifice, even-mindedness, a sense of equanimity and focusing on present etc., have been conceptualized in Gita. Lessons from Bhagawadgita provide unique ways of thinking and perception which is applicable to all the people under all the situations.

6. Sustainable Approach towards Crisis and Response in Tourism

Being one of the most ancient civilizations in the world, India has witnessed the spread of almost all the main religions in the subcontinent, therefore practicing religious activities is an essential part in the lives of the masses. If spirituality provides a feeling of bliss, travelling also provides peace of mind. All over the world, tourism industry has been severely affected by the current pandemic due to which there emerges a need to rethink about the sustainable approach towards crisis. The resilient and coping strategies as prescribed in Shrimad Bhagawadgita provides the basis for taking sustainable decisions which can be of great help to reset the tourism industry, specifically in India.

Various research contributions to the seminar have examined the impact of Covid-19 on Indian Tourism and Hospitality industry and also suggested the need for stronger and better mediums of sustenance, use of green marketing practices by tourism enterprises as effective tools for sustainable development and need to focus on everyday life for simpler sustainable choices. A case study on selected Indian tourism projects highlights and traces the existence of Shrimad Bhagawadgita philosophy in context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The teachings of Shrimad Bhagawadgita lay emphasis on being positive, hopeful and to take the right decisions during testing times, therefore it is essential to achieve harmony in tourism destination and tourism related businesses by

establishing interconnection among environmental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions of sustainable tourism.

7. Business Challenges and Disruptive Leadership: Insights from Shrimad Bhagwadgita

The present business scenario facing risks and uncertainty due to the pandemic highlights the role of disruptive leadership to handle the crisis. Shrimad Bhagawadgita presents a psychological, philosophical, ethical, practical and spiritual discourse between a leader and the follower. The teachings and lessons of Shrimad Bhagawadgita hold great significance and analogies to various modern management concepts such as corporate governance, social responsibility, business ethics, work culture, motivation and leadership skills. Lessons from Shrimad Bhagawadgita provides the knowledge to harness the capabilities of one's mind to drive away fears, to fight the current situation, to focus on efforts without worrying about results and to come out of dilemma by taking the correct decisions. The concept of social responsibility ensures transparency, good conduct and preference to welfare motives on the part of the business sector. Insights from Bhagawadgita suggest the initiation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) with individual social responsibility (ISR) which should further move towards global social responsibility (GSR). The wisdom of Bhagawadgita instills the feeling of fairness and responsibility which is instrumental in delivering societal value and sustainable business solutions. Apart from the studies highlighting refined timeless life management lessons of Shrimad Bhagawadgita that find relevance even in today's modern business world, various research articles emphasize upon the significance of the lifelong teachings of Shrimad Bhagawadgita in tackling stress. Stress management is an important issue facing the modern society especially under the present circumstances created by the pandemic. Due to Covid-19, large number of people are struggling with stress due to financial, emotional and health issues. Practicing the teachings of Shrimad Bhagawadgita provides inner strength and capabilities to accept the present challenges and to fight the fears with full faith which ultimately helps to overcome the mental health issues.

Apart from the main themes other research contributions to the seminar involve the studies on work life balance, corporate excellence through principles of spiritual

intelligence, women entrepreneurship, workplace spirituality and global leadership lessons in the light of Shrimad Bhagawadgita philosophy.

Impressions

1. Gita International Seminar is a grand academic event organized by Kurukshetra University as a part of International Gita Mahotsava.
2. Scholars from all over the world are invited as resource persons as well as participants in the seminar who are mesmerized with the beauty of Gita.
3. This year the seminar took form of a webinar due to covid-19 pandemic, but the enthusiasm and willingness of the participants could not be hampered by the pandemic. More than 600 scholars and students were registered to take part in the event. Seven Departments participated as organizers of seven technical sessions with specific themes to make the event more dynamic.
4. The Broad theme of the seminar 'Sustainable Existence and Bhagawadgita Philosophy" was inspired by the current situation when man needs to think about future generations by renouncing over-exploitation of resources.
5. All the discourses and presentations make our belief stronger that Bhagawadgita is a scripture which can teach man the meaning of life and to handle all situations wisely and patiently. As has been said by Aurobindo Ghosh, 'The Bhagawadgita is a true scripture of the human race, a living creation rather than a book, with a new message for every civilization.'

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परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् । धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ।।

भावार्थ : साधु पुरुषों का उद्धार करने के लिए, पाप कर्म करने वालों का विनाश करने के लिए और धर्म की अच्छी तरह से स्थापना करने के लिए मैं युग-युग में प्रकट हुआ करता हूँ ।।