

## THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND THE END OF ILLUSION

Both H. P. Blavatsky and Alice Bailey consider the Bhagavad Gita as a deeply esoteric work. The story of Arjuna, as I said in my last presentation, symbolically depicts the challenges every spiritual disciple has to face. It could rightfully be called “allegory”: a story used as metaphor, and intended to teach us something, *if* we can truly unveil its hidden meaning. This book is not some cryptic treatise on the affairs of an initiate or Adept: the BG is useful for all of us aspirants, and the challenges which Arjuna, the symbol of the disciple, faces, are the problems of all disciples throughout the ages. Symbolism is like beauty, either you see it, or not. But it is there to be uncovered.

As we said, the BG is contained within a major epic poem, the Mahabharata. The story revolves around two sets of cousins, the Pandava, of divine origin, and the Kaurava, of a darker origin. These two branches of the same family would become bitter rivals and oppose each other in a war for the land. A right symbol for those bright and dark side inside every human being.

Of the five brothers, Arjuna is the commander in chief of the army, and Krishna is his charioteer. Krishna, an incarnation of the god Vishnu (the Christ or love aspect of God) is the symbol of the divine soul.

The tension between both groups of cousins escalate, and ends up in a monumental confrontation on the Kurukshetram, the “field of Kuru”. It is at this point that the BG commences. Suddenly, Arjuna loses confidence in everything he’s supposed to do as a warrior. As soon as he was about to sound the horn to launch the battle, he falls down at Krishna’s feet and says:

*“I cannot fight”. “Krishna, my legs grow weak, my mouth is drying, my body trembles, and my hair stands on end. My bow slips from my hands, and my skin burns all over ... Teachers, fathers, sons, as well as grandfathers, mother’s brothers, fathers in law, grandsons, brothers in law, and other relatives, they are all there. These I do not wish to kill”.*

It is then that Krishna turns to him, whispering a teaching that becomes the *Bhagavad Gita*. I wonder if you realize how unusual and unique this situation is: while tension builds up between two armies, right at the moment of silence before the horror is unleashed, Arjuna cowers off and in the middle of the battlefield, Krishna discloses the most sacred teachings on union with the divine. If you give it some thought, it is truly amazing.

Now, in more esoteric terms: Which is then the conflict that the disciple faces? Knowing that this war is a symbol, we may wonder what kind of a war this is. Arjuna, in the battlefield, faces a terrible conundrum: all his acquaintances, friends, even his own Master, are arrayed to battle against him. He, as warrior, must *slaughter* them. Shall he cower off and revert to the downward dark path of form, or proceed with courage and do what he has to do? In

turn, Krishna, symbol of the inner soul, the higher self, stands poised in observation of the conflict of unleashed forces.

Who are really Arjuna's enemies? His familiar things, attachments, with whom age-long dependence has been established for countless incarnations. The moment the battle is about to start symbolizes this transcendental decision to abandon the Way of death, of form and separation, and to step on the inward path, that path of return to the source. The dream of the incarnated soul has led to all kinds of contracts with time and space; the incarnating human being has submitted to all kinds of guidance, religions and traditions. He has now to let go, to move on, even if this involves the sacrifice of all these "dear things" on the altar of life. When the bow slips from his hands, Arjuna feels an unbearable sadness, that inevitable experience of all of us who seek the spiritual path. He realizes that he is attached to institutions, standards of behavior and established beliefs: they are his "family", so to say.

With a heavy heart, Arjuna says:

*"My heart is weighed down with the vice of faintness, my mind is confused as to duty" (2:7).*

Thus, Arjuna, disoriented and with a feeling of futility, that everything is in vain, a feeling so familiar to many of us, cries "I will not fight".

Krishna, seeing that Arjuna refused to take his weapons and fight, warns him that *victory and defeat are the same; he urges him to act, but not to reflect on the fruit of the action.*

"Once you have made pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat the same, then you will be ready for battle" (2:38)

Krishna tells Arjuna to *"seek detachment, and fight without desire"*, but Arjuna is confused: How can one *seek detachment and yet be urged to slaughter? On the surface these words appear to be ambiguous.* But the fact is, that a deeper truth is here hinted at. Krishna enjoins him *not to withdraw from action, or from the world; one must act, but "In the heart of action, one must remain free from all attachment, since:*

*"Sages look equally on a Brahmana adorned with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, and even a dog and an outcaste" (5:18)*

Speaking about the BG, the Tibetan, who considers this book a must-read for all aspirants to the Path, explains that the relinquishment of gain is another formulation for the Law of Sacrifice: the soul must relinquish the personality. For ages, the soul has identified itself with the lower personal self, and through its agency it has acquired knowledge and gained experience. The time is now come when that agency is no longer "dear" to the soul, and it is now the personality which has to identify itself with the soul, thus losing its separate gain.

Being detached from the outer world of phenomena involves a transcendental recognition: that there is an Observer, a Seer, and that, although we identify ourselves with our ideas and identity, this is just the outer layer of the mind, its concrete aspects.

*"It is said that the senses are great; greater than the senses is the mind; greater than the mind is pure Reason; but what is greater than Reason is He, the Supreme".*

These verses are deeply meaningful. They suggest that *"There is so much more beyond the mind"*. In other words, within this mental field, a Knower, the soul, is found, in turn a reflection of the Eternal Atman. Beyond the mental field, the realm of Pure Reason or Intuition is found.

It seems that the individual soul, the seat of individuality at the midpoint between the lower and higher mind, must eventually weave an **Antahkarana**, a bridge, towards the spiritual Triad. This fusion with the *buddhic* nature is perhaps the promise of escape from the glamor of the world. For the disciple to hold his mind steady in the light, and be fixed on that high point, a higher level of attention is needed, so that the inner focus can be turned from the outer world of effects, to the inner world of causes. This kind of deep attention is hinted at in one of the most remarkable shlokas of the Bhagavad Gita:

*"In that which is the night of all beings, the yogi is awake. That in which all beings are awake, is the night of the sage who sees".*

Its meaning becomes evident for any intuitive mind. The world of the sage who has found enlightenment would be darkness, night, something incomprehensible for anyone attached to the experience of the senses and self-centered desire. The incarnated soul then dreams the dream of the ages, until it awakes. It is in this field, unknown for the ordinary human being, that the sage is active, because it is his field of service. On the other hand, what all beings attached to form consider "alive", interesting, worthy of attention, that life, is futile, vain, for a sage, even equivalent to death. Therefore, the sage does not take active part in a life which he has already experienced for many incarnations, and outgrown.

This involves a complete change in polarization, of attitude, and it has nothing to do with retiring from the world or escaping one's duties. It does imply moving against the main stream of socially accepted behavior, and becoming a real spiritual warrior. We know that, don't we? The problem of action is one of the most difficult matters to truly understand. Krishna poses that question:

*¿What is action? ¿What inaction? He further adds that "Even the wise are herein perplexed".*

*"Difficult, Mysterious is the path of action", says Krishna.*

*"He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is wise among men".*

And I wonder if we could also translate this sentence as: “He who sees SILENCE in action, and action in SILENCE, he is wise among men”.

In a way, I believe the Bhagavad Gita relates this deep silence and peace with the energy of the soul. It is the disciple who raises himself to those “heights” so to say, and following hints from the Tibetan, I find it interesting to see this in terms of “altitude”. In 6:8 the yogi is depicted as “on a high place”, that is, “on a summit”, on a high rock, this sense of altitude pointing to an unwavering position in spiritual realms.

Can we imagine how different our lives would be, should we be able to sustain our center of consciousness on that high point? The picture of the summit of a high mountain is just a symbol, as we can guess, no-one is saying that the disciple should withdraw to a lonely place on the top of a mountain. We can think of a disciple holding his mind steady in the light of the soul, that middle point between the higher mind and the lower personality; or we could extend the reach of our imagination and picture a great initiate holding his consciousness in the realms of the spiritual Triad, the realm of intuition and pure Will. What would the effect in our lives be, and what our usefulness, should we be able to turn the focus of the mind towards the world of causes, while considering this world of phenomena as a field of service and training?

The awakened human being, the BG says, “*remains in a secret place by himself, permanently with thought and self subdued*”, that is, always with the body, mind and self, seated, poised on that high place” (6:10).

His consciousness is steady in the light of that high point within the mind, its “apex”, so to say; in Krishna’s words,

“*in a pure place, neither very much raised nor very low...*” (6:11), in a holy land, also, literally, “*in a clean land*”. But, not too high nor too low, in that middle land in which the higher and the lower meet, the land of the soul, the real Self, in turn a reflection of the Monad. He can consciously direct the focus towards the realms of the spiritual triad, the realm of intuition, or to the outer world in service.

His soul thus turns out to be:

“*a lamp which does not flicker, in a windless place*”.

Thus the joy of the eternal is known, as well as that land where truth resides. This union or synthesis is what freedom really means, freedom, as Ravi Ravindra once said, not *for oneself*, but *from oneself*. The disciple sees himself within the heart of all beings, and sees all beings within his own heart. This, in other words, means that the true battlefield is oneself, where no warriors nor weapons are needed. For each man must fight alone.

Thus on the *Kurukshetra*, the disciple Arjuna bears witness to an inner recognition from which there is no return: he sees his illusions vanish one by one; so much so, that he

finally begged Krishna to show him “his *Vishvarûpa* or universal form”. In other words, he wanted to see His soul face to face. In this climaxing moment, Arjuna, overwhelmed with deep astonishment and awe, bowed down his head to the Shining One, and said with joined palms and shaken to the depths:

*“I see you everywhere, unbounded Form, Beginning, middle, end, nor your Source I find, Infinite Lord, Infinite Form. Blazing as fire, the gaze dazzling as Sun, immeasurable from all sides of the sky”*

To that, the Universal form of Vishnu replied.

*“Time I am, laying desolate the world, made manifest on earth to slay mankind! Not one of these warriors ranged for battle escapes death, you alone will survive. I have already defeated all these warriors” (9:11)*

In the 9th song or chapter, Krishna reveals a supreme mystery, in His words, “the most secret wisdom”, transcendent, the most pure. This supreme knowledge is only transmitted through direct experience. Those who do not believe in those Truths return to incarnation, to the Samsara, over and over again.

*“By Me all this world is pervaded in My Invisible Being. All beings have their roots in Me, and I am not rooted in them”. Krishna tells Arjuna to meditate on this sacred mystery. “I am the source of all beings. But He does not depend on anything or anyone. At the end of the age, in the night of times, when everything returns to the bosom of nature in Pralaya, “everything returns to my nature, he says, and when a new day begins, I bring them back to life”.*

So the big picture appears extraordinary. Behind change, there is always an eternal and undying nature. Is this not the theme of the soul’s endeavor? This universal Krishna is saying: *“having pervaded the worlds with a fraction of myself, I remain”*. Such is the very spirit which must underlie every creative work, after all. However, the soul must also relinquish its tie with all the other personal selves. The disciple must come to the point when she/he can meet other selves on the plane of the soul. He must learn to serve without attachment to results, and relinquish the fruits of service. Arjuna sees the form of god wherein all forms constitute the One Form. The battle is then, and only then, over. The soul is in complete control, and no sense of separateness is then possible.

It is with this detachment that Arjuna can sound the horn, even with the horrors of the inevitable war.

So, as the Tibetan points out in WM, the Gita lays simple rules whereby depression, sadness and illusion can be overcome. These rules emerge as we learn to read this story between the lines. I think these rules would prove to be extremely useful for all of us in these difficult times.

- a- Know yourself to be the Undying one*
- b- Control your mind, for through that mind the Undying One can be known.*
- c- Learn that the form is but a veil which hides the splendor of divinity.*
- d- Realize that the One Life pervades all forms so that there is no death, no distress, no separation.*
- e- Detach yourself therefore from the form side, and meet the Divine within on that high place where Light and Life are truly found.*

Thus illusion ends, and – I would add – a new human being is born.