

BHAGAVADGĪTĀ'S SPIRIT ABOUT ADVERSARIES' FAITH

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Abstract: The antagonists who have nonhumanistic and socially non-extendable ideas about people of other's faith, are skeptical about ways of the good life, give importance to the blind following without exercising their own experiences, treat their imperialistic racial faith as absolute, and view the non-believers as impious are separatist who always thinks of dividing humanity into believers and non-believers. They have specifically been taken into consideration by the teachings of Gītā to show them the path to heaven in their life and to make the earth their dwelling place as heaven itself. The purpose of freedom given to humans for respecting the worship of the Gods as per desires they want to be granted is very apparent in Gītā. The believers and non-believers prosper and fulfill their desires (Gītā 3/10-11). By worshiping the deities, each other that is, human communities strengthen and foster the gods, and the gods in return strengthen and foster the human progress, and thus being strengthened, they mutually achieve their progress and well-being.¹ In spiritual philosophy, the term divine stands for all the potencies inside and out and means the maintenance of life on the earth and welfare inside and out in nature. In order to reach spiritual freedom, one's conduct must be based on the perspective of others as divine. If otherwise, the God, for whom the humans are others or mere followers, may not be acceptable to non-believers and may cause deep fear in the believers, and then the concept of God loving to all is put into question. Love and fear cannot go together. Others are loving beings only because of the pervasiveness and ubiquity of divinity as love. The perspective of 'everything inside and out is divine' is the law of venerability of humanity and respectful conduct to others.

I

Respecting the aspirants' desires, interests, and righteousness, *Gītā* talks about how all categories of human desires can be transformed into value. Any conduct at the personal, local and social level is exchanged for any merit like respect, satisfaction, enrichment, honor, trust, welfare, position in the family, society, unity, and friendliness is a value. It is for moral cultivation of the individual persons and society that culminates into well-being and welfare as the purpose of the conduct. Social extension of the ways and views of life in *Gītā* is a natural law and is not conditional. At no level does it delimit humanity and hence morality on only a fraction of believers.

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¹ *Devānbhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ. Parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyāḥ paramavāpsyatha.* Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā 3/11, see also verse 3/12, Gītā press, Gorakhpur, India, reprint 2016.

Gītā is the treatise on managing desires, duties, and responsibilities that are valuable for individual and social life and living the divine on the earth. It is perhaps the first book in history that analyses all possible *karmas* taken as *dharma* to cultivate and progress humanity towards divinity. Divinity is not a foreign element. All are divine, and thus, its teachings are concerned with one and all believers and non-believers. It is more concerned with the cure of desires of the ignorant and antagonists guided by *rājasika* and *tāmasika* ego and its sanctions; they ruin themselves by their own disguised ideologies and battle with the natural order. How *Gītā* reflects on others' faith, ideologies, and the worship of deities is pointed out specifically in this presentation. In brief, *Gītā*'s view about adversaries' faith can be concluded in one line: Let them respect their faith and worship their own interests. They will get the return of their own performances'. For him, who performs disinterested action, there is no malice for any; *Gītā* teaches respect for others' faith. It respects venerably all alike without attachment to any.

Worship of different deities or Gods:

Let the author start the discussion by quoting verses one about the other's faiths, ways of life, worship of different deities and the gods, and the other about the devotee's dear to God. These quotes serve as the fundamental maxim for a discussion on the issue.

a. "Not in one way but all possible ways, the Human community worships the God, and the God responds to them the way they seek Him. *Gītā*'s attitude herein is that God is there in every form and that one can worship differently with different names and forms, can adopt different methods or practices- positive and negative and the God replies to them all accordingly in the same name, form and manner they treat" (*Gītā* 4/11).² More pointedly, it says, "those who are votaries of and worship to the other gods get those gods, of spirits, of manes, get manes, and bad spirits like ghosts, witches, get them accordingly and those who worship God (*Kṛṣṇa*) get Him" (*Gītā* 9/25).

b. There is no enforcement, no aggression of imposing any single way or view on others by taking as the absolute or the only way revealed by God. More than any, *Gītā* says, "during leaving the body at the time of death, he/she after death attains the being of memory of which he/her is captive of. Here in the verse. "Being or existence (*bhāva*) stands for any form of existence that may be God, deity, human, animal, bird, flies, trees, five material elements, etc., one gets after death because of solidifying any of the objects of memory at the time of death (*Gītā* 8/6). It clearly indicates that for *Gītā*, thinking and memory are also actions that result in fruits.

If it is asked, why does *Gītā* noticeably talk about the worship of the deities and the worship of God as well? The simple reason is based on the freedom and righteousness of the worshipers having the attitude of divinity in all. The worshipers of the deities are all except *yogīns*; *niṣkāmakarma* worship is prescribed for the selfless performers (*yogī*). Out of the two ways of worship, the former leads to mutual

² *Ye yathā mām prapadyante tāmstathaiva bhajāmyaham, mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ .ibid, 4/11.*

fostering of divine life, and the latter leads to the realization of God or oneness with God.

Worship of God:

In *Bhaktiyoga Adhyāya* (*Gītā* chapter 12), we find *Kṛṣṇa* characterizing the Yogī in order to value devotees dear to him. To observe *Gītā*'s perspective about the other's faith, he is referring, at the very outset, to concluding verses (*Gītā* 18-19) from the chapter 12. "The wise has the attitude of treating friends and foes equally and treats honor and ignominy as having equal value, who is alike in heat and cold, pleasure, pain and other conflicting experiences, views values of praise and abuse alike. God declares that one having no attitude of possession, no attachment in respect of dwelling place, and is contented with any means of subsistence, that person is my devotee and dear to me. Such a disinterested performer of duties does not have any malice in his conduct to other's that, as I understand, is, other's faiths or religions. " The verse quoted here regarding the worship of gods or deities are about the performances of different faiths, including antagonists. *Gītā* says God responds to all of them for their own faith in the same way they conduct to Him. Man is free to adopt any way of life (*sadhana paddhati*), and God is free to provide them their due in the same manner.

The second quote clearly sheds light on *Gītā*'s recommendation about devotees who perform their actions without attachment to fruits and the sense of a doer. They treat equally those who worship other deities, or who are atheists, who abuse *Kṛṣṇa*, the incarnated God, who reproach the teachings of *Gītā*, or who follow the ideology opposed to *Gītā*. To its antagonist and opponents who accept *Kṛṣṇa* as not different from a bodily birth, they all are responded as per their desires and the consequent conduct.

Gītā and the question of righteousness:

Gītā is the expression of the awareness of duties and responsibilities (*dharma/karma*³) practiced by the whole human community for cultivation and progress. One can ask why some persons are prohibited from imparting and learning its teachings. Does such a prohibition not make it sectarian? *Gītā* is a *Śāstra*, the object of *śravaṇa* and *manana*, and those who can hear with love (*śravaṇa*) and meditate on it devotedly (*manana*) and the beginners are righteous of its teaching (*Gītā* 18/71). Scriptures are guided only in the matter of what duty is and what it is not (*Gītā* 16/24). Thus, those who do not have faith in human codes of life and freedom or who are not righteous for sharing such sacrificial knowledge as *Gītā* should not be forced to learn it.

Gītā does not take shelter from religious differences and refutes others' faith to establish its identity. Unlike religions, *Gītā* does not believe in book dogma. *Gītā* itself claims it the essence of the tradition of the Vedas and the teachings of the

³ The terms "Dharma" and "Religion" are separate concepts. Religion is well defined as basic faith i. in an imperialistic God, ii. a Prophet, and iii. the book of God revealed through the prophet. There are no such dogmas in *Gītā*. It is a treatise on analyzing and observing different types of *karma* (duties and responsibilities) to oneself and others, which we define as *dharma*.

Upanishads; it is called *Gītōpaniṣad*.⁴ No doubt, *Gītā* contains the words of *Kṛṣṇa*, but *Vedavyāsa* compiled his teaching; he is a seer and not a prophet of a religion (*Gītā* 16/23-24).

It is for the well of the teacher that *Gītā*'s teachings should not be imparted to one who lacks in austerity, nor to one who is wanting in devotion, nor even to one who is not willing to hear it and in no case to one who finds fault with *Kṛṣṇa*, the God incarnation (*Gītā* 18/68). The teacher has to respect his *karma/dharma*. Its teachings are for cultivation and knowledge meant for all people of faiths who believe in shaping their future by performing their duties and responsibilities (*dharma*) well (*śraddhāvāñllabhate jñānam* (*Gītā* 4/39). Its teaching should not be imparted uncalled for and to those who do not want to hear it or who doubt it (...*sanśayātmā vinaśyati. Nāyam loko 'sti na paro na sukham sanśyātmanaḥ* (*Gītā* 4/40). It is to be offered only to aspirants who deeply love God (*Gītā* 18/69). *To impart its teaching is a sacrifice performed for knowledge (Jñānayajña). A God-loving teacher of its teachings qualifies best for being one with Kṛṣṇa -consciousness, the destination that is achieved usually by yogīns who enjoy oneness with God (Gītā 18/70).* The above expressions of *Gītā* on the other's faith are quite in tune with its metaphysical position "God is the heart (*Gītā* 5/29), and the soul (*Gītā* 15/20) of all embodied beings (*bhūtas*)" and thus, all are dear to the God and so is God being their soul.

"What is the attitude of *Gītā* in approaching other's faith" is the fundamental question the paper tries to respond. The author has approached the issue from different perspectives but has given primacy to discussing *Gītā*'s view about others' faith. The author knows that his discussion in this paper is not one in the line of hypocrite interfaith dialogue. He observes that the deep meaning of *Gītā*'s teaching is for the cultivation of man as divine man and for serving the essential values to people of all time and faith and of those having no faith as well for venerable conduct that makes them feel this life heaven. It can serve as the basic ground, potent enough to reconcile the conflicts of interfaith dialogues of sectarian religions as well. The author concludes that since inside and outside are different levels of *Kṛṣṇa* or God-consciousness, our conduct toward others and their faith must be venerable without any expectation, fear or allegiance. The issues of *Gītā*'s teachings are primarily concerned with making the concept of *karma/Dharma* practicably understandable, but its final aim is to show the way to transform or sublimate the humans to a yogī (6/46), and that makes us evaluate it as a treatise on spirituality.⁵

⁴ Each of the chapters of *Gītā* completes with the passage "Śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsū..."

⁵ In spirituality, man is condemned to live his own experience, which we call virtuous living. Religion is to follow the ideas of others; it aims at perpetuating its identity and, for that reason, an extension of a particular way of life (ideology) by any means, but spirituality aims at the cultivation of thoughts to purity. Religions are always the religions of the followers. Those who do not follow those religions are perceived as the others. Spirituality lies in practicing values, and for a spiritual seeker, there is no other who does not deserve respect as he respects and cares for himself. The purpose of religion is to show the attraction of getting to heaven and failing, which is the fear of hell through this device; they organize a socio-political space of followers, while the purpose of spirituality is to rise above the circle of all dualities, including heaven and hell. Religion is the experiences of the other, and followers are commanded to

It analyses all sorts of duties and responsibilities belonging to the mundane prosperity and those leading to spiritual freedom. The difference in the ways of *jñānayoga*, *bhaktiyoga* and *karmayoga* is made based on the primacy of the aspirant involved in practicing any of the *Jñāna* (knowledge), *Bhakti* (love), and *Karma*(duties) as per their fitness but in *Gītā*. *Performing duties without the want of fruits is the basic view of all the ways*. The purpose is to make the aspirant reach the state of an agent performing a duty for duty's sake, a *yogī*, a *sthitaprajña*, a disinterested performer (5/4) that enables himself to perform great works with no effort and even so spontaneous flow of energy without any loss or gain.

II

Different attitudes about value and conduct to other's faith and *Gītā*'s perspective: *Gītā* is a thorough analysis of duties. *Karma/Dharma* is based on three qualities with the top quality (sattva) as the ideal and the responsibilities of paying off the inborn debts and satisfying the desires to make them value (puruṣārthas) that values maintenance and creativity of the world as the basic principle. Our world is the world of *karma/dharma*. Different from all other perspectives in differentiating others, the moral perspective (*sadācāra*) values highly for our conduct to others.⁶ The otherness is a very difficult problem because there are not only equals, fellows, and friends but persons having ill ideas, blind followers of ill ideologies, enemies, and antagonistic toward duties/virtues. Demonic people who abuse and feel happy in exercising their cruelty for destructive activities to other races and communities of sentient and insentient beings. The author shall consider first the perspective different popular religious traditions have on others.

Moral actions pre-requisitely require another to which one performs his duties that are evaluated as moral or immoral. It is not the other's faith but our attitude to them that matters in personal and social life. Our perspective enforces and directs us to make this world heaven, and we as the inhabitant of the heaven. If otherwise, it helps our life and make us a devil for the races having different faiths. A brief account

follow without any intellectual freedom to exercise the faith. Spirituality is experiencing values afresh and transcending all the captives to get the spirit open to realize. There is no inside-outside difference for spirituality, but for religion, the outside is the other in contrast to the inside.

⁶ *Sadācāra* comprises abstention from the addiction of the senses and mind and the performance of moral duties and responsibilities as well. It is abstention of senses, from being addicted to sensuous pleasure, being captive of any of the objects of sensory and motor organs and mind. An abstention from hate, jealousy, greed, anger, lust, fear, and like emotions are needed for purity and soundness of the body, heart, and mind. Truth, non-violence, love, non-stealing, non-possessing, respect, help, mercy, exercising alms, giving, sharing, cooperation, etc. They are the grounds that help decide our moral duties and are needed for our moral happiness and the welfare of society. Morality is only a part of *Sadācāra*.

of major perspectives⁷ about valuing others/other's faith, whether they have existence value or utility value, follows:

- a. as having existence value
- b. as having the utility value,
- c. *Gītā* cultivates a perspective for which all, the inside and outside, have existence-value and deserve to be treated venerably.

If one wants to evaluate a perspective considering any of other's faith as having equal or non-equal existence, one has to base his deliberation on our relation and conduct with others who follow different faith systems. For the purpose of this presentation, a very brief account of the major four theories based on giving value to other's faith is traced with a view that analysis and evaluation of them may help in a proper understanding of the *Gītā*'s view about the other's faith on the one hand and find out how the religions having a narrow sectarian view claim to be secular or global if they keep humans of their faith as highest in the creation and treat others including nature outside merely as impious means.

Anthropocentrism:

As per the anthropocentric perspective of the holy books of prophetic religions, the God has created man as superior to all others; Man is a custodian of the earth, the Stewart of the planet earth and all others including the earth, except humans, have only utility value for man. Man is also divided by them as the followers of the respective religious faith of Bible, Quran, Torah, Avestha, etc. In such a division each of them takes their identity different from all others and, thus, the fear of maintaining their own identity and the racial complex against another's faith becomes imperialistically violent to another. In the name of Industrialization, Immanuel Kant's view of the kingdom of ends caused great damage to the forest and wild community which in his philosophy are merely means. Despite of their anthropocentric view, Buddhism and Jainism provided with high importance to compassion and non-violence to give high value to conduct to all others.

Biocentrism

This ideology accepts humans' existence value and includes flora and fauna as having existence value. However, this perspective accepts the superiority of rational beings over flora and fauna. It gives importance to the moral conduct of humans to flora and fauna essentially as having existence value. Humans can sustainably utilize them.

Cosmocentrism

The view provides existence value to everything in the cosmos; all are of the same qualities of the *prakṛti* as *Sāṃkhya* says. Cosmocentrism assumes that the other is all except God, their creator. From lower insects to humans, the difference between superior and inferior degrees of beings and different levels of humans with their

⁷ For detail, see *Spiritual Ecology and Environmental Ethics*, Devendra Nath Tiwari, *Cultura International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, Peter Lang, Vol. 13 (1) 2016, pgs.49-68.

intellectual and emotional differences are maintained by these theorists even about the human conduct. Humans are responsible for graceful or despicable conduct as per their interest to all lower in order. This theory greatly impacts our treatment of others and their faith because it perceives that all have a life that is of great importance. However, this theory is often grabbed by monists, and then the dominance of God not only over human existence but over-controlling their conduct is translated in a deterministic way.

Major causes of disrespect for other's faith and the position of *Gītā*:

One God with a name in a particular language of the community, a prophet, and a book revealed by God through the prophet are primary faith of religions. There is no theological dogma in *Gītā*. God of the *Gītā* is *Īśa/Īśvara*, and that *Īśa* is all that we perceive as diversities (*vāsudevam sarvam iti*). Scholars having Hindu phobia have translated and interpreted the verses with their allegiances. For example, the term *Īśa* is translated as monotheistic God. However, nobody can agree with God as its English rendering by *RadhaKṛṣṇan*⁸ and also with other translators who translate the word *Īśa* as monotheistic God as it is popularly used in other religious traditions. There are *dharmas* like Buddhism and Jainism that do not accept God. *Gītā* mentions gods (*deva*), and all are divine; anybody can worship the deity of his likeness and may not worship any. One can worship even a snake, a devil, as per the desires he wants to fulfill with the grace of the deity he/she worships. *Gītā's* do not believe in a monistic/imperialistic God that provides no freedom to humans except following the ways of the holy book by negating his own experiences. Belief in one God is the backbone of these religions because the world for them is completely dependent on His will and the goal of life is to attain God's heaven, mercy, grace, and grace. *Gītā* talks about the earth as human's heaven, which is not the ultimate goal. Scriptures, according to *Gītā* is, the guide about the *dharma/karma*, that is, what duty is and what is not; the duty *Kṛṣṇa* narrated to *Arjuna* in the war field is in no way a command, a binding (*Gītā* 16/24); *Arjuna* is free to follow or not to follow any.

Kṛṣṇa, in *Gītā*, is not a prophet; he is an incarnation of God. God is God not only because he creates the cosmos but more because he can incarnate himself as God. The concept of the prophet came later for one selected by God through whom he reveals the holy book. India is the land of seers and sages who do not claim to be prophets but realizers of the eternal truth. Their knowledge is not granted by God's choice but by their own experience; thus, a prophet is blessed by God for receiving his words of wisdom. Prophets are messengers of God who communicate the words they claim to receive from God, while seers' expressions of truth are their own experience and not the experience of any other. Incarnation God is a personality living among us, addressing people and showing them the path of righteousness.

⁸ See the translation of the first word of the first verse of '*Īsopanishad*, the same tr is found *Gītā* everywhere he translates the word "*Īśa*," Ten Principal Upanishads, English Tr and comments by S.Radhakṛṣṇan, Allen & Unwin,1953 & *Gītā*, Tr by s. Radhakṛṣṇan, Harper & Row,1973.

Three basic faiths as the basic ground of religion do not form the essential features of *Sanātana* Hinduism.⁹ Neither they are necessarily required nor important for it because it believes in the system of values and management of desires to transform them into virtues for promoting the divine causes of life. Life has a purpose, and the *Gītā* understands that in terms of progress in the matter of this-worldliness, that culmination into liberation. However, *Gītā* is not antagonistic on the issues of dogmas; letting their followers respect them is the perspective of *Gītā*. Thus, *there is no conflict on dharma; it is adharma, disguised as dharma, that is, the root cause of conflicts in religions.*

Gītā's view on the Law of *karma* and its disbelievers:

According to *Gītā*'s view, eternity or immortality, not the transitory heaven, is the goal of humans. Humans achieve heaven or hell by their own actions. Humans who aim to live their mundane desires are free agents, and they freely accept the way to heaven or hell and, lastly, follow the circle of birth and death. They are free to worship any God/gods they think fit to fulfill their mundane desires. Those Gods/deities grant the fruits they are considered capable of and for which they are worshipped. *Gītā* is aware of the atheists and those who abuse God and accept themselves as God.

Materialists (*sarīrātmavādī*) who do not believe in the law of *karma* and enjoyment of heaven and rebirth may consider their theory best for making the life moments pleasant by minimizing the rationality and maximizing the emotions and passions and by thinking of pleasure as the end for which others can be treated as means. They cannot think that for happiness, a moment of good thinking, a good word, or duty is sufficient, but for pleasure, the whole life is short. *They do not believe in the existence that is not sensed, but they fail to recognize that the material senses can sense only the material things.* They may not accept that the power of granting their desires fulfilled by the deities or demons they worship, in view of *Gītā*, is the power of God. God is there in all; it hardly matters if the antagonist denies God; *Gītā*'s stand to them is "let them respect their own perspective" because the God is there, for him, in that form."

⁹ "*Sanātana Dharma*" means beginningless codes of conduct, duties, and responsibilities compiled in the Vedic text. Venerable conduct to oneself and surroundings; a view of life based on every being as a divine with a purpose to live this earthly life in heaven, and finally, the realization of one's spirit or liberation. It is *Sanātana* because of accepting the spirit as eternal and the ways to the spirit as beginningless. It is because of the eternal importance and relevance of truth, non-violence, mercy, forgiveness, helping, giving alms, *yamas*, *niyamas*, learning, austerity, sacrifice, disinterestedness, and like for the welfare of all communities that it is called *Sanātana Dharma*. After the popularity of the foreign pronunciation of *Indu* and *Sindhu*, it is called *Hindu-dharma*, after which its different sects, sub-sects, and sub-sub-sects, by some device, are called *Hinduism*. It is called *Āryadharmā* because it is the cultured practices of the people belonging to *Āryāvarta*; it is called *Vedic-dharma* because it accepts Vedic command as *vidhi*, that is *dharma*.

Gītā's Views about our conduct toward other's faith:

Morality is generally concerned with human conduct to his fellow beings and the surrounding communities. Conduct is evaluated based on its value, and the value is given based on how humanly it is exchanged for society's moral health and welfare. Values are transformed into a virtue when lived for the moral health of individuals and society. Different from the above view, values in religions are determined in the framework of a revealed book that fixes them as per their utility in achieving the goal of the basic faith of the religions. Here lies the exploitation of human freedom when one follows others' experiences blindly, and morality is determined differently by religious faiths. The morality in *Gītā* is based on the analysis of the experiences of the value of one's duties and responsibilities in society. It talks not about one or a few sets of values but about a system, an institution of values for individual and social cultivation of humans, and lastly, for achieving the goal of oneness as the basic reality of all the diversities. *Gītā's* ethics of *svadharma* (duties that follow one's nature), *āśramadharmā* (duties of the four stages of one's life), *varṇadharmā* (duties of one in a class of the society), *Vedic-dharma* (duties prescribed by the Vedas) can finally be transformed to disinterested actions (*niṣkāmakarma*). At the same time, it is managing the desires, skills, excellence, and expertise of the human community. It is the process of removing individual and social conflicts by venerable conduct to people of different kinds of faiths as well.

Difference between the attitude of worship of God and the Deities:

God is the Spirit and the Spirit of all; *If Spirit is real and it is all, the immanent and the transcendence, then our conduct to others must be divine (10/20). There is a difference between "spiritual" and "divine." The same Spirit is called divine with a perspective of some other power valuable for welfare for others and demonic when it is used for cruelty and destroying others. If spirituality is the purpose, our conduct toward others must be divine. A perception of beings as divine can only serve as the basis of our conduct, leading to spiritual freedom.* It needs to be clarified here that *Kṛṣṇa* of *Gītā* is not a deity but God. *The basic difference between God and the deities is that the latter do not want men to get liberation because if all men are liberated, who will give them alms. Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, preaches the ways to liberate everyone.*¹⁰

¹⁰ All men tame a number of animals similarly; the men are like animals for deities. Deities always think that they are the debtors, and by birth, they are indebted to them (*devarṇa*); men are the others for the deity. As a cowherd feels bad about losing any of his animals killed by wild animals or lost, the deities do not feel good if any of the men get liberated. *Atha yo 'nyām devatāmupāsate 'nyo 'sāvanyo 'hamasmīti na sa veda yathā paśurevaṅsa devānām. yathā ha vai bahavaḥ paśavo manuṣyam bhūñjyurevam ekaikaḥ puruṣo devānbhunaktyekasminneva paśāvādīyamāne 'priyam bhavati kīmu bahuṣu tasmādeṣām tanna priyam yadetanmanuṣyā vidyuh. Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad with Śankara's commentary, Chapter 1, Brāhmaṇa-4, passage 10, Gītā press, Gorakhpur, India, samvat 2014. Ācārya Śankara in the commentary on it has referred to a verse from Anugītā having similar meaning.*

Respect for the freedom of other's faiths

Had there been no human freedom to do or not to do or to do otherwise, there might be no meaning of the other's faith in the spiritual outlook of the Gītā. For this spiritual outlook, there is no difference between the reality inside and the outside (vāsudevam sarvamiti). All are divine and venerable and should be conducted venerably. This venerable conduct to outside communities is the spiritual perspective of Gītā. It is the virtue of valuing our soul as the highest, and the existences outside that we generally call other are equally venerable not only metaphysically but morally too. It serves as the criterion of the moral standard of our conduct 'ātmanasyapratikūlāni pareṣām na samācāret (Mahābhārata-5/15/17). It means do not do a duty to others that you do not want the others to do to you. Based on this perspective, *karma* performed for the welfare of beings in the world is *dharma*. The devil is the devil; the other who follows their ego overlooks or is violent and aggressive to the *karma/dharma* principle.

Everyone, as per desires and interests, is free to worship any deity or even a demon fit for granting his/her prayers. The deity or the demon can grant only the desires they are empowered with. By worshipping goodness, one can get only good and evil by evil forces as and when they are approached for granting the desires. The world of desires is confined to worldly achievements and after exhausting the fruits earned in their lifetime. One gets down to the circle of birth, death, heaven, and hell according to the nature of the fruits(merits and demerits) of the actions performed in earlier life (*kṣiṇe pūṇye martyalokamaviśanti (Gītā 9/21)*). The laws of *karmas* operate only in the circle of the worlds – *pṛthavīloka*, *pitṛloka*, *Chandraloka*, hell, and heaven but not for liberation, the highest goal where one becomes one with *Kṛṣṇa*-consciousness. Since lord *Kṛṣṇa* is a liberated spirit and embodied incarnation for our welfare, the devotee of him gets his nature that is liberation open for all without difference of caste, creed, time and space, high and low without a room for racial discrimination. The whole cosmos is a family (*vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*).

Prohibitions and prescriptions: Is *Gītā* a sectarian view?

Gītā is aware of the problem of the other faiths and the disbelievers of its teaching as well. Wonder if it has a very natural attitude in responding to them also. It mentions those who abuse *Kṛṣṇa*, and at the same time, it has the apprehension of the antagonists who deny, abuse, or refuse to accept *Kṛṣṇa* as God's incarnation. It also has the awareness that there may be persons with ideologies who abuse and deny *Gītā* as a view and way of life.

In this regard, it is relevant to point out that *Gītā* does give high importance to *dharma/karma* as the basis of the conduct of others' faith. Let us analyze verse 3/35, which reads that one's own duty, though devoid of merit, is preferable to the well-performed duty of the other. Even death caused in the performance of one's own duty is blessed while another's duty is fraught with fear. Some *dharmas* like telling a lie, deceiving, thievery, breaching of trust, vileness, violence, corruption, etc., are prescribed to none and prohibited to everyone. Some *dharmas* like devotion, telling the truth, service to parents and guests, control over the senses, following celibacy, non-violence, non-thieving, contentment, mercy, alms-giving, purity, forgiveness, and

humbleness, etc. are *sādhāraṇadharmas* prescribed to all and prohibited to none. The *śāstras* guide about duties of every man according to their *varṇa*, *āśrama*, nature, and situation, and to perform their own duties prescribed so is called *svadharmas*. *Sāmāsika* and *sādhāraṇadharmas* are prescribed for all human community; to conduct opposite to those *dharma*s are *Paradharmas* (*duty of a vile*) which is prohibited. *Svadharmas* must be followed without any determination by others' faith. The duty of a house-holder is fearful for a renunciate (*sanyāsī*) and vice versa.

Purpose of *dharma* and yoga in Gita:

Gītā is not only one way of life, but it opens the gates to ways according to the righteousness of the aspirants. Following any of them may attract prosperity in the world, purity of mind, and liberation. We can categorize the ways into major three according to their limitation –

a. *Dharma* like *Vedic-dharma*, *svadharmas*, *varṇadharmas*, *āśramadharmas*, *sādhāraṇadharmas*, *sāmānyadharmas*, and many more concerning the management of the desires, maintenance of worldly circle, peace and prosperity of this and the life after.

b. Yoga like *Jñānayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga*, *karmayoga*, and *Rājayoga* leads to liberation, leaves all rooms open to follow any of the ways, and there is no tight wall difference among them. To follow any of the yogas perfectly comprises the other infused. Vivekananda, while talking about the mutual relation of *Jñānayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga*, and *Rājayoga* gives the analogy of a bird; the earlier two are like the two wings, and the latter is the tail of the bird that balances.

c. *Gītā* offers a radically new view that even the followers of *dharma* can get liberation if they perform *dharma*s like a yogī, without any attachment to fruit. Since this world is the world of performance of duties (*karmaloka*) and *karma* is the nature of the ego that is *prakṛti*, *Gītā* motivates the ego through its philosophy of *Niṣkāmakarmayoga* to reach the liberation while performing all the duties and responsibilities (*dharma*s/*karma*s) in the world. Thus, *karma* in *Gītā* is *dharma* transforms into yoga when one performs without attachment to the doer's fruits and ego.

Law of *karma* and Equality explained in *Gītā*:

God loves those who follow the path to the realization of the spirit and those who follow the ways of demonic forces, abuse the path of the spirit, and sink to a lower place (*Gītā* 16/20). *Gītā* says those who are votaries of and worship the other gods get those gods, of spirits, of manes, get manes, and bad spirits like ghosts, and witches, get them accordingly and those who worship God (*Kṛṣṇa*) get God (*Gītā* 9/25). Even those who have impious birth are deprived of the supreme goal if they take refuge in God. A doer is free to worship God in any form and name, and he/she gets the fruits according to the interest for which they worship the forms of the deities or demons. Herein, the verse (*Gītā* 9/32) says that one linking with God and entirely taking refuge in God attains the God (*Gītā* 9/34). Due respect to the worship of other religious faiths and their respective gods is well taken care of by *Gītā* 9/25. The omnipresent, equally present in all beings and that there is none hateful or dear to

him; even those who are ill-conduct when worship God dedicatedly, abide in him, and He reveals to them too (*Gītā* 9/29) because of the logic that they are eager to get rid of sins they committed and seek grace to become one with God.

About respectable position to other's faith, Gītā's verse 9/23 is very important where it is mentioned that even those with interesting motives worship other gods, they worship God with a deviated or mistaken approach (avidhipūjā) and get the fruits of their actions. Gītā's mission is to show them discriminately the right pathway (lokasangraha and lokahita) that finally leads to liberation.

Man, in fact, is divine and embodied with the freedom he is empowered to get spirituality realized; one may follow or abuse his own divinity. Let us take the term "other" for those who do not follow or who abuse his divinity working in the form of the law of karma; who is antagonistic and overlooks dharmas inbuilt with the creation as his nature, and also who deny God as the *Ṛt* principle operative in the cosmos, the galaxies, the world and the same in nature outside and the minds. One deviates from nature, follows a way that leads him opposite to his assigned nature, and ignores the principle inbuilt as one's spirit is an abuse of the inbuilt principle that we can say universal law. Imperialistic and demonic conducts divide humanity and the world as the other on racial grounds. For *Gītā*, everything is the one or the other form of God, and there is no problem if somebody denies this view. Let him respect his own viewpoint.

However, God has no hate, no enmity for any; the saint, ordinary man, and the devil are equally taken care of and play their part in God's scheme operative in this world as the law of karma. It is evidenced from history that sometimes the devils dominate and some other times, the deities or virtuous. Lastly, in the fight between the two, we get that truth (*dharma*) prevails because it is their inbuilt existence. Everyone how deprived he/she may be, is the same spirit. If the spirit is taken as the goal of life, morally, our conduct toward the other's faith must be divine.

Human freedom to follow any path and conduct to other's faith:

All are free to follow the path of their own interest and likeness. God is responsible neither for rewarding those who follow his path nor for punishing those who insult or abuse God. His forces in the universe work in a way that they all get rewards or punishment for the actions they perform. Conduct as per the laws inbuilt with the cycle of creation is rewarded; a yogī is a *lokasangrahī* who helps maintain the worldly circle. An opposite mover, who puts hindrances, disturbs maintenance and does cruelty to the followers of the law of nature, that is *dharma*, is *lokadrohī*. (*Gītā* 3/20-42). Both have to enjoy the fruits of their own actions, respectively. One is free to live his spirit as *Kṛṣṇa* or as *Kansa, the lord or the devil*). The former is naturally assigned, and the cause of the vile conduct to other's faith, in the perception of *Gītā*, is the proportionate deviation from the former.

Virtue and Vice in Spiritual Philosophy of *Gītā*:

Gītā is the first book in history that focuses on the philosophy of all sorts of workings (*karmas*) with spirituality as the purpose. Spirituality is freedom of the thoughts from the captive to the objects and the soul from the captives of some other thoughts and

ideologies framed by ego. The otherness concept makes the people aware of the power of the karmas' law and elucidates that the fruits it causes lead to for and against spiritual freedom. Since the law of *karma* is operative in the universe and mind, man is solely responsible for making his future heaven or hell.

Values and virtuous living as the way to the cultivation are given primacy in the texts. Unlike deontologists and consequentialists, a good life is a virtuous life and vice versa. Other's faith is discussed in *Gītā*, in a sense different from others which gives sectarian priority to the religious difference by pointing to the bigotry as their religious identity. *Gītā*'s message respects all traditions and communities; it teaches not to degrade or lower own self in own eyes. It entails our venerable conduct to us and equally to the different faiths, even to communities that are wild community, aquatic, ariel, deities, human and demon, etc. It in *Gītā* is known as *samatva yoga*. A living of divinity leads to liberation. The same spirit that acts inside is externalized, and the same externalized is taken as the outside, and the vice versa is the basic metaphysical assumption that guides our respectable conduct toward others. *Gītā* is a spiritual perspective of life open to all believers and non-believers. It gives importance to diversity and, at the same time, provides an ethical vision of our venerable relation to all by taking the spirit as the whole without substantial difference between the inside and the outside nature.

Incarnation and the destruction of evil forces:

The principle of *karmas* is the God operative in the universe (Ṛt). Virtues, when appropriately lived, lead to pure knowledge, while vices lead to utter darkness. As you sow, so shall you reap; evil begets evil. The accumulated fruits of the past cause our present life, and our present doings will shape our future. Living the order is loving wisdom. It is the beauty of life. Those who overlook or abuse this law of *karma* are the other because they choose to live in a disbeliever's way that leads them to the destruction of their own self, which is a moral and spiritual downfall. They do not experience God or his divine laws inside and the outside; rather, they form an ego of being God himself, having the power to destroy and outdo any order. Such power of ego is the argument that justifies the incarnation of the Godhead to save the good against the destructive power; the God incarnate to maintain the law of *karma* against the evil forces how much stronger they may be to suffer the fruits of their *karmas*. The incarnation is also needed for those who disbelieve the existence of God only because it is imperceptible. They can perceive the incarnated God with their physical eyes.

God is the ubiquitous principle operating law of the order, and by that, all opportunities are open to man to conduct venerably to all others. God is not imperialistic; he does not destroy the demons; rather, their own *karmas* destroy them; their uncontrolled destructive power and violent activities are the factors that enforce incarnation that has the power to destroy the destructive forces how so much stronger they may be. Wars are fought by the wise as a course of resisting cruelty and risks against the maintenance of dharma.

Even in their destruction, there is an argument that one has to get in proportion to the fruits of his/her own *karmas* and accordingly suffer the hell and rebirth in the

demonic womb till they promote to the human and virtuous womb (*yoni*) by the force of virtuous actions. The demonic powers delude themselves as only God and deny God's power indwelling in all. Incarnation makes the evil persons perceive the embodied God as powers of the power that for the maintenance of the world can stand before them as their suffering and death, the fruits of their demonic actions.

God's justice, in *Gītā*, is operative there as the inbuilt law of *karma* in the universe, in nature, and the same as human intelligence. *Tulasidasa* in *Rāmācaritamānas* writes '*karma pradhāna viśva raci rākhā. Jo jas kare so tasa phala chākhā* (*Ayodhyākānda*, verse 218, *chaupāyī*- 4). This world is created with the inbuilt principle of duty and responsibility as its nature which *Gītā* identifies as the *aparāprakṛti* of the God. All are performing their *karmas* to satisfy their desires, and they get their fruits. God also follows the laws of *karmas* and does not interfere with them. *Gītā preaches that one is his own friend and is the other, the enemy of his own by his own karmas. There is no mystery. Man is free to lead the way to the realization of soul or to deceive himself by his own actions* is an outcome of spiritual management of duties, that makes one a friend of his own or himself as his own enemy (*Ātamaiva hi ātmano bandhu ātmano ripūrātmanaḥ* (*Gītā* 6/5-6).

Conclusion

Through the ages, prophets, priests, and shamans of different religions preach to the community of their followers to follow only their view and way of life and to deny all others. However, this is not the reasonable criteria for deciding our conduct toward other's rival faiths because the teacher of a rival community like *Bṛhaspati* and *Śukrācārya* can promote the conduct they find suitable for the community they want to lead. It is absolutely not the case with *Gītā*. It is of the view that those who worship gurus or Gods/deities or demons are free to do that and will get the fruits for their respective worship of the deity as per their desire. It is because of the different powers instituted as their nature by the God that they are fit to grant the prayers of the worshippers the fruit of their desires which they are capable of granting. Goddess of knowledge (*sarasvatī*) can only grant knowledge or wisdom, and Goddess *Lakṣmī* can only grant the desires of wealth and prosperity. By the force of *dharmā*, one can get mundane prosperities only; that is, they can get what they desire but not the freedom from desires. They are condemned to get the fruits they desire. However, getting freedom /liberation from desires (*advaita-lābha*) according to *Gītā* is a need that one fulfills after getting the state of the disinterested performer of the duties, that is, a *yogī*. If the prayer and worship of powers, Gods, and Goddesses are desire-oriented and thus involve all conflicts, respect, and hate, the worshippers suffer heaven and hell and the cycle of birth and death according to the fruits of their actions, while the yoga -oriented worship of *Kṛṣṇa* leads the aspirants to the freedom from world cycle. *To worship a deity other than God is not abused in Gītā; it is not against any faith; it does not recommend any violence against those who worship other God or demon and believe in different ideologies.* It is against the view that the author's ideology is only divine and absolute, and the others who do not follow it have no right to live. One has the freedom to worship any or many Gods as per his

desires and wants, and he will get the fruit of his own actions; accordingly, heaven and hell. Therefore, one should not be enemies of others' ideologies and worships. No aggression but respect is for other faiths and ways. *One does not understand Gītā's view about others properly if one is violent about others' ideology. That is against the law of human divinity and the niṣkāma morality and advaitic metaphysics of Gītā that is socially extendable to all different faiths because of unconditioned universality in nature.*

The logic of the law of *karma* is that what one does, suffers its aftermath. Those who deny the presence of God only because they do not perceive God by their material eyes. For that reason, they deny the law of *dharma* governing this world, abuse God, have different ideologies about God or want to be worshiped himself as God, or by the rule of brute, want to destroy everyone who denies their demonic ideology of God, the God incarnates in the world to make them perceive God's power through their material eyes and also to cause them to suffer the fruits of their own actions.

Gītā talks about different *dharmas* and *sāadhanās* like *jñānayoga*, *bhaktiyoga*, and *karmayoga* for the realization of the oneness of the universe with God-consciousness. The uniqueness of the *Gītā* lies in pointing out the intelligence that a following of *dharmas* can be transformed into yoga. If performed without any attachments to the fruits and free from the ego of a doer, thus, it can help the aspirants achieve liberation. *Dharmas* should be performed without attachments to the fruits of action that make our duties interested against which *Gītā* teaches disinterested or egoless performance of action. All are free to desire divinity and perform actions to make their desires virtuous. *In very brief, Gītā's view about others' faith can be concluded in one line let them respect their faith and worship their own interests; they will get the return for their own performances. A yogī is only blessed with the realization of oneness with God.*