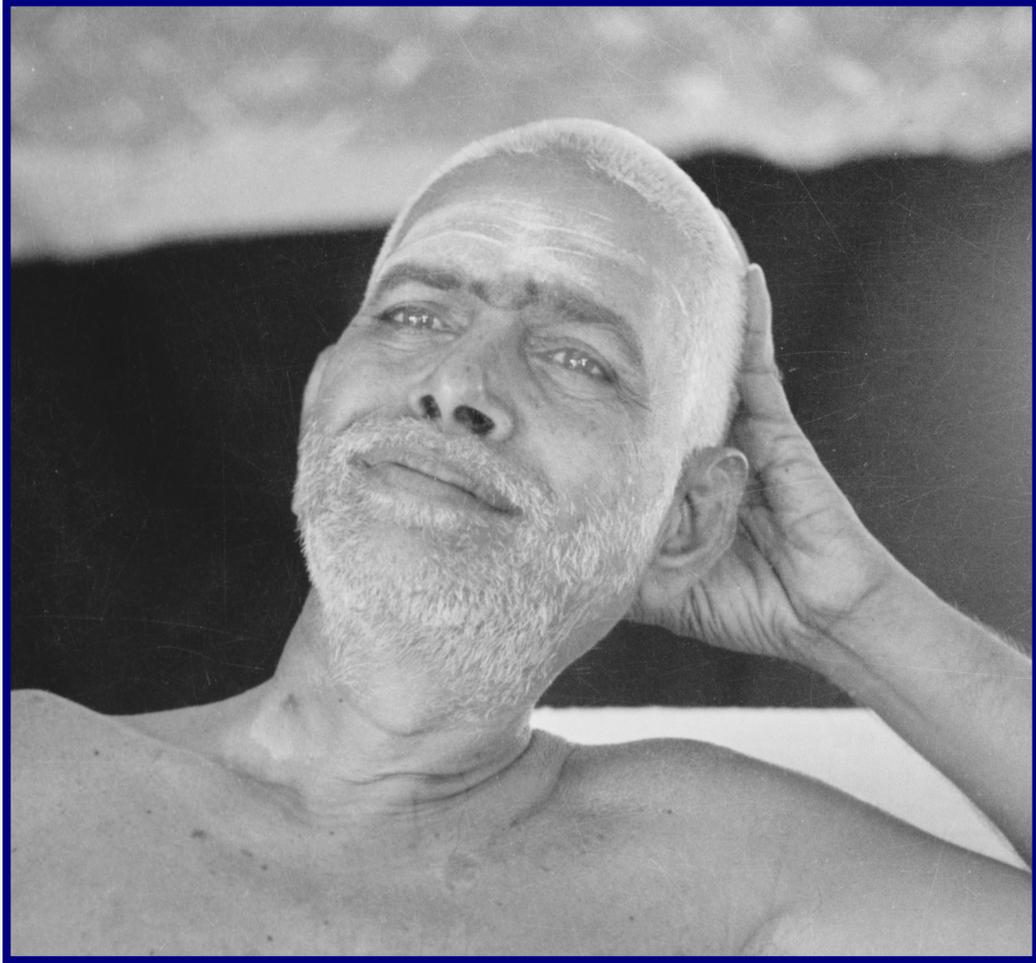


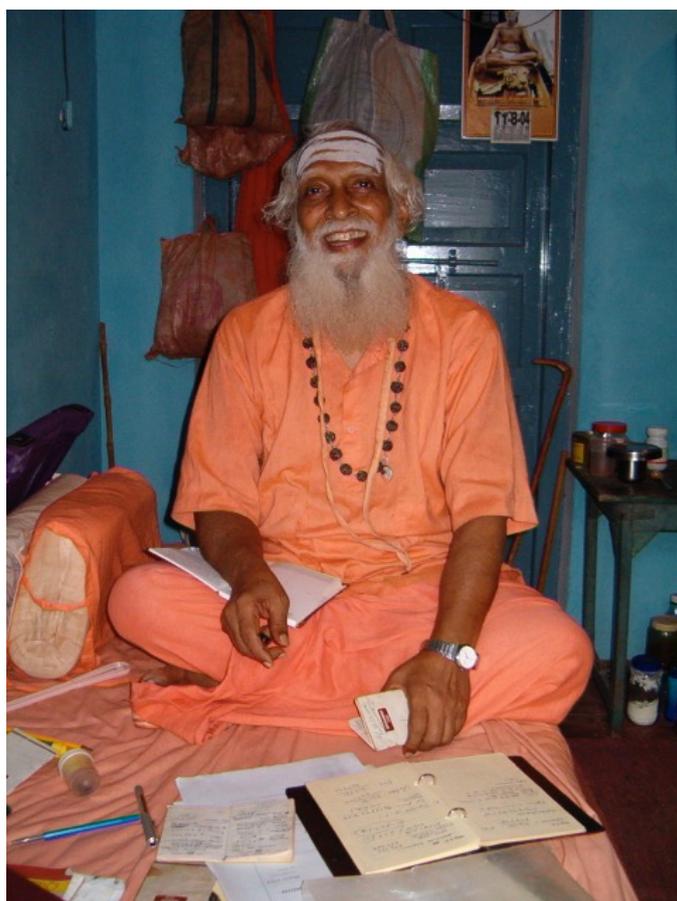
**FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI**



**BHAGAVAD GITA SARA
THE ESSENCE OF THE GITA**

Commentary by
Swami Shantananda Puri

Compiled and edited by
Swami Sadasivananda Giri



Swami Shantananda Puri

OM
SAMARPAN

**May all of the effort and any merit that may
accrue from this work be dedicated to those who
seek to find and love the Lord Who dwells within
the Heart – that very Bhagavan Ramana whose
compassion for all is the embodiment of
Pure Unselfish Love**

**“OF ALL *YOGINS*, ONLY HE WHO RESTS HIS
UNWAVERING MIND AND MELTS WITH LOVE IN ME IS
DEAR TO ME.” *BHAGAVAD GITA***



**“In the recesses of the lotus-shaped heart of all, from
Vishnu downwards, there shines as Absolute
Consciousness, the Paramatman (Supreme Spirit) who is
the same as Arunachala or Ramana. When the mind melts
with love of him and reaches the inmost recess of the heart
wherein he abides as the Beloved, the subtle eye of
Absolute Consciousness opens, and He reveals Himself as
pure Knowledge.” *Sri Ramana Maharshi***



SRI MAHARSHI GITA

1)

Sanjaya said:

To him who was thus overcome
By pity, and whose eyes were filled
With tears, downcast and despairing,

Madhusudana spoke these words: 2:1

2)

The Holy Lord said:

This body is known as the Field,
And he who knows it thus is called
The Knower of the Field by those
Who know of both Field and Knower. 13:1

3)

Know Me also, O Bharata,
To be the Knower in all Fields.
The knowledge of Field and Knower
I consider as the knowledge. 13:2

4)

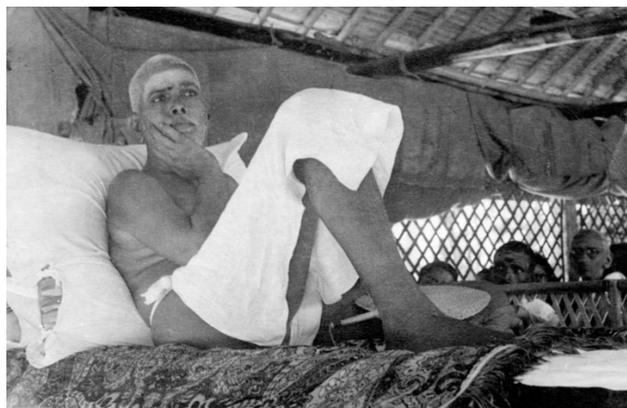
I am the Self abiding in
The heart of all beings; I am
The beginning, the middle, and
Also the end of all beings. 10:20

5)

Of that which is born, death is sure,
Of that which is dead, birth is sure.
Over the unavoidable,
Therefore you never should lament. 2:27

6)

Neither is the Self slain, nor yet does it die,
Nor having been will it e'er come not to be,
Birthless, eternal, perpetu'l, primeval,
It is not slain whene'er the body is slain. 2:20



7)

This self cannot be cut, nor burnt,
Nor wetted, nor dried: 'tis changeless,
All-pervading and unmoving,
Immovable, eternal self. 2:24

8)

That by Which all is pervaded—
Know That is indestructible.
There is none with the power to
Destroy the Imperishable. 2:17

9)

The unreal never comes to be,
The real does never cease to be.
The certainty of both of these
Is known to those who see the truth. 2:16

10)

As the all-pervading ether,
Through subtlety is not tainted,
The Self seated in the body
Is not tainted in any case. 13:32

11)

That the sun illuminates not,
There shines neither the moon nor fire;
For that is My Supreme Abode,
Going whither they return not. 15:6

12)

The unmanifest, eternal,
Is declared as the Supreme Goal,
Attaining Which they return not.
This is My supreme dwelling place. 8:21

13)

Without pride, delusion—attachment conquered—
Dwelling in the Supreme Self, without desires,
Freed from the dualities—pleasure and pain—
The undeluded reach that eternal Goal. 15:5



14)

He who sets aside the counsels
Of scriptures from desire's impulse,
Attains not unto perfection,
Nor happiness, nor Goal Supreme. 16:23

15)

The one who truly sees is he
Whoever sees the Supreme Lord
Existing equally in all
Beings, deathless in the dying. 13:27

16)

By single-minded devotion
I may be known in this true form,
Seen in reality, also
Entered into, Scorcher of Foes. 11:54

17)

Each one's faith is according to
His natural disposition.
Yea, the man consists of his faith;
In truth, he is what his faith is. 17:3



18)

The man of faith, and devoted,
And the master of his senses,
Attains this knowledge, and having
Attained quickly finds Supreme Peace. 4:39

19)

To them, the constantly steadfast,
Worshipping Me with affection,
I bestow the buddhi-yoga
By which they shall come unto Me. 10:10

20)

Out of compassion for them, I,
Abiding in their hearts, destroy
The darkness born of ignorance
By the shining lamp of knowledge. 10:11

21)

But those whose ignorance has been
Destroyed by knowledge of the self—
That knowledge of theirs, like the sun,
Reveals then the Supreme Brahman. 5:16

22)

Above the body are senses;
Above the senses is the mind;
Above the mind is intellect;
Above the intellect: the self. 3:42

23)

Thus, knowing Him Who is above
The intellect, and restraining
The self by the Self, then destroy
That enemy, that foe: desire. 3:43

24)

As fire reduces wood to ash,
In the same way, O Arjuna,
The fire of knowledge does reduce
To ashes all karma—know this. 4:37

25)

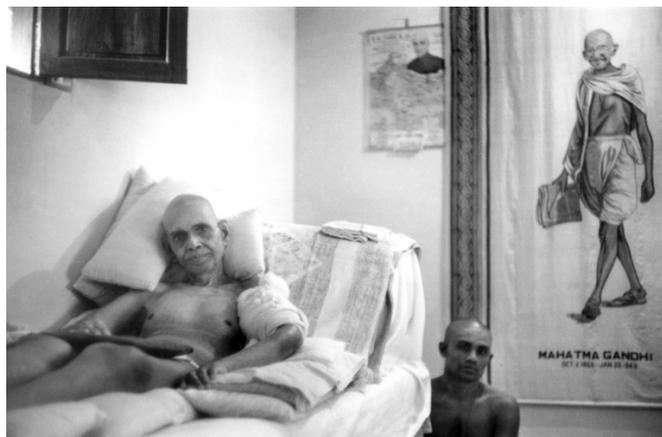
Whose undertakings are devoid
Of plan and desire for results,
Whose actions are burnt in the fire
Of knowledge—him the wise call wise. 4:19

26)

Released from desire and anger,
With thoughts restrained, those ascetics
Who know the Self, find very near
The bliss of Brahma-nirvana. 5:26

27)

With intellect set in patience,
With the mind fastened on the self,
He gains quietude by degrees:
Let him not think of anything. 6:25



28)

Whenever the unsteady mind,
Moving here and there, wanders off,
He should subdue and hold it back—
Direct it to the Self's control. 6:26

29)

Controlling sense, mind, intellect;
With moksha as the supreme goal;
Freed from desire, fear, and anger:
Such a sage is forever free. 5:28

30)

He, disciplined by yoga, sees
The Self present in all beings,
And all beings within the Self.
He sees the same Self at all times. 6:29

31)

Those who direct their thoughts to Me,
Worshipping Me with steadfast mind,
For them I secure what they lack
And preserve that which they possess. 9:22

32)

Of them, the wise man, e'er steadfast,
Devoted to the One, excels;
Supremely dear am I to him,
And he is dear to Me, as well. 7:17

33)

At the end of his many births
The wise man takes refuge in Me.
He knows: "All is Vasudeva."
How very rare is that great soul! 7:19

34)

When he completely casts away
All the desires of the mind,
His self, satisfied by the self,
He is called "of steady wisdom." 2:55

35)

He who abandons all desires
Attains peace, acts free from longing,
Indifferent to possessions
And free from all egotism. 2:71

36)

He who agitates not the world,
And whom the world agitates not,
Who is freed from joy, envy, fear,
And worry—he is dear to Me. 12:15

37)

The same in honor and disgrace,
The same to friend and enemy,
Renouncing all undertakings—
He has gone beyond the Gunas. 14:25

38)

He who is content in the Self,
Who is satisfied in the Self,
Who is pleased only in the self:
For him there is no need to act. 3:17

39)

He has nothing to gain by acts;
Nothing to gain by inaction;
And no need of any being
For any purpose soever. 3:18

40)

Content with what comes unbidden,
Beyond duality, envy,
The same in success or failure,
E'en though acting, he is not bound. 4:22

41)

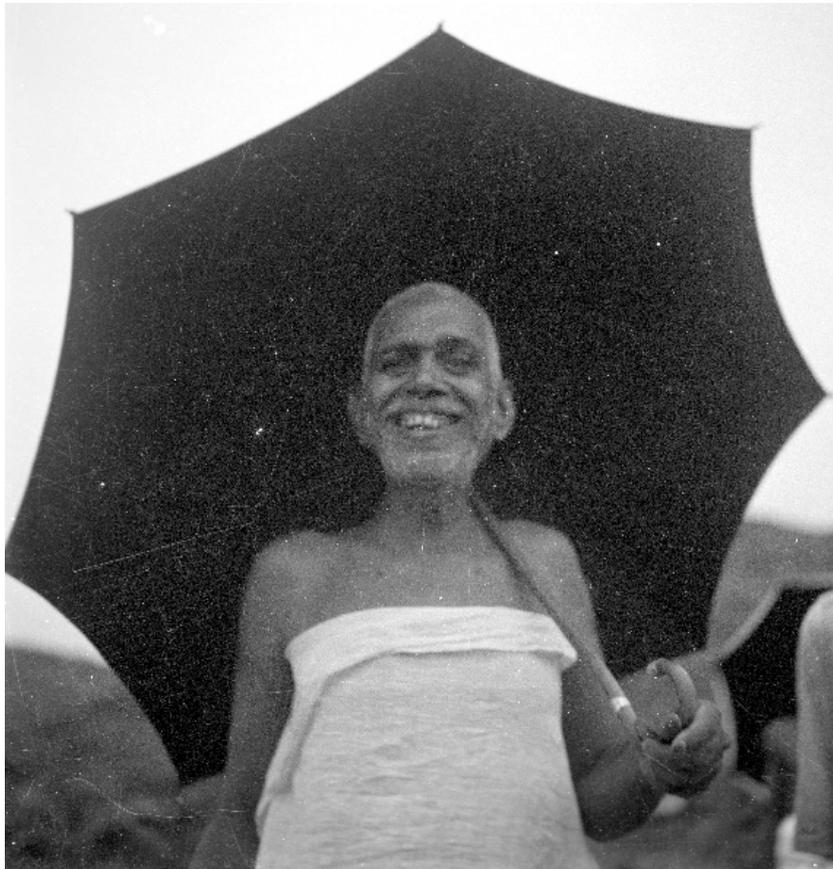
O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in
The hearts of all beings, causing
Them by His Maya to revolve
As if mounted on a machine. 18:61

42)

O Bharata, with all your heart
Take refuge in Him; and you shall
Surely attain unto supreme
Peace and the eternal abode. 18:62

Om Tat Sat

He, Who seated in Arjun's car,
Spoke the Gospel to Arjuna
And removed his distress, may that
Embodiment of Grace save us!



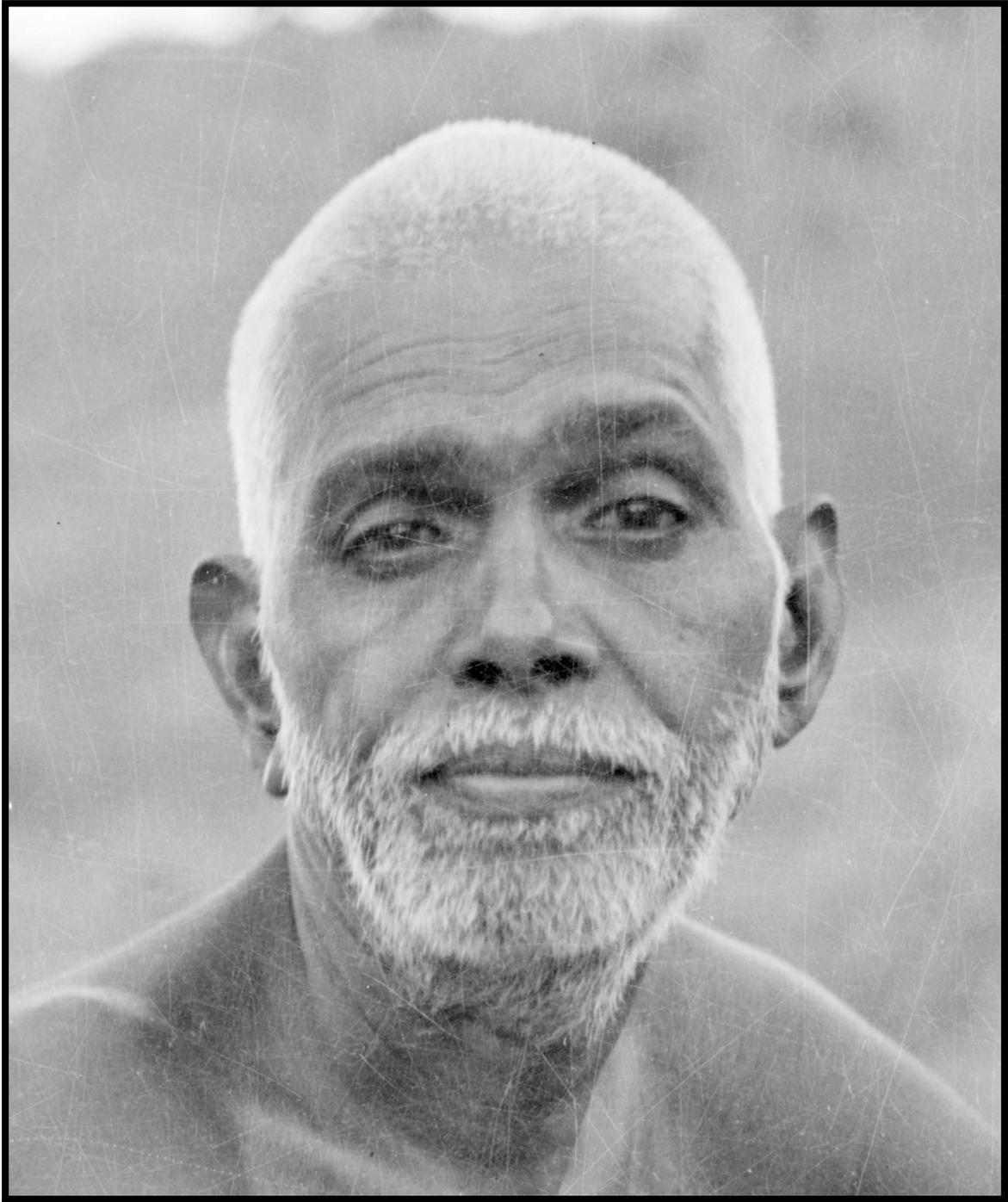
PREFACE

Early in the year of 2006, during the weeks that lead up to *Maha Sivaratri*, Swami Shantananda Puri of *Vashishtha Guha* gave a long series of lectures on the 42 verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* that Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi selected to portray the ‘essence or *Sara*’ of the entire 700 verses spoken to Arjuna by Lord Krishna. These lectures were recorded and transcribed, then edited to render the sentence structure more cohesive.

Contained in this work are many of the most remarkable aspects of spiritual instruction ever shown in the vast collection of commentaries on the *Gita*. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has beautifully selected and arranged these *slokas* that point the reader to the very essence of what has come to be known as the cream of the *Upanishads*- the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*. He has done so in a way that approaches each major teaching of the Lord systemically from all three *margas* or ways. Bhagavan Ramana has shown that in essence the Lord has instructed Arjuna in the Way of Liberation according to all three of the *Karma, Bhakti and Jnana margas*. Thus with perfect clarity Sri Ramana has shed abundant light on the

darkness of philosophical squabbling which argues that the *Gita* is a work of ‘this or that’ *marga* alone. Now in truth, this Bible of *Sanatana Dharma* can be seen as a synthesis of all *margas*, into essentially what should be called the ‘Lord’s *Marga*’.





“In the Bhagavad Gita it is said that it is the nature of the mind to wander. One must bring one’s thoughts to bear on God. By long practice the mind is controlled and made steady.”¹

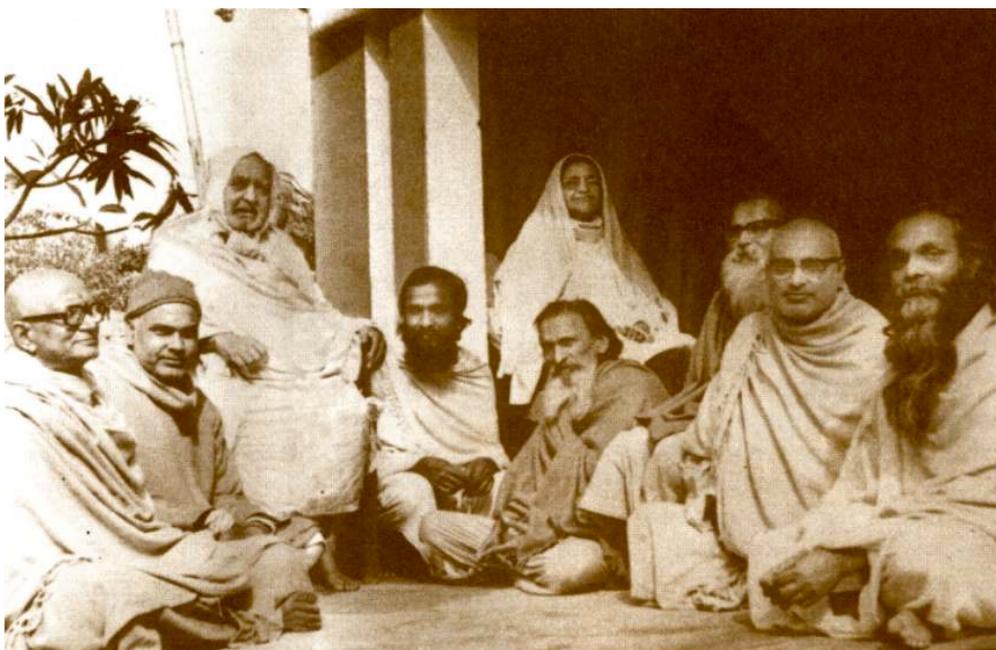
¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, recorded by Sri Munagala Venkataramiah, Sri Ramanashramam 2006, Talk 91, p. 89.

INTRODUCTION

The *Bhagavad Gita Sara* is Sri Ramana Maharshi's selection of 42 *slokas* out of the entire 700 *slokas* of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The first point is, "What do you mean by the *Bhagavad Gita*?" The term tells you what is going to be told in this book and who is the author. The samasaya of the word Bhagavad Gita can be two-fold. The first is the common rendering, Bhagavad Gita. The second is Bhagavathaha Gita Bhagavatam Gitam. *Gitam* means a song, a melodious song. Why?

When a subject is very difficult to grasp, or when the subject is very complex, the style of presentation used should be appealing to the mind. Otherwise, the mind of the listener tends to become distracted and drowsy. If someone sings, it is naturally very appealing to the heart. Therefore, even if the mind finds it dry, the heart will appreciate it. And that is why the *Gita* is in poetry. And a second reason is that the vast majority of these *slokas* are in *Arasthu Chanda* or metered verse. *Chanda* is the limiting of the number of syllables in each line.

In prose, one can express a single idea in an enormous number of pages. There is virtually no limit to the length of that style of writing. But in poetry, the number of words and sentences are strictly limited. The *Chandas* are of various styles, and in the *Bhagavad Gita* the type of *Chanda* used is the *Arashtu Chanda*. In this style of *Chanda* eight syllables are used for each of the four lines encompassing every verse. Thus, there are 32 syllables assigned to over 90% of all the verses found in the *Bhagavad Gita*. These syllables are further characterized by their restricted length of intonation. For instance, in this *Chanda* the fifth, seventh and ninth syllables are designated to be pronounced in a short form. These rules of length and pronunciation of individual syllables not only enables the verse to be song melodiously, but also serves as a strict limitation on the meter and melody.



The idea is this; if you want to catch something that is vast and infinite, you should take a finite vessel, a limited vessel. If you take an unlimited thing, you simply will not catch it. So, when you are trying to grasp the Lord who is vast and infinite, you require a vessel that is limited by the number of words and style of its pronunciation. It is for this reason that poetry is used. And not only poetry, the meter must be sung, for it is a '*Gita*'.

At first glance, a contrast is noted, the battlefield, a place of violence, is described in short meter poetry. What is described is a violent place, a place where the very violence is in the blood of the Warriors. When violence is in the blood, you cannot think of what is right and what is wrong. So for that purpose, the description has to be cooled down. Poetry and music are the best means to cool your senses. The Lord knows that if a description of the “battlefield of the mind” is set in prose, Arjuna (or us, the listeners) will not understand. But the moment the Lord begins to sing, his mind will become calm, the tension will go. This is the means the Lord employs to divert the listener from his tension, and therefore to acquire his attention, that he may attend to Bhagavan's words. It is for this reason that the *Bhagavad Gita* is sung. So, '*Bhagavataha*

Gitam’ means firstly, that the Lord himself is the author. Secondly, the Lord is singing of his own Divine consciousness, and showing the way to approach and find It. Therefore, the contents are Bhagavan and the author is Bhagavan. Who can better be able to tell of Bhagavan, then Bhagavan himself? He is so infinite, no finite person, however great a Sage he may be, will be able to understand Him in full. When the Lord tells, "This is what I am, and this is a method to approach Me", it will be the most objective description, and it will be complete in full. There will not be any ground for doubt or objection.

And finally, one will be told what they will get out of it. One will become *Srimaan*; you will become full of *Lakshmi*. You will possess all eight qualities of *Astha Lakshmi*. Therefore, the Lord is saying that if one comprehends in full, and takes the directions into practice, finally *Moksha Lakshmi* will be theirs. You will be bestowed with that Grace and become *Srimad*.



ONE

THE WISE GRIEVE NOT

From Shankara's most highly acclaimed commentary on the *Gita* up to the present day, most of the great *Mahatmas* have begun their commentaries with the 11th verse of the second chapter, when the Lord first spoke to Arjuna:

*Asocyan anvasocas tvam prajnavadams ca
bhasase gatasun agatasums ca nanusocanti
panditah*

*You are grieving over those who are not fit to
be grieved for, though you speak words like a
man of great wisdom. For the wise grieve
neither over the living nor over the dead.*

The Lord was declaring the basic foolish error in Arjuna's reasoning by making him understand that he was talking all high philosophy without knowing what was what. The Lord declared the truth that Arjuna was not having pity for those who were arrayed in battle against him, but rather it was *self-pity*.

A man of philosophy does not bother if a man is dead or alive, for both are useless. It is with this teaching that the Lord Sri Krishna is going to start. But Bhagavan Sri Ramana is dutifully going to start with the very first verse of the second chapter because he wanted to show the purpose of the entire *Gita*.

Qualified to Hear God Sing

In any text on *Vedanta*, the first verse should be able to say four important things about the text. The four are; first, who is fit to read this book? For instance, children without the developed ability to properly understand should not read this book. They are not *Adhikari*. *Adhikari* is a very important term in *Vedanta*; it means ‘the qualified one, the one who is fit for this particular purpose’. So, the first thing is; who is the one who is fit to hear the narration concerning Bhagavan?

Therefore, the first thing told, the first verse chosen by Sri Ramana, declares who is the *Adhikari*. The *Adhikari* is literally described in the first verse of Chapter two:

Sanjaya uvaacha:

*Tam tathaa kripayaavishtam
ashrupoornaakulekshanam;
Visheedantam-idam vaakyam-uvaacha
madhusoodanah.*

Sanjaya said:

*To him thus overcome with pity, despairing,
Whose eyes were filled with tears, and downcast,
Madhusudana (Lord Krishna) spoke these words.*





First before we begin, there is a beautiful thing that should be explained. The *Bhagavad Gita* forms part of the *Bhisma Parva* of the entire *Maha Bharata*, which consists of one *lakh slokas*. Nowadays, when we count it comes to only 97,000 *slokas*. The full one *lakh* does not come, but still, we call it *Ekalakshatma Kamyatma*.

The Light and the Truth of God

The term *Maha Bharata* itself denotes a spiritual meaning. What is the spiritual meaning of *Bharata*? *Bharata* is the name

of that *Purana*, and also the name of India. People have said that the name is derived from the name of the King ruling ancient India. But then we ask what was the name of the land before that king's incarnation? There would have been thousands of kings, why should the name of that one be taken for the name of the entire country?

Maha Bharata means that which contains the entire wisdom. The wisdom means the *jnana*, not only of the Lord, but the *jnana* of this world also. *Bharata* is derived from the root "*Bha*" meaning light; and light means knowledge.

Whenever you do not understand a passage of scripture, you ask: "Can you throw some light on this, I do not understand it?" So light means knowledge only. It is only metaphorically referred to as light. '*Bha*' is the root, *bhati* means 'it shines', *bhami* means 'I shine', *bhasi* means 'you shine'. So, *bhasa* is the light that comes out. Therefore, '*bharata*' is the one who is fully engaged in that knowledge, solely wanting the knowledge of the Lord.

The *Upanishads* were being taught perhaps 5,000 to 6,000 years back in India. It is believed that at that time there was no

other place in the world that equaled that semblance of civilization. While the world outside India was mainly inhabited by non-evolved “cave dwelling” civilizations, concerned mainly with the external effort of preservation of the body, India’s inhabitants were striving to enter the “cave of the heart” realize the internal Divinity of their True Nature. And so the term ‘*Bharata*’ came to India itself because:

Bhayam ritaha bharataha bhayam ritam bharatam

You see because *ritam* means *napamsam linga*, we are talking of a book, and *rita* means we are talking of the people. So as far as the book is concerned- ‘*bhayam ritam*’, it is steeped in the supreme knowledge and thus it is called ‘*Bharatam*’. The entire book is supposed to be knowledge, and that knowledge has been brought to the mind of the people of India in this portion called the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Dhritarashtra went before Vyasa, who said: “Here is my disciple who will relay all of the events of the battle though you yourself have no eyes to watch.” Thus Sanjaya was brought before Dhritarashtra. What is ‘*Sanjaya*’?

Sanyuktijanaha sanjayaha

It means the ‘one who knows how to succeed’. Later we are going to see that the entire *Bhagavad Gita* is about how to be successful in battle. True success is not necessarily winning in the battle and subjugating the other party, not at all. You may lose the battle, and you may still succeed. Success means expertise, the *kushalata*, fighting the battle without anger, without any recrimination, without revenge and fighting by surrendering oneself and the work of fighting and the final result to the Lord. And this is: *Yogakarma sukamsha...*



Skillful Karma

What is the best way of doing any *Karma*? Whatever *karma* you do is going to involve you in birth and death again. You do good things, you give to *Swamijis*, you give to orphanages, you may build a hundred hospitals and you must get the result out of it. So therefore, you must take another birth. So you may be born as a rich man's son, but then you do what you like and thus accumulate *papas* and then you take another birth of ill fortune.

Then you do more good things and you are again born into fortune. Thus, you will go on from birth to death to birth to death, on and on. You are not going to stop; you are not going to get *moksha* out of it. You will be tempted to do work because you have *Vasanas* within. Thus, you will not be able to remain without work.

The right way to work must be known. Whatever you do, you must say to the Lord: "You are doing it, I am doing nothing!" All is being dedicated to the Lord. "O Lord, because You are making me do it, thus I am doing it, I do not want the

result of it”. I am preparing for the examination because my father wants it, I do not care if I pass or fail. So when you disclaim the doership saying: “I am not doing this work, it is all being done by God”, the result will go to somebody else, the result will not come to you. Otherwise, the *papas* and *punyas* come to you.

So the best way of doing a work is to do it without taking the credit for it. You may build a school and receive a letter of praise from the President for the work, which you frame and place at home for all to see. But if the President writes and reprimands you for terrifically shabby work, you don’t frame that at all. You are careful that the praise comes to you, but the blame is avoided like the plague. You will give a thousand excuses that you were unable to get the proper cement and there was no water for curing it. The blame you will spread as thin as ice, the credit to will hoard like the most precious jewels. This is what happens. When we completely surrender all of the work to God, all of the results are His as well. That is the best and most expert way of doing any *karma*. Any other way you are going to get entangled either in the *punya* or the *papa*, resulting in other births.

Befriending Dharma, the Eternal Rhythm

So, in this entire *Mahabharata*, this is mainly the wisdom which is going to be expounded. To accomplish this, Sanjaya was given the power to see the entire war, with the ability to relate the events that were happening in any order, whether in the past or into the future. Sanjaya was also given the power to know the thoughts of those involved, as well as the outcome of every battle. But poor fellow Dhritarashtra did not avail himself to these God given powers. Not only that, the blind king Dhritarashtra was very confident at the outset of the war. He had double the number of warriors than the Pandavas. And his General Bhishma had never been conquered in battle. Bhishma even overcame his own Guru, Parusharama, who himself was up to then invincible. The blind King Dhritarashtra symbolized the ego blinded by ignorance and thus gave no concern to the consequences of actions. He simply told his army to go into battle and at the time of their victory to return and inform him. His blindness was deadly, because he did not understand that though you seem to have everything on your side, you may lose if you do not have *Dharma* on your side. He failed to

comprehend that what really protects you is love towards God, and that which springs forth from God.

God's only begotten child is *Dharma* itself. God has caused His child to manifest in Vedanta. Unless we follow the *Dharma*, we can never win.

Yeto dharma tatosjaya

The code of *Dharma* is the rule of law, the Dharma yudha, even for this greatest of battles. In the morning a signal was sounded and the fighting would begin. At sundown the signal would again sound and the fighting would cease. So early in the morning Yudhistara, the chief of the Pandavas (the Dharmaputra) would go after his bath to Gangaji, his cousin, and do *namasakar* to her. And she would reply: “Yeto Dharma tato jayaha”, meaning: “Wherever there is dharma, justice and righteousness, there is victory. Wherever there is adharma, there will be no success.” This was of major importance, for it is by this understanding that spiritual success is attained.



Hari Om

