



The Influence Of The Bhagavad Gita On Mahatma Gandhi's Life

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INTRODUCTION: -

“When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon, I turn to Bhagavad-Gita and find a verse to comfort me; and immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. Those who meditate on the Gita will derive fresh joy and new meanings from it every day. “This was said by Mahatma Gandhi, a spiritual and political leader of India, in one of his speeches.

Mahatma Gandhi is most famously known for his peaceful ways and demonstrations that helped liberate India from the hands of Great Britain. Not only was he a freedom fighter of India, some consider him to be the father of his country. He is internationally esteemed for his nonviolent protests to achieve political and social progress (Britannica pg. 1). Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, in the state of Gujarat. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, was the Chief Minister of Porbandar—a small municipality in Gujarat. His mother, Putlibai, was very religious and devoted her days in the temple of their home. The Bhagavad Gita was a very big influence in Gandhi's life. Even though he was introduced to it later on in his life, it ended up being the main authority of his peace movements throughout the world. The Bhagavad Gita is considered as one of the most respected and popular religious texts, not only to Hinduism, but to many other religions in the world. The Gita was told to Arjuna by Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu.

A few words about the contents of the Bhagavad Gita may be useful here. It is a poem of 700 stanzas of two to eight lines each, and divided into 18 'discourses. The verses vividly narrate the historic warfare between two royal houses, tied by kinship. The Gita is a small part of the epic, the Mahabharata. The date of its composition is ascribed to the period between the fifth and second centuries B.C. Gandhi was a fine product of Indian culture. He was nurtured and sustained by the perennial inspiration of Indian philosophy, said to represent the confluence of all that is best in the Indian thought from the early Vedic age to the age of the modern Indian renaissance. It has been rightly observed that Gandhi embodied in himself the highest ideals of ancient Indian civilisation

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita consists of 700 verses of scripture found in the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. The entirety of the Gita is told within the framework of a conversation between Lord Krishna and prince Arjuna. Its main message is that we must take action in life and partake fully of the experiences it sets before us. The Gita covers just about everything from finding and enjoying our life's purpose, to learning how to regulate our

emotions – from treating everyone with honor and respect, to staying true to our hearts and our goals. In essence, it's a guidebook for living.

Gandhi's Connection to the Gita

Throughout Gandhi's life, the Gita was both a guidebook for living a moral life and a spiritual reference point. In its pages he found great insight and direction for his journey. Gandhi felt so deeply connected to the Gita that he often referred to it as his "eternal mother," feeling it offered him more support in his darkest hours than even his biological mother could. He treated the Gita like the Bible, finding refuge in it during both times of sorrow and joy.

The relationship between this holy book and this holy man is one that begs exploration for those of us seeking enlightenment. The Bhagavad Gita and Gandhi both maintained that enlightenment, or moksha, is available to everyone, from the common householder to the yogi living in a cave. They proclaim we are all capable of finding Truth and that we don't have to be born with the highest intellect or spiritual capacity for wisdom. Both the Gita and Gandhi point to practical and ethical ways of becoming enlightened beings.

The Gita's Greatest Lesson: Non-attachment and Selfless Action

One of the most powerful teachings from the Gita is that of action without desire. In essence, it means being unattached to the fruits of one's labour. It's the work itself that is the point – not the results that come from it. What's more, the process of one's work should be pleasurable and fulfilling, and one of selflessness.

This desire-less action can be found as a central teaching in many ancient yogic texts, including Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Of all the Gita's teachings, this one is said to have influenced Gandhi's character the most. The call for selfless action was a constant in Gandhi's life. By abiding by the moral and spiritual laws and ethics set forth in the Bhagavad Gita, Gandhi was able to spread hope and light during India's most tumultuous times.

Gandhi also taught that, in order to reach enlightenment, we need to slay our worldly attachments. If we can dissolve our ego, we can eventually achieve a state of Self-realization. The Gita, too, teaches us that we need to defeat the ego's negative aspects of greed, anger, fear and attachments, and live from a place of higher consciousness, in which love is the driving force. Another central theme of the Gita is that of divine presence being manifest within all of reality. This divine presence is always there for us, and we must have faith that it will guide us and protect us when we feel defeated on the path. Staying true to our goals and our higher Self is yet another lesson of the Gita, one that Gandhi followed throughout his life.

Ghandi, the Gita and Non-Violence

In the Bhagavad Gita, ahimsa is listed as the first and most important virtue. As a peacekeeping spiritual and political activist, the path of non-violence was at the heart of Gandhi's teachings. Ahimsa is an unconditional love for one's self, for others, and for all living beings on the planet. Gandhi walked the path of ahimsa every single day – even in the most dark and dismal situations. This is the message of non-violence from which Gandhi based his teachings.

For us modern-day truth seekers and spiritual warriors, we can also find solace and refuge in the Bhagavad Gita during challenging times. We can study the Gita, as Gandhi did, and we can read about him and his life's selfless work for further inspiration. It's no coincidence that both Mahatma Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita are some of the most prolific sources of spiritual wisdom to have graced the planet. They will remain two of India's most divine gifts to mankind.

Gandhi on Bhagavad Gita:

The Gita is the universal mother. She turns away nobody. Her door is wide open to anyone who knocks. A true votary of Gita does not know what disappointment is. He ever dwells in perennial joy and peace that passeth understanding. But that peace and joy come not to skeptic or to him who is proud of his intellect or learning. It is reserved only for the humble in spirit who brings to her worship a fullness of faith and an undivided singleness of mind. There never was a man who worshipped her in that spirit and went disappointed. I find a solace in the Bhagavad-Gita that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad-Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies -- and my life has been full of external tragedies -- and if they have left no visible or indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teaching of Bhagavad-Gita.

CONCLUSIONS:

Thus we can summarize very well from the Bhagavad Gita's message and Mahatma Gandhi's life teachings that prayer with self purification of one's heart and recitation of only one verse from Gita in our daily routine prayer must be an essential part in every family. Its divine grace always protects us from evils and calamities. It is a very powerful remedy for today's man every problems. It is, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'an empire of thought' that everyone can benefit from, regardless of religion, beliefs or background.

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