

Bhagavad Gita for Everyday Life

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Abstract

Many people think that *Bhagavad Gita* is a book to be studied in old age after retirement. Another misconception is that Gita is a highly philosophical text and hence, not amenable to common people. Some others consider it as a sacred religious text meant only for Hindus.

The truth is that Gita belongs to the whole humanity, not just Hindus. It is relevant to people of all ages, not just old, retired persons. Gita contains religion, philosophy of the highest order, psychology, motivation, management, leadership, communication skills etc. It depends on from what angle we analyze it.

In this paper I argue that Gita is useful in everyday life for all age groups and at every stage of life. Some of the topics I analyzed include: how much to eat; what type of people eat what kind of food; how long to sleep; what is the right attitude towards work; how strong desires lead one to the path of destruction; how to take successes and failures in life; how to maintain equanimity of mind; and how to cope with death of near and dear.

As an illustration, food is a very important aspect of life. Sadly, obesity has become a serious problem since it leads to diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cancer. Easy availability of food everywhere and at affordable prices resulted in change of food habits of the public and consequently to obesity. On the other hand, some people, especially youngsters, eat too little in order to maintain a slim figure. That leads to eating disorders, resulting in major health problems or even death. Lord Krishna provides a solution to this problem. He advises that one should be moderate in one's eating; neither too much nor too little.

नात्यश्रतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्रतः ।
न चातिस्वन्यशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥ ६.१६ ॥

(There is no possibility of one's becoming a yogi, O Arjuna, if one eats too much or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough.)

Likewise, Gita provides answers to everyday problems leading to universal welfare. It helps us lead a healthy, purposeful and meaningful life.

The vast literature on Gita focused on philosophical aspects and more recently, on management issues. This paper analyzes Gita from the perspective of Life Management and extends the literature to a different area – the realm of ordinary people and more mundane issues. When a common man asks “What is in there for me? Why should I study Gita?” this paper provides the answer. This analysis is especially useful for young men and women who face these questions daily. The implication is that Gita is a practical manual and it

should be taught right from childhood so that people can derive benefits from it throughout their lives.

Keywords: *Bhagavad Gita, Everyday Life, Life-Management, Practical Applications of Gita*

Introduction

There are many misconceptions about *Bhagavad Gita*. One of them is that it is a book to be read in retirement. Another one is that it is a highly philosophical text amenable to only scholars. Yet another belief is that it is the sacred scripture only for Hindus.

The truth is that Gita belongs to the whole humanity, not just to Hindus. It contains many aspects of human life, such as management, psychology, leadership, and motivation. In this paper I argue that it is useful for everyday life and can be used by people of all age-groups and at every stage of life. The principles enunciated in Gita are universal.

In the following sections, I discuss some issues related to everyday life and how Gita offers a solution to them. These issues are especially concerned for youth. This analysis is very useful for young men and women who daily face these questions. The topics analyzed are:

- 1) how much to eat;
- 2) how long to sleep;
- 3) what type of people eat which type of food;
- 4) what is the right attitude towards work;
- 5) how strong desires lead one to the path of destruction;
- 6) how to maintain equanimity of mind; and how to take successes and failures in life;
- 7) how to cope with death of near and dear.

Lord Krishna provides clear and logical answers to these issues.

Literature Review

Although Bhagavad Gita is a short text of 700 verses, it generated an enormous literature in many languages. The beauty of the Gita lies in the fact that its meaning, interpretation, and significance depends on how one looks at it. It encompasses religion, philosophy, psychology, motivation, management, leadership, communication skills etc. Depending on their perspective and purpose, different authors looked at it from different angles. Thus, the early studies are concerned about the philosophical aspects of Gita (e.g. classical commentaries by Adi Sankaracharya, Ramanuja, Madhva, Abhinavagupta, Bhaskara, Nimbarka, Vallabha, MadhusudanaSaraswati, Chaitanya, etc.). Among modern commentators on Gita are Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Chinmayananda, and Swami Ranganathananda.

In recent years, there is a growing interest in Gita from Management field (e.g., Jayamani, 2013; Hee, 2007). For example, Hee presents a management grid to link the profit-orientated approach with a purpose-orientated approach in running a business. Some other studies focus on Gita and leadership (e.g., Rarick and Inge, 2008; Chatterjee, 2012). Rarick and Inge examine how Gita offers advice on humanistic and inclusive leadership. Some studies analyze Gita from psychology perspective (Bhawuk, 2008).

In summary, the extant literature on Gita focusses on philosophical aspects and more recently, on management issues. *Bhashyams*(commentaries) by *Acharyas* are amenable to very highly intellectual people. Studies on management, psychology, leadership etc. are intended for high-level professionals. Beyond the above two

categories of people, there is a vast majority which includes youngsters, and uneducated people. When a common man asks, “What is in there for me? Why should I study Gita?” there is no answer in the existing literature. This paper attempts to fill that gap by analyzing day-to-day problems of common people.

Analysis

How much to Eat? How long to Sleep?

Food is the most important aspect of everybody's life. It is essential for the very survival of beings. Our *Rishis* concluded that the food that we eat is converted into blood, muscles, bones, semen, and other things. Lord Krishna describes the importance of food thus:

अन्नाद् भवन्ति भूतानि 13.14।
annād bhavanti bhūtāni | 3.14 |

“All living bodies subsist on food.”

The translation of the *Slokas* of Bhagavad Gita is adopted from Swami Ranganathananda (2016).

In modern world, there are two problems in consumption of food. People eat too much or the wrong type, leading to obesity. Or some eat too little, leading to eating disorders like Anorexia Nervosa.

Obesity has become a global epidemic. In the early 20th century obesity was confined to mainly the developed world, viz. USA and Europe. There has been an alarming increase in obesity in USA over the past three decades. It is estimated that currently, 66% of adults are overweight or obese; 16% of children and adolescents are overweight and 34% are at risk of overweight (Wang and Beydoun, 2007). More recently, dramatic increases in obesity are reported from developing countries such as,

Mexico, China and Thailand (Popkin and Larsen, 2004). India is also gaining weight. Indians now grapple more and more frequently with overweight, obesity, and their consequences such as Type-2 diabetes.

Another alarming facet of the problem is the enormous increase in child- and adolescent-obesity. Globally, an estimated 10% of school-aged children, 5 - 17 years, are overweight or obese. In India, the prevalence of overweight among adolescents varies between 10% and 30% (Kalra and Unnikrishnan, 2012). The most important consequence of childhood obesity is its persistence into adulthood with all its health risks, such as, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, osteoarthritis, gallbladder disease, and some sex hormone-sensitive cancers.

Studies revealed that the factors favoring excess dietary intake include low cost of energy-dense foods, increased consumption of prepared meals, and of sweetened beverages, consumption of snack foods while watching television and ample opportunities to eat throughout the day (Drewnowski, and Specter, 2004). Food is available everywhere and any time (e.g. vending machines everywhere). Consequently, there is no restraint on food consumption.

On the other hand, eating too little leads to eating disorders which are an important cause of physical and psychosocial morbidity in adolescent girls and young adult women (Fairburn, and Harrison, 2003). Symptoms of eating disorders include refusal to eat, extreme weight loss, a distorted body image, low self-esteem, and excessive physical exercise.

Sleeping problems are also widely prevalent in modern societies. There is some epidemiological evidence that disturbed or inadequate sleep may be a risk factor for clinical emergence of

cardiovascular disease and for total mortality (Jenkins et al., 1988). On the other hand, excessive daytime sleepiness leads to fatigue and other sleep disorders (Vgontzas et al., 1997).

In summary, modern societies are plagued with eating and sleeping disorders. For both problems, Lord Krishna advises:

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जायतो नैव चार्जुन ॥६.१६॥

nāty-aśnatastuyogo 'stinacaikāntamanaśnataḥ
nacāti-svapna-śīlasyajāgratonaivacārjuna |6.16|

“There is no possibility of one's becoming a yogi, O Arjuna, if one eats too much or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough.”

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वन्पावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥६.१७॥

yuktāhāra-vihārasayukta-ceṣṭasyakarmasu
yukta-svapnāvabodhasyayogobhavaduḥkha-hā
|6.17|

“He who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation and work can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system.”

The key here is **Moderation** in eating and sleeping, avoiding extremes. Krishna uses the word “Yukta” meaning appropriate/sensible/proper/right in habits of not only eating and sleeping, but also of recreation and work. That is His prescription for eating and sleeping problems.

What type of people eat which type of food?

Worldwide food habits are widely different. The question is why certain type of people prefer certain types of food. To answer this question, Krishna classifies people into three categories: *Sattvik*, *Rajasik*, and *Tamasik*. These are *gunas* or

inherent nature and are present in everybody in different proportions. Depending on which *guna* dominates, the person behaves accordingly as described below:

मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योर्निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते ॥१८.२६॥

mukta-saṅgo 'naham-vādīdhṛity-utsāha-
samanvitaḥ
siddhy-asiddhyornirvikāraḥkartāsāttvikauchyate
|18.26|

“One who is free from egotism and attachment, and endowed with enthusiasm and determination is *Sattvic*.”

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचिः ।
हर्षशोकान्वितः कर्ता राजसः परिकीर्तितः ॥१८.२७॥

rāgī karma-phala-prepsurlubdhohinsātmako
'śhuchiḥ
harṣha-śhokānvitaḥkartārājasahaḥparikīrtitaḥ
|18.27|

“One who craves the fruits of the work, is covetous, violent-natured, impure, and moved by joy and sorrow, is *Rajasic*.”

अयुक्तः प्राकृतः स्तब्धः शठो नैष्कृतिकोऽलसः ।
विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते ॥१८.२८॥

ayuktaḥprākṛitaḥstabdhaḥśhaṭhonaishkṛitiko
'lasaḥ
viśhādīdirgha-sūtrī cha
kartātāmasauchyate|18.28|

“One who is undisciplined, vulgar, stubborn, deceitful, slothful, despondent, and procrastinating, is *Tamasic*.”

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः ।
रस्याःस्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्य आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ॥१७.८॥

āyuh-sattva-balārogya-sukha-prīti-vivardhanāḥ
rasyāḥ snigdhaḥ sthirāhrdyāāhārāḥ sāttvika-
priyāḥ |17.8|

“*Sattvic* people eat foods that increase life span, virtue, strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, succulent, nourishing, and naturally tasteful.”

Sattvic foods include grains, pulses, beans, fruits, vegetables, milk, and other vegetarian foods.

कट्वम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।
आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥१७.९॥

kaṭv-amla-lavaṇāty-uṣṇa-tīkṣṇa-rūkṣa-vidāhinaḥ
āhārārājasasyeṣṭāduḥkha-śokāmaya-pradāḥ |17.9|

“Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are dear to *Rajasic* people. Such foods cause distress, misery and disease.”

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत् ।
उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥१७.१०॥

yāta-yāmaṁ gata-rasampūtiparyuṣitaṁ ca yat
ucchiṣṭamapicāmedhyambhojanam tāmasa-
priyam|17.10|

“Food prepared more than three hours before being eaten, food that is tasteless, decomposed and putrid, and food consisting of remnants and untouchable things is dear to *Tamasic* people.”

Nowadays people are eating all kinds of food. Most of these processed foods are loaded with harmful chemicals and impurities. Such foods are a major cause of various kinds of diseases. The advent of refrigerator and microwave oven, entry of big business in food industry, genetically-modified foods, increased use of fertilizers and pesticides contributed to people eating stale and unhealthy food. As a result, there has been a tremendous increase in violence, anger, and ignorance.

An interesting aspect is that people with a certain *guna* eat certain types of food, as described by Krishna above. On the other hand, if people eat certain types of food, they develop the corresponding *guna*. Thus, this is a two-way process. Hence, if people consume healthy types of food, the world will become a better place. That is the message of *Gita*.

Nowadays, it is mandatory to reveal nutritional information, like calories, proteins, fats etc. on food items. But it does not indicate how it changes mental attributes, viz. how they affect *Sattvic*, *Rajasic*, and *Tamasic* traits. That is why even if certain foods are very healthy in the sense that they help build up muscles and other things, they may increase violent disposition or other effects. But Ayurveda lists the other attributes of foods. Hence, we need to label foods according to their inherent characteristics also.

What is the right attitude towards work?

Work (action/*karma*) is an integral part of life. Everybody has to keep doing some work. But we face many questions and doubts, such as: can I have the option of not doing anything? what are the fruits of my action? can I perform others' duties? etc. Krishna provides valid answers to these dilemmas:

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥३.५॥

na hi kaścitkṣaṇamapijātutiṣṭhatyakarma-kṛt
kāryatehyavaśaḥ karmasarvaḥ prakṛti-jairguṇaiḥ
|3.5|

“Verily, none can ever rest for even an instant, without performing action (*karma*); for all are made to act, helplessly indeed, by the *gunas* (*Sattva*, *Raja*, *Tama*) born of *prakṛti* (nature).”

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येत् अकर्मणः ॥३.८॥

niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ karma
jyāyohyakarmaṇaḥ
śharīra-yātrāpi cha tenaprasiddhyedakarmaṇaḥ
|3.8|

“Perform your obligatory action; for action is superior to inaction; and even the bare maintenance of the body will not be possible if you are inactive.”

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः मा ते सगडोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥२.४७॥

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭemāphaleṣukadācana
mā karma-phala-heturbhūrmātesaṅgo
'stvakarmaṇi |2.47|

“You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but never to the fruits thereof. May you not be motivated by the fruits of actions; nor let your attachment towards inaction. “

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥२.४१॥

vyavasāyātmikābuddhirekeha kuru-nandana
bahu-śākhāyanantāś cabuddhaya
'vyavasāyinām |2.41|

“Those who are on this path are resolute in purpose, and their aim is one. O beloved child of the Kurus, the intelligence of those who are irresolute is many-branched.”

तस्मात् असक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमान्पोति पुरुषः ॥३.१९॥

tasmadasaktah? satatam 'karyam' karma
samacara
asaktohyacaran karmaparam apnotipurus?ah?
|3.19|

“Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme.”

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रयः ।
कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किञ्चित् करोति सः ॥ ४.२० ॥

tyaktvā karma-phalāsaṅgamnitya-ṭrptonirāśrayaḥ
karmaṇyabhipravṛtto 'pinaivakiñcitkarotisāḥ
|4.20|

“Forsaking attachment to fruits of action ever satisfied and independent, even though engaged in all kinds of action, he really performs no action.”

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥ ३.३५ ॥

śreyānsva-dharmoviguṇaḥpara-dharmātsv-
anuṣṭhitāt
sva-dharmenidhanam śreyaḥpara-
dharmobhayāvahaḥ |3.35|

“Better is one's own *dharma*, though imperfect, than the *dharma* of another well performed; better is death in one's own *dharma*; another person's *dharma* is fraught with danger.”

At the outset, Krishna categorically says that doing nothing is no option. We have to keep on working for the bare necessity of maintaining our body. Thus, Krishna is action-oriented; action is always superior to inaction; laziness has no place in His scheme of things.

Then He makes a clear distinction between means and ends. He enunciates a great principle of Karma, that of *Nishkama Karma (NKK)*. He advises us to concentrate on doing the job well, rather than focusing on the results of the action. Take the example of young boys and girls preparing for an important examination. If they constantly think about things like what grade they get or if they obtain admission into a prestigious

institution, they cannot concentrate on preparation. They become nervous or stressed. NKK principle says that give your best effort without bothering about the end-result. Then, the result will automatically follow. In spite of your best effort, if the result is not exactly what you wanted, atleast you will have the satisfaction of giving your best shot. This is a very sound principle and can be used in any undertaking or task in our lives.

Another prudent advice that Krishna gives is in regard to one's own *dharma*. He says that we should confine to our *dharma* (role/responsibility) and do it well. During our lives, we perform many roles in family and society. We should restrict to our roles and not encroach upon others' roles. For example, if a person is a member of a team in a project, he should perform that role and not try to do the role of a project manager.

How strong desires lead one to the path of destruction?

Nowadays we are witnessing an enormous increase in crimes committed on the spur of the moment. Especially alarming is the incidence of juvenile crimes. School shootings, assault on women, robberies are some of those types. Lord Krishna vividly describes the progression of a crime through various stages:

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सगदस्तेषूपजायते ।
सगडात् संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥२.६२॥

dhyāyatoviṣayānpuṁsaḥsaṅgasteṣūpajāyate
saṅgātsañjāyatekāmaḥkāmaṭkrodho 'bhijāyate
|2.62|

“While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment rises desire to possess, and from that anger arises.”

क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशात् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥२.६३॥

krodhādbhavatisammohaḥsammohātsmṛti-
vibhramaḥ
smṛti-bhramśād buddhi-nāśobuddhi-
nāśātpṛaṇasyati |2.63|

“From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion loss of memory. When memory is bewildered, it results in ruin of discriminative power, and as a result the person perishes.”

This is the path:

Thinking of Sense Objects Attachment to them
Desire to possess Anger Delusion Loss of
memory Ruination of Discriminative Power Total
destruction

Let us illustrate this process by an example. Nowadays many young men, especially high-school and college students are committing serious crimes against girls in the name of love. Suppose a young man sees a young girl and feels that she is very beautiful and attractive. Then he keeps on thinking about her day and night (*dhyāyatoviṣayānpuṁsaḥ*). From that constant thinking, his mind develops attachment to her (*saṅgasteṣūpajāyate*). He thinks 'I love her'. From that attachment, he develops a desire to possess her (*saṅgātsañjāyatekāmaḥ*). He proposes to her, and when she rejects, he becomes angry (*kāmaṭkrodho 'bhijāyate*). From that anger comes delusion (*krodhādbhavatisammohaḥ*). In that state, he forgets everything, such as, his family background, his surroundings, his individuality, and whether his desire is justified or not. Then what happens? From delusion he experiences loss of memory (*sammohātsmṛti-vibhramaḥ*). He has no clear thinking and is thoroughly confused. He progresses to the next stage when his power of discrimination is ruined (*smṛti-bhramśād buddhi-*

nāśo). The rational reasoning of 'what to do and what not to do' is gone. In that state he thinks that if that girl does not belong to him, she should not belong to anybody else. Then he commits a very heinous crime, such as, stabbing her or attack with acid. The last stage is the total destruction of that person when he lands in a jail (*buddhi-nāśātpraṇāśyati*). We have been witnessing this sequence of events over and over. How beautifully Krishna described this entire scenario!

What is the solution? Krishna prescribes:

तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यः तस्य प्रजा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥२.६८॥

tasmādyasyamahā-bāhonigrhītānīsarvaśaḥ
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyastasyaprajñāpratiṣṭhitā
[2.68]

“Therefore, O mighty-armed, one whose senses are restrained from their objects is certainly of steady intelligence.”

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥२.६५॥

prasādesarva-duḥkhānāmhānirasyopajāyate
prasanna-cetasohyāśubuddhiḥ
paryavatiṣṭhate[2.65]

'In tranquility, all sorrows are destroyed. For the intellect of one who is tranquil-minded is soon established in firmness.’

Krishna says that one should control one's sense organs from all sides. One should have a measure of self-discipline, and higher values. Then he will have a steady *buddhi*. For a person with a tranquil mind, all sorrows vanish. If Krishna's analysis in this Section is taught to all young men and women in schools, colleges, and universities, many

atrocities and crimes can be prevented.

How to maintain equanimity of mind; and how to take successes and failures in life (Stress Management)?

In modern world, stress is omnipresent. It comes with daily hassles of life, such as, traffic jams, long lines, petty arguments. Stress may also arise with some life-changing events, like, illness, marital problems, losing a job, or children leaving home. A stressful person may become irritable and intolerant of even minor disturbances, may lose temper and yell at others. Persistent stress may lead to several diseases, such as, hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes.

Krishna's remedy for stress management is:

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥२.५६॥

duḥkheṣvanudvigna-manāḥsukheṣuvigata-sprhaḥ
vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥsthita-dhīrmunirucyate
[2.56]

“One whose mind is not shaken or disturbed by adversity, nor elated by happiness, who is free from blind attachment, fear and anger, is indeed a *muni* or sage of steady wisdom.”

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रजा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥२.५७॥

yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehastat
tatprāpyāśubhāśubham
nābhinandinadveṣṭitasyaprajñāpratiṣṭhitā
[2.57]

“One who is always unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil, his wisdom is steady.”

Krishna advises that one should not overreact to

either happiness or adversity. Then he uses a beautiful expression: *vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ*. He says that a person should overcome three emotions – *Raga* (attachment), *bhaya* (fear), *krodha* (anger). These three give rise to stress and are highly destructive. Swami Vivekananda said “Fearlessness is virtue. Fear is a sin.” Controlling these emotions is key to reducing stress. In that steady state of mind, people can take successes and failures with equanimity. Suicides committed on the spur of the moment for failure in examinations or in love etc. will not happen.

How to cope with death of near and dear?

The only thing certain in life is death. The fear of death of oneself and of near and dear is immense. Some people take the death in their stride; but some cannot cope with it. Unable to bear the separation, some may go into depression or may commit suicide. Fear of death is always present in our mental functioning and it is the affective aspect of self-preservation (Zilboorg, 1943). Everybody has to deal with this aspect in his life. When Arjuna was overcome with grief at the prospect of killing his kith and kin in the Kurukshetra battle, Krishna gives a very logical reasoning to overcome the fear of death:

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥२.२७॥

jātasya hi dhruvomṛtyurdhruvaṁ janmamṛtasya
ca
tasmādaparihārye 'rthenatvaṁ śocitumarhasi
[2.27]

“Whoever is born is sure to die; to the dead, birth also is certain. It is not, therefore, fit for you to mourn for this unavoidable fact.”

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।
अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥२.२८॥

avyaktādīnibhūtānivyakta-madhyānibhārata
avyakta-nidhanānyevatatrakāparidevanā |2.28|

“All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation?”

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।
अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्मात् युध्यस्व भारत ॥२.१८॥

antavantimedehānityasyoktāḥ śārīriṇaḥ
anāśīno
'prameyasyatasmādyudhyasvabhārata|2.18|

“These bodies – of the eternal embodied one which is indestructible and indeterminable – have an end, therefore fight, O Arjuna.”

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचित्
नायं भूत्वाऽभविता वा न भूयः ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥२.२०॥

najāyatemriyatevākadācin
nāyaṁ bhūtvābhavitāvānabhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo
nahanyatehanyamāneśārīre |2.20|

“For the soul (*Atma*) there is neither birth nor death at any time. It has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain.”

देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत ।
तस्मात्सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥२.३०॥

dehīnityamavadhyo 'yamdehesarvasyabhārata
tasmātsarvāṇibhūtāninatvaṁ śocitumarhasi |2.30|

“O Arjuna, the One who dwells in the body can never be slain. Therefore, you need not grieve for any living being.”

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिः धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥२.१३॥

dehino 'sminyathādehekaumāram yauvanam jarā
tathādehāntara-prāptirdhīrastatranamuhyati |2.13|

“As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.”

वासंसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णानि
अन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥२.२२॥

vasamsijirnaniyathavihaya
navanigrhnatinaro 'parani
tathasariranivihayajirnany
anyanisamyatinavanidehi |2.22|

“As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.”

At the outset Krishna establishes that everybody has to go through the cycle of birth and death over and over. There is no point in lamenting about this unavoidable aspect. He says that all beings are not seen before birth or after death. They are manifest only in the intervening period. So why worry?

Then Krishna explains the distinction between body and *Atma*. In the event of death, it is only the material body that vanishes, but, *Atma* is eternal and indestructible. *Atma* has no birth and death. A person's body during his lifetime passes through various stages such as childhood, youth and old age. Similarly, the *Atma* also passes from one body to another after death. The analogy given is that of giving up clothes when they become old and torn and put on new clothes. Since the *Atma* is permanent and moves from one body to another,

we should not grieve about the death of material body.

Here Krishna establishes two important concepts. The first one is the distinction between impermanent material body and the eternal *Atma*. The second one is the concept of rebirth or the cycle of birth and death. The Hindu philosophy as enunciated in *Gita* has two very important aspects – reincarnation and the Law of *Karma*. According to the Law of *Karma*, one has to experience the consequences of all actions (*Karma*) in this life or later lives. The experiences that one has in this life are a result of *karma* in one's past lives. If one wants to have good life in later births, one has to do good *karma* in this life. The twin concepts of reincarnation and *karma* provide a powerful logical framework for ethical living and coping with death.

Western philosophy does not accept the concept of reincarnation. It says that after death, one will go to heaven or hell and that is it. They think that the body is everything. That belief gives them an urge to enjoy whatever they want in this one life.

Recently a team of German psychologists and medical doctors at the Technische Universität of Berlin conducted a clinical experimentation on 944 volunteers (Htpnojco, 2016). The study used a new type of medically supervised near-death experiences, that allows patients to be clinically dead for about 20 minutes and then brought back to life. The results of the experiment provided evidence for the existence of the afterlife and of a form of dualism between mind and body. Dr. Ackermann, who led the team, says “I know our results could disturb the beliefs of many people. But, in a way, we have just answered one of the greatest questions in the history of mankind, so I hope these people will be able to forgive us. Yes, there is life after death and it looks like this applies to everyone.”

Conclusion

This paper analyzes the relevance of Gita for everyday life of common people. The issues analyzed include the amount of food and sleep that one should have, the types of food consumed by different types of people, the right attitude to work, the step-by-step process of how strong desires lead one to ruination, keeping a balanced mind in successes and failures thereby managing stress, and how to handle the fear of death. In all these instances, Krishna offers sound and logical advice. The solutions offered by Krishna are very practical. Modern science and psychology also are coming around to Krishna's prescriptions. For example, dieticians are advising people to cut the portion size of food intake to check gaining weight. The vast literature on Gita focused on philosophical aspects and more recently, on management issues. This paper extends the literature to a different area – the realm of ordinary people and more mundane issues. When a common man asks “What is in there for me? Why should I study Gita?”, this paper provides the answer. This analysis is especially useful for young men and women who face these questions daily. The implications are far-reaching. Gita is not confined to old people or philosophers or managers or to Hindus only. Gita is relevant for everyone and at every stage of life. Hence, Gita should be taught very early in schools everywhere so that the benefits can be enjoyed throughout the life.

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