

## Realising And Practising Dharma in The Modern Context

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### Abstract

The term dharma can be analysed in multiple contexts. In the social context, the term dharma refers to certain religions where religious communities are created. In this context, India is considered as a multireligious country giving place to multivarious religious people such as Hindu, Islam, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jinas and so on. In spite of all these religious communities secularism is its unique identity in the international forum.

The second meaning of dharma is the characteristics or features of some characters or the positional status of some personalities. This is a scientific outlook for example the characteristic of the metal is its dharma such as lustre, ductile, density and so on. The characteristic of a river is to flow down until it disappears into the sea.

Another sense of dharma refers to the duties and responsibilities of a social being. In this context, we talk about swadharma or our own roles and responsibilities, para dharma or duties of others, nari dharma or the duties of women, raja dharma or duties of a king or leader and so on. According to Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra religion or dharmas has two main forms such as discrete form of religion and a divine form of religion. The discrete form of religion refers to all the external religious practices in the forms of fasting, worshipping, chanting, offering, lighting, and buildings of worship like temples, masjids, churches, viharas, mathas and so on. The divine form of religion refers to eternal sadhana

which is practised but not externally exhibited. It starts with governing over our own senses and utilising them to realise the ultimate truth. So, this article tries to throw light on all the above-mentioned content and context of dharma with reference to Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

**Keywords:** Conch Shell, Sadhana, Swadharma, Virtue

## Introduction

Knowledge is the greatest contribution of God to human beings. Knowledge can make man multidisciplinary and capable of overcoming all life crises. Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is a great source of knowledge for the whole world. Once Vivekananda was confronted with a situation in a foreign land where all the religious books were placed keeping the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita on the bottom of the shelf and asked to share his feelings regarding the position of this sacred book. Swami Vivekananda smiled and answered Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is placed on the bottom which means the foundation is very strong and that's why different religious principles could uphold their existence on this strong foundation. It is time for the young Indians to realise the power of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in building individual character and national development to make India Biswa guru once again.

## Objectives

1. To understand various contexts of religion.
2. To realise the relevance of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in the modern context
3. To realise and spread humanitarian values in society through Shrimad Bhagavad Gita  
To incorporate different contents of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in the modern curriculum  
to sensitise regarding virtues of life.
4. To discriminate between divine and discrete forms of religion.
5. To differentiate between the internal and external vision based on Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

## The brief introduction of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is an important part of Mahabharata. There is a public belief in Odia which states that -



*“Jaha nahin bharate taha nahin marate”*

It means which aspects of life are not there in Mahabharata they are absent from the world culture. Its essence is that all sorts of knowledge, and information either in science or in spiritualism are available in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. It is composed of seven hundred Sanskrit verses. It is believed that lord Sri Krishna had told all those verses to his sakha Arjun on the battlefield of Kurukshetra in Mahabharata. Shrimad Bhagavad Gita has two senses of knowledge one is external historical information described in a question-answer format. The second sense of spiritual outlook is highly philosophical and subject to practice and realisation. There are eighteen chapters in this holy book as follows

Chapter No	Name	Chapter No	Name	Chapter No	Name
1	The Yoga of Arjuna's Dejection (arjuna-visad-yoga)	7	The Yoga of Wisdom (vigyana-yoga)	13	The Yoga of Distinguishing Matter from Spirit (prakṛti-puruṣaviveka-yoga)
2	The Yoga of Analysis (Samkhya-yoga)	8	The Yoga of Liberating Spirit (taraka-brahma-yoga)	14	The Yoga of the Threefold Modalities (guṇatraya-vibhaga-yoga)
3	The Yoga of Action (karma-yoga)	9	The Yoga of Royal and Hidden	15	Chapter 15: The Yoga of the Ultimate Person

			Knowledge (raja-vidya-raja- guhyayoga)		(puruṣottama- yoga)
4	The Yoga of Knowledge (gyana-yoga)	10	The Yoga of Excellence (Vibhuti-yoga)	16	The Yoga of Differentiating Godly and Ungodly Assets (daivasurasampad- vibhaga-yoga)
5	The Yoga of Renunciation (sannyasa-yoga)	11	The Yoga of Seeing the Cosmic Form (visva-rupa- darsana-yoga)	17	The Yoga of Differentiating Threefold Faith (sraddha-traya- vibhagayoga)
6	The Yoga of Meditation (dhyana-yoga)	12	The Yoga of Devotion (bhakti-yoga)	18	The Yoga of Liberation (mokṣa-yoga)

Mainly it talks about the three main sources of divinity such as karma or the philosophy of work, bhakti or devotion to God, and Gyana or the sources of knowledge.

Arjun, the madhyam pandav is the symbolic representative of all the disciples of the world. Lord Shri Krishna is the representative of all philosophical and spiritual gurus, prophets or ideal of all religions. Maharsi Vyasadeva is the author of this text who was dictating this to Shri Ganesh ji to write out them for the sensitisation of all the human

beings of this world. In an event when Arjun refused to fight against his gurus, elders, brothers, and all his own people saying that

“न काङ्क्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च ।  
किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा” ॥ १-३२॥

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

It means Arjun is not interested in availing any victory, wealth, or kingdom at the cost of all these lives. Happiness or pleasure is of no use at the cost of this life and destruction. Then lord Shri Krishna started motivating him dispelling all sorts of ignorance that prevailed in the mind of Arjun which created a large spiritual text called Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

### **The features or characters of Conch shell**

There is a great science in using conch via blowing in every morning and evening to produce some positive energy and positive sounds. It is a tradition in the Hindu families to use this hand instrument by worshipping the God and Goddesses. Shrimad Bhagavad Gita explained that-

“अनन्तविजयं राजा कुन्तीपुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः ।  
नकुलः सहदेवश्च सुघोषमणिपुष्पकौ” ॥ १-१६ ॥  
“पाञ्चजन्यं हृषीकेशो देवदत्तं धनञ्जयः ।  
पौण्ड्रं दध्मौ महाशङ्खं भीमकर्मा वृकोदरः” ॥ १-१५॥

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

Here are the names of some specific conch shell or sankh and their players as follows-

- Panchajanya of Hrishikesh or lord Shri Krishna
- Devadatta of Dhananjaya or Arjun
- Paundra of brave Bhimasen
- Anantavijay of Yudhishthir
- Sughosa of handsome Nakula
- Manipuspauk of youngest Sahadeva

All the warriors blew their conches separately from all sides. This tradition of playing an instrument in military action still existing in modern times. Besides these military events there are certain positive effects of conch upon the human mind and body.

1. Conch blowing can provide a great exercise for, the urinary tract, bladder, lower abdomen, diaphragm, chest and neck muscles.
2. Blowing a conch strengthens the rectal muscles and prevents many problems which occur due to the gradual weakening of the rectal muscles.
3. As it puts pressure on the prostate area, it improves prostate health and helps prevent prostate enlargement.
4. By blowing the conch, lung muscles are expanded, improving their aerial capacity.
5. Conch blowing also exercises thyroid glands and vocal cords and helps in correcting any speech problems.
6. Facial muscles are stretched when we blow a conch, so automatically fine lines could be avoided by blowing the conch every day.

So, Gita inspires us to blow the conch to get all these benefits proved true in the research of science in this modern age.

### **Death is the door to a new life**

The existence of life in the world creates a concept of Duniya or lifespan between birth and death. the term duniya refers to two fires that is – the birth fire and the funeral fire. It is because du means two and niya means fire. Like birth, death is the ultimate truth. Externally we all are afraid of death but spiritually death is a door to a new life. Death transmits the result of work and qualities of personalities in the form of a fate or fortune for future life. Death witnesses the previous virtues and vices and transmits them to the next birth in the form of inborn instincts inclinations and genetic influences which lead the future life to come. We are not only afraid of our death rather the death of our own people, friends, and family members. Here Shrimad Bhagavad Gita plays an important role in removing the fear of death and stress of losing the intimate relatives closely attached to us. There are so many verses in Chapter Two known as Sankhya yoga of

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita motivating us to be prepared for death and try to resist its effects upon our minds. Let us discuss these issues of death and the essence of life from the verses Shrimad Bhagavad Gita-

‘न जायते प्रियते वा कदाचि  
नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।  
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो  
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥2. 20॥’

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

The soul is neither born nor dies at any time. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting and ancient. It is not killed like the body.

‘वासासि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय  
नवानि गृह्णति नरोऽपराणि ।  
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा  
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥2. 22॥’

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

The soul discards the old and worn-out body and takes on a new body like the man discards old clothes and puts on new ones. The death of the body does not affect the soul in any way. The soul is absolutely immortal and eternal, unlike the body.

‘नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।  
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥ 2.23॥’

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

It means the soul neither be cut by weapons, burned by fire, melted by water, nor dried by air. So, the soul is ever existing and over the death. when one understands the eternity and immortality of the soul, he is not afraid of death.

‘जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्द्विं जन्म मृतस्य च ।  
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थं न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ 2.27॥’

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

Who is born must die and who dies must born again. So, life and death both are true. Therefore, we should not be worried about death but rather be ready to face it as a part of our sadhana.

In the modern context of the demand to control our strain and stress usually we go to the psychologist, psychiatrist and clinical therapist but never go to a saint or guru for its remedies but we should know that medicine does not cure us, medicine strengthens the immunity of the body and this immunity controls over the diseases. We should know that reading and understanding the verses of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita works like a spiritual medicine and efficiently maintains the hormonal balance in the brain and save us from stress and strain forever. Still in this age of science and technology, we should know some biological hormones affecting our peace of mind as follows

Cortisol is the primary stress hormone that changes your body and mind. Adrenaline causes 3Fs Fear, fight and fright and 4S stress, sex, sugar, and salt. Dopamine creates a sense of pleasure and motivation, Melanin Concentrating hormone (MCH) regulates stress and the sleep-wake cycle.

Hormones like serotonin, endorphins, and oxytocin have effects on mood and mind. In spite of all these hormones and the functions, we should remember that God is the doctor of doctors known as Bhaba rog vaidyam and his naam sankirtan(names and praise) works like the medicine against all these worldly despair, dysfunction, and depression. We should keep reading and realising the essence of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

### **The essence of Dharma is a sense of responsibility**

We are living in our family and community as well. When we want peace or prosperity it needs our combined effort but when we want any agitation rebellion or indiscipline an individual may cause and create it. It means all the members of society should understand their own duties and responsibilities. We should not compete or compare ourselves with others because to compete or compare with others means to insult the soul within us. In this regard, Shrimad Bhagavad Gita speaks

‘स्वधर्मपि चावेक्ष्य न विकल्पितुमहसि ।  
धर्माद्विद्युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥ 2.31 ॥’

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

It is not the dharma or characteristic of Kshatriya- warriors to have a fear of war and death. so, as fighting for war is the dharma of Arjuna, we need to execute our own duties and responsibilities in whatever position in society we are, realising that

“We are for the lord not for others, we are for the lord so for others.”

Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra

“अथ चेतत्त्वमिमं धर्मं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि ।  
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥ 2.33॥”

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

It means if Arjun had not fought that war, he would have lost his religious principles and fame and committed sin and mistake. So, we should regard religious principles in rendering our services for society and the country. We should realise that duty is God and war is worship but discharging our duties only for our own interest is not real dharma. The real dharma is to work without attachment with the feeling of the following verse

“सुखदःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।  
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥ 2.38॥”

(Shrimad Bhagavad Gita)

This verse states that we should consider victory and defeat, profit and loss, pleasure and pain equal for us so that we can perform the best, serve the best and achieve the best in our lives. We should remember that failure is the pillar of success. There is victory after the fear. Hard work is the key to success but all these feelings are born only from the study of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

When we forgot our culture, when we neglected the Indian ways of thinking, when we neglected the Indian knowledge system, when we were attracted towards Western culture, when we adopted a modern lifestyle we committed social crimes, allowed corruption in our society, weakened our character and defile our culture. So, it is time to re-energise our younger generations, youths and children to explore the essence of Shrimad Bhagavad

Gita and other Indian knowledge systems to rebuild the Indian way of living and make India the spiritual guru of the world.

## Conclusion

It is a famous Odia quotation which states-

*“Ruchu na ruchu kha pita, asu na asu padha Gita”*

It means we should try to take some bitter food to control worms and we should try to read Shrimad Bhagavad Gita to avoid warmth of mind or stress and it does not matter how much we understand on our own. Where is sound there is light and where is light there is sound, both sound and light are two sources of power and divine energy. The chanting of Gita verses produces a divine sound creating positive energy in the mind and environment as well. Practising the Gita leads to enlightenment in the heart. Practising of Gita means translating spiritual theories into actions and activities. So, we get a verse by Adi Sankaracharya which speaks-

*“Gita sugita kartavya, kim anyaih sastra-vistaraih  
ya svayam padma-nabhasya, mukha-padmad vinihsrta”*

It means the themes and texts of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita are not meant only for studies. From the ground of their theoretical perspectives rather they are the guidelines from lord Shri Krishna which gives direction to the human community to lead them on the religious path and bring ultimate peace in the universe.

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