



## Dichotomy Between Hindu Religiosity 'n Gita's Spirituality

By BS Murthy

Long before the advent of the Torah, not to speak of the Bible and the Quran that followed it, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* had it that “.. since he (man) created gods who are better than he: and also because, being mortal, he created immortals, it is his higher creation. Whoever knows this, comes to be in this, his higher creation.”

However, in the latter-day *Nārāyana Upanishad*, the ‘mortal man’ sought to control the ‘immortal god’ he himself had created thus:

*“daiva dēnam jagat sarvam, / mantrā dēnantu daivatam,  
tan mantram brāhmanādēnam, / brāhmano mama dēvata.”*

It's on god that hinges all / Mantras rein in that godhood  
Controlled are those by Brahmins / Making them our own angels.

Going by the *purānās*, not only the Brahman *rishis* and *maharshis* maneuvered gods through yagnās 'n yāgās but also were wont to curse them when offended.

In time though, as if god gained an upper hand in his tussle with man, Lord Krishna, in Bhagavad-Gita, popularly known as the Gita, averred that –

Those as meditate 'n worship / Them I take My wings under (Ch9, v22)  
Devout be in heart and soul / Me the Supreme thou shall reach (Ch9 v34)  
If thou develop faith in Me / Take for granted I take thee (Ch 12 V8 )  
If one remains to Me firm / It's My promise I take him (Ch 18 v65)  
Set all aside 'n have faith / Thus sans sin, reach Me thou. (Ch18, v66)

It is in this context that we should read Sir Edwin Arnold's postulations in his introduction to the Gita as *The Song Celestial* in translation (1885) “...indeed, so striking are some of the moralities here inculcated, and so close the parallelism—ofttimes actually verbal— between its teachings and those of the New Testament, that a controversy has arisen between Pandits and Missionaries on the point whether the author borrowed from Christian sources, or the Evangelists and Apostles from him.

This raises the question of its date, which cannot be positively settled. It must have been inlaid into the ancient epic at a period later than that of the original Mahabharata, but Mr. Kasinath Telang has offered some fair arguments to prove it anterior to the Christian era. The weight of evidence, however, tends to place its composition at about the third century after Christ; and perhaps there are really echoes in this Brahmanic poem of the lessons of Galilee, and of the Syrian incarnation.”

Indeed the New Testament affirms that –

The Lord shall fight for you, and you should hold your peace. (John 14:14)

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:7)

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Mathew 11:28)

That apart, psalm 115:11 of the Old Testament has it that, "You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield."

All the same, the purpose of this article is not to ascertain whether it was plagiarism or parallel thought but, as its title suggests, is about the dichotomy between the Hindu religiosity and Gita's spirituality.

Obviously realizing that the Hindu religiosity was steeped, not in man's surrender to god but in invoking his favours through mantras of assorted rituals, Lord Krishna proclaimed in the second chapter of the Gita thus:

Unwise use all enticing / Flowery language to further  
Rituals Vedic in their scores / Not the knowledge of Vedas (V 42)

Eyeing heaven with mind mundane / Go for ceremonies such in hope /  
Of having best of both the worlds (V 43)

Stands as firm mind thy clear / Steer thou clear of path rituals (v53)

That is besides cautioning man that –

Pursue if thou wants with zeal / Instincts then would spin thy mind (v44)

But the Brahmins, in control of the Sanskrit mantras and the spiritual narrative alike, with their priestly interests to protect, so as not to let the Lord's message sink into the Hindu consciousness, inserted into the Gita their contra narrative at the very beginning of the next chapter thus:

The Creator wanted mankind to prosper through sacrifices, which shall be the milch cow of man's desires (v10)

Foster the gods through sacrifices (v11)

Fostered by sacrifices, gods would bestow desired enjoyments, but they are thieves who do not return anything to gods (v12)

Who follow the above regimen would attain moksha (v16).

Owing to the all-pervading *purāṇic* narrative that is in tune with the above, by and large, the Hindu religiosity has come to be steeped in propitiating the gods through assorted rituals and fervent prayers to avert adversity or for self-aggrandizement and /or both. It's another matter though that in our materialistic time, it has further descended into a religious barter with gods, or worse, of seeking to bribe them that too only after they second man's bidding!

Hence, the Gita's exhortation to man to surrender to Him, the corner stone of the Semitic faiths, and alien to the Hindu ethos, invariably fails to scripturally draw the Hindus towards it, thereby rendering them skeptical to explore its sterling philosophy fashioned for their benefit. What's worse, as brought out by the writer in his free ebook *Bhagvad-Gita: Treatise of Self-help* sans 110 inane interpolations and in articles, *Mundane distortions in the Divine discourse*, *Absurdity of Bhagvad-Gita's Caste Biases*, and *Badnām-Gita's Spoiler Slokas*, the majority of the Hindus are averse to this peerless philosophy owing to its discrimination of man on account of his so-called birth that anyway was the Brahmanical twist to what was essentially an egalitarian tome. It is for them to realize that in reality, the Gita was the pristine work of their progenitors, Krishna 'n Vyasa, that in time got polluted by the others, and it is time for them to reclaim it by ridding it of its obnoxious interpolations.

That being the case, the question that naturally arises is how come the Gita was eulogized as “the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue..... perhaps the deepest and the loftiest thing the world has to show” by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Prussian philosopher William von Humboldt? And he was not alone in showering praises on it for many a Western thinker such as Arthur Schopenhauer, Albert Einstein, Aldous Huxley, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson were equally effusive in expressing their admiration for it! The answer could as well lay in this truism - the Semitic religious emphasis of surrendering the self to the Lord serves the faithful spiritually but yet it intellectually fails the believer when it comes to the realization of the self that is *atma* that the Gita enables one.

Incidentally, John Ephraim, a Telugu Christian of the day, exemplifies this aspect perhaps like none other; seeing the Gita but as an extension of the Bible to delve into the self, he not only learnt Sanskrit to be able to grasp its philosophical nuances but also by hearted all its 700+0 slokas. What is more, while taking his Christian walk on the Gita's path, he has made it his life's mission to induce the recalcitrant Hindus and others onto it.

What of the Hindus from the higher echelons, who keep away from the Gita for the lack of an aptitude to surrender to the god? Who were to tell them that it is not a tome of devotion but, more significantly, it deals with character building besides delving into the art of living as outlined in its chapter 12 thus –

If thou develop faith in Me / Take for granted I take thee (v8)

Were thee to fail develop faith / It's not thou reached blind alley,  
Ever Me having in thy mind / Practice lets thee turn the bend. (v9)

If thou feel that's hard as well / Indulge then in deeds Me please. (v10)

If thou find that difficult too / Give thyself to Me Supreme  
Act then with thy subdued mind / With no thought for what follows. (v11)

Scores thought over mere roting / Betters meditation awareness too  
What helps man to find moorings / Are acts his with no axe to grind. (v12)

So, it helps you, irrespective of your religious orientation, to pick up a copy of the Gita and begin reading it by skipping the following verses from it for better comprehension, and, if you please, my *Bhagvad-Gita: Treatise of Self-help* sans 110 inane interpolations is in the public domain as free ebook.

**Ch. 3:** s9 –s18, s24 and s35 (12 *slokas*); **Ch.4:** s11 - s 13, s24- s32 and s34 (13 *slokas*); **Ch.5:** s18 and s27 -29 (4 *slokas*); **Ch. 6:** s10-s17 and s41 -s42 (10 *slokas*); **Ch.7:** s20 –s23 (4 *slokas*); **Ch.8:** s5, s9- s14 and s23-s28 ( 13 *slokas*); **Ch.9:** s7,s15-s21, s23-s25, and s32-s34 (14 *slokas*); **Ch.11:** s9- s14 and s29 (7 *slokas*); **Ch.13:** s10, s22 and s30 (3 *slokas*); **Ch.14:** s3 -s4 and s19(3 *slokas*); **Ch.15:** s9 and s12- s15 (5 *slokas* ); **Ch.16:** s19 (1 *sloka*); **Ch.17:** s11- s14 and s23- 28 (10 *slokas*) and **Ch.18:** s12, s41-48, s56 and s61(11 *slokas* ).