



AKSARA BHAGAVAD GITA

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ABSTRACT:

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HERMENEUTICS, AKSARA, GITA, BHAGAVAD, INTERPRETATIVE PARADIGM, CONCEPT, UNIVERSAL TEMPLATE, HARIBAKTH.

INTRODUCTION

Aksara Bhagavad Gita, an explicative perspective of the Bhagavad Gita, which synthesizes different connotations of the Gita. It offers an inclusive and experiential and verifiable perspective of the scriptures by correlating it with contemporary branches of knowledge such as science, management, law, logic, etc.

5200+ years of existence of Bhagavad Gita has produced as many commentaries in almost all the languages with the interest therein still unabated. All the commentaries may be pigeonholed broadly into 21 categories or their combinations and variants, of which 7 are principal. Commentaries have been written by religious leaders and their adherents/followers, philosophers, intellectuals, politicians, scientists and academicians, presenting the humanity with their flavor of the Gita. Consensus has been eluding different proponents and the chasm is getting wider with each school of thought professing the superiority and authenticity of their version to the exclusion of all others. Add to this conundrum other religious beliefs and bigotry and we have children of one God fighting one another claiming superiority of their God and His teachings over others, contrary to His teachings.

Aksara Bhagavad Gita tries to evolve a consensus amongst different adherents and different religionists by proposing a uniform common interpretative model so as to interpret scriptures without deviating from the core beliefs/principles of the original proponents. For this, the base proposed is the concept of universal single God, who is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, infallible, imperishable, infinite, and independent. As a natural corollary of this proposition, His works/words too share the very same qualities. Both these propositions being fairly consensual, these form the guiding principles and cornerstone for interpreting scriptures. To overcome the objection that the proposed model although consensual,

isn't backed by authority, it is constructed based on logic and backed by the authority derived from the Slokas in the Gita itself.

These qualities of God and other characteristics describing His qualities found in the Bhagavad Gita have been taken to build upon principles by both enunciating and substantiating the same. This is sought to be codified and proposed as an alternative mechanism to interpret/understand Gita or any other scriptures. It redefines hermeneutics as presently understood from within the confines of Biblical perspective and applicability to universal perspective and applicability encompassing all religions.

A story is crafted around the narration to simplify abstract concepts. The dialog format is adopted so as to substantiate the principle put forth and to reply to probable and anticipated objections to the proposition.

The book comprises of four sections. Book I has eight chapters followed by , twenty eight chapters in Book II, five chapters in Book III and eleven illustrations in Book IV. The book ends with epilogue and message from the author.

Christina, an American student befriends Haripriya whilst in India under a student exchange Programme. Christina is pursuing inter religious studies and majoring in Bhagavad Gita. With umpteen versions of the Gita, she is at loss to know which the correct version is. She is a member of a study group on the Gita. By providence, the members of the group get involved in a controversy with each claiming superiority of their version. A debate is arranged to discuss the same. The debate serves to unfold the mysteries about the correctness or otherwise and authenticity of different versions of the Gita. During the course of deliberations, intricacies of the Gita, its inclusive nature, its relationship vis-à-vis other religious scriptures, the role of other branches of knowledge in understanding

Gita etc. are all revealed. All of Christina's doubts are resolved. She takes it upon herself to broadcast those esoteric truths hitherto hidden from the world at large by founding a University for Gita studies and disseminating her new found knowledge.

The book commences with a press conference held by Christina at the inauguration of the Gita Institute. This is the culmination of efforts of Christina's execution and her friend Haripriya's exposition. The concept summary is dealt with in the next chapter titled Parthasarathys letter to his daughter. In the next chapter titled Jury Appointment, readers are invited to scrutinise and judge the concepts put forth in course of the debate. This is the precursor to the eighteen chapter long debate that follows in Book II. The chapter titled Verdict form lists out the issues debated and their offshoots and the possible verdicts of the same. The chapter Navaratri conversation prepares foundation for the debate and introduces new concepts and alternatives to traditional schools of thought. This is put in the form of conversation between the father and daughter. The substantiation of the concepts put forth, the arguments for and against, possible objections etc. are all taken up in the succeeding 18 chapters of Book II. The chapter names by itself is self-revealing and informs the principle that is the subject of the debate. Additional issues cropping up during the course of debate were also put to judicial scrutiny.

Book III keeps the readers on tenterhooks as to the outcome of the debate. The entire book is found summarized in the Chapter titled "Wiki Summary".

The delivery of verdict is dealt with in Chapter Thirty Three. The verdict is unconventional and unforeseen. The "behind the mind" process involved in delivering the verdict brings out the inner conflicts faced and springs up some surprises for the reader. It also bring forth the Value based and ethics based foundation our education has.

Book IV simplifies concepts by presenting it in form of illustrations. This is followed by description of the holy land of Dwarka and Kurukshetra. The author winds up with epilogue and a personal message to his readers.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Claims made are also substantiated in most of the cases. The substantiation is made either by way of Gita quotes, or by way of Vedic historical precedent, or is experiential or is verifiable. It is a trial by fire, with each concept coming under fire unscathed. The form and style of presentation is unorthodox and is mixed as is the genre.

The book suffers from wordiness and the central theme could have been conveyed by using less than $\frac{3}{4}$ th of the words presently used.

Viewed from the targeted reader's perspective, the theories being put forth and the concepts being espoused are radical and revolutionary. It may not find acceptance amongst the majority, be it general readers, theologians, religionists etc. although it is experiential and verifiable. It calls for an open mind and an introspective outlook. All the existing commentaries were debated and continue to be debated. So the debate goes on with one more additional commentary. After all, it is subjective. This book doesn't die away before making its imprint on mankind.

EFFECTS AND RAMIFICATIONS

It attempts to coalesce different versions of the Gita like say Dwaita, Adwaita, Visisht Dwaita, etc. and all their combinations and variant perspectives. It throws a tantalising challenge to Hermeneuticians to explore the subject from a new angle. It opens opportunities for Gita researchers to pursue hitherto unexplored open ends. It provides a consensual platform for all religionists to iron out their differences by providing a common evaluation Model. It could revolutionise the way scriptures are interpreted. Existing books on Hermeneutics would require an overhaul.

Hermeneutics based on the traditional western model relying on the Bible would pave way for the Eastern & Indian model based on the Bhagavad Gita.

Ravindra Rao writes under the pen name of Haribakth. He is an alumnus of Marathwada University, Aurangabad, with a Postgraduate degree in Commerce and a bachelor's degree in law. He has graduated from Osmania University, Hyderabad. He served as an IT officer in a state owned Bank for 34 years before opting for voluntary retirement in 2015. The Bhagavad Gita is his soul and passion.

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REFERENCES

1. Haribakth's Aksara Bhagavad Gita.