

Song of God

The Pandava and Kaurava armies are poised for battle. Arjuna asks Shri Krishna to draw his chariot to the middle of the battlefield. Seeing his elders and relatives on the opposing side, an anguished Arjuna feels his Gandiva bow slip. The Supreme Personality of Godhead then initiated His song, *Bhagavad-gita*. Shrila Prabhupada describes this famed dialogue: “It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important Upanishads in Vedic literature.” (Bg. Introduction p.3) Gita Jayanti marks the day Lord Krishna spoke *Bhagavad-gita* to Arjuna.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is, has been translated to 55 languages and 19 million have been distributed to date. The knowledge of the soul as marginal energy of the Supreme releases us from linguistic, social, political and national designations and unites us in our collective position of reviving our relationship with God. While there are hundreds of translations of *Bhagavad-gita*, no other translation, with its word-for-word transliteration, has made as many Krishna *bhaktas* as *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

When Lord Caitanya visited Shri Rangam He met a *brahmana* who was ridiculed and criticized for his incorrect pronunciation and reading of *Bhagavad-gita*. Lord Caitanya noticed tears in the *brahmana*'s eyes and asked about his state. The *brahmana* said that he only sees the beauty of Lord Krishna sitting on a chariot as Arjuna's charioteer and this fills him with happiness. Lord Caitanya embraced the *brahmana* and announced, “Indeed, you are an authority in the reading of the *Bhagavad-gita*. Whatever you know constitutes the real purport of the *Bhagavad-gita*.” (Cc. Madhya 9.102)

According to the *Gita Mahatmya*, “All the sacred places of pilgrimage...dwell in that place where the book the *Gita* is kept and where it is read.”

We could celebrate the *Bhagavad-gita*'s philosophical value—detailing the nature of the Supreme Lord, material nature, the living entity, time and karma; or we could celebrate Yogeshvara (Krishna who is the master of all mystics), Who orchestrated the annihilation of the miscreants and established the principles of religion...on a battlefield. Either way there is a lot to celebrate.

Kurukshetra

Bhagavad-gita 1.1, “Dhritarashtra said: O Sanjaya, after my sons and the sons of Pandu assembled in the place of pilgrimage at Kurukshetra, desiring to fight, what did they do?”

Isn't it incredulous that a battlefield can be referred to as a place of pilgrimage? According to the *Mahabharat*, King Kuru settled on that land and chose to embed the eight spiritual virtues: austerity, truthfulness, forgiveness, kindness, purity, charity, sacrifice and celibacy. Indra granted Kuru the boon that he would admit into heaven, anyone who died there while fighting or performing penance. Thus Kurukshetra became both a battlefield and a land of piety.

Writers and philosophers comment that Kurukshetra is a metaphor for the body or mind with reference to the constant battle between the higher and lower selves. Saints on the path of *bhakti* reject such speculation. Impersonalism and mythology leaves one lost to the Lord. Based on scriptural evidence, Kurukshetra is celebrated as a place of pilgrimage where *Bhagavad-gita* was spoken, and where the *gopis* pulled Lord Krishna's chariot to Vrindavan (*ratha-yatra*).

Kurukshetra, lays north east of Haryana, in North India, where Gita Jayanti is honoured as the greatest day in the history of mankind. Pilgrims from all over the world come to bathe in the sacred ponds, Sannihit Sarovara and Brahma Sarovara before entering the temples where *Bhagavad-gita* is recited. At Jyotisar, a marble chariot under a banyan tree marks the spot where Lord Krishna spoke the *Bhagavad-gita*. The festivals are state organised and on this day ministers, governors and pilgrims share the same goal. The immortal position of Kurukshetra is in the hearts of the devotees.

For those of us that are in the unenviable position of being home bound, it's heartening to know that hearing from authorised persons gives one the same benediction as going on pilgrimage, the results of both draws us closer to the Supreme.

Both articles written by Bhaktin Saras Naidoo.

Shri Shri Radha Radhanath Temple will be hosting a special celebration and recitation of Bhagavad-gita on Gita Jayanti, Sunday, 23 December 2012.

