

GAṆEŚAGĪTĀ

A Brief Summary



SWAMI HARSHANANDA

GAṆEŚAGĪTĀ

A Brief Summary

Swami Harshananda



Sri Ramakrishna Math

Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004

Published by
Adhyaksha
Sri Ramakrishna Math
Mylapore, Chennai-4

© All Rights Reserved
First Edition, August 2007
Third Print, November 2016
1M2C

ISBN 978-81-7823-454-0

**Total number of copies
printed till now: 4,600**

Printed in India at
Sri Ramakrishna Math Printing Press
Mylapore, Chennai-4

Preface

If there is an imitation, there must be an original. If the imitation approaches the original in excellence of quality, it can rather be called an adaptation. This *Gaṇeśagītā* can perhaps be classified under that category.

Though considered as a part and parcel of the *Gaṇeśapurāṇa*, it looks more like an independent work, attached to the *Gaṇeśapurāṇa*, to give it acceptability since the latter is a major scripture of the Gāṇāpatya cult.

In this brochure, a brief summary of the work has been attempted. It is hoped that it will prove to be useful to the spiritual aspirants, especially those devoted to Lord Gaṇeśa.

S.H.

Key to Transliteration and Pronunciation

Sounds like	Sounds like
अ a-o in son	ग g-g (hard) in go
आ ā-a in master	घ gh-gh in log-hut
इ i-i in if	ङ ṅ-ng in singer
ई ī-ee in feel	च c-ch in chain
उ u-u in full	छ ch-chh in
ऊ ū-oo in boot	catch him
ऋ ṛ-some what	ज j-j in judge
between r and ri	झ jh-dgeh in hedgehog
ए e-ay in May	ञ ñ-n (somewhat)
ऐ ai-y in my	as in French
ओ o-o in oh	ट ṭ-t in ten
औ au-ow in now	ठ ṭh-th in ant-hill
क k-k in keen	ड ḍ-d in den
ख kh-ckh in blockhead	ढ ḍh-dh in godhood

Sounds like	Sounds like
ण ṇ-n in under	य y-y in yard
त t-t in French	र r-r in run
थ th-th in thumb	ल l-l in luck
द d-th in then	व v-v in avert
ध dh-the in breathe	श ś-sh in reich
न n-n in not	(German)
प p-p in pen	ष ṣ-sh in show
फ ph-ph in loop-hole	स s-in sun
ब b-b in bag	ह h-in hot
भ bh-bh in abhor	· ṁ-m in sum
म m-m in mother	: ḥ-h in half



जगत्कारणं कारणज्ञानरूपम्
सुरादिं सुखादिं गुणेशं गणेशम् ।
जगद्व्यापिनं विश्ववन्द्यं सुरेशम्
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

jagatkāraṇam kāraṇajñānarūpam
surādiṁ sukhādiṁ guṇeśam gaṇeśam ।
jagadvyāpinam viśvavandyaṁ sureśam
parabrahmarūpam gaṇeśam bhajema ॥

Thou art the cause of the world, the primal knowledge, the origin of gods, the origin of bliss, the lord of the guṇas, the lord of heavenly hosts. Thou pervadest the universe and art worshipped by all. Thou art the lord of the gods, thou art verily the supreme Brahman. To thee, O Lord, do we offer our worship.





GAṆEŚAGĪTĀ

Introduction

The *Bhagavadgītā*, a part and parcel of the immortal epic, the *Mahābhārata*, has left a very deep impression on the psyche of the Hindu nation. This has, in course of time, given rise to a number of similar works of a didactical nature, either as a part of some purāṇa or even as an independent work.

The *Gaṇeśagītā* is one typical example. It is an integral part of the *Gaṇeśapūrāṇa*, comprising the eleven chapters—138 to 148—and has 413 ślokas or verses in all. It is in the

form of a dialogue between the king Vareṇya and his divine son Gajānana or Gaṇeśa.

Summary of the Contents

A brief summary of the work may now be attempted here.

Chapter 1

Sāṅkhyārthasārayoga, 69 verses

The king Vareṇya requests his son Gajānana (knowing full well that he is God himself) to expound to him yogaśāstra or the science of yoga.

In reply, Gajānana discounts several concepts normally thought of as yoga and states that true yoga is withdrawing one's mind from the objects of senses and directing it towards

the ātman within. In this attempt several modes of sādhanā like the sādhanacatuṣṭaya, śravaṇa (hearing about the ātman), manana (reflection of the same) and nididhyāsana (meditation), which are useful, are described. The need for a proper guru or spiritual teacher is also stressed.

Chapter - 2

Karmayoga, 43 verses

In reply to the question whether jñānaniṣṭhā (devotion to knowledge) or karmaniṣṭhā (devotion to work) is a better path of sādhanā, Gajānana replies that both are equally effective if properly understood and practised. Work done as a duty and without selfish motives is far better than giving up work altogether. When

Prajāpati created this world along with gods and men, as also the system of the four varṇas among men, he ordained that all should perform their duties and sustain one another by helping one another. Gajānana specifically declares that even the liberated ones should work to set an example to the ignorant people, of the world. Towards the end, in reply to another question, he says that it is kāma or desire that impels a man to commit sins and hence exhorts Vareṇya to control it.

Chapter - 3

Jñānapratipādanayoga, 50 verses

Continuing his teaching, Gajānana declares that he taught this ancient yoga or spiritual

wisdom to Viṣṇu in the beginning of creation. Through him and a succession of teachers like Sūrya and Manu it was propagated in this world. To the question how he, of this generation, could teach it to Viṣṇu, the ancient divine person, Gajānana reveals that he is the anādi-īśvara, the primeval Lord of the universe, who is the origin, the sustenance and the place of dissolution of the whole universe, from whom even Viṣṇu and other gods originate!

The ignorant persons worship other deities for petty results and hence are caught in the web of saṃsāra or transmigration.

Gajānana declares that the system of the four varṇas was evolved by him. He also explains

the terms *kriyā* (actions done without selfish desires) and *akriyā* (abandonment of prescribed actions), various *yajñas*, the importance of approaching a worthy guru and *satsaṅga* (holy company).

Chapter 4

Dvaidhasaṁnyāsayoga, 37 verses

Now, the king *Vareṇya* raises the question whether *karmayoga* or *karmasaṁnyāsa* is superior. Though both are good and give the same result, *Gajānana* opines, that the former is better.

A true *karmayogi* offers the fruits of all his *karmas* to God. Hence he is not bound. It is the

person who performs desire-motivated actions that is bound and hence suffers.

God never creates *karma* (action) or *kartṛtva* (agency). They are done by the *prakṛti* of three *guṇas*. Those wise ones who know this are the real *paṇḍitas* (men of knowledge) and can get whatever they want.

In reply to another question, *Gajānana* describes the nature of true *sukha* or happiness, as the one rooted in the *ātman* (Self).

Chapter - 5

Yogāvṛttipraśaṁsanāyoga, 27 verses

Gajānana stresses that yoga is possible only when the mind is purified by the performance of

ordained works, but without the desire for the fruits. Such a work is called 'akarma.' But, when work is performed with selfish motives and desires, it binds.

The divine teacher then describes in detail, the factors that are not conducive to the practice of yoga like physical diseases, disturbed state of mind, unclean and risky places, very hot or cold seasons and so on. The practitioner of yoga should also avoid going to extremes in the case of food, fasting, sleep or keeping awake.

Renunciation of desires is another important aspect of sādhanā.

In answer to two more questions raised by Vareṇya, the lord replies that the mind, though

difficult to control can be brought round through vairāgya (spirit of renunciation) and abhyāsa (repeated effort). If a yogi dies before reaching the final goal of life, he will be reborn in the family of yogis, after first enjoying divine pleasures in heaven. He will then continue his spiritual practices.

Chapter - 6

Buddhiyoga, 21 verses

This chapter starts with a description of the twofold prakṛti of the Lord—the lower prakṛti comprising ten parts (four elements, mind, the sun and the moon and three other aspects); the higher prakṛti, viz., the jīva or cetana who is in the grip of ahaṅkāra, born out of the attachment

to the mind. The whole world is a product of these two prakṛtis.

People in general are overcome by prakṛti and hence bound. However, once in a while, some fortunate soul, purified through the performance of his ordained duties (varṇa-āśrama-dharma) crosses over this prakṛti or māyā.

After describing how he is present in every object of the created world, Gajānana declares that even those who worship other gods with desires actually worship him alone. And again, it is he that responds to their supplications through them.

The importance of the final thoughts at the time of death is stressed at the end.

Chapter - 7

Upāsanāyoga, 25 verses

This chapter begins with a short account of the two wellknown paths described in the Upaniṣads-the Devayāna or Arcirādimārga and Pitṛyāna or Dhūmādimārga. They are the paths leading to the Brahmaloḥa (The world of Brahmā, the creator) and to the Pitṛloḥa (the world of manes).

Brahman, the Absolute, is beyond both. It is identical with Gajānana himself. Those who meditate upon him attain this Brahman and get mukti or liberation.

This meditation is aided by ritualistic worship performed with faith. And, this

ritualistic worship can be performed mentally also.

Though sakāmapūjā (worship motivated by desires) is permissible, niṣkāmapūjā (unselfish worship) is more desirable.

Since all the gods are the manifestations of the one God (Gajānana), it is not proper to dislike other gods even while being devoted to one of them.

A simple mode of mantrajapa (repetition of the divine name) along with its subsidiary processes like the nyāsas, is also described.

Towards the end, there is a eulogy of the Praṇava or Oṃkāra.

Chapter - 8

Viśvarūpadarśanayoga, 25 verses

At the specific request of the king Vareṇya, Lord Gajānana shows him the cosmic form of his, after endowing him with a divine sight. Seeing that cosmic form, Vareṇya describes it and also praises the Lord. At his entreaties, the Lord withdraws the cosmic figure and reassumes his original form. The description, though brief, is very similar to the one given in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Chapter - 9

Kṣetra-jñātr-jñeya-viveka-yoga, 41 verses

Worshipping God with form and contemplating on the Akṣara/Avyakta (God, the formless) are two wellknown modes of spiritual

Chapter 10

Yogopadeśayoga, 23 verses

This chapter starts with a description of three kinds of prakṛti—sattva, rajas and tamas—and the way they manifest in the human beings.

Sattva frees a person from the bondage of saṁsāra whereas rajas and tamas bind him all the more.

The signs of sattva, of daivī type, are: abhaya (fearlessness), ahimsā (non-injury to others), śauca (purity), apaiśunya (absence of calumny), amānitā (absence of pride and vanity) and so on.

The characteristics of a person of the āsurī type, of rajas, are: bragging, arrogance, perverted

understanding, short-temper, jealousy and so on.

The qualities seen in a person of the rākṣasī type, of tamas, are: delusion, egoism, vanity, hatred, violence, anger, harming others for nothing, agnosticism, falsehood and many other evil qualities.

Whereas good persons go to heaven after death, the evil-doers go to hell. But both of them come back to this earth again.

Even bhakti or devotion can be of three types according to these guṇas. But devotees are always advised to cultivate sāttvic devotion only.

Chapter 11

Trividhavastunirūpaṇayoga, 52 verses

In this final chapter, there is a beautiful delineation of three kinds of tapas (austerity), dāna (gifts), jñāna (knowledge), karma (action), kartā (doer), sukha (happiness) and duḥkha (unhappiness), according to the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas.

Serving the respected elders, performance of one's ordained duties and worship of gods is tapas of the body. Truthful and sweet speech is tapas of speech. Keeping the mind unexcited and at peace is tapas of the mind.

When this tapas is performed without any desires, it is sātत्वika. When done with desires it

is rājasika, when practised to harm others or as a show, it is tāmasika.

Dāna or gifts when given as per the injunctions of the scriptures to the right person at the right time and place, is sātत्वika. When given with selfish motives it is rājasika. If given to those who will dishonour or misuse it, it is tāmasika.

Similarly there is the three fold distinction in jñāna (knowledge) also. Seeing the Saccidānanda Brahman every where is sātत्वika jñāna. Seeing the limited jīvātman is rājasika jñāna. Mistaking the body for the ātman is tāmasika jñāna.

Sātत्वika karmas are the actions ordained by the scriptures, performed without selfish motives

and in a way that does not inconvenience others. Rājasika karmas are performed as a show without the proper attitude. Foolish and idiotic actions are tāmasika.

A Sāttvika kartā or doer, though he does actions rightly, is never egoistic. The rājasika doer is selfish and is subject to constantly changing moods. The tāmasika doer is always engaged in harming others.

Sāttvika sukha or happiness appears to cause difficulty in the beginning (because of the disciplines involved in attaining it) but gives bliss at the end. Happiness derived from sense-pleasures results in suffering at the end

and hence is rājasika. The tāmasika happiness produces delusion and harm.

Then follows a brief explanation of a famous phrase *Om tat sat*. A detailed account of the four varṇas—brāhmaṇas, kṣattriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras—and their duties is given next.

Towards the end there is the specific injunction that this teaching should not be imparted to the unworthy ones but to be protected by all means.

The teaching ends with a detailed phalaśruti or eulogy. There is also the instruction regarding the proper mode of reciting it including the recommendation of certain holy days and holy places.

Conclusion

A careful perusal of this *Gaṇeśagītā* reveals that it is almost an imitation, nay, an adoption, of the celebrated *Bhagavadgītā*. The topics discussed, the questions raised, the replies given are all very much reminiscent of the *Gītā*. The language is elegant and the presentation good. (It is said that there is a Sanskrit commentary too on this work. But not much is known about it.) In some places, it is even more detailed. On the whole, it is a work that deserves a deeper study.



Appendix

GAṆEŚA-PURĀṆA

The main purpose of the purāṇas or mythological lore is to bring philosophy and religion to the doors of the masses. They have also played an important role in spreading knowledge—both sacred and secular—and preserve Hindu culture among the common people.

Out of the eighteen Upapurāṇas or secondary purāṇas, (all ascribed to the sage Vyāsa), the *Gaṇeśapurāṇa* is listed as the first. It is a big work of 12,000 verses spread over 250 chapters. Except for the *Gaṇeśagītā*, an

important treatise on religion and philosophy, which forms a part of the last portion of the purāṇa, the rest of the work is highly sectarian in character, clearly aimed at spreading the Gāṇāpatya-cult (cult of Gaṇapati). It abounds in stories of gods, sages and kings, always aimed at glorifying Gaṇeśa above even the wellknown deities Śiva, Devī, Viṣṇu and Brahmā!

Incidentally, certain mantras of Gaṇeśa, vratas or religious observances and worship connected with him are also described.



I am like Ganesh.
I consider every woman
as my Divine Mother.

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA



9 788178 234540

Buy books online at www.chennaimath.org
and eBooks at www.vedantaebooks.org
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore
Chennai - 600 004. ☎ 044-24621110
✉ mail@chennaimath.org

Ganesa Gita

₹ 10.00

ISBN: 978-81-7823-454-0