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A Brief Review of "THE HOLY GITA: THE DISCOURSE NONPARAEIL" by Malayaj Garga

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Gita (Bhagavadgita) is the most important and the most searched for work on spiritual philosophy and spiritual way of life which presents a natural synthesis of both material and spiritual values and which contains almost every phase of knowledge (wisdom) that is required as an efficacious guide for happy and healthy living. Commentaries on the Gita far outnumber those on any other book. Right from the "Gita-Bhasya" of the great Shankaracarya (8<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) upto the most recent "Yathartha-Gita" of Swami Adgadananda (end of 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century) there are more than hundred commentaries, some of them from the pen of great Acaryas. And now (2013) comes the work entitled "The Holy Gita : The Discourse Nonpareil" by Malayaj Garga, a talented person whose writing seems not only intelligent and rational but also inspired.

But the question comes: so many commentaries and other writings on the Gita already being there, what is the need of a new commentary like that of Malayaj Garga? What is the special approach and special characteristic of this work; in other words, what is its uniqueness which will differentiate it from other works on the "Gita"?

In an attempt to find the answer to the above question, we would point out at the very outset that Gita is such a multidimensional and multifaceted and yet most integrated storehouse of knowledge that everytime one researches it, one finds new knowledge and new wisdom; it is like the ocean of gems from which every diver picks up some new valuable gems of knowledge.

The most striking feature of Malayaj Garga's work is the rational approach free from mere faith and also free from subjective speculations of an imaginative mind. Garga employs the logical and the critical method in interpreting the teachings of Gita. His explanations of the position of the Gita are acceptable, his arguments are convincing. He does not interpret the Gita from any particular philosophical or religious standpoint, he does not seem to have prejudices and presupposition of his own; he argues in the spirit of a scientist who naturally remains rational and logical.

An in-depth of study of the 'Gita' reveals that the teachings of the Gita are based not on faith, nor on speculation and poetic imagination but are based on the actual experiences of the seers and the Yogins, and as such we can also test and verify the same in our own experience and in our own life. In this sense Gita can be called 'scientific' if the term science is not confined to empirical experience and is extended also to the inner mental and psychical realm of spiritual experience.

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Verily, Gita is a book of spiritual science. Even if we hesitate to technically call Gita a science, we can at least accept without reservation that Gita has full scientific temper, as the method of enquiry and investigation employed by Krishna (or better call it Vyasa) and the discovery resulting therefrom are fully on the scientific lines, with the only difference that it focuses not on the external material world but on the inner world of spirit. Malayaj Garga diligently and successfully brings out this scientific temper of the Gita. And just as every science has also an applied form which is called its technology, the spiritual science too has an applied form of its own which is technically called 'Yoga'. Gita presents the Yogic technology. Every chapter (of the Gita) in the end is given the name of a particular form of Yoga. Garga is wisely aware of this truth which becomes evident in his writing.

Another very important characteristic of the Gita, successfully brought out by Garga, is that the Gita DOES NOT belong to a particular religion or even to a particular nationality. Many people (specially the followers of the Semitic religions) believe that Gita is a text of Hinduism. To label the teaching of the Gita with 'Hindu' is a naïve view and a gross misunderstanding of the Gita. The technical terms used in the Gita have totally secular meaning. For example the 'Brahman' means the Reality which is all pervasive, Atman means the Self or the Soul, Siva means the 'Benign' or the 'Good' (and not the god of Mount Kailash) and so on. The Gita presents the Truth of life; the only thing is that it was discovered in India by the great seer 'Vyasa'. Would it be the reason to call the Truth of the Gita Indian or Hindu? Many truths of science were discovered in America, Germany, and other countries. Could for that reason the science be called American and German and so on? Science is a universal thing, it would be meaningless to say 'American science' or 'German science'. Similarly, to call the Gita Hindu or even Indian is what is called 'uninformed criticism'. If you really study Gita and become acquainted with the presentation therein, it will become automatically become clear to you that Gita is universal; it can be accepted and adopted by all religions and nationalities.

Malayaj Garga has also ably emphasized and explained the points which the Gita has advanced in criticism of many immoral and undesirable practices which had become rampant in the society. In the matters of the social and the religious problems, Gita has very non-conformist and revolutionary attitude. Gita is really a revolutionary book. For example, Gita is against casteism and the observance of untouchability. It strongly advocates equal observance between the educated Brahmin and the so-called low caste 'Candala'. Caste (or rather 'Varna') was created on the basis of quality (Guna) and deed (Karma), says the Gita, meaning that it was not based on birth. Similarly, many undesirable rituals and practices for getting selfish ends had cropped up in the Vedic tradition. In this context the Gita criticizes and rejects the Vedic aberrations and passes such remarks that seem to be derogatory to the Vedas. This is suggestive of the revolutionary spirit of the Gita. It is warranted that the commentators pay due attention to the non-conformist and revolutionary attitude of the Gita. But most commentators have overlooked the

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same. No commentators seem to have strongly come in favour of the revolutionary position of the Gita. Even Shankaracarya, the most reputed commentator, was conformist and supporter of caste. Malayaj Garga handles with care and explains intelligently such contexts in Gita in order that the confusion (if any) in the mind of the reader may be cleared.

All told, "The Holy Gita" of Garga is a highly readable work. Garga should also be thanked and congratulated for the arduous labour with which he has completed this voluminous (958 pages) work. Certainly, "The Holy Gita: The Discourse Nonpareil" is a valuable and warranted addition to the Gita literature. Not only ordinary readers but also scholars and research students will benefit from it.

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