

## HOW THE "SONG OF GOD" CORRELATES WITH THE "DRAMA OF LIFE" \*

Scholars have considered and argued whether the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is an integral part of the *Mahābhārata* or whether it was simply interpolated at a later date.<sup>1</sup> Probing the validity of these theories is unimportant because both works are estimated as masterpieces of Sanskrit literature. However, when we investigate the various episodes carefully linked in these works, the most conspicuous theme appears to be the part played by the individual in the socio-religious dynamics of life. The drama appears in the *Mahābhārata*, and the course of action is delineated in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, literally translated as "The Song of God",<sup>2</sup> consists of a dialogue between *Kṛṣṇa* (God incarnate) and *Arjuna* (or "man"), in which *Kṛṣṇa* expounds, through poetic discourse, the philosophy *Arjuna* must follow for God-realization. Therefore, the term "The Song of God" seems suitable to render the title *Bhagavad-Gītā* in English. It is *Kṛṣṇa's* or God's teaching set forth in a rhythmically metrical composition. The *Mahābhārata* or "The Great (battle of the) Bharatas"<sup>3</sup> is the

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1. Upadhyaya, K.N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavad-gītā*, Delhi, 1971, p. 2-9.
2. Winternitz, M., *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I., Tr. V. Sirinivasa Sarma, Delhi, 1981, p. 409.
3. *Ibid.* p. 297.

story of a mighty combat between two sections<sup>4</sup> of one family over a kingdom. It portrays many a caper, as well as stirring movements in the socio-religious life of the human being; the *Mahābhārata* deals with, and reflects the dramatic struggle of life. Hence the writer thinks that it would be pertinent to refer to this great epic by the metaphoric title "the drama of life".

In this short article it is expected to discuss how "The Song of God" can be incorporated into "the Drama of Life". The importance of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* within the *Mahābhārata* is great. There is a definite need in the *Mahābhārata* for the spiritual philosophy which is taught in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The battle idea from the *Mahābhārata* is simply used to bind and relate the spiritual teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* into the *Mahābhārata*, or a real life situation: a struggle both mental and physical. This is done so that the common man can understand how to relate and combine the spiritual teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* to his life and problems. Due to this use of the battle theme we find that there is a congruent relationship taking place throughout both: a "mental battle" in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and a "physical battle" in the *Mahābhārata*; both battles have to be won. The winning of these battles successfully makes a person completely perfected.

What are the basic spiritual or philosophical ideas and teachings found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*? It seems that the most important one and the most emphasized idea is that of detached activism or *karma-yoga*. *Kṛṣṇa* advised *Arjuna* not to be inactive, but to be active in his duty without being attached to the result. "To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction".<sup>5</sup> He further states:

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4. *Kauravas* and *Pāṇḍavas*.

5. *karmaṇy evā'dhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana* (contd.)

"Not by abstention from work does a man attain freedom from action; nor by mere renunciation does he attain to his perfection".<sup>6</sup> According to Upadhyaya, prior to the composition of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* there were two ways of one's attitude towards the performance of his life's duties: namely, indulgence in worldly duties or *pravṛtti* and renunciation of worldly duties or *nirvṛtti*. He says that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* questions these as the only ways by putting forth the idea of detached activism or *karma-yoga* along with a strong faith in God.<sup>7</sup>

The answer to realizing God is therefore not necessarily in renouncing the world, rather, it lies in living in the world but not being of the world. This refers to the performance of one's normal duties or *dharma* in life; working, leading a family life, being a householder, taking all worldly responsibilities. "Better is one's own law though imperfectly carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. Better is death in (the fulfilment of) one's own law for to follow another's law is perilous".<sup>8</sup> This is a sequel to the idea that if you are a *Kṣatriya* then you must fight and be a warrior. "Further, having regard for thine own duty, thou shouldst not falter, there exists no greater good for a *Kṣatriya* than a battle enjoined by duty".<sup>9</sup> One should not drop

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*mā karmaphalāhetur bhūr mā te saṅgo'stv akarmaṇi*  
(BG. II.47). (The text and the translation of verses are quoted from: Radhakrishnan, S., *The Bhagavadgīta*, London, 1953).

6. *na karmaṇāṃ anārambhān naiṣkarmyam puruṣo'snute*  
*na ca saṅnyasanād eva siddhim samadhigacchati*  
(BG. III.4.)
7. Upadhyaya, K.N. *op.cit.*, p. 483. ff.
8. *śreyān svadharmo vigrahaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt*  
*svadharme nidhanam śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayavahaḥ*  
(BG. III.35.).
9. *svadharmam api cā'vekṣya na vikampitum arhasi* (contd.)

out or run away from one's duty. This is a very important point of view in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; we must discharge our foreordained responsibilities. Whatever the responsibility is, it should be accomplished perfectly.

Not being of the world in turn implies both not becoming caught up in sensual temptations, as well as keeping a detached attitude towards one's worldly duty. It also implies keeping a proper perspective on the importance of worldly duties in comparison to spiritual duties.

Here, it is pertinent to turn back to *Bhagavad-Gītā* II, 47,<sup>10</sup> mentioned above. *Kṛṣṇa* says that we must perform our duties to the best of our capacities, but we must do them in such a way that we are not attached to them, their results or rewards. *Niṣkama-kriyā* reflects the same meaning. We must not look upon the actions as a means, or be elated or depressed about their results, but must simply discharge them and then leave the results in the hands of God.

The reason for this outlook is that *Kṛṣṇa* is the ultimate doer, and we must do our duties with Him in mind, in other words, dedicate our actions to Him. Once we do this, then they become God's actions and are therefore considered as right actions.<sup>11</sup>

Devotion fits in with this teaching of *Karma-yoga* perfectly. The idea of pursuing action or *dharma* unselfishly for God is devotion. It is stated: "An action which is obligatory, which is performed without attachment, without love or hate by one undesirous of fruit, that is said

*dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate (BG. II.31.).*

10. See f.n. 5 above.

11. Upadhyaya, K.N., *op.cit.*, p. 366.

to be of 'goodness'".<sup>12</sup> If we do work in this way it is actually a form of devotion; we devote actions (work) and rewards to God. So the key is to do work (*karma-yoga*) and devote it to God, whereby it becomes spiritual discipline.

*Kṛeṇa* makes one other very important point which concerns knowledge or wisdom. He relates the nature of a wise man, the person who is detached from pleasure and pain. This is a significant idea which He proclaims: "He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desire amid pleasures, he from whom passion, fear, and rage have passed away, he is called a sage of settled intelligence".<sup>13</sup> Here He is stressing the necessity of being detached from emotions; the wise man will not waver. The reason that this is a trait of a wise man is clear. If a person goes through life letting emotions rule him, he will resemble a ship sailing through stormy waters. But if he is detached from emotional reactions to life he will be like a ship sailing straight to its goal through calm seas.

When *Kṛeṇa* refers to knowledge, it is called that he is speaking of the "knower of the field" (*kṣetrajña*).<sup>14</sup> He describes briefly how a person can be the "knower of the field", and goes on to tell us what we should know in order to gain this knowledge.<sup>15</sup> He says that these concepts are by no means new; they have been sung in the

12. *nityam saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam  
aphalaprepsunā karma yat tat sattvikam ucyate  
(BG. XVIII. 23.)*

13. *duḥkheṣu anudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigatasprhaḥ  
vitaragabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīr munir ucyate  
(BG. II. 56.)*

14. *BG. XIII. (Introductory stanza)*

15. *Ibid. XIII. 3.*

*Vedas* and used earlier to describe the "Absolute" (*Brahman*).<sup>16</sup>

First He cites all things that were created by *Brahman*; "the great (five gross) elements" (*mahabhū-tani*) of which all physical objects are composed of, namely earth, water, fire, air, and space (ether), (the fifth being active only in man).<sup>17</sup> He then refers to the idea of "self-sense" (*ahaṅkāra*) or egoism, "intellect" (*buddhi*), the "Unmanifested" (*avyaktam*) or *mīla-prakṛti*, the "ten senses and the one" (*indriyani daśai kan ca*), viz. the eye, the ear, the skin, the tongue, and the nose that form the senses of knowledge (*jñāna-indriya*), and hands, feet, mouth, anus, and genitals that form the five organs of action (*karma-indriya*), and the mind that functions as the background of all the ten senses. Then He mentions the "five objects of the senses" (*pañca cendriyagocarāḥ*), viz. form, sound, touch, taste, and smell. He goes on further, briefly describing the *Kṣetra*, and says it also consist of "desire" (*icchā*), "hatred" (*dveṣāḥ*), "pleasure" (*sukham*), "pain" (*duḥkham*), "the aggregate" (*samghātaḥ*) or the assemblage of various parts of the body, "intelligence" (*cetana*) or the power to reveal and interpret, and "steadfastness" (*dhṛti*) or firmness that keeps the senses and the body fit and active.<sup>18</sup> In conclusion He describes the qualities of life, pure and good traits which a person must possess to have knowledge (or to be enlightened), and finally the ultimate state (*atman* merging into *Brahman*).<sup>19</sup> When *Kṛṣṇa*

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16. *Ibid.* XIII. 4 and commentary. See: *BG.* tr. R.C. Zaehner, New York, 1975, p. 335; *BG. as it is*, tr. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhūpada, Los Angeles, 1975, p. 207 f.

17. *Ibid.* XIII. 5.

18. *Ibid.* XIII.6. See: *BG.* tr. Swami Chidbhavananda, Tirupparaitturai, 1965, p. 677-681; *BG.* tr. S. Radhakrishnan, p. 303.

19. *BG.* XIII. 7-17.

says: "He is the Light of lights said to be beyond darkness. Knowledge, the object of knowledge and the goal of knowledge - He is seated in the hearts of all"<sup>20</sup> He is referring to a person who has reached his ultimate goal; God realization or *Brahman*. He states that to gain knowledge a man must realize and know (to know in the mind, and to realize or make real in the heart) all these things, from what constitutes the world to what constitutes God Himself. This is an extremely valid and thorough account of what man must achieve to gain knowledge or God realization. The world has to be comprehended; *Brahman* has to be understood; and the fact that *Brahman* dwells within all has to be realized.

Before making an attempt to describe how the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is pertinent to and befits the *Mahābhārata* it is preferable to give a brief summation of the theme and course of events which occur in the latter.

The theme of *Mahābhārata* is a battle between *Kurus* and their cousins, the sons of *Paṇḍu*, over a kingdom that belonged to their fathers. The sons of *Paṇḍu* are *Yudhiṣṭhira*, the eldest, *Bhīma*, *Arjuna* (who is the main character in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* too), and the twins *Nakula* and *Sahadeva*. The foremost sons of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* are *Duryodhana* (the eldest who is always referred to as being wrathful, jealous, and evil), *Bhīṣma*, *Droṇa*, *Vidura*, and the adopted *Karna* (the mighty archer). *Karna* is a rival of *Arjuna* throughout the epic which is ironic because they are, unknowingly, brothers. They had all been brought up together by the blind king *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, as *Paṇḍu* had encountered an early death. *Yudhiṣṭhira* was recognized heir to the throne and *Duryodhana* and his brothers were very jealous. *Duryodhana* tried to kill the *Paṇḍavas*, or the sons of *Paṇḍu*. But when he failed they disguised themselves as *Brahmana* priests and lived a reclusive life in the forest.

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20. *jyotiṣam apī taj jyotiṣ tamasaḥ param ucyaṭe  
jñānaṁ jñeyam jñānagamyam hr̥di sarvasya dhīṣṭhitam  
(BG.XIII.17).*

When *Yudhiṣṭhira* won a powerful ally in *Drupad* (his father-in-law), *Duryodhana* decided he must part with a parcel of the kingdom and give it to the sons of *Pandū*. But *Duryodhana* was still very jealous and *Yudhiṣṭhira*, though he was righteous and pious, had one weakness, an uncontrollable urge to gamble. So *Duryodhana* devised a scheme whereby *Yudhiṣṭhira* was tricked (by the use of loaded dice), into gambling away his entire kingdom, his brothers, and the worst of all his queenly wife *Draupadī*.

Thereafter they roamed in exile for twelve years. But when their exile was over, *Yudhiṣṭhira* requested the return of his kingdom. When this request was not granted, a huge battle was foreseen. The *Pandū* brothers, with the aid of *Kṛṣṇa*, pleaded for peace, but proud *Duryodhana* would not consent. Then a great battle occurred, which included all the kingdoms of Northern India and lasted for a gory eighteen days, in which all the sons of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra* were slain. This is where the *Bhagavad-Gīta* takes its place in the *Mahābhārata*, just preceding the commencement of the great battle.

It should not be misunderstood that the *Mahābhārata* is devoid of spiritual teachings; this is not so. We should behold this work as containing a moral theme displayed throughout; the rise and the success of the good and virtuous and the fall and defeat of evil and improbity. There is no doubt that justice always prevails, and the bad is overcome by good. The epic has many other beneficial teachings and Hindu beliefs scattered throughout. It contains moral codes, the duties of four castes (*varṇas*), the four stages of life (*āśrama-dharma*), the laws of marriage, and yogic philosophy. These moral teachings are necessary and important in every society and they cannot by any means be overlooked in this great work.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is needed within the *Mahābhārata* in order to accentuate the pure and straight spiritual



teachings of a living Master (at that time). Not only are these true and direct philosophical ideas not offered in the *Mahābhārata*, but many readers do not recognize and absorb the moral teachings that are presented in the epic. This is due to the fact that they are often underlying, deep-rooted, and not given clearly, simply, and straightforwardly on the surface. In order to grasp, comprehend, and perceive these spiritual and moral teachings clearly, a direct and a brief explication becomes indispensable; the *Bhagavad-Gītā* fulfils this requirement, and paves the way for God realization.

Then, once one has absorbed these ideas of the way in which to attain God realization, one can relate them to his own life or the lives of the characters in the *Mahābhārata*. The work will then take on an entirely new and deeper meaning.

Now we should see how the *Mahābhārata* absorbs the ideas and teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and where the need for the *Bhagavad-Gītā* within the *Mahābhārata* lies. In other words, in what parts of the *Mahābhārata* can we recognize ideas similar to those proclaimed in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (the places where they sometimes overlap), and in what areas of the great epic can we discover a definite need for the spiritual teachings and ideas expounded in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*?

The precept of detached activism (*karma-yoga*) is only too clearly demonstrated throughout the *Mahābhārata*. Condensing a section of eight *ślokas* from the *Sabhaparvan* in the *Mahābhārata* Dutta says: "Battle for the cause of virtue, perish in a deadly war, then to seek their upper mansions in the radiant realms afar! ---- Primal Cause and self-created! When is done his purpose high, *Narayana* leads immortals to their dwelling in the sky".<sup>21</sup> This

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21. See: R.C. Dutta, *The Mbh. (Condensed into English Verse)*, Allahabad, 1944, p. 43. Also see: *The Mbh.* ed. V.S. Sukthankar and S.K. Belvalkar, Vol.2. (contd.)

speaks of performing one's duty through action, or battle in this case, and then one will be led to "upper mansions in radiant realms" or to a "dwelling in the sky".<sup>22</sup> This clearly propounds the idea of *karma-yoga* and goes so far as to point out that we must do our *dharma* through action; this automatically implies right action. It is not our duty unless it is the correct or right action.

When the good and righteous *Yudhiṣṭhira* carelessly gambles away his entire kingdom, including brothers and wife, he is obviously following wrong action. Not only is he attached to its results but he does not have the thought in mind that he is performing this action for God. One needs the teachings of *karma-yoga* propounded in the *Bhagavad-Gīta* to see which actions are right and which actions are wrong, and which are neutral (*karmanah*, *vikarmanah*, *akarmanah* respectively). When a person performs an action with true devotion to God it is considered as right action, and not when a person is doing it for the sake of good results. *Yudhiṣṭhira* wanted to win (the result) so lustfully that he entirely forgot what he was doing and whether it was honourable, virtuous, or not.

Dutt, when he condenses and versifies a section from the *Sabhaparvan* of the *Mahabharata*, speaks of "conqueror of earthly trails, crowned with virtue's heavenly crown".<sup>23</sup> If one can live through and overcome his worldly tribulations, then one can go to Heaven. But the key is how does one conquer his earthly trails. This is communicated

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*Sabhaparvan*, ed. F. Edgerton, Poona, 1944, p. 169 f.;  
*The Mbh.* (Books 2 and 3), tr. J.A.B. van Buitenen,  
 Chicago, 1975, p. 92.

22. R.C. Dutta, *op.cit.*, p. 61.  
*sandideśa pura yo'sau vibudhānbhūtakṛtasvayam*  
*anyonyamabhinighnantaḥ punarlokanavāpsyatha* (*Mbh.*  
*Sabhaparvan*, adhyāya XXXIII. 15).
23. V.S. Śukthankar and S.K. Belvarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 343-345; J.A.B. van Buitenen, *op.cit.* p. 163.

in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; one must perform the right actions with the right frame of mind: "Even if a man of the most vile conduct worships me with undistracted devotion, he must be reckoned as righteous for he has rightly resolved. Swiftly he become a soul of righteousness ---." 24 The *Mahābhārata* gives us keys and ideas, but only the *Bhagavad-Gītā* positively tells us the proper way in which we should act.

As is pointed out in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*, it does not matter what *dharma* we follow; whether it be that of a *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, man in exile, enunch, herdsman, cook, or any worldly duty (the caste or class is unimportant). It only matters that wherever we find ourselves in life, we do our duty as best as we can, attributing actions to God, and not relying upon or considering their sequel. This idea of dedicating all actions to God ties up with the idea of devotion (*bhakti*).

The concept of "self" is also very important here. In the tale of *Savitri*, we find an illustration of how devoted an Indian wife was to her husband; she actually talks *Yama*, the god of death, into returning her dead husband's soul. She has completely lost her sense of self in her sanctimonious devotion to her loved one. When the *Bhagavad-Gītā* speaks of dedicating one's actions to God, *Kṛṣṇa* also says that we must renounce the idea of self or ego as it all belongs to God no matter in what way. *Savitri* likens the devotion between man and wife to that of union between *atman* and *Brahman*. *Draupadī*, in reply to a long question put to her by *Satyabhama* who is the chief queen of *Kṛṣṇa*, also says: "There is no such deity *Satyā*, here in all worlds with all their divinities like a husband: you're rich in every wish if you please him right; if angry

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24. *api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananyabhāk  
sadhur eva sa mantavyaḥ saṁyag vyavasīto hi saḥ  
kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmatma* ----- (BG. IX.30 and 31.1.1).

you're dead."<sup>25</sup> This pure and true devotion is an integral tenet of enlightenment, if one does not give up the self and dedicate all actions to God, one will never attain this enlightenment. One of the main reasons why this tale of *Savitri* is so beautiful is that it gives us some light into the subject of selfless and devotion; two trails which are so important because with them, we can come closer to realizing God in everything, including our actions.<sup>26</sup>

As it was mentioned earlier *Kṛṣṇa* talks of a wise man's detachment from emotions. We get a definite view of attachment to the emotion of anger, jealousy, revenge, hatred, lust, pride, and greed in the *Mahābhārata*. We also find instance of women's attachment to their husbands, grief over losses, and elation over gains.

*Duryodhana* is very lustful towards *Draupadī* who is full of hatred or anger when he tries to take her as a concubine. He is always referred to as proud and all the cousins feel revenge stemming from anger, for one another at some point in the story. All the emotions that have been mentioned above are part and parcel of the make up of the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, on the other hand, *Kṛṣṇa* asserts that one must not be affected by emotions; pleasures should not cause elation, nor pains depression; one should not grieve over losses, or house negative emotions such as anger, which causes revenge and hatred. Therefore, *Kṛṣṇa* suggests that it is impossible to be wise, or righteous unless these emotional reactions are overcome. So, by the standards of *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the characters of the epic have some good and moral points, and follow religious codes to some

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25. *naitaddṛśam daivatamasti satye - sarveṣu lokesu  
sadaivatesu.  
yathā patistasya hi sarvakāma - labhyaḥ prasāde  
kupitaśca hanyat*

*The Mbh.* (The *Āraṇyakaparvan* - pt. 2), ed. V.S. Suktankar, Poona, 1942, p. 799. Translation is quoted from J.A.B. van Buitenen, *op.cit.*, p. 667.

26. Swami Chidbhananda, *op.cit.*, p. 685.

extent, but they are nowhere near being truly righteous or gaining God realization.

This is interesting and relates to what was stated earlier because a reader would almost assume that these characters, just by simply following their *dharma*, (and actions resulting from their *dharma*), were achieving spiritual enlightenment in or after life. But this is not necessarily so and thus the great need for the *Bhagavad-Gītā* within the *Mahābhārata*. The reader needs to see that there is not only more to attaining enlightenment than what appears on the surface of the epic, but also needs to be clearly and concisely presented with the actual do's, don'ts, how's, and wherefore's of this great task.

The reason why attention is drawn to this issue is because emotions are presented so freely in the epic; even *Kṛṣṇa* is said to feel angry.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, without the theme of unwavering mind or knowledge brought forth in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, one would assume these were good or at any rate not detrimental. Yet *Kṛṣṇa* lays so much importance on this subject that we realize its value. This shows the need for the *Bhagavad-Gītā* to keep the themes and ideas of the *Mahābhārata* in perspective to their true spiritual value.

The last point that would be touched upon is that of "knower of the field" (*kṣetra-jñā*).<sup>28</sup> We get a definite knowledge of the attributes of forgiveness, uprightness, humility, sincerity, etc. from reading the *Mahābhārata*. The "good" characters presented to us in the epic

27: *tathā bruvaca evāsyā bhagavānmadhusūdanaḥ  
vyapāharicchināḥ kruddhaṣ cakreṇāmitrakorśanaḥ  
sa papāta mahābāhurvajrāhata ivācalāḥ*

V.S. Suktankar and S.K. Belvarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 203, and *loc.cit.*, f.n. v. 21. For Tr. see: J.A.B. van Buitenen, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

28. BG. XIII.2.

all display these beneficial traits which are said to be possessed by the knower. But there are many other facets of the knower that we do not see in any characters in the epic. The most profound of these is the "absence of the thought of 'I'" (*anahmīkāra*).<sup>29</sup> Every personality seems to be very self-centered, with the one exception of *Savitri*. One could argue that she too was self-centered since she desired her husband. But we should remember that the sense of "herself" was non-existent within her, and her only wish was to give life to the dead husband; it was the inordinate attachment to her dearest relative that made her to follow *Yama*. *Mahābhārata* says that woman has no god other than her husband.<sup>30</sup> This is a very important course that one must adopt to become a knower, and also another reason why the tale of *Savitri* is such a necessary and integral part of the epic poem.

In the view of the writer the *Mahābhārata* represents the stage for "the drama of life". The stage being the world, man, life, and all the interaction that occurs among them. With the many variety of stories, and the length and depth of the entire epic that they comprise, it is felt that the reader receives a long lesson on life itself, its problems, pleasures, and pains. Moreover, he receives a valuable lesson because the *Mahābhārata* gives us a moral standpoint from which we can deal with these problems, pleasures, and pains.

The *Mahābhārata* also displays some of the many tribulations and temptations that are encountered in one's lifespan. One instance, gambling, warns us of its negative results; another, war, shows us of its inevitability or unavoidable occurrence, and then of its devastating outcome.

29. BG. XIII.8.

30. *patyāśrayo 'ni me dharmo matah strīnām sanātanaḥ  
sa devaḥ sa gatirnitya tasya ka vipriyaḥ caret*  
V.S. Suktankar, *op.cit.*, p. 797. Also see: J.A.B.  
van Buitenen, *op.cit.*, p. 666.

Then, in still other situations, we are shown the right or righteous way to act or react in a given situation, how to accept one's *dharmā*, a subject that is dealt with in both the *epic* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. There is no doubt that the *Mahābhārata* deals with many of the themes that are also found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and we can go so far as to say that in many instances these themes are more clearly and deeply propounded in the epic poem. This is because they are woven into the story so that it is like experiencing them directly not from the source instead of hearing a discourse about their attributes or detriments (such as is found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*).

Therefore we have some advantage to the reading of the *Mahābhārata* due to its incorporating moral and spiritually based philosophies into a story in which we can observe their use and outcome. But, nevertheless, there is a need for the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, or we might never have noticed these teachings in the epic, valued them according to their worth, or accepted their practical incorporation into our life experience and situations. Without the implications found within the epic of how a person can really use certain traits, ideas, or attitudes, in his lifestyle, the discourse given in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* could make these same things seem useful for a *śākhī* or holy man, and not for a common man or a householder. Without the one we could never realize the true value of the other.

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