

Society and the Individual

Swami Suryadevananda

Summary

Swadhyaya is often translated as 'Study of the scriptures' but, one can look at this term from a broader sense to mean, 'Study of the self through scriptures'.

Today, we take up five verses from the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita: verses 40-44 to understand how life was viewed and lived in the time the Bhagavad Gita was first given, some very pertinent observations of Arjuna and its meaning to our lives today.

Bhagavad Gita

Chapter I, Verses 40-44

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| kulakṣaye praṇaśyanti kuladharmāḥ sanātānāḥ dharme naṣṭe kulāṁ kṛtsnam adharma 'bhibhavaty uta (I-40) | In the destruction of a family, the immemorial rites of that family perish. On the destruction of spirituality, impiety overcomes the whole family. |
| adharmābhibhavāt kṛṣṇa praduṣyanti kulastriyāḥ strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇasamkaraḥ (I-41) | By the prevalence of impiety, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt. And, with the women being corrupted there arises intermingling of castes. |
| samkaro narakāyai 'va kulaghnānām kulasya ca patanti pitaro hy eṣām luptapiṇḍodakakriyāḥ (I-42) | Confusion of castes leads the slayers of the family to hell, for their forefathers fall, deprived of the offerings of rice-balls and libations. |
| doṣair etaiḥ kulaghnānām varṇasamkarakārah utsādyante jātadharmāḥ kuladharmās ca śāśvatāḥ (I-43) | By these evil deeds of the destroyers of the family, which cause confusion of castes, the eternal religious rites of the caste and the family are destroyed. |
| utsannakuladharmānām manuṣyāṇām janārdana narake 'niyataṁ vāso bhavati 'ty anuśūruma (I-44) | We have heard, O Krishna, that dwelling in hell for an unknown period is inevitable for those men in whose families the religious practices have been destroyed. |

Though outer conditions change with time – outer problems and our inner conflicts remain the same. The ancients had a deep understanding of our problems, the real cause, practical solutions and devised a way of living which answered all these. This way of life was a very well thought out system which was a direct answer to all the problems one could face while working out our karma and moving towards moksha.



The battle which forms the backdrop of the Bhagavad Gita is our battle today and the conflict that arose in Arjuna is the conflict that arises in us even today when we stand face to face with certain conditions.

Heart to heart talk

Without going into unnecessary detail

- I. What Arjuna felt was at stake
 1. Karma
 2. Purusharthas
 3. Varna
 4. Ashrama
 5. Rituals
 6. Family
- II. Arjuna's vision: "If I fight, all this could happen."
- III. A different vision offered instead



Let us journey through these together with a mind free of all notions, ideas and ways of seeing things to understand how life was lived back then, individual conflict amidst conditions in society and a higher vision offered by Lord Krishna. These three are the focus of this talk.

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