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THE TIMELESS WISDOM FROM GITA AND THE ART OF LEADERSHIP

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Since the first homo sapien set his foot on this planet, quest for inner peace and calm has been his eternal preoccupation. History is witness to the fact that Gautum- The Buddha (480 BC- 400 BC) left the earthly possessions and happing of power and pelf that go with a raja in the quest of the above said objective- seeking inner peace. This quest haunted the man throughout history and the response to it is an interesting spiritual topic. Raja Janak, for example, chose to be seated in the 'raj- gaddi' but became a renunciate at heart.

Bhagwat Gita is the fibre of every Hindu's frame, which he inhereted through listening to his grand-parents / parents and other elders. Professor Dr. Snajay Srivastava's book *The Timeless Wisdom from Gita and the Art of Leadership* is a significant contribution to the holy Gita literature. I was struck by his innovative gut feeling right on the page after the cover of the book, where he intuitively dedicates the book to all parents. As hinted earlier our grand- parents and parents related to us stories that resonated the philanthropic vision of Dr. O.P. Bhalla - a 'rocket- fuel' to materialize MREI. Without Lord Krishna's blessings no warrior can win.

The learned writer of the book under reference- which potentially may be the legendary book on the Gita lore- has brought under lens all spiritual concepts like '*Karma-yoga*', '*Gyan- yoga*', '*Bhakti- yoga*', '*The Life Cycle*' and '*The Nature of Human Psychology and Soul*'. Then he has very scientifically taken up chapter wise translation and comments on all the eighteen chapters of the Holy book. He has given the '*shloka*' (verse) in Sanskrit with its trans-literation in English. The book provides Hindi and English trans- literation of each shloka and the language used is simple and understandable by a common reader. Dr.

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Snajay Srivastava has also pondered over wisdom and leadership and has included concerned *shlokas* and verses.

The book has been sectioned into seven parts after Acknowledgement and Preface. The first part is 'Vision of Gita' where Srivastava says "Gita teaches us ways to escape those bindings and trappings. Lord propounds the Divine theory of Selfless deeds and Non-attachment to the rewards of "Deeds". He says that the soul is the energy that unites all living beings as life energies. Through Gita (the divine song of Lord Kirishna), "Lord demonstrated to Arjuna how Divine contains everything visible in the cosmos and all the invisible forces." The second section is 'The Life Cycle' which captures seven major elements of a human life, namely; Nature, Desire, Meditation, Yog, Wisdom & Leadership, Life & Death, and lastly, 'Self- Awakening'. Arguable, it can be said that the most important line of Gita- "Having closed all the gates (controlled all the senses), having confined the mind in the heart, having fixed the life breath in the 'head', engaged in the practice of concentration, uttering the monosyllable OM- the Brahman- and remembering Me, he who so departs, leaving the body, attains the supreme goal" appear in this section of the book. In the sub- section 'Wisdom & Leadership', on page 63, the writer emphasises the importance of not only seeking it but also sharing, for he who shares gets more in return. Dr. Srivastava says "Those who share their knowledge, eventually lead the way for others to a path of prosperity, happiness and success. Lord talks about the gifts of knowledge and qualities of a leader with Arjuna."

A human being's life has two happenings- birth and death. The latter is inevitable to follow the former. The author has very aptly included chapters and verses under the section 'Life and Death.' Another spiritual perspective of all seekers is 'Self- Awakening'- the last sub- section under 'The Life Cycle'. Here he has quoted chapters concerning the said topic. He says "Often a person can gain more understanding about a problem while sitting alone in peace than through discussing with people. In soulful introspection, that sows the seeds of motivation to solution, determination and unidirectional thought...the Lord to Arjuna about the path of self- awakening through solitude, detachment and meditation." I personally find the section 'God's Own Child' most inspiring and hopefully affirmative. The section guides us about the importance of 'right' praying, i.e. not praying simply for desires' fulfilment, but for happiness, wisdom and prudence. This section tells the readers about qualities that make us dear to God. In Chapter 12, Verse 13 & 14, Arjuna gets the answer: "He who has no ill- will to any being, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism...even- minded in pain and pleasure and forgiving...steady in meditation, possessed of firm conviction, self- controlled...who is thus devoted to Me, is dear to Me."

The next section is '*Purushuttam Yog*' or 'The Supreme Spirit'. Here the writer

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mainly discusses those *shlokas* that seek to answer the divine pursuit of attaining *moksha* (salvation). The penultimate section is called 'Reflections'. One would countenance a lot of problems to identify the personages those were influenced or impacted by the Gita. The learned author of the book under review has shown his intuitive responsiveness as well as innovative gesture to the common readers' quest to know the identifiable leaders in various fields on whom Lord Krishna's grafted spiritual maxims could bear fruit for the people at large to see. A very important and distinct innovation in the book under review is perhaps 'Reflections' - this section includes the people who were influenced by the preaching of Gita. The distinguished personages includes Albert Einstein, Aldous Huxley, Annie Besant, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, David Thoreau, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Nelsen Mandela, Emerson, and last but not the least Mahatma Gandhi. Mohan Das Karamchandra Gandhi, as the world knows him, and one who saw him in flesh and blood or who saw his photograph, knows that he had only four earthly possessions- a bare essential white dhoti to clad himself, a long *dehati* stick to maintain balance of his wobbling body, a set of old specs precariously perched on both sides of his nose, and a copy of Holy Gita tucked under his shoulder. He famously expressed his feeling that whenever he was indecisive or non-confident, a verse from the Bhagwad Gita gave him confidence and strength to plunge into action. It may also be beneficial and interesting for the multitude of Gita readers to exercise their judgement for this purpose. The ultimate section is called 'The 9L's of Leadership' and here, Dr. Srivastava presents the importance of being 'self-aware' and its direct importance in today's world- both in the corporate and outside it. The 9L's are: Learning, Laugh, Looking, Lasting impression, Love, Leverage, Likeability, Listening and lastly, Lead. There are certain imperative questions and spiritual seeking that the writer answers in this section. This particular section is an added advantage of the book. Questions like "Why the best leaders are immortal and they get to live on eternally", "Why did Arjuna not want to fight despite being a Kshatriya and a great warrior", "What are the various attachments that weigh a person down during his lifetime and become a cause of distraction", "Who is a person with steady wisdom", "What are *Karma*, *Vikarma* and *Akarma*", "What is the purpose of the Incarnation of God", "What is Karma Yog" and "Why do humans commit Sin" and many more are answered in a comprehensive language.

The learned author Prof. Dr. Sanjay Srivastava has shown a remarkable insight into the celestial spiritual lore of the Holy Gita, which unfailingly finds a sheltered groove in at least every Hindu house. The reviewer wishes you the best of reading of the globally famous celestial song that accompanies Lord Krishna's blessings. Amen!

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