Ethics of Bhagavad Gita

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The Bhagavad Gita
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The **Bhagavad Gita**, also referred to as **Gita**, is a 700-verse Dharmic scripture that is part of the ancient Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. This scripture contains a conversation between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide Krishna on a variety of philosophical issues. Faced with a fratricidal war, a despondent Arjuna turns to his charioteer Krishna for counsel on the battlefield. Krishna, through the course of the Gita, imparts to Arjuna wisdom, the path to devotion, and the doctrine of selfless action. The Gita upholds the essence and the philosophical tradition of the Upanishads. However, unlike the rigorous monism of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita also integrates dualism and theism.

Numerous commentaries have been written on the Bhagavad Gita with widely differing views on the essentials, beginning with Adi Sankara's commentary on the Gita in the eighth century CE. Commentators see the setting of the Gita in a battlefield as an allegory for the ethical and moral struggles of the human life. The Bhagavad Gita's call for selfless action inspired many leaders of the Indian independence movement including Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who referred to the Gita as his "spiritual dictionary". 

**Introduction**
The word *karma* is derived from the Sanskrit *kri*, meaning 'to do'. In its most basic sense *karma* simply means action, and *yoga* translates to union. Thus *karma yoga* literally translates to the path of *union through action*. However, in Vedantic philosophy the word *karma* means both action and the effects of such action. Karma yoga is described as a way of acting, thinking and willing by which one orients oneself toward realization by acting in accordance with one's duty (dharma) without consideration of personal self-centered desires, likes or dislikes. One acts without being attached to the fruits of one's deeds.

Krishna explains that work done without selfish expectations purifies one's mind and gradually makes an individual fit to see the value of reason. He states that it is not necessary to remain in external solitude, or remain actionless, in order to practice a spiritual life, since the state of action or inaction is primarily determined in the mind.
According to Bhagavad Gita the highest form of Swajdharma (one's faith), concerned with a self-less duty towards the rest. Each individual must discharge his or her duty before passing the business of maintaining the world on to those who follow. These duties may collectively be labelled loka-samgraha, which could etymologically be analyzed as ‘holding’ (from grah, to grasp) ‘together’ (sam) ‘the world’ (loka), though David Kinsley translates this as ‘support of the world’ and Tilak as ‘universal welfare’. The renunciation or selfishness action done for public good is called as Lokasamgraha.
Sva-dharma means literally "own dharma" and has been translated as "own duty" and "particular responsibilities." Dharma is derived from the Sanskrit root dhr, "sustain, support, uphold," and has a wide range of meanings, including truth, cosmic law, reality, righteousness, correctness, integrity, duty, and caste duty. The term Sva-dharma is a brahmanic creation that came relatively late and applies especially to the meanings of dharma as duty and caste duty. Thus it is duty according to one's caste (varna or jati; see Social Castes), one's age group within the caste, and one's stage of life (asrama). This system of social responsibilities is varnasramadharma and the term is nearly synonymous with Sva-dharma.

Every person has unique duties and responsibilities and this "own dharma" or Sva-dharma is unique to that person because everyone has different capacities for righteousness. This capacity is determined by one's birth, which is a result of karma, actions in a previous life.
Because of differing levels of purity between the castes, everyone cannot be expected to meet the same standard of social behaviour. However, the duties of the different members of the different varnas and asramas interact and support each other. It is necessary to follow one's Sva-dharma so that the carrying out of one's duties and responsibilities maintains harmony in society and the world. Brahmanic doctrine holds that social and cosmic harmony is dependent on following one's Sva-dharma at all times.

Interpretation of questions of dharma come from sruti, divine revelation in the form of the Vedas; smrti, the sacred tradition of the Vedangas, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, the Puranas, and the Dharma-shastras; practices of the wise; and conscience, this having the least weight.

Today Sva-dharma can be more liberally interpreted according to one's personal understanding of the position reached in life and the best course to take in the future to achieve the final goal.
The philosophy contained in the pages of the Bhagavad Gita is today considered relevant and essential to our understanding of ourselves even in the western world. Leading business schools in the USA such as Kellogg have included the Bhagavad Gita as an elective subject in their curriculum. Terms such as ‘Karma Capitalism’, ‘Exit Plan’ and the likes are being explained on the basis of the teachings of Lord Krishna and the message of the Bhagavad Gita.

The theologies based on the Bhagavad Gita as propagated in the world do not, however, portray the true essence of the words of Lord Krishna. For example, ‘Karma Capitalism’, a term derived from Karma Yog, is understood to mean that when one does one’s work with sincerity, good results follow. But Krishna never meant this by Karma Yog. Instead, He said it time and again that we, the beings, are not the doers of action but all actions are performed by nature. The being who mentally renounces all actions to God, while performing those actions, is said to be truly engaged in Karma Yog that unites him to God.
Conclusion

The message of Bhagavad Gita is that either you can perform your actions with attachment thinking that you are the doer or you can perform the same without attachment by thinking that God/ Nature is performing the actions. This unattached performance of actions has been called Yagya or Karma Yog in the Gita. This unattached performance of actions is the true Karma Capitalism, called Karma Yog in the Gita, which will not only fulfill all desires but will also transform us and make us one with God. The message of You Are God – The Bhagavad Gita as never before in the modern world has become more relevant than that at any time in the past.

To read more follow the original text or text-book prescribed in the class.
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