

Geeta and Vishnu Sahasranama

भारतं सर्वशस्त्रेषु, भारते गीतका वरा ।
विष्णोः सहस्रनमापि ज्ञेयं पाठ्यं च सर्वदा ॥ (महाकौर्म)
शास्त्रेषु भारतं सारं तत्र नामसहस्रकम् ।
वैष्णवं, कृष्णगीता च तद्ज्ञानान्मुच्यतेऽञ्जसा ॥ (ब्रह्माण्डे)

SREEMAD ANANDATEERTHA BHAGAVATPADACHARYA has drawn references quotations from KURMA and BRAHMANDA puranas and quoted in his two works. Geeta-Bhashya and Geeta-Tatparya respectively, in the context of proving the authority of Maha Bharata. The substance of the above two stanzas is –

“out of all the authoritative texts (Shastras), Bharata is the best. And within the Bharata text GEETA and VISHNU SAHASRANAMA are the most essential portions. These two texts alone are enough to bring the knowledge how one can save oneself from the repeated sufferings of the birth and death”. The above two quotations not only bring out the importance and greatness of MAHABHARATA, but also focuses our attention on the two most essential parts of “BHARATA” viz. “GEETA” and “SAHASRANAMA” . These two stanzas as we contemplate, bring a series of reflections on our mind. We can make an attempt – recapitulate some of them.

GEETA and SAHASRANAMA are the words of wisdom addressed to Arjuna and Yudhistira respectively. The former was preached before Mahabharata war and the latter, after the war. Both these essential teachings are in different PARVAS of Bharata text, and they were addressed to two brothers.

There are six internal enemies. (1) Desire (2) Anger (3) Miserliness (4) Close attachment (5) Excessive ego or haughtiness (6) Jealousy. Each one is capable of putting a person into an abnormal condition. Here Arjuna suffered from enemy no. 4 ie. Moha and went out of action.

Whatever the Lord preached on that day was the universal truth applicable for all who are required to fight a war against internal enemies and win too. Thus Arjuna was assisted by Sri KRISHNA to fight the internal enemy.

He grasped Sri KRISHNA's preachings and having seen the Vishwarupa, at the end of conversation, declared that his illusionary attachment vanished and he was amply reminded of his duties by HIS grace. He was then rid of all dilemma and his task was clear. He would at once follow Lord's advice and ready to strike at anybody.

When his sight became clear he started seeing the enemies who indulged in hatracy and insult to God and others just belonged to enemy camp.

As soon as Arjuna started seeing the enemies he launched the attack on full scale and with full spirit of a warrior. Geeta concludes with declaration of SANJAYA to DHRITARASHTRA that victory belonged to that side of the army where Shri KRISHNA and ARJUNA were standing.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णः यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।

तत्र श्रीः विजयोभूतिः ध्रुवानीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥

The great war of Mahabharata was over in 18 days. All the PANDAVAS returned victorious to Hastinavati along with Sri Krishna. Yudhistira was crowned as the king. Not much time elapsed. Yudhistira's mind started haunting with the idea of 'fear of sin' due to war. He felt that he was responsible to wage the war. As a result of that war, there was mass killing of men, elephants and horses and so on at a considerably large scale. He considered he was solely responsible for this. He revealed this to Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna consoled him that he had done something worthy of warrior class. Those who were outright haters of Lord Narayana and their followers were killed in the war and there is nothing wrong in punishing the wicked and that was no sin. With all these advice, Dharmaraja's dilemma was not resolved but persisted.

Since the task of war was accomplished and his purpose of vanquishing the wicked was over, Lord Krishna was not eager to preach another detailed 'Geeta'. Bheema, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadev and Draupadi tried to console Yudhistira to the best of their ability but all in vain. His belief about the possible sin remained deep rooted in him. He felt all of them were telling like that to please him out of respect and love.

Krishna thought that Yudhistira might overcome the situation by the advice of Bhishma, since he belonged to the enemy camp; secondly Yudhistira had faith in him.

As Bhishma was lying on a cot made of arrows and waiting for his death, all the pandavas headed by Sri Krishna went to see him. Bhishma was pleased by the visit of Sri Krishna at the close of his life. They all told him the mission of their visit. Bhishma said to Sri Krishna that there was nothing that was not known to HIM. Still being asked by Sri Krishna, Bhishma agreed to preach Dharmaraja about the dharma. Sri Krishna stood in Bhishma (in an Amsha) and inspired him to preach Yudhistira. Yudhistira heard from Bhishma the most precious and sacred knowledge . "Sahasranama" begins with the opening words of VAISAMPAYANA.

श्रुत्वा धर्मान् अशेषेण पावनानि च सर्वशः ।

युधिष्ठिरः शान्तनवं पुनरेव अभ्यभाषत ॥

Having heard several holy/sacred preachings from Bhishma, Yudhistira having not been fully satisfied or not getting an answer for his secret worry, he repeatedly asked Bhishma several questions.

Bhishma replies that repeating the thousand names of Lord of Universe, God of Gods, supreme amongst all, the VISHNU, a person would rise above the sins, since sins would get vanished. Vishnu Sahasranama ends like this.

विश्वेश्वरं अजं देवं जगतः प्रभवाप्ययम् ।

भजन्ति ये पुश्कराक्षं न ते यान्ति पराभवम्॥

There is no defeat at any time for a person devotedly and daily chanting Vishnu Sahasranama.

The sum and substance of the whole context is:

In the beginning of Bhishma parva, “GEETA” has been preached to Arjuna by Sri KRISHNA to overcome his grief on account of his illusionary attachment to his so called relatives.

In the Anushasika parva, “Vishnu Sahasranama” has been preached to Yudhistira by Bhishma to overcome the doubt about possible sin on account of war.

Geeta was for younger brother Arjuna; before the war. Vishnu Sahasranama was for the eldest brother Yudhistira after the war. Indeed fortunate are those who understand/repeat these two precious parts of Mahabharata to get the grace of Lord VISHNU and thus attain Moksha too.
