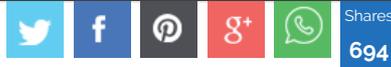


## The Bhagvad Gita is a universal text

Sunandaji and her father, Swami Parthasarathy, have dedicated many years in research to understand the scientific appeal of the Bhagvad Gita and explain its universal message to people from all walks of life —Vedanta Life Institute (Vedanta Life Institute)



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HENNA ACHHPAL | Mon, 2 Jan 2017-08:05am , DNA

Sunandaji of Vedanta World explains the scripture's scientific relevance and talks about its life lessons for youngsters

The *Bhagvad Gita* is a manual for life, says Sunandaji, the daughter-disciple of speaker-philosopher Swami Parthasarathy. The 90-year-old Swamiji has dedicated many years of his life to research in order to understand and interpret the *Bhagvad Gita* in a scientific way.

Swamiji and Sunandaji will be hosting a series of evening lectures, with Swamiji talking about the Law of Karma on Monday, followed by Sunandaji, from January 3 to 6, 2017, reflecting on the concepts of renunciation and action from Chapter 5 of the *Bhagvad Gita*. In this excerpted interview, Sunandaji explains the scientific relevance and universal appeal of the *Bhagvad Gita* and talks about lessons for the young from this text that is commonly misconstrued as a religious text belonging to the Hindu faith.

### **What makes the Bhagvad Gita universal?**

People generally think the *Bhagvad Gita* is a book that belongs to the Hindu faith. However, the uniqueness of this text is that it's universal. The sage Vyasa, who wrote the epic *Mahabharata*, gave out this philosophy right in the center of the epic. If *Mahabharata* could be compared to a necklace, *Bhagvad Gita* would be the pendant. He conveyed a message to humanity which is why it's not confined to the Hindu faith.

It may have been born here, and is interwoven into our faith and culture, but it belongs to humans across the globe. It's like somebody discovers electricity in Europe, it does not belong to the Europeans, it's meant to benefit the whole world. The *Bhagvad Gita* has instructions on how to live your life, and gives you facts and laws about living. Though we say that, it has to be interpreted and explained in a scientific way.

### **What do you mean by interpreting in a scientific way?**

You could take Krishna, for example, as a personality. When he says “Come unto me, surrender to me,” people will take it literally and say you must surrender to the personality Krishna. He’s only representing the truth. Like a national flag represents the nation. It’s a symbol, an idol. All the great masters — not only Krishna, whether Christ, Buddha, Mahavira — when they said “come unto me”, they didn’t mean the personality. They meant what they represented, which is the truths of life. That is where the interpretation has to be correct otherwise we segregate ourselves and are at conflict with each other, which is not the message of these masters.

### **What are some of the misconceptions about the Bhagvad Gita?**

One of the most important misconceptions is that it’s a preoccupation for people when they’re old and retired. An average youngster will say the *Gita* is not for them and won’t have time for it. The *Gita* gives you the technique of action. It tells you how to act dynamically in the world. It’s meant for the young. It was given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, who was a commander-in-chief of the Pandava forces. He was not retired, he was a young man of action. He collapsed on the battlefield, despite being fully qualified as a warrior, because he couldn’t take particular challenges. Through the *Gita*, Krishna gave him the technique of action to help him get out of his delusion.

### **How does that make the text relevant to today?**

If you look at the world, people want two things — happiness and success. But then you find that people have one or the other. If you want success, it comes at the cost of your peace of mind; if you want happiness, you have to get away from everything. It’s totally necessary. It’s because we don’t know the technique. Like driving is a technique, it’s a skill, that you have to learn, practice and perfect. So also with life and living. One of the most prevailing messages of the *Gita* is that of a man of action, a qualified warrior set out to fight a righteous battle. But in the zero hour, he collapses. This could happen to anyone in the world. The message is about people facing challenges. Who doesn’t have challenges in the world today?

### **What are some of the techniques of living found in the text?**

When we come face-to-face with a challenge, we’re so ill prepared that it could affect us completely. One of the techniques is how to perform your action dynamically and at the same time not be stressed out. The world we live in is in a constant state of change. When things go right, you’re happy; when they don’t, you’re unhappy. This makes the quality of your life go down. How does one face the world in such a way that no matter what happens, you remain unaffected? The *Bhagvad Gita* teaches you to develop yourself internally and when you’re strong within, you’re able to face all these differences in the world without any affectation.

## **SCHEDULE & VENUE**

Swami Parthasarathy’s lecture on the Law of Karma on January 2, 2017 from 7 to 8 pm

Sunandaji’s evening lectures on Chapter 5 of the *Bhagvad Gita* from January 3 to 6, 2017 from 6:45 to 8pm

The lecture series will be held at Ravindra Natya Mandir, Prabhadevi, Mumbai

Visit [www.vedantaworld.org](http://www.vedantaworld.org) for more information

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