

Gita Vivrutti – an introduction

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The greatness of Sri Mahabharata and its two crown jewels – Shrimad Bhagavadgeetha and Vishnu Sahasranama – have been extolled in all our major religious documents. The following verses from the Mahakurma Purana summarize this beautifully:

bhAratham sarvashAsthREShu bhArathE gIthikA varA
ViShNoh sahasranAmApi j~JEyam pATyam cha thadhvayaM

ಭಾರತಂ ಸರ್ವಶಾಸ್ತ್ರೇಷು ಭಾರತೇ ಗೀತಿಕಾ ವರಾ

ವಿಷ್ಣೋಃ ಸಹಸ್ರನಾಮಾಪಿ ಜ್ಞೇಯಂ ಪಾಠ್ಯಂ ಚ ತದ್ವಯಮ್

(mahAbharata is the greatest amongst all shAstras; in bhArata, the Bhagavadgeetha and Vishnu Sahasranama are venerable; these two are worthy of being recited and understood).

There are many translations and commentaries on the Bhagavadgeetha, but nothing captures the heart of Sri Vedavyasa and the true spirit of the Gita like Acharya Madhva's GitAbhAshya and gIta tatparya.. This is not surprising because his knowledge of the Gita is first-hand – one, because he was present in the flag of Arjuna as Hanumanta, listening to the actual words of the Lord and two, because his guru is Sri Vedavyasa Himself. Thus, as a human gets first hand knowledge of the world by seeing it through his own two eyes, one should see the Gita through the GitabhAshya and Gita tatparya to get its true import.

The depth and width of spiritual wisdom hidden in Acharya Madhva's terse words have been brought out beautifully by the Teeka of the great Jayateertha, but this was still aimed at a scholarly audience. It needed the genius of Sri Raghavendra teertha

(Rayaru) to understand and digest the full import of the Bhashya, tAtparya and their Teekas and crystallize them into a simple, direct commentary on the Gita that people with a simple knowledge of Sanskrit could understand. This work, the Gita Vivrutti or Gitartha sangraha, not only shows the Rayaru's mastery over the subject matter but also shows his immense kindness towards humanity in bringing the treasure called Gita within the reach of the common man.

The speciality and greatness of the Gita Virutti can be understood from the following points:

- It covers all the 701 verses in the gIta. Most commentaries begin with the eleventh verse of the second chapter.
- It captures the true import of the Gita, in accordance with the Bhashya, tAtparya and Teekas in a simple and elegant manner.
- It complements the coverage provided Bhashya, tAtparya and Teekas wonderfully. Where the coverage is in depth, the Vivrutti summarizes them succinctly; where the coverage is light, the Vivrutti provides additional details.
- The technique adopted by Rayaru is brilliant. Some of the noteworthy aspects of his style are:
 - Where appropriate, he links the Gita with relevant portions of the BrahmasUtras, Vedas and Puranas, so that the reader gets the correct philosophical orientation
 - at the beginning of each chapter he provides the linkage with the previous chapter and a quick summary of the salient points of the current chapter.
 - Sometimes he anticipates the questions that readers might have, raises them himself and provides very satisfactory answers.
 - Where relevant he leverages his great command over vyAkraNa (grammar) and nirukta (word etymology) to provide additional insights. The way in which he tackles the

Vibhuti yoga by providing etymological meanings of the words used is unique and brilliant

Even in the mangaLacharaNa shloka Rayaru provides glimpses of the greatness of Vivrutti:

lakShMInArAyaNam nathvA pUrNabODhAn gurUnapi
kurmah shrIkRuShNagIthAyA bhAShyAdhyukthArTha
samgraham

ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀನಾರಾಯಣಂ ನತ್ವಾ ಪೂರ್ಣಬೋಧಾನ್ ಗುರೂನಪಿ
ಕುರ್ಮಃ ಶ್ರೀಕೃಷ್ಣಗೀತಾಯಾ ಭಾಷ್ಯಾದ್ಯುಕ್ತಾರ್ಥ ಸಂಗ್ರಹಂ

(after paying obeisance to Lakshmi Narayana, Shri PurnabodhAn and other gurus also, I will provide the meaning for Shri Krishna gIta as stated in the Bhashya and other works)

The points to note are:

- The manner in which Rayaru begins by paying obeisance to the Lord and His consort. He chooses to use the same name ('Narayana') used by Sri Madhvacharya in his works. Even the style used is very similar to the one used by Sri Madhvacharya.
- The usage of the name 'PurNabodha' indicates that only Sri Madhvacharya's gyAna (knowledge) is PurNa (full) and so he is the only fully equipped to comment on the Gita.
- The usage of the term "Shri Krishna gIta" instead of the more popular 'Gita' is very intriguing. Here, Rayaru is referring to the verse from BrahmAnda purAna quoted by Sri Madhvacharya in the bhAshya ("shAsthrEshu bhAratham sAram thathra nAmahasrakam, vaiShNavam kRuShNagItha cha thaj~JanAth muchyate&mjasa")
- His humility and guru bhakti in saying that everything he is about to say is already there in the Bhashya and other works
- His

Listeners of Madhva Radio are very fortunate and blessed to have the privilege of listening to this series of illuminating lectures from eminent scholars of the Poornapragna Vidyapeetha on this wonderful work by a blessed soul. May Sri Hari, Vayu and Rayaru bless us all with appropriate bhakti, gyAna and vairAgya.

Shri krishnarpanamastu