

Critical Thinking Questions For "Sacred Texts Unit"

Author: NA (Anonymous)

Title: Bhagavad Gita

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1. What do you think the work's main argument, point, or conclusion might be?

The Bhagavad Gita illustrates a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, a warrior prince. That conversation took place in the middle of a battlefield with armies on both sides ready to confront each other. During that dialogue Krishna was responding to Arjuna's confusion and moral dilemma about fighting his own cousins. Krishna explains and reminds Arjuna about his responsibilities and discusses several other philosophies with concise examples and comparisons, today the Bhagavad Gita is considered to be a guide to Hindu philosophy.

2. Give three ways the text(s) address the natural world and/or man and woman's place in it:

-Krishna describes the natural world and its demonic mentality as follows: The world is unreal and is produced only of lust. Taking shelter of lust, we, humans often think of sense gratification as the goal of life and scheme to increase our wealth. While plotting to harm others or competitors, we think ourselves as powerful and happy, and we surround ourselves by relatives, use sacrifices and charity only to further increase our happiness. Perplexed by illusory anxieties, impudency, and wealth; and envying the Supersoul within our own bodies and within the bodies of others, demons blasphemes real religion. Keep in mind that those actions only help us in reincarnating into degraded beings in the most unproudful shapes and forms. Krishna emphasizes that because lust, anger and greed are the beginnings of demonic life, we ought to give them up and understand our duty through faithfully following the scriptures. Reminding us that Desire, wrath, and greed are the triple gates of hell that destroy the self. Therefore we should abandon these three. We ought to worship Krishna with devotion. Along this same context it's important to share Ramanuja's point of view of our place in the world and what is the ultimate purpose : "The Bhagavad-Gita was spoken by Lord Krishna to reveal the science of devotion to God which is the essence of all spiritual knowledge. The Supreme Lord Krishna's primary purpose for descending and incarnating is relieve the world of any demoniac and negative, undesirable influences that are opposed to spiritual development, yet simultaneously it is His incomparable intention to be perpetually within reach of all humanity"

-Although we are in the world we are not of the world and therefore we are spiritual beings doing earthly experiences. That truth has been explained by Krishna in

numerous occasions and examples, "Just as the self within the body goes through childhood, manhood and old age, so also it passes to other bodies". Contrary to our natural tendencies we ought to have compassion for all living things and worship Krishna as part of our duty.

3. How might the historical period and location (i.e. context) have affected how the content of the text(s)?

As a reminder, the Bhagavad Gita mainly narrates about the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, hence the content of the text is primarily due to the war that was about to unfold and Krishna had to remind Arjuna of his duties as a warrior. Therefore everything had to do with that event. Reiterating that, that fateful and historical date has everything to do with this scared text. We can recall that first Krishna analytically explains to Arjuna that fighting in his service is transcendental and will bring no sinful reaction. Therefore Krishna encourages Arjuna to remain fixed in his service - fight - and ignore his mind's desires. Krishna also instructs Arjuna to fight to set the proper example of duty. Krishna therefore tells Arjuna to fight, but with knowledge and detachment without falling victim to his own attractions and aversions.

4. During the time period when the work was created: what social groups (for example: economic class; religious affiliation; political group; ethnic/linguistic group; gender) was being addressed? Why do you think so?

Although everyone can benefit from its teachings, The work was primarily directed to Hindus to allow them to be in touch with the teachings of Krishna from the instructions provided to Arjuna. The Bhagavad Gita's emphasis on selfless service had been a source of inspiration for many Indians including the great Mahatma Gandhi. It has received several praises by many, Indians and non Indians alike. There is no other way to illustrate the impact it had, then to share the following quotes. "The Bhagavad-Gita has a profound influence on the spirit of mankind by its devotion to God which is manifested by actions, Dr. Albert Schweitzer. This next quote also seems fascinating "The Bhagavad-Gita is a true scripture of the human race a living creation rather than a book, with a new message for every age and a new meaning for every civilization" Sri Aurobindo. Therefore, I would indeed concur that it has been a sacred text that transcends ages and civilizations.

5. What is the role of the human being in the text(s) in the world? In the cosmos and/or afterlife?

According to the teachings of Krishna I can see a sense of freedom, a certain liberty to honor and embrace our duties with no eventual consequence. Now, it's important to be careful about not engaging in sinful and dishonoring acts because we have what is so called "Freedom". The freedom that is being described by Krishna mainly refers to

exemplary actions, honoring the warriors code, and not engaging in any behavior that leads to lust. Therefore regulating our senses at all times should be the proper code to follow in an effort to avoid lust's control. Furthermore, the text wants to create a certain sense of awareness regarding the immortality of the soul "The soul is immaterial and unalterable", the following analogy also reinforces the same point "As a man gets rid of worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so the self puts away outworn bodies and puts on others that are new", hence eventually our body will be worn out and destroyed, powerful message that constantly reminds us on the importance of not focusing on earthly matters, on superficial matters that would only last temporarily but instead focus on matters that are unseen and that last eternally. Like matters of the soul- spiritual growth. Matters of the soul not only benefits us here but also in the afterlife.