

# Individuality in the bhagavad gita essay sample

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The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most important texts of the Hindu faith: it promotes the tenets of yoga, moksha, reincarnation and others, all in the form of conversation between Arjuna and Lord Krishna. An important part of this text, and of the Hindu faith, is its unique stance on the individual and the self. According to the text, the self must be understood completely, in terms of its abilities and place in the universe, in order to understand the world around them and contribute to it in a meaningful way. Self-knowledge and the outside world are directly correlated, and knowing oneself in a truly honest manner is to unlock the key to the universe itself. Self-knowledge is accomplished through examination, observation and evaluation of the self, looking for Divine Qualities that are extolled by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita itself.

Krishna dictates that, in order to reach salvation, or moksha, the self must be broken down completely. Selflessness is the absolute key to enlightenment or the fulfillment of the eternal self. Krishna states that, in order to realize the Truth of the universe and of the self, Nisham Karma must be performed - selfless action. The concept of karma revolves around sacrificing time and energy for the Supreme, for doing things for others without thought of gaining on an individual level. " To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction" (2. 47). Actions taken must never be done purely for the sake of the self; at the same time, action must be taken if it is needed. The Bhagavad Gita does not allow the individual to shirk their responsibility to the whole, nor does it reward cooperative action for selfish reasons.

The concept of selfless action is one of the primary means by which enlightenment is reached, removing the self from consideration in actions. In Chapter Five, "The Yoga of Renunciation of Action," Krishna states:

"Yoga-yoked, with self purified,

With self subdued, senses conquered,

His self the self of all beings,

He is not tainted when acting." (5. 7)

In essence, when someone achieves a completely purified sense of self, their actions are not "tainted" by selfish consideration for their own wellbeing. They merely do for others, their reward being that helping another self advances the greater whole, which includes himself. "The soul who meditates on the Self is content to serve the Self and rests satisfied within the Self; there remains nothing more for him to accomplish" (3). By limiting one's interest to the self, one removes their level of care for the results of their actions, and get closer to the Supreme in the process.

Moderation or deprivation are valued tenets of devotion in Hinduism, as self-restraint is one of the means by which devotion to the Supreme is expressed. "Never eating or sleeping too much or too little, yoga is attained" "When the man, so living, centers his heart in the true Self and is exempt from attachment to all desires" (6). This allows the individual to rise spiritually beyond the physical and visceral needs that the tangible human might want, and raises their desires toward the Supreme itself.

Krishna states that those who seek self-knowledge have to keep an open mind about self-truths; one must be totally honest about who they are and the things they do, and leave behind all bias regarding their actions and look at them objectively. In order to do that, retrospection is advised as a means of unfolding layers of vanity and self-delusion. By looking back on the things you have done and reflecting on the truth of those actions, the self is more deeply known. As you learn more about your life, you forge a greater relationship to every other life. In this way, individuality is seen as somewhat of a spectrum; you are an individual person, but you are also part of a seamless whole that you must contribute to.

In conclusion, the Bhagavad Gita teaches about the self in terms of global and universal understanding of the world around us. In essence, the key to comprehending the Truth lies within us, as we are an inexorable part of that Truth. Through the yogas (karma, bhakti, jnana and others), one achieves discipline and peels away self-centeredness and illusion, leaving only the raw sense of self that is necessary to find a place in the universe. By understanding the self, greater peace is achieved, and one's place in the universe is understood. This understanding of the self in Hindu is meant to create a more selfless, disciplined mind and body which contributes to the community with little regard for its own desires.

## **Works Cited**

The Bhagavad Gita. (n. d.) Atma Jyoti Ashram. Retrieved from [http://www.atmajyoti.org/gi\\_bhagavad\\_gita\\_intro.asp](http://www.atmajyoti.org/gi_bhagavad_gita_intro.asp).

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