CHAPTER I

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Introduction

The ‘Bhagavadgītā’ is regarded by almost all sections of the Hindus as one of the most sacred religious works. It is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise. It means the Lords song, i.e., the philosophical discourse of Lord Kṛṣṇa to persuade the reluctant Arjuna to fight. The Bhagavadgītā or ‘Song celestial’ is an inspired book, and occupies a unique position in the sacred literature of Hindus.

The Gītā presents before us God realization, or freedom, as the ideal and teaches us how to live a God-centered life, grow in devotion to God and transform all our activities into worship of God. The authorship of the Bhagavadgītā is attributed to Vyāsā, the legendary compiler of Mahābhārata. As the date of the Mahābhārata is calculated between 400 BC and 400 AD, the date of Bhagavadgītā may be somewhere between 250 BC and 250 AD. Balagangādhara Tilak had dated the Gītā to 3100 BC. Lassen assigned 3rd c.AD to the Bhagavadgītā. Dr. S. Radhakṛṣṇan has dated the Gītā to the 3rd BC.
Besides, *Bhagavadgītā* is the most popular and sacred book of the Hindus and is contained in the great epic *Mahābhārata*. The *Gītā* which forms the chapters 25th to 42nd of the *Bhīṣmaparvan* of this greatest Sanskrit epic provides an essence of the entire *Vedānta* philosophy, which has been extracted from all the *Upaniṣads*. On the whole, *Bhagavadgītā* is also called an *Upaniṣad* because the colophon ‘*Bhagavadgītāsu Upaniṣadsu*’ indicates the same. The *Upaniṣads* are the essence of the *Vedic* wisdom, so is the position of the *Gītā*. As the colophon indicates, the *Bhagavadgītā* is metaphysics and ethics, *brahma-vidya* and *yoga-śāstra*, the science of reality and the art of union with reality⁴. *Gītā* gives not only a metaphysical interpretation-*Brahma-vidya*, but also a practical programme *Yoga-śāstra* to transform knowledge into experience.

The glory of *Bhagavadgītā* is unfathomable and illimitable. It is one foot of the triple base on which the *Vedānta* is founded, the other two feet being the *Upaniṣads* and *Brahma-utrās*. Together these three are called ‘*Prasthāna Traya*’ - the triple canon of Hindu law, philosophy and theology.

*Bhagavadgītā* is unique in many aspects. One of them is the ending of each chapter. *Gītā*’s title gives some clue as to what the content is going to be. At the end of each chapter, there is a descriptive ending of
the chapter and ends in some form of ‘Yoga’. For example, Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Dhyānayoga etc. All these endings have other parts in common including the fact that they are all conversations between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna (Śrī Kṛṣṇārjuna saṁvāde). The term ‘Yoga’ is derived from the root ‘Yuj’ which means ‘Union or Identity’.

It is considered that the first part of Gītā concludes with the first six chapters. Some treat Gītā as the explanation of the mahāvākya ‘tattvamasi’ of chāndogyopanīṣad. The meaning of this mahāvākya is ‘thou art that’. The first six chapters of Gītā is the explanation of the word ‘tat’, the next six chapters contain the explanation of ‘tvam’ and the last six chapters contain the explanation of the word ‘asi’. The first six chapters deal with the principle of ‘jīvātman’, the next six chapters deal with the principle of ‘paramātman’ and the last six chapters deal with the unity of jīvātman and paramātman principles. These three sections are divided as karmakāṇḍa, upāsanākāṇḍa or bhaktikāṇḍa and jñānakāṇḍa respectively.

It must be admitted of course, that the teachings of Gītā existed already in the ‘Śruti’. Dvaita philosophy of the Sāṃkhya and Advaita philosophy of the Vedānta were preached long before the Gītā was written. Bhagavadgītā holds an incomparable and unique position in world literature. It recalls the divine voice of Lord Kṛṣṇa through which
many of his mysteries and inner secrets are revealed. In communicating these for the benefit of mankind, the Lord has invoked Arjuna, as an interlocutor or questioner. *Bhagavadgītā* which is full of the Lord’s extraordinary thoughts and views from the very heart, was never excelled in the past, nor would ever be, in the future. The *Gītā* is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the perennial philosophy ever to have been made, hence its enduring value not only for Indians but for all mankind.  

*Bhagavadgītā* contains highly useful and detailed material for a seeker of any country, community, disposition, creed, *varṇa* in life. It is so, because there is in it, neither denunciation nor praise of any creed or denomination, instead it deals with the essence of pure Reality only. The ‘Real Tattva’ is not realized because of attachment and aversion- *rāgā* and *dveṣa* - born of the changeable nature of things in a person. Only on achieving complete freedom from attachment and aversion, it is automatically realized and it with ease.

The mirror of the *Gītā* is so clear and untarnished that it reflects ideas from every side. The materialists find the book a perfectly practical manual of daily life and conduct, the philosopher finds it an equally clear guide to the knowledge of the Self. The man of affairs says that the sole aim of the *Gītā* is to guide him on the path of action.
While the devotional man finds that it leads him along the path of adoration till he merges himself in the Supreme.

The main teaching of the Gitā is ‘Karmayoga’ or Selfless action. The most important aspect of Gitā philosophy is that it provides a harmonious synthesis of different paths i.e, knowledge of Brahman, and offering all enjoined actions at the feet of Brahman⁶. In essence, the Bhagavadgitā is the only spiritual text which provides a rational philosophic basis of ‘Sanātanadharma’ to which a common person can easily relate!

**Content Analysis of Bhagavadgitā**

Bhagavadgitā, the Song of the Lord Kṛṣṇa, consists of 700 verses and 18 chapters. Each of the chapters of the Bhagavadgitā is called as ‘Yoga’. Bhagavadgitā has been described as Brahmavidya, the science of the Absolute, and as Yogaśāstra, a scripture that teaches the art of union with God.

The first chapter is called ‘Arjunaviśādayoga’ (The Despondency of Arjuna) and consists of forty seven verses. Here Arjuna says that it is not good to fight against his kith and kin because it will annihilate the entire family. As such, the immemorial family tradition will perish. In the perishing traditions, lawlessness overcomes the whole family. He also says that if the sons of Dhrutarāṣṭra should stain him,
unresisting, unarmed, in the battle that would be better. Arjuna sat in
the chariot murmuring these words in the battle field.

The second chapter contains seventy two verses and is called
‘Sāṃkhyā Yoga’ (The Path of Knowledge). Here Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna
not to grieve over the mere destruction of physical bodies. The bodies
must die in any case and ātman can never be slain. To attain thorough
knowledge Kṛṣṇa describes Ātmasvarūpa. One should not grieve over
the inevitable. “One who is born will die at any cost. Śaṅkara interprets
the Sāṃkhyā to mean ātmanātmavivekajñāna. Thus Gītā emphasizes
the immortality of the soul and the inevitability of rebirth. Kṛṣṇa
argues that ‘disrepute is worse than death to the honoured. To work
alone have you the right and never to the fruits of work’.

Kṛṣṇa also gives stress to the attainment of wisdom, right
understanding, right knowledge, the absence of selfish desire, and also
gives the picture of the man of steady wisdom sthitaprajñā. According
to Śaṅkara, liberation can be attained only through right knowledge.
Performance of duties cannot lead to Mokṣa but it leads gradually to
the attainment of purity of mind.

The third chapter is ‘Karmayoga’, the need for action according
to Jñāna and the Karman. It contains forty three verses. Karman means
acting according to one’s varṇa and Āśrama. Kṛṣṇa reminds Arjuna
the influence of the guṇās in the human being.
The fourth chapter is ‘Jñānayoga’ that describes his own innernature, which is named as the ‘Yoga of knowledge’. This chapter contains forty two ślokās. Jñāna is fire, and Karman is fuel in the spiritual Agnihotra; both Karman and Akarman then become superimpositions on the Ātman. Actions not done for the sake of Yajña bind; if done for Yajña, they do not bind.

The fifth chapter is called ‘Sannyāsayoga’ and contains twenty nine verses. It is the ‘Yoga of Renunciation of Karman’. The life style can be altered, but the world cannot be renounced. When there is no ego, renunciation happens. With the realization of God, opposition between jñāna and karman will be removed, and both will assume the form of each other. The words ‘Sāṃkhya’ and ‘Yoga’ stand respectively for contemplation and activity. According to Kṛṣṇa both Sāṃkhya and Yogā are same.

The sixth chapter is ‘Dhyānayoga’ (The Yoga of meditation). This chapter contains forty seven verses. Non-attachment which is common to Sannyāsa and Yogā is both the pre-requisite and the result, Bhahmajñāna; otherwise an active karma-yogin and an inactive Sannyāsin might both be far away from God. God realization is a process and not an event. Kṛṣṇa continues his description of a yogin. A yogin is known to be superior even to the men of knowledge and he is superior to ascetics.
The seventh chapter is ‘Jñānavijñānayoga’. It contains thirty verses. It describes bhūmi, āpaḥ, analaḥ, vayuḥ, khaṃ, manaḥ, budhiḥ and ahaṃkārā - the eight fold division of God’s nature.

The eighth chapter is ‘Akṣarabrahmayoga’ - (The yoga of the imperishable Brahman). It contains twenty eight verses and describes the nature of Brahman or Adhyātman. Sacrifice, charity and penance burn the sins, but not their residual effects, nor do they prevent the committing of new sin. The imperishable is the Supreme Brahman and is dwelling in each individual body and is called ‘Adhyātman’. The perishable adjunct is the ‘Adhibhūta’ and indweller is ‘Adhidaivata’. In this chapter Kṛṣṇa names Brahman as Akṣara.

The ninth chapter is called ‘Rājavidya Rājaguhyayoga’ (The Sovereign Knowledge and Mystery) and it contains thirty four verses. This chapter completely discusses the nature of devotion-bhakti. Watching the cosmic Prakṛti, Paramātman is only the Adhyakṣa.

The tenth chapter is called ‘Vibhūtiyoga’ (Divine manifestations), contains forty two verses. This chapter discusses the devotee in liberation who remains in one’s own true state of being. Unless the personal aspect of God is experienced, the Brahmayogin would be poor in contentment. Kṛṣṇa as the permanent Vibhūti of Brahman is capable of being seen even today.
The eleventh chapter called ‘Viśvarūpadarśanayoga’ (The Divine Form) contains fifty five verses. Arjuna requests Kṛṣṇa to show Kṛṣṇa’s Cosmic Form. The description of the Viśvarūpa is factual, without any admixture of imagination.

The twelfth chapter ‘Bhaktiyoga’ contains twenty verses and begins with the description of the types of devotion. Kṛṣṇa in His Cosmic Form is beyond the limits of thought. Some verses describe bhakti as making one dear to Kṛṣṇa. One who is completely non-attached is described as free - mukta. ‘Bhakti’ is the main element in this chapter.

The thirteenth chapter is called ‘Kṣetra-kṣetrajñayoga’ (Discrimination between Nature and Soul). It contains thirty four verses. This chapter gives the clear teaching of Kṛṣṇa’s superiority and the place of Prakṛti and the Self. It may be understood as an attempt to reinterpret traditional ideas in terms of what the Bhagavadgītā has taught. Here Ātman is described as the highest Self.

The fourteenth chapter is called ‘Guṇatrayavibhāgayoga’ (The classification of the Three Guṇās). It contains twenty seven verses. It describes Kṛṣṇa’s relationship to reality. Kṛṣṇa, the highest reality is the origin, dissolution and sustainer of this universe. The centre element of this chapter is Triguṇās - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.
The fifteenth chapter is called ‘Puruṣottamayoga’ (The Supreme Spirit). It contains twenty verses. Here, the Lord says the sense-world from the union of the field and knower. It begins with the comparison to a pipal tree, reinterpreting on Upaniṣadic symbol of Puruṣās.

The sixteenth chapter is called ‘Daivāsurasampadvibhāgayoga’ (The Divine and the Demonical Attributes). It contains twenty four verses. It’s also called ‘the yoga of the destinies’. It gives an account of the virtues appropriate to each destiny. These born to a divine destiny have ideal characteristics. The divine destiny leads to liberation. The Lord lives behind precepts in the form of Śāstras. These constitute the intervals between one avatāra and another.

The seventeenth chapter is called ‘Śradhātryavibhāgayoga’ and is known as the ‘yoga of distinctions of three kinds of faith’. It contains twenty eight verses. Faith, without Vedic Knowledge, in a realized soul is far superior to having Vedic knowledge without such faith. The Blessed Lord said that threefold is that faith born of the individual nature of the embodied - Sāttvic - Rājasic and Tāmasic. In this chapter, the Lord discusses the importance and the meaning of OṀ-TAT-SAT.

The concluding eighteenth chapter is ‘Mokṣasannyāsayoga’ and is called ‘The Yoga of renunciation’. It contains seventy eight verses. It summarizes the entire teachings of Bhagavadgītā. Kṛṣṇa proceeds
to teach by way of summing up, the doctrine of the whole of the
Gītāśāstra, as also the whole of the Vedic Doctrine. Here, Arjuna
however, asks to know only the distinction in the meaning between
Sannyāsa and Tyāga.

For, the test of ‘Tyāga’ is in ‘Sannyāsa’, and the essence of
Sannyāsa is in Tyāga, though super - sāttvika tyāga occurs only with
the realization of Brahman. Bhakti at its highest becomes Jñāna.
Śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsa and Sākṣātkāra are the ascending steps
in the process of God-realization. Sañjaya’s mystical experience is
the same as that of Arjuna who saw himself and Kṛṣṇa in the body of
Kṛṣṇa. Sañjaya’s prophecy is that glory and victory will be on that
side which is supported by God’s power and grace.

**Commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā**

The Bhagavadgītā represents a unique stage in the development
of Indian culture. It has a series of commentaries from the great creators
of Indian life, like Śrī Śaṅkarācārya and Śrī Rāmānujācārya. It stands
even today as a great inspiration. The various commentaries on the
Gītā were written by the teachers in support of their own traditions.
The commentators contribute their own thoughts in expounding the
Bhagavadgītā and also draw the confirmation of their thoughts from
it. Bhagavadgītā is so popular that it has more than fifty commentaries
in Sāṃskrit and more than two hundred and fifty commentaries in other languages.

‘Śrī Śaṅkarācārya’ (A.D.788-820) is the first and most authoritative commentator on the Bhagavadgītā. He was the great exponent of absolute idealism called ‘Unqualified Monism’, Advaita. In his Gītābhāṣya he tries to establish that the main purpose of Kṛṣṇās discourse is the exposition of Jñānayoga and Karma Sannyāsa. According to Śaṅkara, the aim of the Gītā is the complete suppression of the world of becoming in which all action occur, though his own life is an illustration of activity carried on, after the attainment of wisdom⁷. ‘Anandagiri’, AD 13th century, wrote a commentary based on Śaṅkara’s commentary. ‘Śrīdharma’ 1400 A.D and ‘Nīlakaṇṭha’ also are commentators of the Bhagavadgītā. ‘Madhusūdana Sarasvaty’ (1540 - 1647 A.D) and ‘Venkaṭa-nāthā’ wrote commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā. In their interpretations, they gave more emphasis on the role of Bhakti. ‘Rāmānuja’ of the 11th century A.D, the founder of the qualified non-dualism of Viśiṣṭādvaita, wrote a commentary on the Bhagavadgītā. ‘Yāmunācārya’, Rāmānuja’s teacher summarised the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā in his ‘Gītarthasaṃgrahā’. According to Rāmānuja, ‘Nārāyaṇa’ is the Highest Brahman and Bhakti is the only means of liberation. Liberation is service of and fellowship with
God in *Vaikuṇṭha*. Rāmānuja does not agree with the reality of the world.

The most famous dualist, ‘Madhva’ (A.D 1199-1276) wrote two works on the *Gītā*, called the ‘*Gītābhāṣya*’ and ‘*Gītātātparya*’. According to him, devotion is the exclusive method of liberation. Mādhva criticized the identity of the self and the absolute. The most famous commentary of Mādhvā’s followers is the ‘Prameyadīpika’ of ‘Jayatīrtha’ (1335-185 A.D). ‘Nimbārka’ (A.D 1162) wrote a commentary on the *Gītā* called ‘*Gītātattvaprabhāṣikā*’. Nimbārka is the propounder of ‘Dvaitādvaita’ (dual-non-dual-doctrine). The principal theme of Nimbārka’s writings is the devotion to the Supreme. ‘Vallabha’ (1481-1533 A.D), the proponent of ‘Sudhādvaita’ or pure non-dualism, wrote a commentary on the *Gītā*, the ‘*Sattvadīpika*’. According to him, the true Self is the Supreme *Brahman*. *Bhakti* is the most important means of attaining liberation. ‘Puruṣottama’ (1668-1781 A.D), Vallabha’s follower, also wrote a commentary on *Bhagavadgītā*.

‘Bhāskara’ of the 9th or 10th C.A.D, whose systematic formulation is called conditioned difference in non-difference also, wrote commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā*. Bhāskara and some other *Vedāntins* called Śaṅkara a ‘Crypto Buddhist’, accusing his metaphysics, especially his analysis of the world a
Māyā. ‘Tātparyacandrika’ of ‘Venkatanadh’ is a commentary on Rāmānuja’s Gītābhāṣya. Ānanda Vardhana and Ramākānta also wrote commentaries on Rāmānuja’s commentary. Bālagaṅgādhara Tilak’ (1856-1920 A.D), one of the luminaries in the Indian independence movement, wrote a lengthy commentary named ‘Gītārahasya’ on the Gītā. He thought that this Gītā could inspire the nation to struggle against the British. He says the Gītā teaches ‘jñānamūlakabhiṣaktipradhānakarmayoga’, a life of works founded up on knowledge and centered upon devotion to the Lord.

Besides these commentaries, there are a number of translations on the Bhagavadgītā in to several languages. In 1785, ‘Charles Wilkins’ is the first person who translated Bhagavadgītā to English and published by the British East India Company with an introduction by Warren Hastings, the first British Governor General of India. A century later, another beautiful depicting of the Gītā in English came out, namely, ‘The Song Celestial’ by Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904). In 1788 the first French translation came. In 1823 ‘Shou Gal’ published the Latin version of the Gītā and in 1826 Dr. Hambolt published it in German. John Davis published another version in English in 1875. ‘Śrī Aurobindo’(1872-1950) wrote two series of essays on the Bhagavadgītā. He says that ‘the Gītā is an integral Yogā’. The Indian philospher, ‘Dr. S. Rādākrṣṇan’ (1885-1975 A.D) translated
Get into English. Svami Vivekananda also gave a series of lectures on the Bhagavadgītā. ‘Nirāṇam Madhavaṇiṣcikera’ was the first person to translate it to Malayālam. Further to this a Tamil poet ‘Pāṭtanār’ translated Gītā to Tamil language. There are many translations of the Gītā in other western languages also.

The Bhagavadgītā and Prasthānatraya.

Indian Philosophy is commonly divided into two kinds. They are Āstika or Orthodox system and Nāstika or Heterodox system. Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yogā, Pūrva-māṇḍūkya and Vedānta are the six Orthodox systems of Philosophy. The three schools of Budhism, Jainism and Čārvaka Philosophy are called the Heterodox systems of Philosophy.

Among the schools of philosophy, Vedānta has an exceptionally long and colourful history of development. The term ‘Vedānta’ means the end of Vedā or the end of knowledge. The Upaniṣads, Brahmaṇa-Brāhmaṇas and the Bhagavadgītā are together called ‘Prasthānatraya’, the triple cannon of Hindu law. These are also termed as Śruti prasthāna, Sūtra prasthāna and Smṛti Prasthāna respectively.

The term Vedānta as popularly understood does not refer to any single school of philosophical thought. It rather refers to a group of
schools of philosophical thought which believe in divergent views like Absolute unity, Absolute identity, unity as well as diversity and Absolute duality. All these schools call themselves as Vedānta because all of them rely basically on the Upaniṣad and derive support from Śūtrās of Bādarāyaṇa and the Bhagavadgītā.

The ‘Upaniṣads’, which constitute the last portion of the Vedās, represent bold flights of human imagination in search for answers to the perennial problems of mankind. Upaniṣads constitute not merely a speculative literature but also provide practical solutions to spiritual, material, and natural afflictions. It represents the essence of Vedic thought as perceived by ancient sages who had spent their lives in understanding these problems.

Bādarāyaṇa’s ‘Brahmasūtra’ is written in a very mysterious language and constitutes the interpretation of the Upaniṣad philosophy. It is considered as the first truly authentic Vedānta manual. Brahmasūtra consists of 555 sutras which are divided into four chapters. Each chapter consists of four pādās and each pādā has a number of adhikaraṇās. It deals with the nature of Brahman, the refutation of Smṛtis which are not in accord with Śruti, means of acquiring knowledge of Brahman, and the result of acquiring the knowledge of Brahman.
Bhagavadgītā is the most important text among the triple cannon. The Gītā, which is in the verse form, consists of 700 verses and eighteen chapters. Bhagavadgītā is a text which is vested with the teachings of philosophical, psychological, ethical and religious import. It enjoys immense popularity and provides a scholarly exposition of the Upaniṣad philosophy which is easily understandable by the common man. The main teaching of the Gītā is Karmayoga. The Gītā presents before us God-realisation, or freedom, as the ideal, and teaches us how to live a God centered life, grow in devotion to God, and transform all our activities into worship of God.

The Beginning Chapter of Śaṅkarabhāṣya

Śaṅkarācārya has not composed bhāṣya for the stanzas upto 10 of second chapter and first chapter of Bhagavadgītā. The reason may be that the Lord’s advice starts from the 11th stanza of the second chapter. The first chapter ‘Arjunaviśādayoga’ is mentioned as an introduction to enter Bhagavadgītā. Since nothing has been mentioned philosophically and psychologically in this chapter, all authors agree this as an introduction to Bhagavadgītā.

This chapter starts with the query of Dhṛtarāśtra to Saṅjaya about what has happened in between his children and Pāṇḍū’s children in the Kurukṣetra war field. As answer he replies that after viewing the
opponent army, Duryodhana approaches Dhrṣṇācārya to say ‘Hey Dhrṣṇācārya, kindly view the brigade of Pāṇḍava army deployed by your disciple Drṣṭadyumana’. He enumerates the warriors of the enemy army such as Sātyaki, Virāṇa, Drupada, Drṣṭaketu and Cekitāṇa, the valiant king of Kāśi, Purjit, Kunti-bhojaḥ, Śaibya, Yudhāmanyu, Uttamausas, Abhimanyu, and children of Draupati etc. He enumerates the warriors in his army also. After that Bhīma blows the conch. Eventually the Lord and Arjuna also loudly blow their conches, on the huge chariot tied to white horses. Arjuna requests Lord to place his chariot in the middle of both the armies. Arjuna is stricken with grief by viewing all his close relatives on both sides. He says that his arms become powerless, mouth drying up, body shivering, exercises, Gāṇḍīvaṃ falls from his arms and mind utterly perplexed. And he says that he doesn’t want any gain or any land by killing his rowed up relatives and he says that won’t do any sin which is self destructive. Then with grief-struck mind sits on the chariot in the middle of the war field by dropping his bow and arrows.

Thus the worried Arjuna is being advised by Lord through Bhagavadgītā to perform his duties Karmavāsanās form the reason for birth and death. They are of two types, the Subhavāsanās and Asubhavāsanās. ‘Duryodhana’ is a representative of Asura race of the
Asubhavāsanās. But ‘Arjuna’ is the representative of the Deva race who replaces Asubhavāsanā with subhavāsana by manliness. But on the path executing duties, even brave people may also face difficulty if they don’t have a clear theoretical idea of at least satyasvarūpa. Thus Arjuna’s worry is only due to unawareness. Arjuna had to sit on his chariot giving up his arms because of his laziness and lack of drive to perform duties. For devastating unawareness, enlightening advises should be given with stimulative power to perform duties according to each one’s Guṇakarmans. Performing one’s svadharma with clear knowledge will lead to purity of mind and purity of mind will lead to vastusāksātkāram. The lord performs only this continually.

Similarities and Dissimilarities of the Commentators

So many commentaries have come up for Bhagavatgītā which is a part of Mahābhārata. The foremost among them is Śaṅkarabhāṣya by Śaṅkarācārya. Jagadguru Śaṅkarācārya possessed superhuman qualities. His voice is the proclamation of Advaita Vedānta. He is a person who has contained and connected the entire cosmos in the one string of Advaitadarśana. It can be stated without any doubt that among all the Ācāryās born in Bhārata, Śaṅkara has carried out this task of revealing the secret of Gītā in a manner which no one else could.

The ‘Prasthānatraya’ commentary by Ācārya, who has perceived the soul of word and its meaning, is the last word in Advaita Vedanta.
Bhagavatgītā is one among the three prasthānās. In that score, a commentary which could excel that of Ācārya’s commentary has not happened in the last 1200 years. Through his commentary on the Gītā, Ācārya has carried out a historical role in the process of Bhāratā’s emotional integration.

According to Śaṅkara, the aim of the Gītā is the refinement of mind and realization of Brahman. The one owned of the right knowledge actualizes that the Highest Reality is one without a second. All eminences of subject and object disappear in him and thus the true Self, Ātman shines in him.

Jñāneśvari is the first commentary to have come up in a vernacular language. Jñāneśvara is the spiritual guru of the Marāthi language. It was just at the age of 15 that he wrote the commentary on Bhagavadgītā. There are more than 9000 verses in Jñāneśvari. Jñāneśvara conducted spiritual discourses wherever he went, without any preparations. In all those occasions he offered extempore commentary on the Gītā. The world renowned Jñāneśvari is the compilation of all these commentaries on Gītā.

Jñāneśvari is written in the popular and famous ovi metre of Marāthi language. This is a popular metre which is poetical and musical similar to folk songs. Ovi is characterised by rhyming three
lines portion with changing vowels followed by an unrhymed short fourth line. *Jñāneśvari* starts with

अः नमो श्री आद्या वेद प्रतिपादः।
जय स्वसंवेद्या आत्मरूपः॥

This metre has the excellence of prose and the beauty of verse. *Jñāneśvari* has been translated into English, French, Spanish and Persian languages and to Indian languages like Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Malayālam, Bengāli and Gujarāti too.

Jñāneśvara who was a devotional poet in Marāthi language played a vital role in shaping the righteousness in man. *Jñāneśvari* has been written in that sweetness which can be found in a folk song and is as simple as could be understood by even a child. Being written while he was a teenager, *bhakti* is the predominant mood in it. It can be inferred that the simple style was selected in order to create inroads into the common public. Jñāneśvara has carried out the composition revealing the childlike state achieved at the summit of devotion. The sweetness of devotion made Jñāneśvara simpler.

Jñāneśvara had only a very short life. But in this short span he could assure a place in everyone’s heart. Jñāneśvara didn’t lead a worldly life. Hence he didn’t have the support of the experience of a life in the worldly plane. This too is one reason for the simplicity of Jñāneśvari.
Ācārya lived till his 32\textsuperscript{nd} year. His life was that of a strict brahmacāri. Yet his parakāyapraveśā is a very curious and strange episode in his life as recorded in his biography. The debate he conducted with Maṇḍanamīśrā and the later developments have been recorded in the portion starting from the 69\textsuperscript{th} verse of the 9\textsuperscript{th} chapter of Śrīmad Śaṅkaradigvijaya.

Ācārya has referred to many aspects of lust in various parts of his commentary. In the commentary of the 23\textsuperscript{rd} verse of the 5\textsuperscript{th} chapter commentary on Gītā, Ācārya has treated this aspect clearly. The western critics have criticized them as the dark and dismal side of human nature. But Indian thinkers have included this dark side after making it brilliant and cloaked it in the glory of science.

In the opinion of Jñāneśvara the way to liberation is bhakti. It can be understood that Jñāneśvara has tried to instill the sweetness of bhakti into the hearts of his listeners throughout the commentary. But in the view of Ācārya it is knowledge which one should pursue to attain liberation. Ācārya’s keen interest in knowledge has made him quite a serious person. Both the commentators have a noble lineage. Ācārya accepted Govindabhagavadvāda and Jñāneśvara accepted his brother, Nivṛittināḍhā as their preceptors. The difference in the nature of the preceptors may be perceived in the disciples too. Throughout
Jñāneśvara’s commentary, one can perceive the sweetness of the relation between a mother and her child. Ācārya too has realized the greatness and sweetness of this relationship that he has considered Gitā as Gitāmātaḥ.

Ācārya has written all his works in the divine language Sāṃskrit condensing all his knowledge. It can be inferred that he had an in mind a futuristic vision regarding the endurance of his work for ages to come that he endeavored to treat every work with utmost seriousness and sincerity. Ācārya didn’t consider Sāṃskrit merely as a language rather has tried to raise the language to Vedic heights and sublimity.

Jñāneśvara has chosen his mother tongue, Marāthi, as the medium for his commentary. He has stated through his commentary that he has tried to follow the path tread by Ācārya. But one can easily find glaring differences in their style. Jñāneśvara gave more importance to bhakti than or dry philosophizing. Ācārya has given word to word commentary in his work and has given the commentary for only 638 among the 700 ślokās. But Jñāneśvara has offered it for all the ślokās.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. IP - P. 11, Introductory essay.
2. ACIP - P. 32
3. TBG - P. 12
4. Ibid - P. 12
5. HV - P. 330
6. TBG - P. 17
7. ACIP - P. 44