I - INTRODUCTION

The Vedas, the Upanisads, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the texts relating to the very roots of the Indian culture, irrespective of the religion, creed or race of the people; for, they reflect man as he is, what he aspires to be and what he should ideally become. Among these too, the BG can be called as the very soul of the Indian -- nay, of the entire humanity.

A study of the BG especially without referring to the various contradictory commentaries on the same, can never fail to draw one to it finally looking upon it as the "Gospel of life". This Song Celestial (as Arnold calls it) is the exposition of the practical philosophy of life given by the Lord Himself to Arjuna at the outset of the Mahabharata war (thus it stands almost at the climax of the Epic story covering the chapters 25-42 of the Bhima-parva). It aims at removing Arjuna's moha by presenting the philosophy from the Upanisads. A few concepts here are picked up from the Vedic literature being developed in the BG for the first time, and some original concepts are added to them. In doing so comes to the surface the exquisite synthesizing skill of its author; he has depicted here two new outlooks at life and its fulfilment, viz., Karma and Bhakti, along with the already established one of Jnana. This unique synthesis, namely, the BG, with its widest and deepest possible vision, holds a universal charm and appeal.

Primarily to an Indian, then to a Hindu and to a Vaisnava, the SBP gradually came to hold a unique significance. Its author being the same as that of the BG, i.e. Veda Vyasa, the SBP despite being a cult-oriented (i.e. Vaisnava) text, also contains deep spiritual speculations with a strong undercurrent of Bhakti. The constant "observation"(1) of the so-called Vaisnavas that the SBP is an exposition of mere devotion hurts one which is negated by even a single reading of the entire text, especially of the Eleventh Skandha. On reading the latter, an alert mind would be instantly reminded of the BG and start making comparisons between the two.
This thesis is the product of the inquisitiveness of getting at the right answer. The Tenth Skandha traditionally believed to be heart of the Lord describes His life and deeds, while the Eleventh Skandha is considered to be His head, as it contains Kṛṣṇa's final message to Uddhava. Being so, it aims at bestowing mokṣa, and thus Vairāgya or Renunciation is added to the Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti of the BG. Consequently, despite the fact that both the BG and the ŚBP are the direct teachings of Kṛṣṇa, the latter is influenced by the former, and yet has its distinct contribution to the BG's teachings.

The thesis, therefore, refers to the similarities as well as the differences between the BG and the Eleventh Skandha of the ŚBP. The BG is referred to with priority due to its chronological antiquity. The chapters discussed in the thesis are as follows:

Chapters:

II
   Karma Yoga

III
   Jñāna Yoga

IV
   Bhakti Yoga

V
   Dhyāna Yoga

VI
   Sāṁkhya Yoga

VII
   The Highest Reality

VIII
   Avatārarvāda

IX
   Vibhūti

X
   The Sermon of the Avadhūta

XI
   The Navayogis and the Bhāgavata Dharma

XII
   Eschatology

XIII
   Minor Concepts (Māyā, Authority of the Vedas, etc.)

XIV
   A Comparative Study of the Style and Approach of the BG and the ŚBP

XV
   Conclusion
Appendices :-

1. The Purāṇa literature, the ŚBP as a Mahāpurāṇa, its author, origin, development, date and place of composition.
2. The main topics of the BG and the ŚBP.
3. Select Bibliography.

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