



# INFLUENCE OF BOOKS ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*Books are noted to be a Man's best friend. Reading books is a valuable habit that one must practice enlightening one's mind and soul. Books enhance the imaginative power of the reader and inculcate patience within. Reading gives you a broad knowledge of everything and everyone surrounding you. When you learn to empathize with the characters in a book, you learn to realize people in real life as well. With reading one can acquire knowledge in different areas like cultures, arts, history, regions, and much more.*

*Reading books develops one's personality in a better way. It can help you learn new words and improve your vocabulary. One can improve one's own performance and way of thinking and become a better person in every aspect. However, when you read, you can learn about the experiences of someone from a totally different era, or within a different social class; experience another ethnicity, gender, sexuality. All of this helps you to empathize with others. Through this paper, I would like to present my views about some insightful books and how they helped me to overcome obstacles in my life. The outcome of book reading is obviously thought-provoking and food for the soul, which benefits the reader to transform his personality from ego-driven to soul-driven.*

**KEYWORDS:** *enlighten mind and soul, empathize, ethnicity, insightful, thought-provoking, transforming ego-driven to soul-driven.*

When I start thinking about books, the only book which comes to my mind first is Bhagavad Gita followed by 'My Experiment with Truth' (The Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi) and some other inspiring self help books like "How to stop worrying and start living" by Dale Carnegie, "Think and grow rich" by Napoleon Hill, "Geethanjali" by Viswakavi Sri Rabhindranath Tagore, "You can heal your life" by Louis Hey, "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho and "The four agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz and so on. In this writing I would like to state the essence of Bhagavad gita and how it helps one to overcome hardships in life and how to remain calm in chaos and be resilient.

The Bhagavad Gita is a manual for life and living. The Gita presents the laws and principles on which life works. Well before there was any concept of 'Hinduism', thousands of years ago, our ancestors called themselves the arya putra or noble race. Or Bharatas (bha – light and rata – revel), those revelling in the light of Consciousness. The result of this philosophy was prosperity, harmony and spiritual growth. The philosophy created a conducive environment for people to reflect on higher pursuits of life.

The Gita was given to the skilled and noble Arjuna when he became despondent on the battlefield at Kurukshetra, unable to withstand the challenge of having to fight his own relatives, teachers and friends. The message of the Gita given by Krishna revived him despite the incapacitated state he was in.

The Gita can be divided into three parts of six chapters each. These three parts are said to represent the great upanishadic aphorism, "Tat Tvam Asi", "You Are That".

The Chapter 1 **Arjunaviśāda-yoga** talks about 'tvam', you, the individual. You meet challenges and are overwhelmed by them. You need to understand the purpose of life and conduct yourself accordingly. Doing that is your duty; it is karma yoga, a path of action. Karma yoga is working for a higher cause in the spirit of cooperative endeavour. When a person functions thus his worldly desires wane away and he is prepared for meditation. Through meditation he realises his Self, the purpose of existence. The most famous verse in this section is probably karmanye vadhikaraste (II.47) – **your right is to action and not to its fruit.**

The second part Chapter 2 **Sāṅkhya-yoga** talks of 'tat', that, the Supreme Reality, God. Krishna shows how Reality or God is in everything and everything is in God. He demonstrates this both by analyses and syntheses. He names individual things and says they are God and then puts it all together, synthesises them in the form of Vishwarupa, His cosmic form. In it, Arjuna sees how everything is part of Krishna or Reality, the good, the bad and the ugly. **Whatever one sees is a manifestation of the Lord. With this vision one's mind expands in love and demonstrates the first quality of a bhakta, a devotee of God**

– advesta sarva bhutanam, maitra, karuna eva cha. That is, no hatred towards any being, and to be friendly, compassionate (XII.13).

The third section Chapter 3 **Karma-yoga** talks about ‘asi’, are, the relationship between the individual and God. He is the root and the world is the tree, the inverted ashwatha tree. Like any family tree, the parent is shown on top and the descendants below. **The world is made up of the three gunas – tamas, ignorance; rajas, activity; and sattva, poise. They bind us in different ways and keep us from recognition of Reality. Beings in the world are all different – but different combinations of the three gunas. When one goes beyond the gunas one finds one’s true Self.**



Chapter 4 **Jnana Karma Sanyasa yoga** talks about “Transcendental Knowledge”. In this chapter Krishna explains Arjuna about the process to acquire Transcendental knowledge. In answer to the query of Arjuna about the cause of all sinful activities, Krishna explains that lust is the only cause for it. Moving towards the solution of it, Krishna says that one must first steady the mind through spiritual intelligence and by acquiring spiritual strength one can easily conquer the lust. **This chapter shows the method to acquire this spiritual intelligence.**

The Bhagavad Gita chapter 5 **Karma Sanyasa Yoga** talks about “**The yoga of Renunciation**”. Arjuna asks Krishna whether the path of renunciation or the path of action is better for him. Krishna replies that both paths are good but that the path of karma yoga is more direct. **The path of renunciation and the path of action both lead to the Self if practiced deeply.** The practices of meditating, renouncing worldly pleasures, and studying the scriptures are actions that lead to the wisdom of understanding the true Self and to liberation from suffering. The path of karma yoga also leads to the same wisdom.

The chapter 6 **Dhyana Yoga**, In this Lord Krishna introduced the topic of meditation towards the end of the last chapter. Being an important topic, Krishna spends almost the whole of this chapter dealing with meditation. [Here, meditation is upon

the Lord as the very Self (Ātmā) of the meditator. This is meant to assimilate the Self-knowledge gained from the guru’s teaching. **The conditioning that “I am the body” will go only with the assimilation of the Self-knowledge. Assimilated Self-knowledge alone can be expressed as ānanda.]**

The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 7 **Jnana-Vijnana Yoga** ( Wisdom and Realization), In this chapter Krishna explains **how one can know him (God) by practicing nonattachment.** Krishna focuses now on imparting to Arjuna that he (God) is the fundamental essence of the universe and that his current form is just an earthly incarnation. Krishna explains he is the essence not only of all existence but also of the perceivable world. Just as he is incarnated in a body, he is both the essence of the universe and its material. What he is trying to convey to Arjuna is that people are often misled by the parts of him or the world they experience with their senses, failing to understand his nature as the essence of being beyond what can be perceived.

The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 8 **Taraka Brahma Yoga** (The Yoga of the Supreme). In this, Krishna explains that **true freedom is "union with the deathless,"** or God. He defines action as the Self’s creative power that "causes the whole world to be." Human beings will enter whatever state they are in at the moment of their death. Therefore, because one never knows the time of one’s death, it is essential to meditate at all times.

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 9 **Raja Guhya Yoga** (The Secret of Life) In this chapter **Krishna is detailing more precisely how Arjuna can turn his actions into prayer and offerings to God,** and Krishna’s tone becomes devotional. In yogic traditions, the yoga of devotion is called bhakti yoga and emphasizes love and thanks to God.

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 10 **Vibhuti Yoga** ( Divine Manifestations) In this chapter Krishna sheds more clarity on the connection between the yoga of action and the yoga of understanding. He tells Arjuna that "to those ... who loves me / with true devotion, I give / the yoga of understanding," thereby bringing the person union with God. In other words, **when a person worships Krishna in actions, the god then gives that person wisdom as well. In this way the yoga of action leads to the yoga of understanding.**

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 11 **Vishwaroopa Darshana Yoga** (The yoga of the Universal form) Arjuna asks Krishna to show him his "ultimate form." In the words of the poet, Sanjaya, **Krishna gives Arjuna a glimpse of the incredible vastness and majesty he encompasses, showing him the "whole universe / enfolded / ... in the body of the God of gods." The vision is also a terrifying one, as Krishna reveals a self with billions of heads, fangs, and weapons.** Arjuna is humbled and awed by the vision. He describes what he sees, including a vision of Krishna devouring all of the Kauravas. Arjuna asks Krishna "Who are you, in this terrifying form?" Krishna responds that he is dead and that Arjuna must fight in the battle



because the Kauravas will die regardless. Krishna has already killed them; Arjuna is merely *his instrument*. Arjuna bows to Krishna and apologizes for any overfamiliarity he might have shown.

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12 **Bhakti Yoga** (The Yoga of Devotion) **The successful person of yoga will show love and compassion for everyone equally and will have a calm attitude of detachment to the joys and sorrows of life.** The devotee who is indifferent to "grief / and desire, good and bad fortune— / that man is the one I love the best," Krishna reveals."

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 13 **Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga** (The Field and Its Knower) Here **Krishna outlines three elements of existence. These are the field, the Knower, and the object of knowledge.** The field describes nature, or the physical world, which includes the body and the entire perceivable world. When Krishna outlines the field, he mentions the 5 elements and the 10 senses. The five elements include the standard four of earth, air, fire, and water, and the fifth of ether, or space. The 10 senses that the text mentions can be divided into two parts: sensory and motor. The sensory faculties include sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The motor faculties and related uses include the hands for grasping, voice for speaking, legs for walking, genitals for procreating, and anus for eliminating. Humans experience nature, or the physical world, through these faculties.

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14 **Ghuna traya Yoga** (The Three Gunas) Krishna explains, he is "the seed-giving father" and that nature is "the womb." All beings come forth from the combination of the two. **The three gunas—sattva, rajas, and tamas—are based upon a person's disposition. The gunas keep the eternal Self bound to the physical body. Sattva binds by attachment to knowledge and joy, rajas by passion and activity, and tamas by laziness and sleep. Of the three, sattva has the power to uplift a person and lead to enlightenment because it is connected to wisdom. The other two create stasis, or drag a person down.**

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 15 **Purushottam Yoga** The Ultimate Person" **Krishna describes "the realm of sorrow" as a tree, with the branches fed by the gunas and the roots by action. The leaves represent the sacred hymns. Krishna instructs Arjuna to cut this tree down "with the sharp-edged ax of detachment" and search for God, or "the primal Person" that is the essence of the universe.**

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 16 **Daivasura sampad vibhaga Yoga** (Divine Traits and Demonic Traits) **Krishna describes the characteristics that belong to wise men versus "men with demonic traits."** The divine traits are those of the enlightened person or the person with the potential to become a sage. These traits include purity of heart, integrity, compassion, courage, and a loving heart. Krishna considers the traits of ignorance, hypocrisy, anger, and conceit demonic qualities. According to Krishna, Arjuna has the divine traits.

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 17 **Shraddha traya Vibhaga Yoga** (Three Kinds of Faith)

**Krishna's breakdown of the three gunas shows how they may categorize other aspects of human nature.** Sattva is the only guna connected to the realization of God and Self. Krishna's words reveal that sattva is the quality closest to divinity and, therefore, the most positive trait a person can have. It is important to remember, however, that sattva is still a guna and, consequently, still part of nature. This means that even sattva has the potential to hold a person to the cycle of rebirth, a result of its being exercised with attachment.

Rajas and tamas, in Krishna's view, are never positive and pull a person away from God. Tamas is the worse of the two, a quality that encompasses not only inaction, ignorance, and dullness but also active negativity, such as violence and chaos.

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 18 **Moksh Sanyas Yoga** "Freedom Through Renunciation" In this final chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna teaches Arjuna about renunciation. **Krishna makes a distinction between the concept of renunciation and that of relinquishing. Renunciation, or the act of renouncing, means letting go of action motivated by desire. Relinquishing means giving up the fruits of actions.** Krishna insists that although embodied beings cannot completely relinquish action, they must relinquish the results of action. Five elements are present wherever action occurs. These elements are the physical body, the agent, the sensory organs, behaviors, and "divine providence." Persons of "limited understanding" see themselves as the sole agent of an action and fail to recognize these five components.

#### How does Bhagavad Gita help us in daily life?

Reading the Bhagavad Gita introduces us to the truth about life and helps us attain freedom from superstition and false beliefs. Knowledge gained from the Bhagavad Gita dispels our doubts and builds our confidence. Teachings from the Gita tell us to think well before we act.

The Bhagavad Gita tells us that each one of us should do our duty Without expecting rewards. It also says that the path of devotion to God is open to all.

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