



# Gita: The Art of Selfless Living and Dying

**For Mains:** Ethics and Human Interface

## Why in News?

Gandhi's unwavering faith in high principles both in life and death were shaped by his love for the Bhagwat Gita and is a perfect example for all of us to follow.

## Who was Mahatma Gandhi?

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869 – 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948), also remembered as **'Father of the Nation'**, was the leader of India's independence movement against British rule.
- He was conferred with the title of **Mahatma (great-soul) Gandhi**.
- His life was dedicated to many other noble causes like poverty alleviation, women's rights, and eradication of the practice of untouchability, among others.
- He was the **pioneer of the nonviolence philosophy** that has inspired civil rights leaders across the world.
- His birthday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, is celebrated as **Gandhi Jayanti** in India and conferred as the **International Day of Non-Violence**.

## What is the Importance of Bhagwat Gita in Gandhi's Life?

- **A Gospel of Selfless Action:**
  - According to Gandhi, Gita teaches us the **only desire that is worth pursuing is to realize that we are the soul** (or self), aspire to become like Him (God) (i.e., possess his supreme qualities), and to attain eternal bliss instead of being **obsessed with material pursuits** such as fame, money, and relationships.
    - This is the **process of self-realization**, which entails understanding that we are the soul (not the body and mind) and are caught in the endless cycle of life and death due to our karma.
    - Karma simply means that **any thought, speech, or action undertaken** upon others will have a corresponding result in our lives.
- **Role of Action:**
  - The Gita acknowledges that for the world to continue running, **action (whether mental or physical) needs to be taken**.
    - The Gita says, "Do your allotted work but renounce its fruits- be detached and work- have no desire for reward and work."
  - Renunciation of the fruits of one's actions is the **central message in the Gita**.
  - Renunciation **does not mean indifference to results but a renouncer is the one who performs his duty with cheerfulness** and thoroughness and remains desireless of the fruit of the action.
- **Ahimsa and Truth:**
  - Gandhi believed that **when one enforces the Gita's central teaching in life, one is bound to follow Ahimsa and Truth**.

- Nonviolence or Ahimsa as per Gandhi Ji is **described as the state to do no harm in thoughts**, words and actions to all living beings.
- It is **not just refraining from undertaking violent action** but also a whole way of life.
- Since it extends to all living organisms, it **encompasses consuming vegetarian food, a sustainable lifestyle**, and the protection of the environment.
  - Because **when there is no desire for fruit**, there is no temptation for untruth or himsa (violence).
  - The **cause of any untruth or himsa will be rooted in the fulfillment of attaining a desire** fuelled by ego. For instance, sins like murder, theft, etc cannot be performed without attachment.
- **Serving God through the Service of Mankind:**
  - A further message in the Gita is that mankind should serve God by serving one another and Gandhi adhered to this message unwaveringly.
  - To this, he **elucidated how the soul's natural progress is towards selflessness** and purity.
  - This is why he was able to effortlessly dedicate his whole life to the freedom and betterment of the lives of the people of India.
  - He believed that what we think of in the last moments will become who we are and by doing so **one will acquire the qualities and nature of this God (or revered Gurus) in the next birth.**
  - But for this to happen in the dying moment, one has to live a life free of attachment and aversion and have a heart that is ready to love and forgive all. Once we have mastered these skills, the peace we get should be channeled into spiritual practices.

[Source: Livemint](#)

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