

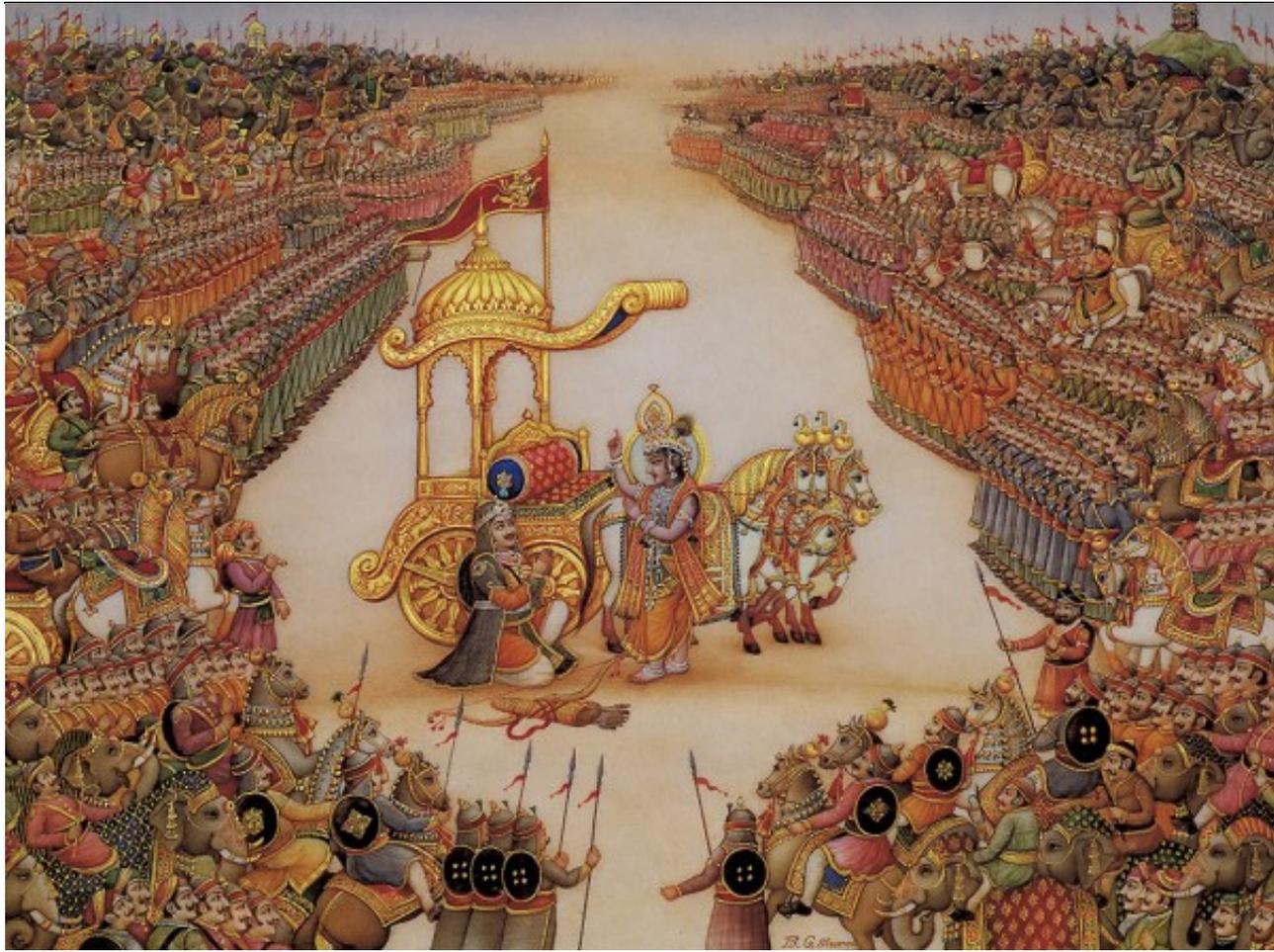
Values for vedic wisdom

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Arjuna had also asked about *jnanam* and *jneyam*, and Krishna had ended the last verse by saying that this is the knowledge to be known. Therefore, when you use the word *jnanam*— what is *jnanam*, what is the thing to be known? – Vedic wisdom is what it should be referring to. However, since the whole *Bhagavad Gita* is about this *vedic wisdom*, what Krishna does is that he interprets the word *jnanam* in Arjuna's question as *jnana sadhanam*, meaning those qualities of my mind which will help me gain this knowledge. That's because all knowledge, including spiritual knowledge, has to take place in a human mind, and an appropriate means of knowledge has to be used for this. Every body of knowledge has its own qualifications; I can not study Calculus without the knowledge of Algebra. If I want to learn Calculus, and I don't know Algebra I have to first equip myself with the knowledge of Algebra. Similarly, there are some qualities mentioned here which will help me not only with the understanding of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but will help this knowledge to take root and fructify. This knowledge will not be 'out of sight, out of mind', but will be with me 24x7. Therefore, he has taken these qualities as *jnana sadhanam* and explained it in verses 7 to 11 of the 13th chapter in the *Bhagavad Gita*. In all there are twenty qualities. This may seem a bit daunting but they are all interrelated. Therefore when you start cultivating a few, they all fall into place without too much of a struggle.

Amanitvam adambitvam ahimsa kshantirarjavam |

Acharyopasanam shaucham sthairyam atmavinigraha || 13.7 ||

Absence of demand of respect, absence of pretension, not hurting, accommodation, straightforwardness, service to teacher, cleanliness, steadfastness, mastery over mind...

Krishna starts with two qualities called *Amanitvam*, *Adambitvan*. I am taking both together because they are related.

'Lift yourself by yourself...*uddharet atmanatmanam*.' In other words, develop your sense of self-esteem so that your self-worth is not dependent on how others treat you; you are independent.

***Amanitvam* means absence of *manitvam*. Now what is *manitvam*? *Manitvam* means 'my feeling that people should always respect me'. I may be worthy of respect, well-read, well-traveled, I may be in a position of power, I may be deserving of respect but it is unhealthy to keep demanding respect. Absence of this is what Krishna talks of as *amanitvam*. If I am going to keep demanding respect from people and if it is not forthcoming, I am going to be upset, and no knowledge is going to take place in an upset mind. Instead, a healthy attitude is what is required — if people respect me, it's fine; if people don't respect me, that's also fine, that's their freedom of choice. I don't respect every person I meet even though the person may be worthy. For example, a political leader may be deserving of respect, but if his political ideas are different from mine I may not respect him. Therefore, it is not that I respect every person although some may be deserving. Similarly, why should I expect others to respect me? It's common sense...**

***Amanitvam* is followed by *Adambitvam* ...absence of *dambitvam* is called *adambitvam*. What is *dambitvam*? *Dambitvam* is one step worse than *manitvam*, because in the latter case the person may be deserving, in some way, of some respect, but in the former the person concerned is not worthy of any respect at all. This person keeps putting up a false front to gain respect from people. For example, if someone tells me, 'I didn't see you all of last week... where were you?', and I reply, 'Oh I had been to Delhi to meet the PM as we had to consult on some things', I have lied because I want the person to respect me. In case another person, who had seen me last week, walks in, I have to then ensure that the conversation does not veer towards the topic of what we did last week because I will be caught out. I am not speaking here about the small white lies we speak, I am referring to the lies we put out to put up a false front to earn some respect...The problem with these lies is that the mind starts believing in its own lies. Such a mind is not in touch with functional reality. How then is this mind going to understand the absolute Reality that you are?**

Both *manitvam* and *dambitvam* stem from lack of healthy self-esteem. One of the finest writers I have read on the topic of self-esteem is Nathaniel Brandon. He looks upon self-esteem as having two components: self-efficacy and self-respect. Let's look at the self-respect part first. If I have healthy self-respect, then feeling good about myself is not based on what others say of me. As a martial artist once said: If I know I am good, then I don't have to wear a black belt to show that. That is what absence of *manitvam* and *dambitvam* are about. *Amanitvam* and *adambitvam* refer to an individual having a healthy self-esteem. In the sixth chapter, Krishna had mentioned, 'Lift yourself by yourself...*uddharet atmanatmanam*.' In other words, develop your sense of self-esteem so that your self-worth is not dependent on how others treat you; you are independent. Yes, you are sensible enough to take feedback from people, but your happiness is not dependent on how people treat you. Such a mind has is already well on its way to gaining *vedic wisdom*, and these two values will ensure that the knowledge fructifies in you and you can own up this knowledge in your life.

The finest example of this is an incident from Buddha's life. Once Buddha walked into a village with his disciples and the villagers were verbally abusive to them.

A student, Ananda, went up to him and said, 'Look at all these villagers, look how bad they are, see how they treat us'.

'Why do you let them disturb you so much?' Buddha asked him.

'How can you not be upset when they abuse you so much?'

'What happened in the previous village we went to, Ananda?' the Buddha responded with a question.

'Oh, they were such nice people...they got us food, fruits, sweets.'

'...And what did you see me doing?' Buddha asked.

'Oh, you took whatever we needed,' Ananda recalled, 'and distributed the rest to the villagers.'

'Well,' said Buddha, 'in this village I did not need anything, so I did not take anything.'

This is a mind which has *amanitvam* and *adambitvam*, a mind that doesn't internalize the negativities. Buddha's self-respect was so high that he was not dependent on the respect that people gave him or the abuses that people gave him. This is the highest level of these two values. A student cultivates them in a relative manner to a functionally appropriate level.

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