



"The Universal Quest For Spiritual Awakening: A Comparative Study Of *The Pilgrim's Progress* And The *Bhagavad Gita*"

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Abstract:

In this paper, I analyze the **universal spiritual themes** in **John Bunyan's** *The Pilgrim's Progress* and **Sri Madhusudan Sai's** *Bhagavad Gita – A Summary*. Both guided by deep **religious** and **cultural traditions**—**Christianity** and **Hinduism**, respectively—these writings contain the **universal quest for spiritual change**. I intend to address recurrent themes such as the **soul's journey**, the **seeker's challenges and temptations**, **faith and devotion's** contribution, the **good and evil dichotomy**, and the final objective, which is **liberation** or **salvation**. The journey in **Bunyan's** tale of **Christian's allegorical pilgrimage** from the *City of Destruction* to the *Celestial City* reflects the **Christian life of faith and redemption**. Conversely, **Arjuna's** bewildered struggle on the **Kurukshetra battlefield**, illuminated by **Lord Krishna's** guiding wisdom, represents the **redemptive journey from confusion to clarity** via **dharma** and **devotion**. Both texts, despite different **theological sculpting**, unite in the portrayal of the struggle as **transforming the self**, the **struggle spiritually**, and the process is **beyond this world**. The analysis brings forth the **differences of spiritual perspectives** in distinct traditions, revealing the underlying **shared aspirations within humanity**.

Keywords: John Bunyan, Sri Madhusudan Sai, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Bhagavad Gita – A Summary*, spiritual journey, universal spirituality, faith and devotion, good and evil, liberation, salvation, comparative religion, inner transformation

Introduction:

For centuries, literature has been a gateway for writers wrestling with intricate spiritual issues to speak and explore freely through symbols, dialogues, and imaginative storytelling. Looking at the global literature, one can identify and include books like John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the latter being a sacred scripture in the Hindu culture. Although both these works stem from entirely divergent cultural and religious settings, 17th Century Puritan England and Ancient Indian Philosophy share remarkable similarities in the line of the soul's pilgrimage toward divine truth, moral decision-making, and the assistance of a higher being, and the desire for emancipation and salvation. Again, the deeper one delves into the works of literature, the more they realize the resemblance in human nature and emotions as the inspiration behind countless, timeless books.

One such example is *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which Bunyan wrote in 1678 as a Christian allegory in the wake of his release from jail. During this wait, he wrote the book in which he, alongside the main character, Christian, travelled from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. One can aptly say that the characters, event places, and people that are part of that journey are walking, talking allegories symbolizing moral thoughts that they are all grappling with. The ultimate goal that Bunyan had in mind in writing this book was to change the mindset and inspire followers to face temptation while remaining unwavering in their faith.

Unlike other historical texts, the *Bhagavad Gita* was written between the 2nd and 5th centuries BCE, focusing on the exchange between the fighter Arjuna with Lord Krishna, his divine charioteer and spiritual counselor. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna about duty, the self, and liberation. The *Bhagavad Gita*, which was summarized and interpreted by Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai aims to make ancient teachings easier to understand with modern vernacular. This translation shifts the perspective from viewing the *Gita* strictly as scripture to seeing it as a practical spiritual handbook that encourages selfless service, meditation, and deep connection with the Divine.

The purpose of this paper is to conduct a comparison analysis of the two works and look into the common spiritual themes regardless of the context. The focus of this study will be on the following topics:

- The allegorical path of the soul.
- The characteristics of the trials and temptations.
- The importance of faith and devotion.
- The representation of good and evil.

The final aims of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are identified as Salvation and liberation, which are biblically framed as *The Bhagavad Gita*. Through these concepts, the study attempts to illustrate how both texts address the common ethical and existential challenges humanity faces, providing perspectives that go beyond culture and religion. Such comparison serves to deepen the analysis of each text and, in addition, helps to understand more fully the literature of spirituality as a worldwide, cross-cultural phenomenon.

2. Contextual Background

2.1 John Bunyan and *The Pilgrim's Progress*

John Bunyan, a writer and a preacher, was born in Bedfordshire, England, in the year 1628. England, during his lifetime, was witnessing overwhelming shifts in global religions. Bunyan was a nonconformist Puritan, meaning he scanned the traditional structure of the Church of England and subverted it. Bunyan's defiance of the Church of England and his devotion to preaching unlicensed sermons led him to a twelve-year imprisonment.

Throughout his incarceration, he began writing *Pilgrim's Progress*: a work that would propel him to fame. Unlike Works of Puritan England, *Pilgrim's Progress* was a breath of fresh air. It was published in 1678, and it chronicles the life of a Christian who endeavors to leave the City of Destruction to reach the Celestial City or Heaven, overcoming many moral and physical obstacles in the process. Bunyan, who was deeply rooted in the biblical scripture, embraced a straightforward approach to storytelling.

He vividly painted the moral and theological lexicon that frames the timeless tale. He managed to capture the imagination of readers who had never read scriptures and talk in an unfamiliar language that had been heretofore inaccessible to them. He became the voice of the common man, and to this day, is regarded as a cornerstone in Christian English Literature.

What makes *The Pilgrim's Progress* particularly significant is its allegorical structure. Each stage of Christian's journey is an allegorical representation of a stage in the believer's spiritual life. The tale serves as a personal testimony and a manual that combines consolation and direction, and a caution for the faithful. We can still appreciate Bunyan's timeless work today for its exploration of piercing fear, relentless temptation, unyielding perseverance, and enduring hope.

2.2 Sri Madhusudan Sai and *Bhagavad Gita – A Summary*

Bhagavad Gita, or sometimes spelled as *Gita*, is one of the most precious scriptures of Hinduism, and its name translates as "A Song of God." This scripture is a part of the larger epic *Mahabharata*. It is set on the eve of the great war in which a battle is to take place, and it contains a dialogue between Lord Krishna, who is Arjuna's divine charioteer, and Arjuna as a warrior who is morally sad and needs guidance. Krishna talks about the never-ending cycle of life, ego, death, and life, and freedom, guiding Arjuna on his duty. In today's time, other than the *Gita*'s original interpreters, it's easy to read as Sri Madhusudan Sai has provided his interpretation in a *Shri Gita* summary.

In his series *Bhagavad Gita- A Summary* by Sri Madhusudhan Sai, he talks about the *Gita*'s teachings and relates them to everyday life. Madhusudhan emphasizes that the *Gita* is not and shouldn't be seen as a historical or religious document; it is a live guide that is there to help humans of any time to understand the intricacies of life. Aspects like selfless action, spiritual wisdom, detachment, and surrendering to the Divine are highlighted in the interpretation. He sees the exchanges between Krishna and Arjuna in the form of a dialogue as more than a philosophical dialogue, but as a transformational dialogue depicting the inner

struggle of ignorance and enlightenment. He urges the readers to strive for a pure, service, and inner clarity, and strive towards the ultimate goal of moksha, liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

3. Comparative Thematic Analysis

3.1 *The Spiritual Journey*

Both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Bhagavad Gita* capture the idea of the spiritual journey, which is a transformative, path-shaped departure from enslavement to freedom, ignorance to enlightenment. Each text is grounded in a different religious perspective, and both contain the idea of spiritual growth requiring struggle, some degree of inner conflict, divine assistance, and self-transformation.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the journey is both literal and allegorical. Christian, the protagonist, forsakes the City of Destruction, which is sin personified, and begins a difficult pilgrimage towards the Celestial City, which symbolizes Heaven or divine salvation. In the course of the journey, Christian comes across many allegorical places and characters that capture the inner spiritual conditions: the Slough of Despond, which is Despair, Vanity Fair, which is Worldly Temptation and the Delectable Mountains which are the high points of spiritual insight. The journey, in all its details, is both profound and physical, psychological and deeply Theological, reflecting Bunyan's Puritan belief that salvation is a process of sanctification that is not only a struggle, but a lifetime of effort requiring faith and divine grace.

The journey in the *Bhagavad Gita* is more philosophical than geographical. As Arjuna stands on the Kurukshetra battlefield, he is frozen in doubt, conflict, and sorrow as he considers fighting family members. His crisis captures the essence of the human condition: the conflict between duty and emotion, and action and stillness, virtue and attachment. As Arjuna's divine charioteer, Krishna fights against the mental turmoil with higher truths: the soul's eternity (atman), death's illusion, the necessity of dharma (righteous duty), and devotion's path of detachment.

Unlike Bunyan's Christian, who embarks on an outward journey, Arjuna transforms from within. His 'journey' represents the shifts in consciousness—he becomes clear-minded from confusion, and transforms fear into faith. There are structural differences in structure, yet both paths are linked in spiritual purpose. Christian's way and Arjuna's field serve as metaphors for the ordeals facing the human soul in search of truth. Each starts in a state of spiritual crisis--the Christian tortured by load and sin, while Arjuna twists under the leaden hand of his own despair and moral struggle. Both are given help from heaven--Christian getting it from Evangelist and other figures of speech, and Arjuna from Krishna himself. And both achieve a kind of liberation at last: when Christian gains sole access to paradise, Arjuna attains a definitive psychological perspective and readiness for action under divine will.

Thus, no place is more appropriate for the spiritual theme common to both texts than that of a journey. This kind of Journey not only traverses space or dialogue, but more profoundly changes the individual's Moral realm. Both narratives also show that whether through external pilgrimage or internal awakening of the

people, the truth is hard to come by. And yet with guidance from divine light wisdom, Heaven will one day eventually beckon all living beings home.

3.2 Trials and Temptations

Confronting trials and temptations—those moral, emotional, and spiritual tests that test the seeker's faith, clarity, and commitment—is a crucial component of both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. In addition to being outward barriers, these difficulties also represent internal conflict and the universal human condition.

Christian's journey in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is replete with dangerous situations meant to test his mettle. Every trial is a moral peril, from Vanity Fair, where he is ridiculed for his faith and tempted by worldly pleasures, to the Slough of Despond, where he almost drowns in doubt and despair. Characters like Talkative, who poses as spiritually wise but lacks genuine piety, and Apollyon, a demonic figure who physically attacks Christians, serves to highlight Bunyan's point that temptation can take many forms and that one can only overcome it with the help of scripture, discernment, and divine intervention.

Although the trials are externalized in striking allegorical scenes, they represent internal conflicts between doubt, pride, fear, and vanity. Christian's ability to overcome these obstacles confirms the Puritan notion of perseverance via faith and the constant vigilance required of the believer.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, on the other hand, depicts Arjuna's trial as a deep internal conflict. He is tempted by grief, compassion, and a fear of moral failure rather than by demonic forces or worldly diversions. Arjuna struggles to balance his warrior duty and his emotional ties when he is faced with the possibility of going to war against his friends, family, and teachers. He is tempted to seek out false renunciation and neglect his obligations. According to Krishna, this is a more profound kind of delusion; what appears to be compassion is a kind of spiritual ignorance. The battle between cosmic responsibility and personal emotion is Arjuna's trial, and the mind itself is his battlefield.

The notion that adversity is essential to spiritual development unites these two depictions. Arjuna and Christian must confront their temptations to overcome them rather than run away from them. Trials strengthen a Christian's character and increase his reliance on God in Bunyan's story. In the *Gita*, Arjuna's crisis catalyzes him to learn about himself and receive divine wisdom. The difficulties in both texts are necessary to the journey, not just a means to an end.

Additionally, both pieces stress how trials frequently come in disguise. Characters like Mr. Worldly Wiseman and Ignorance, who advocate for ostensibly simple alternatives to the real path, are examples of how temptation in *The Pilgrim's Progress* can seem benign, even holy.

Similarly, Krishna exposes Arjuna's compassion and non-violence in the Bhagavad Gita as veils that conceal his uncertainty and terror. According to both writers, the most difficult spiritual trials are frequently the most subtle. In the end, these texts' temptations and trials show that the spiritual path is not straightforward. It requires discernment, fortitude, and surrender.

Both Christians and Arjuna, under the guidance of divine wisdom, develop via struggle and come out stronger and closer to the ultimate goal, whether they are facing demonic forces or internal conflict.

3.3 Faith and Devotion

The main spiritual forces that keep the main characters in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bhagavad Gita is based on faith and devotion. While presented in different ways in Christian and Hindu theological traditions, both texts emphasize that overcoming challenges, resolving internal conflict, and achieving the ultimate purpose of human life require unwavering devotion to the Divine and faith in spiritual principles. Faith serves as the cornerstone of the Christian journey in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. A Christian's progress is contingent upon his belief in the promise of salvation from the moment he reads the book (which is a metaphor for the Bible) and recognizes the gravity of his sin. He puts his faith in God's grace, as made clear by scripture, rather than in human strength or worldly knowledge.

Even in the face of violence, temptation, or despair, he remains steadfast in his devotion despite being put to the test on numerous occasions. Faith is portrayed as active perseverance—a persistent, trusting response to divine guidance even in the absence of comfort or clarity, rather than passive belief. Prayer, humility, repentance, and obedience are characteristics of a devoted Christian. Bunyan highlights that faith is difficult and must persevere in the face of suffering, loneliness, or fear.

For instance, Christian's faith is the only thing that keeps him going when he encounters Giant Despair in Doubting Castle or traverses the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He is protected from despair by his faith in God's promises and the Celestial City's hope. Puritan theology, which views faith as a gift from God that enables a believer to walk by spiritual sight rather than by material evidence, is consistent with Bunyan's portrayal. Along with karma yoga (selfless action) and jnana yoga (spiritual knowledge), bhakti (devotion) is one of the three main spiritual paths mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita. Arjuna learns from Lord Krishna that the most direct and personal way to become one with the Divine is to offer pure devotion, which is given without pride, ego, or selfish desire. Arjuna gains shraddha, or strong faith, in Krishna's wisdom and the rightness of his duty as he hears his teachings. He can act by dharma and overcome doubt due to his faith.

Arjuna's devotion progresses from bewilderment and emotional attachment to surrender and self-transcendence, in contrast to Christianity, which aims for individual salvation from sin. He clearly states at the end of the conversation, "My delusion is gone, I have regained my memory; I am firm now, free from doubt, and I will act according to Your word" (Bhagavad Gita 18:73). Krishna responds by telling him that

a devotee who completely surrenders is never lost and that even a small amount of devotion can shield one from intense fear. Devotion is further humanized as a reciprocal relationship with the Divine in Sri Madhusudan Sai's summary. Krishna is a friend, a teacher, and an indwelling presence who invites the devotee to acknowledge the divinity within themselves. He is neither aloof nor abstract.

The core of spiritual transformation is this intimate, loving devotion. Both texts portray faith and dedication as dynamic, transformative forces, despite their theological differences. Christians walk by faith rather than sight, and Arjuna obeys God's will rather than seeking reward. Faith provides purpose in action, meaning in suffering, and fortitude in the face of hardship. In both journeys, the inner fire of devotion—steadfast, personal, and surrendered—leads to the destination rather than knowledge alone.

3.4 The Nature of Good and Evil

The themes of good and evil are extensively explored in both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, not only as external forces but also as moral decisions and spiritual states that influence a person's soul's destiny. Both Christian dualism and Hindu dharma present a moral landscape in which the individual must continually choose between the higher path and the spiritual downfall, even though these ideas are articulated within different theological frameworks. Good and evil are frequently personified as characters and embodied in symbolic locations in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, where they are presented in allegorical form. Some characters—Apollyon, Giant Despair, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman—stand in for spiritual perils, sins, and false teachings, while others—Evangelist, Faithful, and Hopeful—represent virtues like truth, loyalty, and perseverance.

Bunyan establishes a stark moral dichotomy: one must either follow the straight and narrow path of righteousness or be misled into sin and ruin. Evil is a constant danger to the soul's journey and is not merely a philosophical idea. The stakes are high—losing salvation could result from slipping into sin, complacency, or spiritual arrogance. Bunyan does, however, also demonstrate how evil frequently poses as virtue.

For example, Vanity Fair is a trap for those who lack spiritual awareness, despite its dazzling pleasures and amiable merchants. Ignorance and other characters appear to be devout but lack a genuine grasp of grace. Bunyan highlights that evil is most dangerous when it seems respectable or even religious through these nuanced depictions.

However, genuine goodness frequently necessitates humility, sacrifice, and a readiness to endure hardship for the sake of truth. The ideas of dharma (righteous duty) and adharma (unrighteousness) provide a more philosophical foundation for the *Bhagavad Gita*'s conception of good and evil. Alignment with the eternal order of the cosmos is what defines goodness, not just moral behavior. Arjuna's predicament stems from his ambiguity regarding what is morally right—is it better to fight or to abstain from violence? According to Krishna, deeds are neither good nor bad in and of themselves; what counts are the motivation behind them, the lack of ego, and the fulfillment of one's obligations without regard for the outcome. To explain

human propensities toward good or evil, the Gita also presents the three gunas, or attributes of nature: *tamas* (ignorance and inertia), *rajas* (passion and activity), and *sattva* (purity and harmony). While *tamasic* actions, which are based on cruelty, delusion, or laziness, bind the soul to suffering, a *sattvic* mind, which is centered on truth, compassion, and self-discipline, leads to liberation. Good and evil are, therefore, conditions of the soul that are influenced by one's awareness, self-control, and alignment with divine wisdom rather than being absolute categories.

According to Sri Madhusudan Sai's commentary, self-realization and service to others are the sources of true goodness, while forgetting one's divine nature is the source of true evil. In this sense, evil is the internal delusion (*maya*) that keeps a person from seeing the truth, rather than an external foe.

Despite their disparate conceptualizations, the two texts have one important thing in common: the conflict between good and evil is mostly internal. Both Christian and Arjuna must learn to identify and reject falsehood, get over fear and doubt, and align themselves with divine will, whether this is demonstrated through battles with demonic figures or internal conflicts on the battlefield. Being good is not a passive quality; it calls for discernment, bravery, and dedication.

On the other hand, evil frequently seems alluring but eventually results in spiritual stagnation or devastation. Because the real struggle is waged within the soul rather than the outside, both Bunyan and the Bhagavad Gita exhort the seeker to live a life of moral clarity, spiritual integrity, and unwavering vigilance.

3.5 Salvation and Liberation: The Ultimate Spiritual Goal

The idea of arriving at a supreme spiritual state—a location or state that signifies the conclusion of the seeker's journey—is the culmination of both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bhagavad Gita. This is salvation, or the soul's entrance into the Celestial City, which is a metaphor for Heaven and eternal life with God in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *Moksha*, or freedom from the cycle of birth and death, and a return to the eternal reality of the Self (*Atman*) united with the Supreme (*Brahman* or Krishna). These are the objectives of the Bhagavad Gita. These objectives both signify the union with the Divine and the transcendence of worldly existence, despite the differences in theological interpretations.

The culmination of Christian's protracted and difficult journey in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is his arrival at the Celestial City. The Christian conception of heaven, where the soul is set free from sin, agony, and mortal struggle, is symbolized by this city. Although there are many challenges along the way to salvation, the faithful are ultimately rewarded with eternal joy and divine communion. A Christian's path is earned via perseverance, repentance, and faith in God's grace rather than just good deeds. Bunyan highlights that people who resist temptation, hold fast to their beliefs, and have faith in the promise of Christ's redemption will be saved, which is a gift from God. It is the soul's restoration in the everlasting kingdom of God.

This moment is vividly depicted in the story. Christian is terrified as he crosses the last river, which represents death, but he finds solace in the knowledge that God has promised him. Christians are joyfully greeted as they enter the Celestial City, which is a reward for them steadfast faith and spiritual perseverance.

Christian eschatology is the foundation of Bunyan's intensely personal theology of salvation, which holds that salvation is the soul's ultimate goal, dependent on a life of moral struggle, directed by scripture, and maintained by faith. Moksha, or freedom from samsara, the never-ending cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, is the spiritual objective described in the Bhagavad Gita. Moksha is a state of consciousness where the soul recognizes its eternal oneness with the Divine, rather than a physical location like Heaven.

Krishna's teachings state that self-awareness, detachment, and surrender to God are the paths to this liberation rather than merely following rituals. Even the most sinful people can achieve moksha if they fully surrender with love and devotion, Krishna tells Arjuna. The Gita emphasizes inner transformation as the main strategy for achieving the goal, in contrast to Bunyan's focus on pilgrimage through adversity. Arjuna's ability to overcome ego, emotion, and attachment is put to the test on the battlefield. His ultimate triumph will come from

gaining spiritual stability and inner clarity rather than from vanquishing his adversaries. Arjuna's fear vanishes when he follows Krishna's instructions, and he rises to act altruistically, not for his benefit, but under the will of God.

According to Sri Madhusudan Sai's summary, moksha is the recognition of one's divinity. Liberation is realizing that the Divine is within, not running away from the world. This insight changes one's behavior, relationships, and way of living. It is the accomplishment of life's purpose rather than its demise. Both texts affirm that the soul is meant for something greater than worldly existence, even though they use different expressions—liberation in the Gita and heaven in Bunyan's work. The journey involves a radical reorientation of the self—away from ignorance, fear, and ego, and toward truth, love, and union with the Divine—rather than merely morality or religious observance.

Thus, the universal yearning for transcendence—the wish to return to a state of eternal peace and divine connection, to transcend suffering and impermanence—is symbolized by salvation and liberation. Despite being influenced by different traditions, both Christians and Arjuna eventually arrive at a state of spiritual fulfillment that validates the sacred purpose of humanity.

4. Literary Devices: Allegory and Dialogue

Their unique use of literary structure to communicate profound spiritual truths is one of the most potent connections between *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bhagavad Gita, despite their stark cultural and theological differences. While the Bhagavad Gita uses dialogue, especially the philosophical exchange between Arjuna and Krishna, to explore the nature of existence, duty, and divinity, *The Pilgrim's Progress* uses allegory to personify moral values and inner struggles. These techniques are essential tools that influence the audience's perception and experience of the spiritual journey; they are not merely literary devices.

4.1 Allegory in *The Pilgrim's Progress*

One of the most well-known and enduring pieces of Christian allegory in the English language is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Each character, setting, and event in the story symbolizes a spiritual truth or a phase of the spiritual path. By using this method, Bunyan can take abstract theological ideas—like sin, salvation, tenacity, and grace—and turn them into concrete situations that readers can relate to on an emotional level.

Characters like Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Christian, Faithful, Hopeful, Evangelist, and Giant Despair are more than just fictional; they represent moral principles, spiritual struggles, and psychological states. For instance, when Christian falls into the Slough of Despond, it mirrors the real emotional pitfall of despair that can occur early in spiritual life:

"This miry Slough is such a place as cannot be mended..."

— Here, Bunyan emphasizes how hopelessness can trap the soul before it truly begins its journey (Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*).

Likewise, Christian's battle with Apollyon is a dramatic representation of spiritual warfare:

"I am come from the City of Destruction... to the place of deliverance."

— Christian's declaration reaffirms his faith-driven resistance to evil, framing life as a journey against temptation and doubt.

The locations in the story—Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, the Celestial City, and the Slough of Despond—reflect the difficulties believers face in the real world, both morally and spiritually. Vanity Fair, for example, critiques materialism and worldly distraction, symbolizing the superficial temptations that derail sincere seekers.

By relating to Christian's journey, Bunyan's allegorical structure encourages readers to self-reflect on their own spiritual condition. He can also critique false paths, like materialism or shallow religiosity, through allegory without naming specific people or institutions. This gives his narrative a timeless and universal quality, allowing it to transcend its 17th-century Puritan origins and resonate with modern readers across faith traditions.

4.2 Dialogue in the *Bhagavad Gita*

The *Bhagavad Gita*, on the other hand, is told entirely through dialogue—a profound theological and philosophical discussion between Lord Krishna, the warrior prince Arjuna's divine charioteer and guide. This conversational format allows for a dynamic exploration of doubt, fear, duty, and truth. Arjuna's moral paralysis on the battlefield of Kurukshetra reflects a universal human crisis:

"My limbs fail me, my mouth is parched, my body trembles, and my hair stands on end..." (Gita 1.29)

— This moment of existential dread represents the human tendency to freeze in the face of ethical complexity and inner conflict.

Krishna's responses begin as practical counsel—urging Arjuna to do his duty as a warrior (kshatriya)—but evolve into profound spiritual revelations. One of the foundational shlokas in this progression is:

"Karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana..." (Gita 2.47)

(You have the right to perform your duties, but not to the fruits of your actions.)

This line captures the heart of karma yoga, or selfless action, highlighting detachment from outcomes.

The Gita introduces key paths like karma yoga (path of action), bhakti yoga (path of devotion), and jnana yoga (path of knowledge). As Krishna explains:

"Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, O Arjuna, at that time I manifest Myself on earth." (Gita 4.7)

This affirms the divine role in restoring dharma—a central tenet of Hindu belief.

Toward the end, the Gita offers its most direct call for spiritual surrender:

"Sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja..." (Gita 18.66)

(Abandon all forms of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.)

This moment completes Arjuna's inner journey—from confusion to clarity, from fear to faith.

Unlike Bunyan's external pilgrimage, the Gita focuses on internal spiritual awakening, and its dialogical form captures the intimacy and evolution of the relationship between teacher and seeker. The unfolding nature of dialogue allows for paradox, synthesis, and depth, as Krishna encourages both action and detachment, individual effort and divine grace. These apparent contradictions are not meant to be resolved with rigid conclusions but to reflect the complexity of spiritual truth.

4.3 Bridging the Two: Form Serving Purpose

Despite their apparent differences, dialogue and allegory both have the same ultimate purpose: To enlighten the reader or listener to spiritual truths. While the Bhagavad Gita depicts the internal dialogue as the means to external action, The Pilgrim's Progress depicts the external journey as reflecting the inner transformation. Both formats promote participation and introspection. Where am I on the path? It is a question that Bunyan's readers ponder. Which temptations have I encountered? Those who listen to the Gita ask: What is my dharma? Am I

behaving wisely or out of ego? The texts transform into soul-mirrors in addition to being stories.

Additionally, both strategies enable a broad audience to access the texts. While dialogue offers philosophical depth in a relatable and humane manner, allegory reduces complex theology to narrative.

Their literary styles—the Gita's emphasis on inner discernment and universal truth, and Bunyan's emphasis on moral clarity and perseverance reflect their respective cultural priorities.

Conclusion:

A comparison between Sri Madhusudan Sai's summary of the Bhagavad Gita and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* shows that, despite coming from different historical and religious backgrounds, both works have a deep concern for the journey of the human soul toward the Divine. Every work tackles universal themes differently, including the struggles of spiritual development, the conflict between good and evil, the need for faith and devotion, and the ultimate goal of salvation or liberation.

Using characters, settings, and symbolic struggles, *The Pilgrim's Progress* employs allegory to depict the journey of the Christian believer from sin to salvation. Its moral clarity and intensely personal understanding of faith are what give it its power. Every believer's experience of struggling with doubt, overcoming worldly temptation, and finding rest in God's grace is symbolized by the Christian journey. On the other hand, the Bhagavad Gita engages readers in philosophical discussion, particularly as it is summarized by Sri Madhusudan Sai. The internal conflict of every person who seeks truth amid the moral chaos of life is reflected in Arjuna's internal turmoil, which is resolved by Krishna's divine counsel. The inner path is emphasized by the Gita's framework of karma, dharma, and self-realization, which promotes spiritual wisdom, moral behavior, and submission to the Divine.

Ultimately, both texts use moral resolve, unwavering devotion, and disciplined effort to lead the reader toward transcendence, whether it be the Celestial City or the state of moksha. The Gita's internal metamorphosis and Bunyan's external journey show that, despite differences in form and doctrine, the spiritual core is strikingly similar: life is a test of character, and its ultimate goal is the soul's awakening to its divine nature. In addition to bridging two significant religious-literary traditions, this comparative analysis upholds humanity's common moral and spiritual concerns. These texts serve as a reminder that the pursuit of truth, goodness, and divine connection is a universal endeavor that cuts across time, culture, and creed in a world that is becoming more and more divided.

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