# THE PATH LESS TRAVELED : A SOFTWARE DEVELOPER'S JOURNEY WITH GEETA PARIWAR



The year was 2021, and the world was in the grip of a pandemic. Fear was palpable in the air, every cough was a potential threat, and the outside world seemed like a battlefield.

In the past few years, my family had been shattered by grief. We were still recovering from the loss of my father when, within a six months period this year, I lost my mother and younger sister as well. It was a triple blow that left us all Shattered. At my house, we often had health emergencies, and my own health wasn't doing so well either.

One day, while engrossed in my work, I heard my wife reciting Geeta shlokas. She was attending an online class. While I wouldn't label myself as naturally skeptical, the recent surge of self-proclaimed gurus promising instant enlightenment had certainly made me cautious.

Cyberspace had been overflowed with dubious promises: instant Kundalini awakening, remote chakra cleansings, and one-click solutions to life's problems - all at a premium price. So, when I heard my wife chanting the Bhagavad Gita from her computer one afternoon, skepticism was my first reaction. Imagine my surprise - an online platform dedicated to teaching the Bhagavad Gita, with hundreds of teachers reaching out to lakhs of students!

Recitation of sacred texts, including the Bhagavad Gita, had always been a part of my upbringing, so I wasn't much interested in most of these online classes. But this class was different. Now, I'm no expert, but the teacher's voice immediately struck a chord. Calm, composed, and radiating a quiet understanding, she explained the shlokas in a way that resonated. Unlike the online gurus promising quick fixes, this teacher focused on clear pronunciation and ensuring everyone grasped the meaning.

The teacher was composed, calm, understanding, patient, and was reciting in

perfect way. she was also repeating the shlokas as many times as needed for student's understanding.

She wasn't selling; she was sharing. Maybe it was the genuine care in the teacher's voice, or the patient repetition for those needing a little extra help. Maybe it was the way the class fostered a sense of community, even through the screen. Whatever it was, I found myself captivated.

Intrigued, I confessed to my wife, "This teacher seems genuine. Maybe you should continue with this class - it's a brilliant way to perfect pronunciation."



While I encouraged her, the idea of joining myself hadn't quite taken root yet.

One day, while my wife was engrossed in watching "आओ गीता सेवी बनें" (Come, let's become Geeta Volunteers), I overheard that the speakers were inviting individuals with programming experience to offer their seva in Geeta Pariwar.

As someone with decades of experience in the software field, I saw this as a golden opportunity to combine my skills with my devotion. There was just one catch - I had to join the L1 level to learn the Geeta first. And so, with a mix of curiosity and excitement, I signed up for the beginner level.

Little did I know, joining LearnGeeta online training classes would be a turning point.

The moment I joined the LearnGeeta classes, I was struck by the divine atmosphere that enveloped the virtual space.

The virtual classroom buzzed with a unique energy. There were people from all walks of life, united by their devotion. The trainers were sincere and knowledgeable, the atmosphere was electric, with a sense of discipline and respect that was evident even through the computer screen.

I was amazed by the diversity of the people I met. One of the most heartwarming aspects of Geeta Pariwar has been witnessing the sheer joy on the faces of older learners. Many, in their twilight years, were finally fulfilling a lifelong wish to delve into the wisdom of the Gita. Others, who had never been formally exposed to Sanskrit, were now confidently

grappling with its ancient verses. Their enthusiasm was infectious, a testament to the timeless quality of the Gita's message. It served as a stark reminder that the pursuit of knowledge and spiritual growth has no age limit.

Discipline in the online classroom and WhatsApp group ensured everyone's focus remained sharp. We addressed each other as "Bhaiya" and "Didi," fostering a sense of respectful family.

The weekly Vivechan Satras, led by esteemed scholars like resp. Shri Sanjay Malpani Bhaiya and resp. Shri Ashu Goyal Bhaiya, were a highlight. Their insightful explanations illuminated the Gita's profound wisdom, making even complex concepts clear and relatable. The insightful Q&A sessions following the Vivechan Satras enriched attendees by clearing doubts and offering solace through the Gita's wisdom. LearnGeeta's digital platform bridged the gap between distance and devotion, fostering spiritual development for a global audience.

The platform also proved to be a solace for those coping with loss. The global pandemic, with its devastating toll, left many families reeling from the sudden absence of loved ones. The Gita's profound teachings on the impermanence of the physical world and the eternal nature of the soul offered comfort and a sense of perspective during these



challenging times.

Despite my initial reservations, I found myself growing more and more interested in the Geeta as the weeks went by. Even though I couldn't attend every Vivechan satra due to time constraints, I always made sure to tune in whenever I could. And when I did, I was never disappointed. The discussions were always thought-provoking, and the question and answer sessions were a treasure trove of knowledge and insight.

Due to my busy schedule, committing to a fixed daily seva schedule with LearnGeeta was simply out of the question. So, I waited, hopeful, for an opportunity to utilize my software development skills, a chance to offer seva in a way that fit my circumstances.

Thankfully, Geeta Pariwar soon threw open its doors. I had the privilege of working on several projects here, each

one like a stepping stone on my path of learning and growth. But the one that truly tested the limits of my abilities was the automatic message generation in nine languages! It was complex, demanding, and ultimately, incredibly rewarding. The initial setup of the Learning Management System (LMS) was another challenge I relished. In addition to these projects, I actively developed several Google Apps to address specific needs.

The true culmination of my efforts was creating the first version of http://vivechan.learngeeta.com. I vividly remember the day Shri Ashu Bhaiya ji announced its launch. It felt like a divine acceptance of my service by Bhagvan Shri Krishna himself.

These projects became my refuge during the pandemic's darkest days. As loneliness threatened to consume us all, they were a fortress, shielding me from despair. They shielded me from loneliness and fear, providing a sense of purpose and connection when the world felt like it was falling apart. It kept me afloat, my mind occupied in a divine cause, a welcome distraction from the storm raging outside - and sometimes, even within. Family losses - my parents and sister - had left a void, and health anxieties loomed constantly. But focusing on these projects kept me grounded, my mind occupied with a purpose that transcended my personal struggles.



During online classes, I observed that Geeta Pariwar's students were remarkably diverse. Some, like me, sought solace, while others pursued different goals. Many elderly participants, beaming with joy, learned the Gita for the first time. Young adults explored the ancient scripture with curiosity.

What further cemented my association with Geeta Pariwar were the stories I encountered. There were those who had weathered the storm of personal tragedies, losing loved ones to the cruel grip of the pandemic. Witnessing their resilience, their unwavering faith in the face of adversity, was a humbling experience.

In today's digital landscape, children are often confined to their phones, consumed by the relentless scroll of

social media. Here at Geeta Pariwar, I witnessed a heartwarming counter-narrative. many parents expressed immense gratitude for the platform. The Gita, they explained, offered their children a much-needed escape from the virtual world.

One of the most inspiring aspects of Geeta Pariwar is the prominent role of women in leadership positions. From WhatsApp group admins and pracharaks to coordinators, translators, and social media influencers, women of all ages are at the forefront of this digital gurukul (Online classes). Their contributions extend beyond administrative roles, with a majority of trainers also being women. This nurturing environment reflects the Gita's message of empowerment for all.

Geeta Pariwar's strength lies in its leadership. A team of accomplished doctors, Managers, Business Owners and successful Entrepreneurs guides the organization, ensuring well-informed decisions and a platform that effectively reaches its dispersed student base.

But Geeta Pariwar isn't just about strong leadership. Knowledge is power, and Geeta Pariwar takes this notion seriously. The organization boasts a significant number of highly educated individuals - Doctors, PhDs, and other scholars - who occupy key positions in Geeta Pariwar. Their expertise ensures the highest literary quality in all learning materials and discourses (vivechans). The depth of knowledge readily available was truly inspiring.

This journey with LearnGeeta has been an eye-opener. It's shown me that genuine spiritual learning exists online, and that sometimes, the most profound experiences come from the most unexpected places. In a world often consumed by the transient and the trivial, Geeta Pariwar reminds us of the enduring power of knowledge, faith, and the timeless wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita. So, if you're looking to deepen your understanding of the Bhagavad Gita, or simply seeking a community of like-minded individuals, I highly recommend checking out LearnGeeta. You might just be surprised at what you discover.

-Sunil Kapdi , Mumbai

