

GITA PHILOSOPHY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON NEPALI POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

The people of Nepal have witnessed different political movements in the political history of Nepal. The political movements are influenced by different philosophies. Gita philosophy as well has marked distinct impact in the politics of Nepal. The people of Nepal had to bear a lot of injustice, oppression and exploitation during Rana rule. Although the governments prior to Rana rule were also not so much democratic, to some extent they were directed to public welfare. At the time of Rana rule there had taken place many reformations in global politics, but Nepali people were denied off very common citizen rights. So, there was a need for a democratic movement in Nepal. In the campaigns for democratic movements then, there was a very significant impact of Gita philosophy. It is found from this study that four martyrs of 1997BS and founder leaders of Nepali Congress and Nepal Communist Party were influenced by the ideas of Gita philosophy and the general public has a great faith on the Gita philosophy. Gita philosophy has formed the foundations for the democratic movement in Nepal. And even after the establishment of democracy in Nepal, there were series of political changes in Nepal. And in the revolutions or campaigns for restoration of democracy or for the republic, there has been a role of different political leaders and as many of the first-generation leaders are still in active politics, we can find direct or indirect influence of Gita philosophy in Nepalese politics. Though the later generations of leadership seem to have less knowledge about Gita, their activities and the political interests matched with the principles of Gita philosophy.

Keywords: Constituent, Diamond, Influence, Philosophy, Revolutionary.

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BACKGROUND

The modern political history can be traced since the start of Rana regime in Nepal (1990-2007 BS). This rule is defamed as dictatorial, familial, fearsome and dark period of injustice in the political history of Nepal. People were highly suppressed and deprived of political, social and other rights (Dahal 2017). Therefore, leaders like Madhav Raj Joshi, Shukra Raj Shastri, Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ram Hari Sharma, etc. had started to make people aware of their political and civil rights and motivated them to fight against Rana rule from the year of 1993 (Gautam 2004). Members of Nepal *Praja Parishad* had taken oath for ending Rana rule and establishing democracy in Nepal by placing the book of Gita on their head (Acharya 2012). Shukra Raj Shastri delivered very highly influential speech on Shreemad Bhagavad Gita at the '*dabali*' (open theater) of Indra Chowk on Mangsir 13, 1995 BS (Upadhyaya 1953). Later he was arrested and imprisoned in 1995 being accused of inciting people in the name of spreading message of the Gita. The great warrior, who declared a fight against the government at Kathmandu, had addressed the people saying:

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥ (गीता, २ : ३७)

Hato va prapsyasi swargam jitva va bhoksyase mahim.
Tasmad uttistha kaunteya yuddhaya krita-nischayah. (Gita 2: 37)

Meaning, Lord Krishna told Arjuna that if he was killed in the battlefield, he would attain heavenly abode, and if he won, he would enjoy the earthly rule. Therefore, he should fight with determination.

The main purpose of Shastri's lecture was to clarify the material benefit of Gita philosophy. "If we die, we go to the realm of martyr and if we win, we can bring change in the country. Let's place the life at stake for people's right" (Singh 1994). Shukra Raj Shastri was determined to accept death for justice instead of sticking to life and asking forgiveness in front of Rana rule. He was a brave hero, revolutionary and patriotic who was imprisoned by the Ranas for making people aware of their right at the center of Kathmandu, Indra Chowk, and for opposing the government publicly (Pradhan 1994). These two events - Shukraraj's speech and oath by the members of Praja Parishad formally started movement for democracy in Nepal. These incidents prove that Gita philosophy is inseparable from democratic movement of Nepal (Sharma 1994).

Rana rule was also based on religion. So, like the proverb 'diamond cuts diamond' Shukra Raj also used religion to fight against Rana rule. His public speech on Gita philosophy is the founding pillar of political movement in Nepal. Gita philosophy is based on dialecticism, and spiritual philosophy (Giri 2011). It can also be analyzed from material point of view. The war of Mahabharat had resulted between two families, had abundantly used arms and ammunitions. War itself is a material action. Lord Krishna, through the means of Gita philosophy, has justified the war of Mahabharata from the point of view of spiritualism. So, in Gita philosophy, life philosophy has been defined differently by intermixing spiritualism and materialism and war with truth and justice. The world is based on dialecticism. There are two types of dialecticism: spiritual dialecticism and material dialecticism. Tradition of Hindu philosophical thought has thought of spiritual dialecticism. There are two classes in human society: ruling class and ruled class or powerful and powerless. Two sides of the war of Mahabharata represent two classes. The Pandavas represent justice, right conduct and rights whereas the Kauravas stand for oppressive class. Kauravas had denied the right of the Pandavas. The Pandavas have been deprived of their state and compelled to participate in the series of conflicts and war. Finally, they became successful to get their right and state through the use of arms and ammunitions because they believed that armed revolution is necessary for change and no one can get their right without fighting.

In India, Mahatma Gandhi was influenced by Gita philosophy. He led Indian movement for independence through non-violent resistance or public disobedience and succeeded in bringing independence in India (Ghandi 1960). In India, Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders started their independence movement by being the follower of the Gita philosophy (Aurobindo Philosophy). Nepali political leaders were also engaged in Indian Independence movement. They were influenced by both Gandhi and the Gita philosophy (Kirpapsad 2000). While analyzing Nepali politics during the Rana rule, people represented truth, justice and right whereas dictatorial Rana rule stood for injustice, falsity and oppression. In this research people have been compared to the Pandavas whereas the Rana rulers have been taken as Kauravas. While discussing about the influence of Gita philosophy on Nepali politics, one needs to talk about how political movements started in Nepal, what is the base of the movements. *Nepal Praja Parishad* and *Nagarik Adhikar Samiti* (Committee for Civil Rights) and their campaigns are the founding stone of political movement of

Nepal. Committee for Civil Rights had organized a public mass meeting to reinstate civil and political rights. That event geared the movement and gave way to democracy in 1951. Although there are different scholars who have defined democracy differently, they agree that there must be some common features of democracy. There should be rule of law, constitutionally elected government by public vote, periodical election system, etc. People's sovereign rights, freedom and equality, independent justice system, and multi-party competition are guaranteed in democracy. Good governance is possible only in democracy.

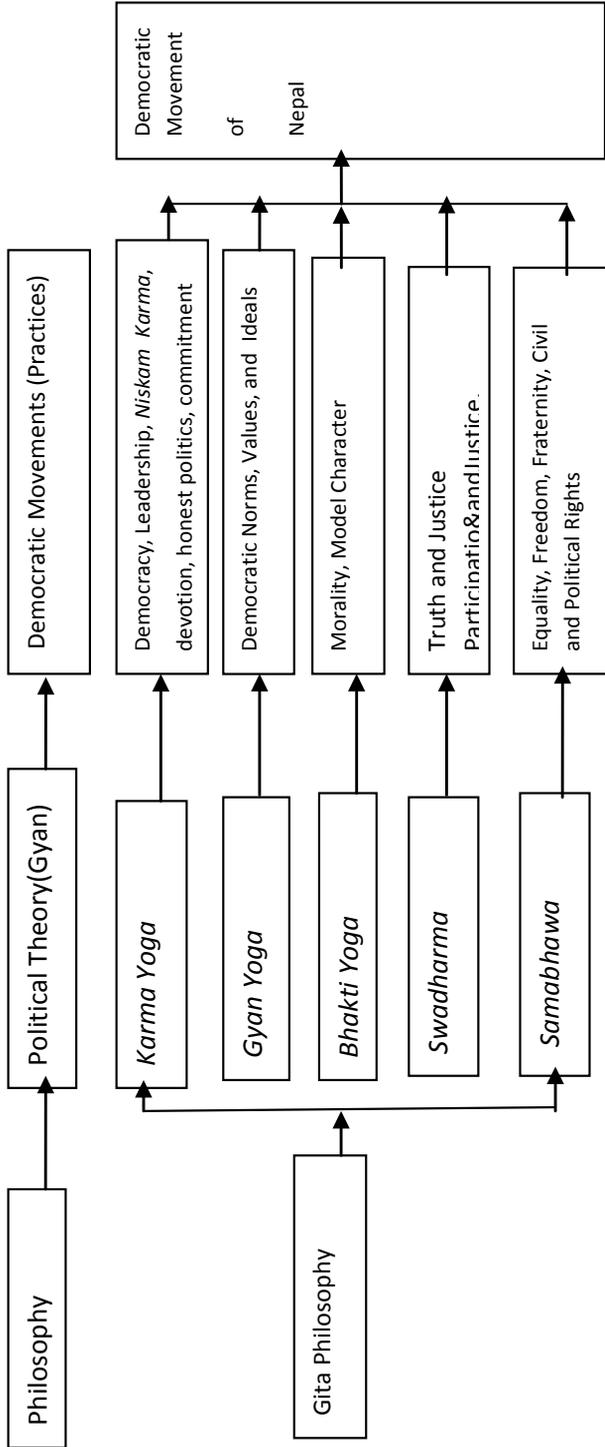
We can realize the direct influence of Gita philosophy in the democratic movement of Nepal to overthrow the autocratic Rana rule. And in the political movements that followed the establishment of democracy in 1951, i.e. political movement for restoration of democracy by overthrowing the party less Panchyat System in 1990 and in political movement for the establishment of republic Nepal in 2006, we can find many indirect traces of the influences of the Gita philosophy.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

Main objective of this article is to explore the influence of Gita Philosophy on Nepali Politics. It also tries to analyze democratic movements and institutionalization of democracy in Nepal. The article is based on more qualitative information collected from secondary sources books, Journals, PhD dissertation etc. and collection of qualitative information based on thematic areas. This article makes a brief description and analysis about Gita philosophy on Nepali politics and democratic movements of Nepal. So, it is descriptive and analytical article.

Conceptual framework

Mainly, in this research study, theoretical concepts of the *yogas* of disinterested action, cognition or transcendental knowledge, devotion, personal duty, immortality of the soul and the feeling of equality have been applied. The impact of Gita Philosophy on different democratic movements of Nepal has been analyzed here (Figure 1).



(Dahal, 2016)

Figure 1 : Conceptual framework

DEMOCRACY AND POST DEMOCRACY PERIOD IN NEPAL

The revolution of 1951 begins the era of democracy in Nepal. After the revolution, democracy was in course of institutionalization. Constituent Assembly (CA) was supposed to draft a new constitution for Nepal. In the meantime, Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1959 was announced, and first general election was held. Nepali Congress got two third majorities (72 of 109) in parliament. Parliamentary leader of Nepali Congress, Bisheswor Prasad Koirala (BP) became the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal. The elected prime minister was expected to promote democratic practices in Nepal. But unfortunately, the then King Mahendra arrested the elected Prime Minister BP Koirala, his cabinet members and other leaders of different political parties. So, Party less Panchayat system started in Nepal (Gautam, 2004). Thus, ten years after the establishment of democracy, Panchayat system was introduced, which obstructed political and civil rights. Because political parties were banned, they were compelled to organize different campaigns and movements for democracy underground. Party less Panchayat system remained almost for thirty years. At last democratic and communist parties made a coalition and started united movement for democracy in 1990 (Rawal 1990). That united movement ended party less Panchayat system and restored democracy in 1990. Although democracy was restored, institutional development of democracy could not take place. There could not be peace and stability in the country, nor could it foster development. The so-called constitutional monarch again tried to gain executive power of the country. King Gyanendra dissolved the parliament and started to rule on his own. The Maoists insurgency was penetrating more and more into different parts of the country. The political parties and the then struggling Maoists got into 12-point agreement to fight against the Monarch jointly. So, in 2006, the then seven parliamentary parties and CPN Maoist called for a protest movement for the establishment of full-fledged democracy, and successfully established republic in Nepal.

GITA PHILOSOPHY ON NEPALI POLITICS

Different philosophies, theories and thoughts have direct and indirect influence on democratic movements of Nepal in one way or other. Gita philosophy is the essence of the Vedas, its supplementary texts and Upanishads. Gita is the universal philosophy and it can be used to study present day society and politics. Institutional development of democracy is impossible without good, ideal and virtuous leaders (Devkota 1998) and

Gita philosophy advocates for virtuous action. An ideal leader is someone who accepts the yoga's of disinterested action (*Niskam Karma*); and devotional service, as mentioned in Gita philosophy, is his life philosophy.

Revolution of 1951, joint mass movements of 1990 and peoples' movement of 2006 were influenced by Gita philosophy. Therefore, those movements became successful. But after the success of those movements, political leaders have failed to keep their promises to people although people had contributed from their part in every movement political parties called for.

In every social movement for justice and liberty in Nepal, we can find significant impacts of Gita philosophy (Giri 2011). The war of the Mahabharata had taken place between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Had the Kauravas given the Pandavas their share of property, the war of Mahabharata would have been averted. Likewise, had Rana rulers allowed people to use their civil rights? Had people's representatives been allowed to rule, those revolutions would not have been necessary. Panchayat system and multi-party system was practiced, Movement of 1990 would have been averted. People would not have marched against Panchayat system. From 1961 to 1990 different political parties staged their protest and movements for the restoration of democracy in the country. Each political party was conducting protests in differently on their own. But after they realized that separate movements would be of no avail, they came to an agreement to stage a united movement against Panchayat system. Puspallal has said that joint movement of Nepal Communist Parties and Nepali Congress is necessary (Puspallal 2013). When they were united, the movement became successful because it was for public welfare. So, it can be said that those movements had the impact of Gita philosophy in a sense that the movements were for justice and people's rule.

Political parties have time and often called for democratic movements in Nepal, in which people participated wholeheartedly. As in the war of the Mahabharata, Arjuna became ready with his miraculous bow for the war after Lord Krishna presented his immense form of '*Bishorup*', similarly, political parties of Nepal had led the movements for making people ultimate sovereign power of the nation. Any rule of people's representative works for well-being of the public. Therefore, democracy or people's rule is a system of governance discussed in Gita philosophy. The people of Nepal taking part in the different political movements were

also influenced by Gandhism. Most of the political parties and its leaders of Nepal were in India during the Indian fight for independence. They actively participated in the movement against the East India Company in India. The campaign was led by Gandhi. And it is known that Gandhi was influenced by Gita philosophy. The same political parties from Nepal which were in Indian than, conducted their campaign against the Ranas from India itself as the Ranas did not allow any sort of political activities in Nepal. Nepali political leaders like B. P. Koirala, Dilli Raman Regmi, Man Mohan Adhikari, Tulsi Lal Amatya, etc. had also actively participated in Indian Independence Movement. Likewise, there was the support, help and well wish of India and Indian leaders in the movement against Rana rule. The leader of 1951 Revolution and the first elected prime minister of Nepal; Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala was influenced by Gita philosophy. The founding general secretary of Communist Party of Nepal, Pushpa Lal also believed that democracy was only possible if all political forces other than Panchayat stood together and struggled together. The sacrificial, ideal and devotional politics of political leaders of Nepal like Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ram Hari Sharma, Shreebhadra Sharma, Man Mohan Adhikari, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Mahendra Narayan Nidhi etc. proved that they were highly influenced by *Niskam Karma* of Gita philosophy (Rimal 1998). It is a glorious ideal of Nepali politics that Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ram Hari Sharma, Ganesh Man Singh were ready to be imprisoned to death with confiscation of their all possessions. So, it is indirectly proved that Gita philosophy has its influence on Nepali politics as well.

One of the lessons of Gita philosophy is to unite and fight for truth and justice. While analyzing the political history of Nepal, it is found that in 1951 people, political parties and the king were united against Rana rule and the movement became successful; in 1990, all political parties got united against the Panchayat system and they became successful to restore democracy. In 2006 also, two out of three major political forces, parliamentary parties and revolting Maoist party came into twelve points agreement to fight against dictatorial monarchy and to establish republic. Traditional autocratic and feudal force led by the monarchy could not prevent the storm of united movement. That movement resulted in a historical and spectacular participation of the people from every profession and strata of life, and defeated monarchy – the traditional feudal force. The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly formally declared Nepal as the republic state and ended monarchy (Nepal Government, Kanun Kitab Babsta Samittee,

2006). As the war of the Mahabharata had taken place when Pandav were denied of their rights/state, similarly democratic movements of Nepal have also been successful because people fought for their unalienable rights which they were denied off by the rulers. Such struggles for the rights are also disinterested actions of the people. Even in those peaceful movements the government mobilized armed forces and many Nepalese have got martyrdom (Panthee 2007). At last dictatorial government could not stand in front of the bare hands of the people and they had to grant people with their rights. In 2006 also, a united movement of parliamentary parties and Maoist defeated the traditional force led by the monarchy. It seemed that sixty years long people's aspiration of drafting a constitution by CA was going to materialize. Unfortunately, the first Constituent Assembly (CA) failed to deliver the promise of a constitution because of the disputes among the political forces that had fought against the tyranny of monarchy. Mainly the disputes were about the form of governance and federalism. The second CA announced the Constitution of Nepal, which has already been promulgated, but still there are some forces dissenting to the constitution (Dahal 2015). Because truth and justice only functions in democracy, Revolution of 1951 was needed. It is only through revolution and movement that civil, political and human rights of the people have been guaranteed (Rawal 1990). Therefore, for that moment revolutions and movements are truth. Truth and justice may mean differently at different times. As in the war of the Mahabharata Pandavas and their supporters fought selflessly, in the same way Nepali people have also selflessly fought for democracy and justice. One should not engage himself into any movement for his personal profit. Yoga of disinterested action emphasizes the welfare of the country, people and all. In the Gita, Lord Krishna has told Arjuna that one gets success if he commits to work with devotion.

In every people's movement there is the influence of Gita philosophy directly or indirectly. There is conflict or strife among people or societies, directly or indirectly. Movements are directed against evils prevailing in the society. This is the philosophy of human life, not only of Gita philosophy. We can find any type of life: global, human, democratic or political in the Gita. In every part of all living entities, the impact of Gita philosophy can be noticed. Gita philosophy is a struggle, a movement. A newly born infant also has to struggle for sucking his mother's breast for sustenance from his mother. There is also Gita philosophy as oxygen pervades everywhere for the sustenance of all living entities, so is the importance and necessity of

Gita philosophy. The Gita is a repository of every kind of knowledge, which never diminishes, rather increases. Anyone can increase his knowledge from that repository (Dahal 2016). Gita philosophy should be implemented in practical life. Because of the effect of Gita philosophy, human being can get rid of passion, desire, anger, arrogance, greed etc. One commits to evil work if he has a desire of wealth, but it is good to have desire of knowledge. Knowledge increases when we use it. Gita philosophy has everything, but it depends on the user how much can he extract from there as per his necessity. Gita philosophy contains all good things. If one applies those things in his life, and follows the path suggested in Gita philosophy, his life becomes happy and pleasing to live.

PRESENT SITUATION OF NEPALI POLITICS

People's movement for democracy in 2006, ended autocratic monarchy, and according to the people's aspirations, parliament of Nepal established republic to be approved later by the first meeting of CA. Historical election for CA was successfully held on 2008 (Chaitra 28, 2064 B. S.). The first meeting of CA held on 2008 (15 Jestha, 2065 BS) approved Nepal as a republic. After the approval of republic Ram Baran Yadav was elected as the first ever President of Nepal. Unfortunately, CA failed to draft a constitution during its prescribed time span, and it was dissolved on 2013 (Jestha 14 2069BS). Second election for CA was held on 2013 (Mangsir 4, 2070BS). After twenty-one months of its second election, CA drafted a constitution and it was promulgated by the President Ram Baran Yadav on 2015 (Ashoj 3, 2072BS). Although there are still some sections dissenting the constitution, it has started functioning just after the promulgation. It is vital that dissenting sides should be brought into consent for the effective implementation of the constitution.

CONCLUSION

Eastern and Western philosophies have their own values, belief systems and ideals and political thoughts have been developed accordingly. Tradition of Nepali political thought has been based on Hindu philosophy and culture. Besides, there are also other thoughts and principles used in Nepali politics and democratic practices.

Shreemad Bhagavad Gita is a philosophy of life. It is human philosophy, and is indiscriminate in terms of tribe, language, culture, ethnicity and religion. This philosophy has become a philosophy for all human being. Political thought has got enough space in Gita philosophy, and

political leaders seem to have accepted the Gita as a political scripture and have conducted their politics accordingly. Eastern philosophy and politics are inseparable, and we can trace that relationship in Nepali politics, too.

Five political theories can be derived from Gita philosophy: Karma yoga, Gyan yoga, Bhakti yoga, Swadharma and Samabhawa. The founder political leaders followed practices like Niskam karma, democratic norms and values, morality, truth and justice, and equality which they learned from Gita philosophy. So, Gita philosophy has influenced Nepali politics to a larger extent in the earlier democratic movements and to a lesser extent in the latter democratic movements.

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