

Bhagwat Gita and Education: Philosophical Premises and Educational Implication

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze and explore the Bhagwat Gita, one of the most influential religious books of Hindu literature in terms of philosophical premises and its educational implication. Similarly different aspects of philosophical thoughts such as metaphysics, epistemology and axiology also are presented with appropriate examples. This article is divided into different parts, dealing with the subject and its scope. The ideas like Jeeva (The being), Ishwora (The God) and Moksha (salvation) are presented clearly, as Gita discusses the relationship between them. Likewise, 'Yoga' and its types as Karma Yoga (Action), Bhakti Yoga (God) and Gyana Yoga (Knowledge) have been clearly explained. In the same way, the educational implication of the Gita concerning the true meaning of education, the ideals of education, the curriculum and the concept of moral education have also been presented. Gita, not merely a religious book, is equally important in the scientific world and modern education system. Almost all individuals have to follow the ethical path of Gita and make their contribution to the shake of humanity and make their lives meaningful by performing their duty without any desire.

Keywords: Philosophical premises, educational implication, yoga (Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga Gyana Yoga) metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, spiritual value, salvation, duty.

Introduction

Shreemad Bhagwat Gita is the epitome of Vedic culture and literature. It is the essence of all Indian scriptures. In this unique holy book, we find a clear analysis of the various Yoga. The relationship between the Jeeva (the being) and Ishwora (God) has been clearly explained in Yoga, viz..., Karma yoga, and Bhakti yoga. All these..... (Chaube &Chaube, 2010).

Bhagwat Gita (hence after 'Gita') is one of the significant epitomes of Vedic culture. It can be taken as an essence of eastern Hindu scriptures. It is a unique holy book dealing with yoga which deals with the relations between the being and the god. Gita is a scripture that talks about action (karma yoga), god (bhakti yoga) and knowledge (gyana yoga) in a systematic way. It is said that Gita is the essence of all the eastern scriptures. It is a collection of unique and unlimited feelings and thoughts. Simply, it could be understood as a dialogue between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjun on the battlefield of Kurukshetra before starting the war. It is a form of poetic narrative/converse. It is an essence or synthesis of the Vedic philosophical thoughts in the form of instruction, a discourse between Guru and Chela. Krishna is the chief speaker, who is the lord of the title –or as the term is variously rendered in translation, the adorable one, the divine one, the blessed one etc. To begin with, the poem opens, he is the charioteer of a young Indian prince named Arjun, who is his cousin, and their conversation takes place in the chariot that made him ready to engage in battle. But as the poem proceeds there is a

gradual revelation of Krishna's real assents, until at length he discloses himself as the full glory of Godhead. Mishra et al. (2010b, p.287).

Gita is a book which suggests one to act, duty should be performed, and one should not be escaped from his duty, it also discusses the gap between knowledge and ignorance. The message Gita convey is to perform their duty without hoping for its return. As there is a saying, "*Karmennebadikaraste Maafalesu Kadachana, Maa Karmafalheturvuma Te Sangost-wokarmani*". It is true that if one is continuously involved in his/her virtuous action, success will be automatically achieved. Continuous devotion may lead to salvation. It is a limitless thought from which different ideas/thoughts/isms have been developed by critics. For example, Shree Shankaracharya advocated knowledge (Gyana yoga), Shree Ramanujacharya invented devotion (bhakti yoga) and Lokamanya Tilaka considered Gita as action/duty (karma yoga) Chaube & Chaube(2010).In the war of Kurukshetra two contending armies of Kauravas and Pandavas were supposed to be drawn up on the battlefield. However, it was the most critical moment that Arjun hesitated to kill the relatives. He faced a difficult situation; his heart failed and his limbs grew faint; when his mouth was dry and his body trembled; his hair stood on; he could not stand his brain began to reel. He could not decide what was right and what was wrong. He was afraid of evil and longed for a master. He wanted to perform his duty but did not know what it was. He would like to give up the fight, he would like to relinquish worldly conquest even if they could give him the triple crown of the three worlds.

Ultimately, lord Krishna made him determined to do his duty for the sake of saving the religion which is to fight against evil to save the religion and humanity. In this way, it teaches us to perform our duty for the sake of humanity and good faith without hoping for any benefit.

Objectives

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To explore the philosophical premises of the Gita.
2. To analyze metaphysical, epistemological and axiological aspects of Gita.
3. To find the educational implication of the Gita.

Methods of Study

The present research work is based on a text-based study. Different books including Bhagwat Gita were consulted intensively. It is an asset of library base research where the information was gathered from the library resources and analyzed and interpreted on its philosophical and educational grounds. It is a short qualitative research based on an interpretivism approach.

Results and discussions

Metaphysical, Epistemological and Axiological aspects in Gita

Metaphysics (Theory of reality)

Concerns with the study of humans, the nature of the universe, truth, and existence is metaphysics, or it refers to the study of the ultimate nature of being. The branch of philosophy deals with the nature of existence, truth and knowledge. It investigates the nature of being and the world. It is fundamentally concerned with explaining the nature of being and the world. It is made of two words: 'meta' and 'physics' means 'beyond' and 'existence' respectively, which

cannot be perceived by sense. It searches for the truth which may be beyond natural existence. The main questions of metaphysics are: What is truth; What is untruth? What is a soul? What is god? Who is the creator of the universe? How was the universe so created? etc. It does not concern about the utility of this truth. It investigates the fundamental elements and processes of this universe.

Ontology

The following ontological ideas can be noticed in Gita.

The existence of god and conscious soul ever exist, God (Ishwara) is the original seed of all the existences, the intelligence of intelligence, and the power of a powerful, embodied soul passes from one body to another and the physical body is destructible but not the soul.

Epistemology (Theory of knowledge)

The study of the logical structure of cognition or knowledge. It concerns the nature and scope of knowledge and whether knowledge is possible or not. The main questions of epistemology are what knowledge is? How knowledge is acquired? What do people know? How do we know? What do we know? Why do we know?

It discusses the sources of knowledge mentioned in the Gita. It is accepted that the following are the sources of knowledge according to Gita or knowledge can be generated by:

Respecting the scientific and spiritual world, devoiding the false ego as the form of knowledge, focusing on the attainment of renunciation of material comfort, inner awakening and self-identification and salvation.

Axiology (Theory of Value)

Deals with the study of value and value judgment. Mainly it classifies knowledge investigated by metaphysics such as ethical-unethical, just-unjust, useful-harmful, rational-irrational etc. It determined the ideals, aims and duties of human life. It prepares a code of conduct for human beings. The norms and values accepted and mentioned in Gita or the main values and norms found in Gita can be mentioned,

Not to kill any creatures including humans (nonviolence), to perform the prescribed duty and attain self-duty (Swadharma), be free from desires and false ego, be free from immoral and offensive activities, control senses, maintain discipline, to live with intense mind and wisdom and to be concentrate on attaining the aim of life i.e. salvation (Moksha).

Philosophical Premises of Gita

1. The chief motivation for free life
2. The door of hell
3. The path toward fall
4. The significance of self-duty

(Chaube & Chaube, 2010)

We do not live in a vacuum. We reside in a very wide environment which is full of complexities and intricacies. There is always an inevitable interaction between us and the environment. This interaction is a sign of life. Every living being is subjected to this interaction.

Of course, variations are found in the interactions of various living creatures. A dog seeing a monkey reacts in a certain way, but a human baby seeing a monkey becomes excited and shows different reactions. Like man, there is an element of intelligence. This element brings a change in the situation. Due to his intelligence, man is not bound to follow a certain path. He can choose from various alternatives before him. This ability to make a choice creates a complex problem. Now arises the issue of policy. The exploration of elements of life attempts to resolve the arisen issues.

When the attachment (Bhava) is very powerful, and it is not momentary, then it is called worldly pleasure (Vishaya). Five worldly pleasures are famous. They are lust (Kam), anger (Krodha), greed (Lobha) delusion (Moha), and pride (Ahankar). Lust, anger and greed are regarded as doors to hell. In the face of these, the intellects become very weak. In all stories, lust (Kama) has been considered blind. When in lust, a person does not look either forward or backward. Anger is generated when lustful desire is not fulfilled. In greed, the intellect, being powerless, becomes a handmaid to attachment and becomes helpful in realizing the objective. In greed, one wants to enjoy the fruit of another man's labour, in the same way as it is the horse who runs, but it is a rider who reaches the destination. In human beings greed is a powerful cause of friction. The domain of greed is much wider than that of lust and anger.

In Gita lust (Kama) has been given the first place in the doors of hell. The word lust may be used both in a narrow and wider sense. Within the wider sense, all types of desires are included in it. A desire or *Kamana* is a basic motivation in human nature. When a desire is unfulfilled we become unhappy and, if possible, we attempt to remove all the obstacles in the way of realizing the same. If our attempt is very brisk, we get angry also. Desire is an element of our human nature. But the things that come within the objectives of our desire are not definite in the beginning. They may be very few or many and of varying nature. The thing for which one has an attachment may not be within the desires of another person. When we feel an attachment to a certain thing that enters into our consciousness and gradually we become more and more conscious about it. When we fail in achieving our desire we get angry. In anger the intellect becomes covered and we are not able to see the concerning thing in the right perspective.

Krishna tells Arjun that a duty (Swadharma) has to be performed for the sake of the duty itself. The desire for outcome and attachment puts down the work from a moral viewpoint. It is said in Gita that it is excellent if one performs his duty, even if the work done is lower than that of any other person. Even to die auspicious while performing one's duty, to act according to another person's duty is dreadful (Bhagwat Gita 3::35).

Educational Implication of Gita

Honesty walks hand in hand with integrity and ethics. Honesty is the value most needed on the planet at this moment in time. To sum it up, we could say that deceit is the great cosmic illusion that veils our perception. The cosmic illusion consists of countless layers of self-deceit that cause us to forget the truth of who we are (Shri Prem Baba, 2015, p.1)

He focuses *Karma* as the main part of life which is derived from honesty. The first and easiest way is to study in the usual educational institutions. Additionally, one can contribute to the development of this quality by mastering as many skills and professions as possible, by communicating with people, God and many other ways. Through Gita, the teacher could change

their behaviour, thinking and perception to develop the quality of education by being faithful to their duty.

Swami Vivekananda (2014 as cited in Kohlberg 1981) asserts – education is not the amount of information that is put into the brain and runs riots there, undigested all life. After learning, students must have life-building, man-making, character-making, and assimilation of ideas. This means education is a true lover of humankind. In such a way, Gita has been a true friend to all educators to learn about human values even in the modern age.

The whole thing regarding the implication of the Gita is discussed in the following way including the true meaning of education, the ideals of education, the curriculum and the concept of moral education.

1. The true Meaning of Education: We may derive the true meaning of education through virtuous knowledge (Satwika Gyan) as emphasized by Krishna (18:20). Virtuous knowledge is that through which we perceive unity in diversity and sense the Brahma (i.e., God or Parmeshwar) in all the creatures on this earth. Thus we may accept according to the philosophy of Gita that true education is that which helps one to see the existence of God (i.e., Brahma) in the soul of an individual. Arjun was delusional at the start of the battle. Krishna (his Guru) helps him to see the whole epitomized in one individual, Krishna, i.e., God Himself. Thus Krishna tries to help Arjun to see the point that he (Arjun) cannot kill anyone's soul which resides in the Brahma (God) Himself.

2. The Ideals of Education: We may analyse the ideals of education into six parts, let us see how Gita refers to these ideals of education.

i. To Develop Virtuous Knowledge: Our students, like all of us, suffer from ignorance of virtuous knowledge. In Gita, Krishna removes Arjun's ignorance and motivates him towards performing his duty. From this position, we may take up the idea that the ideal of education should be to remove ignorance and provide virtuous knowledge.

ii. To Develop and Effect Sublimation of Personality: Everyone's personality is equipped with evil (Asuri) and virtuous (Daivi-godly) traits. In other words, Kauravas (Asuri) and Pandavas (the virtuous) exist in each of us. Krishna awakens in Arjun the virtuous powers inherent in him and motivates him toward the right path. This is exactly what a Guru should do for his disciple. Thus the idea of education should be to develop and sublimate the personality of the student.

iii. To coordinate between the Individual and Social Aim: On the battlefield, Arjun is lost between his individual freedom and social responsibility. His individual freedom was to fight or not to fight. The social responsibility warranted his participation in the battle for punishing the evil-doers for establishing peace in the land. Krishna impresses upon him to sacrifice his individual freedom and take up the Gandiva for annihilating the wicked persons and their allies. Thus we say that according to Gita 'one of the chief ideals of education should be to effect a coordination between the individual and social aspects of things.'

iv. To Develop the Inner Consciousness: Arjun desires to keep himself away from the ghastly battlefield. Krishna does not want to force him against his will. Instead, he (Krishna) takes recourse to logical reasoning and tries to convince Arjun about his sacred self-duty (Swadharma). Ultimately, on his own, Arjun decides to fight against his opponents. Thus

Krishna, his Guru and Friend, succeeds in awakening the inner consciousness (Antahkarana). This is exactly the ideal that we should follow in the field of education.

iv. To Develop Intellectual and Logical Ability: Arjun expresses his doubt regarding the utility of battle. His doubt is at the root of the preachings of the Gita. Krishna employs his intellectual and logical ability for removing Arjun's doubt. Thus the main purpose of the philosophy of Gita is to develop the intellectual and logical ability of Arjun (the common man) so that he may be able to take his own decision in the face of alternatives. This should be our ideal of education also.

V. To establish the Importance of Duty: One can be happy only by establishing a balance between one's rights and duties. Krishna tells Arjun that nothing is greater than the performance of one's duty (Swadharama-palan). It is very necessary to emphasize this viewpoint before the student these days. If our students develop this attitude towards life, then this very earth will become a Heaven.

3. The Curriculum: Gita refers to two types of Knowledge (Gyan) ---- (i) the Aparā Vidhya, i.e., the knowledge about mundane affairs and (ii) the Parā Vidhya, i.e., the spiritual knowledge or the knowledge about the Supreme Self. In the knowledge about mundane affairs, we may include all types of subjects in various disciplines of arts, science and engineering etc., which are generally taught in our education centres. Within the Parā Vidhya-the spiritual realm-come the knowledge about the soul (Atma), God (Brahma), the being (the Jeeva) and the world (Jagat). Needless to add, these days in our educational system the 'Parā Vidhya'-the spiritual realm-is generally ignored. This has resulted in the predominance of acquisition of worldly wealth of various types at the utter neglect of the spiritual realm. The knowledge about spiritualism alone can give eternal peace to man. Hence in our educational system, "the spiritual aspects of man's life should also be given its due place along with subjects related to worldly affairs."

4. The Concepts of Moral Education According to Gita: Previously we have said that the performance of one's duty (Swadharama-palan) has been principally emphasized in Gita. It was towards the fulfilment of this ideal that Arjun decides to fight on the battlefield. Krishna has impressed upon him that one's duty should be performed without taking into consideration its outcome and attachment (Rag) for the same. It is extremely difficult to think of any higher moral ideal for a man than this. Through practising this ideal a person will reach the peak of his development and he will overcome all worldly attachments. This is exactly what is needed in our youths these days. So if we impress upon them to practice the above ideal we shall be giving them the noblest moral education.

Conclusion

Bhagwat Gita is one of the masterpieces of Hindu religious scriptures. It is the gist of Indian and Indian sub-continental Vedic culture and literature explaining 'karma -yoga' karma is a comprehensive term for the processes whereby impressions are formed and imprinted on the mind-field to bear certain fruits in a strict application of the law of cause and effect (Bharati, as cited in Varughese, 2006). The law of Karma says that every action, mental, verbal or physical has a consequence. This consequence is visited upon us. None of us, no matter how rich, powerful or influential we are in a worldly affair, can avoid facing these consequences. Only Aatma is immortal and believed that it may be incarnated or reincarnated. Gita is, perhaps the best scripture taking about Karmayoga.

Because of his intelligence, man can make a choice, when faced with various alternatives. The choice is to be made according to one's duty. No desire for outcome and attachment. Gita helps a person to see the existence of God in all creatures. Education to develop virtuous knowledge, personality, inner consciousness, intellectual and logical ability and the importance of duty in one's life. Along with knowledge of mundane affairs, spiritual knowledge is impaired.

Thus, almost all great individuals of the world follow the ethical path of the Gita. Its main lesson is the action which is inevitable till we attain liberation. The aim of every action should be for the welfare of humanity. It is to be noted that technological and scientific development should also be based on the ethical foundation of the Bhagawad Gita. Analyzing Gita from merely a religious standpoint and limiting it within a community is an injustice. Even in the present day, it is equally important to shape society and to make a person more ethical and devoted to his or her duty. Thus, Gita is a scientific book in nature. It can be used in class as a tool and source of social science for teaching social values, the existence of the universe, the relationship between the mind and the human body, the role of teacher and students, responsibilities and duties of individuals.

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