



INTEGRATING THE TEACHINGS OF GITA IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

Smitimayee Basantia*, Kabita Das

Department of Philosophy, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra23442>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra23442

ABSTRACT

Current academic landscape is predominantly shaped by Western educational theories, often overshadowing our own rich historical and cultural perspectives on education. The Bhagavad Gita, an ancient scripture, offers profound insights into educational philosophy that merit exploration. This paper focuses on interpreting education as articulated in the Bhagavad Gita, revealing its potential to inspire scholars to delve into our own educational heritage as now day's students are not able to grasp the core values. Shrimad Bhagavad Gita referred to the "Lord's Song," is a significant gift from India that illustrates how Sri Krishna awakens Arjuna to follow the righteous path. Its teachings inspire individuals to improve various aspects of life which emphasizes on various essential components of education, such as self-realization, character formation, intrinsic motivation, discipline and decision making. These concepts not only guide individual development but also foster a sense of responsibility towards society, cultivating better global citizens. The Gita outlines pathways to knowledge through self-awareness, devotion, action, and meditation. Its educational philosophy advocates for holistic development and moral values, promoting the integration of knowledge and action. By examining the educational implications embedded in various verses (slokhas) of the Gita, this particular study aims to connect the gap between Eastern and Western educational philosophies that employs an hermeneutical approach, establishing connections between cultural practices and the personal experiences. The insights derived from Bhagavad Gita can provide a foundation for comparative studies in educational philosophy, prompting educators and students alike to reflect on their roles and responsibilities. By instilling Gita's values in students, education can help shape better decision-making in all areas of life. Ultimately, understanding the principles outlined in the Bhagavad Gita that can enhance educational practices, enabling both teachers and students to fulfil their duties effectively.

KEYWORDS- Bhagavad Gita, Education, Philosophy, Society, Practice

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, human society is experiencing the effects of social cohesion as well as globalization. While significant advancements have been made in various fields, issues such as widespread corruption and violence are escalating. This has led to a decline in moral values, and society is grappling with moral decay. There is a growing desire among individuals to enhance human values and morality. In this context, the ethical teachings of the Bhagavad Gita become increasingly relevant for our daily lives. This paper aims to emphasize the fundamental concepts of the Gita's ethical teachings and their significance in contemporary society.

Cultivating higher sentiments is essential for fostering peace and social harmony in today's social landscape. The enduring relevance of these teachings over time underscores their greatness. Scholars from both Eastern and Western traditions regarded Bhagavad Gita as the most profound texts in existence. In a clear and insightful manner, Lord SriKrishna elucidates the science of self-realization and the precise methods through individuals' that could begin their undying connection through the Divine (Aurobindo,1992). The Gita offers unparalleled spiritual knowledge that is universally applicable, transcending sectarian ideologies and secular viewpoints. It resonates with the sacred aspects of every religion as spiritual teachings. This is because a deep understanding of the Bhagavad Gita unveils timeless principles

that are vital for transcendent life from diverse viewpoints, enabling individuals to grasp hidden truths that are found in various religious texts.

Numerous influential thinkers, including Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, and Albert Schweitzer, as well as historical figures like Madhvacharya, Sankara, and Ramanuja, have contemplated the enduring message of the Gita (Vermani,2018). Ultimately, the primary aim of the Bhagavad Gita is to guide humanity towards recognizing the true essence of divinity; i.e. the highest spiritual achievement and the ultimate material fulfilment is to cultivate a deep love for God.

Importance of Bhagavad Gita

It is considered as the essence of Upanishads; it presents a condensed form of supreme knowledge about Brahman and offers a universal, synthetic teaching that harmonizes various religious doctrines (Aurobindo,1992). In the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna, Arjuna represents the spiritual seeker who grapples with the dilemma of action versus renunciation. Krishna emphasizes that action, performed without attachment to results, is essential, guiding Arjuna to fulfil his duty as a Kshatriya. The Gita introduces the concept of yoga as an union with God through various paths: Duty (Karmayoga), knowledge (JñanaYoga), and devotion (Bhaktiyoga). Ultimately, the Gita serves as an ethical framework, addressing



the morality of human actions and reinforcing the importance of duty and righteousness in life.

The guiding principle of "duty for the sake of duty" emphasizes performing one's responsibilities without any other considerations. Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna not to grieve over the potential death of his relatives in battle, as the soul, which resides within the human body, cannot be killed. Eternality, immortality, and purity can be attributed to soul. It simply sheds its old body and takes new form (Bhakti, Swami, 1986). He further teaches Arjuna that about the ultimate doer and the whole thing occurs according to God's will. Gita highlights divine virtues as treasures that an individual gathers through quest for God. In contrast, negative traits such as arrogance, self-deception, anger, rudeness, and ignorance characterize those with a demoniac nature. These individuals lack purity, good conduct, and truthfulness, often claiming that the world is devoid of truth, morality, and divinity. Which currently everyone is facing affecting students with its core.

The Gita is viewed as the most significant texts in Indian, inspiring many prominent philosophers in India to comment on it and express their interpretations. This has led to a wide range of opinions regarding its central teachings. Some argue that the Gita presents various paths without synthesizing them (Panditro, 2020). However, these critics overlook the fact that if that were true, there would be no need for the Gita after the Upanishads. The Gita aims to provide a clear path for Arjuna, who acknowledges that all his doubts have been resolved after hearing its teachings. Thus, it cannot be claimed that the Gita lacks a central message. Regardless Gita does not establish any paths with knowledge, devotion, or action as superior to the others; it presents the path of Niskam Karmayoga, where knowledge, devotion, and action are harmonized, leading to highest development of intelligence, feeling, and determination (Vermani, 2018). This Niskam Karmayoga is indeed regarded as core teaching of Gita, although it requires further explanation. Earlier delving into this core teaching, it is pertinent to unfavourably examine different philosophical perspectives on the Gita's main message.

In articulating educational principles, Lord Krishna does not simply dictate his wisdom to his students as others might. The Gita addresses the fundamental reasons behind such education. A human child is not a blank slate; rather, they inherit specific tendencies, instincts, and character traits from their past lives (Mynbayeva, et.al, 2018). While parents provide the physical body, the child's mental faculties and spiritual essence are shaped by their own previous experiences. This understanding accounts for individual differences among people. The Bhagavad Gita harmonizes metaphysical concepts with physical realities, addressing both internal and external influences on individuals, thereby establishing education as a vital spiritual and social necessity. Education must be built on solid foundations, not on unstable ground. Teachers should possess a deep understanding of their subjects, but when it comes to matters of personal judgment, they must allow students the freedom to make their own decisions just as Arjuna was ultimately left to choose whether to engage in battle field or not. According to the Gita, an ideal teacher maintains balance

and not only imparts knowledge but also embodies it. Essentially, a good teacher ensures both their own well-being and that of their students (Khanal, 2012) (Mynbayeva, et.al, 2018). In this context, students are viewed not merely as disciples but as active learners. The most important qualities of an ideal student include humility and a willingness to acknowledge their ignorance regarding the subject matter they wish to learn. Essential traits of a good learner include sincerity, compassion, obedience, and trust in their teacher. Additionally, students must possess a strong desire for knowledge; without this drive, they will struggle to fully grasp what their teacher offers.

Education and Bhagavad Gita

Lord Krishna teaches that the true essence of education lies in acquiring virtuous knowledge. This raises the question: what does virtuous knowledge entail? It involves recognizing the diversity of existence and understanding that God is present in all beings. True knowledge enables us to perceive the divine within every soul. According to Krishna, this supreme knowledge encompasses the insights gained from studying the Vedas and various philosophical traditions (Bhakti, Swami, 1986). The Bhagavad Gita places significant emphasis on the importance of the soul, highlighting that while the physical body is temporary, the soul is eternal. This understanding is a deeper aspect of knowledge; simply knowing that the soul is distinct from the body isn't enough. Liberation from the body does not mean the soul becomes inactive or impersonal (Kalita, 2018). In fact, if the soul is eternal, it must also be eternally active, engaging in activities within the spiritual realm this is a profound aspect of spiritual wisdom.

The Bhagavad Gita outlines moral, spiritual, social, and cultural values that should guide both educators and students, as well as those who involved in shaping educational curricula for personal development. Today's rapidly evolving nature where society faces numerous challenges, with a predominant focus on economic prosperity. Many individuals are solely concerned with achieving financial security, leading to an overemphasis on materialism that undermines essential social values. This has fostered a culture of selfishness, resulting in jealousy, corruption, and rivalry.

Krishna emphasizes that true education can be understood through virtuous knowledge, which helps us recognize unity amidst diversity in all living beings. There are two primary forms of knowledge: physical and spiritual. The teachings of the Gita advocate not for renouncing action but for renouncing attachment to the results of our actions. While we are responsible for our deeds, we should not be fixated on their outcomes, nor should we refrain from action altogether (Khanal, 2012). Living a Dharmik life characterized by morality, accountability, righteousness, and commitment to duty is closely linked to education. Such an education nurtures individuals who stand up against injustice, contribute to the welfare of others, uphold truth, and discern between humane and inhumane actions. The Bhagavad Gita promotes Karma Yoga, which encourages fulfilling one's responsibilities as a means to alleviate suffering caused by unfulfilled desires. These teachings illustrate that the Bhagavad Gita encompasses



a holistic approach to education that integrates mental, physical, and socio-cultural dimensions, reflecting key principles found in modern psychology.

Gita in relation with Current Education System

In Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna poses questions to Shri Krishna regarding life, the world, and his personal struggles in 84 verses, to which Shri Krishna responds with 574 verses. The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna is viewed by some as a form of counseling, by others as an educational approach, and by some as a type of psychological therapy provided by Shri Krishna to Arjuna (Kothari,1992). To establish educational principles, the divine teacher Lord Krishna does not simply provide his wisdom to his student through rote instruction like others might. The Bhagavad Gita addresses the underlying reasons for such education (Ghimire,2013). A human child is not a blank slate; rather, they come into the world with certain tendencies, instincts, character traits, and mental dispositions shaped by their previous lives. While parents may provide the child's physical body, the child's spiritual essence and actions are inherently their own, which accounts for individual differences (Khanal,2012). The Bhagavad Gita harmonizes metaphysical concepts with physical realities, reconciling the notions of withdrawal and engagement, as well as addressing both hereditary factors and environmental influences. It presents clear educational principles, emphasizing that education is a spiritual and social necessity that built on solid foundations rather than unstable ones.

The role of a teacher is the most essential characteristics in education. A teacher must possess great expertise in their subject matter but should also allow students the freedom to make their own judgments, much like Arjuna was ultimately left to decide whether to engage in battle field or not (Kalita,2018). According to the Gita, an ideal teacher maintains a balanced approach. A true educator not only imparts knowledge but also exemplifies it. In essence, the teacher must be attentive to both their own well-being and that of their students (Srinivasachari,1943). In the Gita's perspective, a student is not merely a disciple but a learner. The foremost quality of a best scholar is the willingness submission towards the educator, acknowledging their own ignorance of the subject matter. Essential traits of a good learner include sincerity, humanity, obedience, and trust in the teacher (Panditrao & SciRes,2020). Additionally, a strong desire to learn is crucial without it; students cannot fully absorb what is taught. Humility and respect for the teacher do not equate to blind obedience instead, students must engage critically with the material. The Bhagavad Gita expresses profound confidence in humanity's potential for moral growth and character development. It disapproves of underestimating one's own abilities. The Gita asserts that individuals can realize their divine nature and interconnectedness with all beings, leading to spiritual enlightenment and universal love (Kothari,1992). It acknowledges the individual's freedom to choose from various paths toward self-realization and reassures that through self-effort and self-reliance; one can achieve moral elevation and even attain the state of Brahma.

While value-based education may stem from spiritual roots, materialism often arises from everyday worldly experiences. The Bhagavad Gita illustrates the possibility of transcending beyond mere intellect, emotion, and behaviour, proposing Karma Yoga as a means to achieve this state of salvation. Education is framed as the pursuit of one's duties aimed at attaining peace, joy, and fulfilment while freeing oneself from desires, anger, and fear, all while maintaining a calm mind and wisdom. Lord Krishna explains that the true essence of education lies in acquiring profound knowledge. Human nature dictates that one cannot remain inactive to do so one is akin to death. Thus, action is preferable to inaction. The ethical teachings of the Bhagavad Gita have a profound impact on society, urging individuals to fulfill their duties without attachment i.e. a practice known as *niskamakarma*. Ethics fundamentally concerns conduct, which is influenced by either virtuous or unvirtuous will. A pious will fosters righteous behavior and promotes the highest good, while an impious will leads to unrighteousness and evil. Through ethical discipline, one can suppress unrighteousness and encourage righteousness. However, this raises the question: what constitutes profound knowledge? It is the ability to perceive the divine presence in all living beings, recognizing that God exists everywhere and in everything. True knowledge teaches us to recognize the divine spark within each soul. The Lord emphasizes that this supreme understanding encompasses all wisdom derived from the study of the Vedas and various philosophical teachings (Ghimire,2013). The Bhagavad Gita particularly highlights the significance of the soul, stating that while the body is temporary, the soul is eternal (Panditrao & SciRes,2020). Understanding that the spirit is distinct from the physical body is just the beginning; liberation from the body does not mean the soul becomes inactive or impersonal. In fact, the soul is always active and its eternal nature ensures that it continues to engage in activities within the spiritual realm, which represents a deeper layer of spiritual knowledge.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that Bhagavad Gita is a valuable educational resource. In today's curious individuals who always feel overwhelmed through contemporary education and technology, teachings of Gita serve to cleanse mind, intellect, and spirit, combining for fostering a sense of responsibility as citizens within their communities and the nation. It also teaches us about *Niskamakarma*, the principle of selfless action. The ethical framework of the Bhagavad Gita plays a crucial role in transforming our current unstable society, life with lust, corruption, inhumanity, and violence, into a more civilized community grounded in truthfulness. The Bhagavad Gita holds significant importance and practical relevance for education, addressing the challenges individuals encounter throughout their lives. It teaches that a state of steady wisdom enables one to navigate success and failure, gain and loss, as well as joy and sorrow. This state represents true happiness. A person, who remains unaffected by pleasure or pain, neither overly praising nor condemning it, possesses a deep understanding of the workings of the material world. Actions should be valued for their intrinsic worth rather than their outcomes. The Gita's message speaks to a mind focused on the pursuit of intellectual, ethical, and social ideals a mind that seeks redemption through



adherence to established principles of Dharma, moral law, and social responsibilities.

REFERENCES

1. Bhakti Vedanta A.C. & Swami Prabhu Pad.(1986) 'Bhagavadsandeh' Bhakti Vedanta Granth Sansthan, Kandhivali Bombay vol.1,
2. Ghimire, J. (2013). *Meaning of education in the Bhagavad Gita. Journal of Education and Research.*
3. Kalita, S. (2018). *Reflection on philosophy of value-oriented education: Regarding the teaching of Bhagavat Gita. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR JHSS).*
4. Khanal, P. (2012). *Educational research methodology. Sunlight Publication.*
5. Kothari, C.R. (1992). *Research methodology (Method and procedure). New Age International Publication.*
6. P.N. Srinivasachari,(1943) *The Ethical Philosophy of the Gita, Ramakrishna Math, Madras.*
7. S. Aurobindo,(1992) *Essay On The Gita, (Complete): Second Series Calcutta: Arya Publishing House.*
8. Vermani S. (2018). *Life Lessons from Bhagwad Gita. International Journal of Basic and Applied Research, www.pragatipublication.com ISSN 2249-3352 (P) 2278-0505 (E), July, Volume 8, Number 7, PP 598-607.*
10. Mynbayeva, A. & Sadvakassova, Z. & Akshalova, B. (2018). *Pedagogy of the TwentyFirst Century: Innovative Teaching Methods. 10.5772/intechopen.72341*
11. Panditrao M. M., (2020). *National Education Policy 2020: What is in it for a Student, a Parent, a Teacher, or us, as a Higher Education Institution/University? AdeshUniv J Med SciRes ; 2(2):70-9*