

BHAGAVAD GITA REFLECTED IN PRESENT EDUCATION

Dr. Somnath Das

Email ID: soumo.sans@gmail.com

Abstract

Our academia is familiar with the educational theories and thoughts developed in the West. However, we have inadequate information about our own historical and cultural thoughts in relation to education, despite their importance and comprehensiveness. In the Bhagavad Gita, I noticed that some of the basic components of educational philosophy are present. Among the various aspects of educational thoughts, this paper deals with the interpretation of the meaning of education that can be found in the Bhagavad Gita. Interpretation of a comprehensive meaning of education consisted within the Bhagavad Gita can contribute to inspire academicians to look behind the curtain of history for searching valuable knowledge. It can also provide some basis for comparative study of educational philosophy in the East and the West. From methodological perspective, this paper is a product of an Arts-based hermeneutical interpretation of a historical scripture that has established interesting links to cultural practice, personal experiences and feelings of the author. Bhagavad Gita is one of the most popular books of Hindu: Holy Gita is considered to be the greatest contributions of India to the World. In the present research paper, the researcher has attempted to find the effect and implication of Bhagavad Gita in the present scenario of education.



Keywords

Educational Implication, Education in India, Eastern Wisdom Tradition, Bhagavad Gita.

Paper Identification

1. Introduction

Bhagavad Gita literally means 'The Lords Song', i.e., the philosophical discourse of Lord Krishna to persuade the reluctant Arjuna to fight. One of the greatest contributions of India to the world is Holy Gita. In the battle field Arjun was struck, when he saw his relatives as the opponents. To motivate him the Bhagavad Gita is preached in the battle field Kurushetra by Lord Krishna to Arjun as a counseling to do his duty while multitude of men stood by waiting Krishna gave education to perform his duty as a prince, as a warrior, as a righteous man to fight against evil and restore peace and order. The central teaching of the Gita can be beautifully summarized in this sentence of Annie Besant: 'It is meant to lift the aspirant from the lower levels of renunciation, where objects are renounced, to the loftier heights where desires are dead, and where the yogi dwells in the calm and ceaseless contemplation, while his body and mind are actively employed in discharging the duties that fall to his lot in life.' The real meaning of education is to impart knowledge. True education would provide children not only an intellectual stimulation, but also a real purpose in life. The Bhagavad Gita is the Holy Grail of education because it is the essence of all doctrines and philosophies. It is providing the purest knowledge and gives direct understanding of the self realization.

2. Metaphysics of Gita

The important metaphysical point of teaching in Gita is being. Gita advocates of the unreal there is no being and of the real there is no non-being. The soul is eternal, unborn, indestructible, undiminishing, all – pervasive, unthinkable, and immutable, unmanifest, Soul cannot be killed by sword, it cannot be diminished or destroyed by fire, air or rain. Neither soul is born nor it dies it is out and our immortal and everlasting. He, who find the ultimate reality seated equally in all beings and un-perishing with the perishing bodies, see truly. Devotion is defined as disinterested service to God. So it is form of Karma. The Lord himself lifts up his devotes from the 'ocean of birth-and-death'. To love of God becomes the divine and supreme love.

3. Bhagavad Gita and Education

Gita says, the real meaning of education is receiving of virtual knowledge but question arise 'what is virtual knowledge'? Whenever we see or we feel the iverse in diversity and God exists everywhere". "True knowledge is that which teach us to see God in each soul". The Lord says that supreme of all purest knowledge and its essence that knowledge was derived from the detailed study of Vedas and different kinds of Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita specially stresses on the importance of the soul. The Lord says that this body is





perishable and the soul is not perishable. That is a confidential part of knowledge; simply knowing that the pure soul is different from the body which is going to be finished, the soul remains same and becomes immortal. But actually that is not the fact, International Journal of how can the soul, which is so active after being liberated from the body. It is always active. Education According to Bhagavad Gita-

In order to formulate the principles of education the divine teacher Lord Krishna has not imparted his wisdom to his student as mere dictation like others. The Gita answer the 'why' of such education. The human child in the world is not a tabula rasa or an empty being. He inherits the certain tendencies, instincts, propensities of character, mental dispositions etc. from his past life. Parents give to child only his body but his physical apparatus and soul's doing are his own. This explains individual differences. The Bhagavad Gita reconciles metaphysics and physics, nivritti and pravritti, psychical entity, and hereditary and environment of men and gives the principles of education clearly indicating that education is spiritual-social necessity. It is a value and its edifice cannot be built on sand.

The teacher must teach his subject with great competence but when the issue of judgement is involved he should let the student free as Arjun was finally left to decide himself whether to fight or not. The concept of the teacher in the Gita is that he must be most balanced. The true teacher not only teaches truth but also demonstrates it. In short, the teacher is vigilant enough to keep the soul and body of his student as well as his own together. The student, according to the Gita, is not a disciple but a learner. But the first and the last characteristic of an ideal student are to surrender before the teacher accepting his ignorance of the subject he wants to know. Genuineness, humanity, obedience, faith in his teacher is the essential characteristics of a good learner. He must also possess an intense urge to know without which he will not be able to digest what the teacher gives. Humility, obedience, faith etc. towards the teacher imply that the student should be virtuous. The student, according to Gita, must shun three great vices- Kama, Krodh and Lobha in his personality. Obedience means respect to the teacher; however, it does not mean the foolish obedience in which everything is accepted by the student blindly. The eager intellect of the student must be satisfied.

4. Objectives of Education According to Bhagavad Gita-

- Development of virtual knowledge
- Development and modification of personality
- Adjustment in individual and social aims
- Development of internal consciousness
- Development of intellectual and reasoning ability
- Establishment of importance of duties in life

5. Curriculum on the Basis of Bhagavad Gita

Two types of knowledge

- Physical (Art, Science, Engineering etc)
- Spiritual (Knowledge of body and soul)

The bhagavad Gita teachings are stands not only for the renunciation of action, but also for the renunciation in action. It is emphatically stated that Samnyasa does not mean the renunciation of action, but of interest, desire and attachment.

Methods of Teaching

- Conversational method
- Question -Answer method
- Demonstration method
- Contemporary method (rational analysis with proper analysis)
- Learning by doing





Discipline

The moral of Bhagavad Gita entails upon the discipline of the life and performance of one's duty without attachment to the result in sattvic way. Gita rightly strikes at the root of the problem. Ideal personalities of teachers and deep scholarly efforts can save the untracked indiscipline

among students. Faith on the instructions of Gita can remove the problem of indiscipline and anomie that are prevailing in Indian education.

6. Enthusing about the Gita

Our professors would also provide us with ideas and meaning of education through their instruction. I used to find almost all the definitions and meanings of education derived from the Western thoughts and theories. Despite that, a question that used to knock me constantly was about the Eastern wisdom tradition bereft of the meaning of education. Frauwallner (1973) argue that the Vedic philosophical tradition is older than the Greek civilization. Many scholars in both the East and the West seem to be interested in studying and interpreting the educational aspect of the Bhagavad Gita. A Vedic scholar, Prabhupad (1986) argues that the Bhagavad Gita is a popular source of knowledge and wisdom for the global community. Similarly, Fosse (2007), a scholar from the West, writes Bhagavad Gita still speaks by people everywhere across the ocean, across the millennia, and across the boundaries of the language religion and the culture. Based on these arguments, it can be said that the Bhagavad Gita is a comprehensive philosophical thought for all humankind. In its deep meaning, we can get comprehensive philosophical thoughts and theories, for example, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Axiology and Logic System. Likewise, we also can draw some educational thoughts. Worthily saying, I found interesting educational philosophical thoughts in the verses of the Bhagavad Gita (e.g. aims, meaning, and importance of education, teaching subjects and methods, ways of motivating learner, etc.). On this background, I have tried in this paper to deal with the meaning of education that can be found in the Bhagavad Gita. The study was based on the interpretative paradigm under an Arts-based hermeneutic design (Thompson, 1997; Frazier, 2008) as the method of the study for the reason that I found it more appropriate for generating data from the text and also for creative interpretation of International the text. So, my journey began with a collection of related texts. I reviewed the main text of the Bhagavad Gita as well as its interpretation by various scholars, and the Upanishads. I generated data adopting several hermeneutical reading cycles. My study revealed that the Bhagavad Gita can be taken as an ocean of philosophical thoughts of the Eastern wisdom tradition. It would be injustice if we looked at the Bhagavad-Gita only through the lens of religious myth. We need efforts for bringing out the hidden knowledge form our scriptures and use this knowledge for improving our education sector. However, no serious attention has been paid to this philosophy in our society and universities. This may be because of the fact that our education system has grown on the feed of the Western thoughts. I do not mean the Western thoughts are not useful; my emphasis is on the search and dissemination of our own historical knowledge.

7. The Bhagavad Gita: A Sublime Thought

The Bhagavad Gita as a poetic narrative in the form of a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra just prior to the start War. It is considered to be one of the greatest scriptures of the Vedic philosophy. The Bhagavad Gita shows the ways to live a spiritual cum material life consequently. Although the Bhagavad Gita is conceived as an essence of all Vedic philosophical thoughts, no reference in its entire text claims that it is for the Hindus. So, it can be said that it is for all humankind throughout the world. In this sense, it is always of great importance to all. It is one of the three central texts of the Vedanta, the other two being the Brahma Sutras and the Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita is appropriate for all. It is not for some specific community, caste, creed, sex, country but it is a common asset of all human beings. It is a book with sublime thoughts and practical instructions on the Yoga, devotion, and action. It is profound in thought and sublime in heights of vision. Even though the Bhagavad Gita was created on the battlefield before the commencement of the war, its relevance in present





context is still meaningful and considerable. Therefore, the battlefield represents our body where an unending battle is raging between good and evil forces.

8. Meaning of Education in the Bhagavad Gita

Education is the process of cultivating completeness in human being. That implies knowledge, skill, ability and wisdom for Karmic and Dharmik life. Perhaps, our wisdom tradition supports me. In the view of Radhakrishnan and Moore (as cited in Bhawuk, 2011, p. 164), the Bhagavad Gita is a synthesis of all Vedic ideas and wisdom and it was developed through the instructional process. It may be looked upon as a discourse addressed by a Guru to a Chela who has fully determined upon the renunciation of all worldly desires and aspirations but yet feels certain despondency, caused by the apparent blankness of his existence (Rao & Bannerji, 1912, p. 2). Marsella (as cited in Bhawuk, 2011, p. 24) sees the Bhagavad Gita as a psychology of the Eastern civilization. While the Bhagavad Gita is known as an instructional module, the philosophy of life and psychology obviously has the meaning of education. According to the philosophy of the Gita, the state when a human is free from the three wraths (lust, anger and fear), is the state of attainment of knowledge and wisdom (Bhagavad Gita, 2.56). The Bhagavad Gita provides very useful and practicable 'contents' for education that can address the problems related with action, salvation and wisdom. Bhagavad Gita states that the state of steady wisdom is such a state when achievement and failure, profit and loss, joy and sorrow can be perceived in equal terms (Bhagavad Gita, 2.57), that is a state of the fullest satisfaction or the end state of desires. In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it, nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge. Bhawuk (2011) viewed that Bhagavad Gita defines the purpose of work; work is to be performed for its own sake, not for its outcomes (p. 148).

In my understanding, the steady wisdom itself is taken as motivation for right action and it can also be conceived as the concept of education. Materialistic pleasure is temporary, can be lost any time but steady wisdom never drags us toward loss. This state may be a stable emotional condition, stability in thinking and action, freedom and a self directed state. Stability is a component of wholeness. The Bhagavad Gita states that one who performs an action with controlled mind and wisdom is wise. On the basis of this Leaman (2000) argues that Gita's message to the mind occupied with the pursuit of intellectual, ethical and social standards, the mind that insists on salvation by the observance of established Dharmas, the moral law, social duty and function or the solutions of the liberated intelligence . to live a Dharmik (morality, accountability, righteousness and commitment in one's duty) life can be associated with education according to the Bhagavad Gita and such an education makes human Dharmik thereby developing capacity to raise voice against injustice of any sort, involve in welfare of living beings, be impartial to truth and discern between what is human and what is inhuman. Bhagavad Gita recommends the practice of Karma Yoga, or the path of work (or doing one's prescribed duties), as the intervention to avoid the unhappiness resulting from the pursuit of desires. These statements show teaching of the Bhagavad Gita gives emphasis on combination of mental, physical and socio-cultural paths of education which are very much focused aspects in the modern psychology as well. Position of self-realization is the situation of Vidya that is education. So, it can be interpreted as an important principle related to the meaning of education. Every human in this world is in need of salvation. Students in schools are in need of salvation from fear, terror and punishment of teachers and pressure from parents. Other people involved in different activities are in need of salvation from violence, conflict, pride, ego, tension, poverty, ignorance, etc. The sick are in need of salvation from diseases and older people from death. All these people are in need of salvation from the type of experience they are gaining. The verse (5.26) of the Bhagavad Gita stated that "the persons who are from anger, self disciplined and constantly searching for perfection, are assured of liberation." salvation can easily be incorporated with the meaning of education. The meaning of value based education might take its root in spirituality and materialistic definition might origin from the worldly phenomenon that surrounds us every day. In this connection, Bhawuk's (2011) argument highlights that the Bhagavad Gita describes the possibility of a





state in which we can actually rise above cognition, emotion, and behavior and presents karma yoga as a process to achieve this state (state of salvation)” (p. 118). This notion provides me with some ideas to synthesize the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to trace the meaning of education accordingly. In a concise sentence, being based on my own understanding, after (in fact perennial) reading the Gita repeatedly and analyzing the scholars' notions, it can be said that: Education (Vidya) is the process of performing one's own duties for the attainment of peace, joy, satisfaction and salvation being rid of the three wraths (lust, anger and fear) with the steady mind and wisdom.

The word "Vidya" has been used in the Bhagavad Gita to introduce the realm of education and knowledge. Mainly two types of knowledge have been discussed in the Bhagavad Gita logical knowledge and spiritual knowledge. The logical knowledge has been identified as the ability to discuss the external form of things available in the world through wisdom perceiving them with the senses called the Science. The knowledge of the internal aspects (Soul) of matter and creatures has been called the spiritual knowledge. The actions which are performed for the attainment of various types of comforts, luxury, prosperity or joy have been called Avidya and the actions performed for the attainment of the Brahma (self-actualization or soul realization) have been called Vidya. It means education is essential both to eke out the material life and attainment of spiritual upgrading. Doesn't it sound (ir)rational? It expresses that Avidya (action or materialistic knowledge) and Vidya (spiritual knowledge) should go together. Spiritual education might not be misinterpreted. In our context, spiritual education should not necessarily be based on the literal reading but it may be an appropriate remark to make that the way Arjuna was attuned to knowledge, skills, attitudes, dharma and wisdom by their gurus. However, we should not forget that we are living at the age of hyper technology and a 'teacher' can become a 'guru' only after severe toil in favor of the students. On the basis of this discussion is that the Bhagavad Gita has not called only the spiritual knowledge as education instead it has taken both spiritual and material aspects in defining education. In this way, the Bhagavad Gita has considered education as the basis for worldly and spiritual progress.

9. Conclusion

Success comes only when we put all the knowledge to use. The Gita introduces our inner personality. The intellect, which reasons and discriminates the mind, is the centre of emotions and impulses. After reading the Bhagavad Gita, one can the understanding that it is our valuable historical asset of knowledge, and it demands deep study and interpretation. The moral teaching, specially ethical actions that run through the whole of the Bhagavad Gita is not only an emergence need of our country, but of the world community. We can enrich our philosophical, sociological, anthropological and psychological understanding through the readings of the Bhagavad Gita. In the Bhagavad Gita, much effort has been made to equate Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga, in which meaning of education fragranced. One can get fruit from the Bhagavad Gita according to his/her intention and level of understanding. Through the lens of education, all aspects of educational philosophy, i.e. meaning of education, aims of education, importance of education, learning materials, pedagogy, curriculum, motivational techniques, assessment practice, and roles of learner and teacher can be found and interpreted by and through a deeper reading of the Bhagavad Gita. Therefore, the Bhagavad Gita can be taken as an educational philosophy, because it has got all components of an educational philosophy.

10. References

- [1] Janardan Ghimire, Meaning of Education in the Bhagavad Gita, Journal of Education and Research,
- [2] Acharya, S. R., & Sharma, B. D. (Eds.). (2010). 108 Upanishad, gyan kanda. Mathura, Gayatri Tapobhumi: Uga Nirman Yojana Bistar Trust.
- [3] Adhikari, A. (2044 BS). Shreemadbhagavad Geeta, Geeta lokbhasya. Kathmandu:
- [4] Loklaxmi Adhikari. Barone, T., & Eisner, E. W. (2012). Arts based





- educational research. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- [5] Bartley, C. (2011). An introduction to the Indian philosophy. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- [6] Bhavna Sharma, M. Ramachandran, Kanak Kalita. Methods or Improving Communication Skills of Rural Students in Pharmaceutical Education. Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research, Volume 5, Issue 10, October-2014
- [7] Bhawuk, D. P. S. (2011). Spirituality and Indian psychology: Lessons from the Bhagavad-Gita. New Delhi: Springer.
- [8] Fosse, L. M. (2007). The Bhagavad Gita: The original Sanskrit and translation.
- [9] Retrieved from <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/99876257>.
- [10] Frazier, J. (2008). Hermeneutics in Hindu studies. The Journal of Hindu Studies, 1, 3-10.
- [11] Gupta, S. D. (1922). A history of Indian philosophy (Vol.I). New Delhi: Cambridge.
- [12] Khatiwada, B. (2066 BS). Upanishad: Samkshipta awalokan. In B. Mohonpradad, & D. Bhumiprasad (Eds.), Purvia chintan parampara (pp. 20-30). Kathmandu: Vidharthi Publication.
- [13] Leaman, O. (2000). Eastern philosophy: Key readings. London: Routledge.
- [14] Swami, B. (1971). Bhagawad Geeta as it is. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- [15] Tanner, D., & Tanner, L. N. (1980). Curriculum Development: Theory in to Practice. New York. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.
- [16] Taylor, P. C., Settelmaier, E., & Luitel, B. C. (2012). Multi-paradigmatic transformative research as/for teacher education: An integral perspective. In K. Tobin, B.
- [17] Fraser, & C. McRobbie (Eds.), Second international handbook of science education (pp. 373-388). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

