



Role of bhagavad gita tenets in promotion of social harmony

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Abstract

'Unity in diversity' has represented the multi-ethnic nation like India from year of its conception. Almost all the religions of the World whether it is Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Muslim etc. have preached for righteous relationship among the human beings to enforce peace and harmony. Holy Scriptures like Bhagavad Gita is one such widely accepted example. This paper focuses on the role of Bhagavad Gita tenets in promotion of social harmony. It is a theoretical paper wherein a rigors review of literature was undertaken to identify the themes derived from Bhagavad Gita that can be applied to promotion of harmony in society. 13 themes were selected and thoroughly studied, they include: *Desire at the root of Conflict, Conflicts and their resolution, Peaceful surrender, Inner directed-ness nature of battles, Specific Yoga for each temperament, Relationship management, Rightful control over sense and mind, Detachment as a path to supreme, Theism leads to peaceful and harmonious society, God within, Saattvik personality, the highest standard of being, Importance of collaboration for human existence, and Inner peace transforms into global peace.* Bhagavad Gita's Teachings will serve as a foundation of nurturing values oriented education. And therefore it should be taught at different levels of education in widely understood languages in a neutral manner to enhance spiritual intelligence.

Keywords: Unity in diversity, intelligence, global, harmony, bhagavad gita

Introduction

India is a multi-ethnic nation and the slogan that popularly represents Indian society from years in past is 'Unity in diversity', therefore the ultimate goal of Indian government or in that case government of any diverse society is to promote ethnic cohesion and peace. Social harmony may be defined as valuing, expressing and promoting love, trust, admiration, peace, respect, generosity and equity upon other people in any particular society regardless of their national origin, ethnicity, gender, race, age, occupation or other characteristics. National as well as international bodies and authorities are actively working towards the promotion of social harmony, organizations such as UNICEF, United Nations or SAARC have been continuously working in the same direction. There are various means to reach this goal of social harmony and peace but education can be the finest among all. Zohar (1997) ^[8] coined the term 'Spiritual intelligence'. Spiritual Intelligence is the intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes and highest motivations (Zohar and Marshall, 2004, p.3) ^[10]. It is the intelligence that makes us whole, that gives us our integrity. It is the soul's intelligence, the intelligence of the deep self. It is the intelligence with which we ask fundamental questions and with which we reframe our answers (Zohar, 1999) ^[9]. Spiritual intelligence is a learned behavior and can be enhanced. The tools of spiritual intelligence include meditation, prayers, Holy Scriptures, conscious awareness of our experiences. Almost all the religions of the World whether it is Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Muslim etc. have preached for righteous relationship among the human beings to enforce peace and harmony, from the day of their origin. Thus integration and education of these scriptures into the school syllabus can lead to gradual progress of mindset towards cohesion, peace, non- violence and inclusion, which

is good at national and international or global levels also.

BhagavadGita is said to be the songs of the spirit/god. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a section of a massive Indian epic named "The Mahabharata", the longest Indian epic. The Gita consists of 18 brief chapters and about 700 verses. It is in a form of dialogue between Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, and his friend and disciple, Arjuna. This dialogue takes place in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata. It is a standard book on Yoga for all. It deals with the four Yogas, viz., Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. The Gita is the cream of the Vedas. It is the essence of the Upanishads. It is the universal scripture for all people of all temperaments and for all times therefore the instructions that are inculcated by Lord Krishna are for the whole world.

The purpose of the study is to recognize the teachings of BhagavadGita in promotion of social harmony and peace. Introducing Bhagavad Gita to students in schools may help in shaping a more integrative and inclusive mindset.

Methodology

The present study follows a theoretical framework. It is mainly based on secondary data, which is largely collected from different sources like journals, articles, and periodicals. A rigor review of literature was undertaken and comprehensive understandings of these studies were used to arrive at themes which depict the role of Bhagavad Gita on harmony and peace.

Results and discussion

Based on the review of literature collected and analyzed, the following comprehensive themes were derived:

Desire at the root of Conflict: The Bhagavad-Gita constructs all conflict as a misperception and ignorance or lack of Buddhi, the power of discretion and understanding.

'Ignorance' refers not ordinary ignorance in the sense of lack of knowledge of a particular topic. Rather, it refers to the personality unenlightened by spiritual knowledge. The Bhagavad-Gita talks of 'Buddhiyoga' the practice of uniting the mind with the higher consciousness through 'Vyavasayatmika Buddhi' or cultivated mind that makes one resolute to have only one thought that is Self-realisation (The Bhagavad-Gita II-39 and 41). Buddhi is the force behind our wisdom and our reactions to the outside world. A man of lesser Buddhi is constantly driven by the senses and desires for sense gratification. He thereby remains in a constant state of turmoil and sorrow arising out of union and disunion with the sense objects (Jayaram, 2000). This leads to passions, delusion, anger, loss of memory, confusion and finally loss of Buddhi or intelligence (The Bhagavad-Gita II.62 and 63). Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, "Wise do not grieve. You grieve for those who are not worthy of grief, and yet speak the words of wisdom (The Bhagavad-Gita II.11)". Arjuna's infatuation in the battle field was because of his wrong world view. He lacked the spiritual intelligence to settle the conflict arising in his mind so Lord Krishna said, "The wisdom of Saamkhya (or the knowledge of the Self) has been imparted to you, O Arjuna (The Bhagavad-Gita II.39)". From the Bhagavad-Gita's point of view, any distress is unproductive and hence is illegitimate.

Conflicts and their resolution: The BhagavadGita indicates that there are variety of conflicts, such as mental conflict, social conflict, man-nature conflict and man-god conflict. BhagavadGita has not just outlined the types of conflicts but also the paths to resolve each one of them.

- The first type of conflict is the mental or attitudinal conflict. Arjuna opted for a battle with Kauravas to get the share of the kingdom. However before the war took place, a psychological war broke in his mind. The Bhagavad-Gita describes how to avoid mental conflicts and for that He has preached the 'Law of Work' or Karma Yoga. Do your duty to the best of your ability, O Arjuna, with your mind attached to the Lord, abandoning worries and attachment to the results, and remaining calm in both success and failure. The equanimity of mind is called Yoga (II.48). Yoga means 'to join' (join work with spirituality); so work (karma) becomes Karma Yoga when work is performed with spirituality. Bhagavad-Gita says, "You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty (II.47)". We should accept the fact that there cannot be sameness in actions and the outcome of the actions. There can be sameness only with reference to attitude towards accepting the result of the actions. Spiritually matured persons accept the result as it is. We have our choice to perform either ego-centric work or spirit-centric work. Since spirit-centric work does not beget adverse results, so the equanimity can be achieved. Yoga is alertness in action (yoga: karmasu kaus (h) alam II.50). He continues, "The mind is the 'friend' of those who have control over it, and the mind acts like an enemy for those who do not control it (VI.06)". So according to Lord Krishna, all conflicts arising in the mind are due to lack of balanced intellect. So, the answer to the mental or attitudinal conflict is control of mind.

- The individual conflict leads to a higher conflict pushing forward into a further external conflict that is a social conflict. So, the individual conflict is behind the social conflict. The social conflict can be resolved by mutual cooperation and performing ones prescribed duty for the betterment of the society. Nourishing one another you shall attain the Supreme goal (III.11). King Janaka and others attained perfection (or self-realisation) by Karma Yoga alone. You should perform your duty with an apathetic frame of mind to guide people and for the welfare of the society (III.20).
- There exists a conflict between the individual and the world as a whole. Man has alienated himself from the Nature. The third conflict is between Men and Nature. We behave like a stranger to the world we live in. Out of greed men is over exploiting the Nature. The Nature is not going to spare us, if we are not going to obey its laws. Because of a conflict of our individuality with the Nature, we face the wrath of the Nature. All these catastrophes of human life and life in general are the outcome of an isolation of the individual from the Nature. We are an integral, vital, universal part of the Nature. Nature does not die; it is the individual body that decays. Therefore Lord Krishna says, "Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be (II.12)". Lord Krishna says, "Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego – all together these eight constitute my separated material energies. Besides this inferior nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is a superior energy of mine, which comprises all the living entities who are interacting with the material nature and are sustaining the universe (VII.4, 5)". The bodily limitations, the vital limitations, the mental limitations and the intellectual limitations are the outcomes of the bifurcation of personality or individuality from the cosmic Nature.
- This third conflict is due to another conflict, the fourth conflict – the conflict between the men and the Absolute or God. We are alienated from God Himself or the Ultimate Supreme Power that has created the Nature. Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita (XIV.3) says: "O Bharata the total material world is called Brahman and it is the source of all births. It is that Brahman or the womb called the Nature (Prakriti) where I place the embryo of life. Thence is the birth of all living beings". Therefore, Nature is the source of all life and when we try to play with it the Nature reacts to it. The result is natural calamities and catastrophes of life.

Peaceful surrender: Surrender exclusively unto him with your whole being, O Bharat. By his grace, you will attain perfect peace and the eternal abode. (XVIII.62) the Ramayan also says "The moment the soul surrenders to God, its account of sinful deeds in endless past lifetimes is destroyed by his grace." (V.32) This verses from bhagavad Gita puts forth the following points a) To desire only in accordance with the desire of God, b) Not to desire against the desire of God, c) To have firm faith that God is protecting us, d) To maintain an attitude of gratitude toward God, e) To see everything we possess as belonging to God and f) To give up the pride of having surrendered.

*Tam eva śharaṇam gachchha sarva-bhāvena bhārata
tat-prasādāt parām śhāntim sthānam prāpsyasi śhāśhvataṁ*

Inner directed-ness nature of battles: Paramahansa yogananda (2002) ^[2] had written in his book “God Talks with Arjuna”, that the real Kurukshetra is within us. The battle of Mahabharata is still raging within us. Our Ignorance is Dhritarashtra. Our individual soul is Arjuna. The Indweller Who dwells in our heart is Lord Krishna, the charioteer. The body is our chariot. The senses (Indriyas) are the horses. The mind, egoism, senses, mental impressions, latent tendencies, cravings, likes and dislikes, lust, jealousy, greed, pride and hypocrisy are our dire enemies. The Gita gives us practical lessons to regulate our daily life. It tells us how to overcome our enemies, how to develop the divine virtues which will help us to attain inner peace. The message of the Gita is the message of sacrifice, love and duty. Love all human beings, share what we have with others, rise above petty likes- dislikes and do duty well. These are the lessons of the Gita which give inner peace to us.

Specific Yoga for each temperament: There are people with three kinds of temperaments, such as the active temperament, the emotional temperament and the rational temperament (Paranjape, 1998). In the Gita there are the three Yogas, viz., Jnana Yoga for the man of rational temperament, Bhakti Yoga for the man of emotional temperament, and Karma Yoga for the man of active temperament. According to the teaching of the Gita, there is no conflict among the three. It harmonises the philosophy of action, devotion and knowledge. The three horses of this body-chariot—action, emotion and intellect—should work in perfect harmony. Only then this body-chariot will move smoothly and we can reach the destination safely and quickly, we can rejoice in the Self within and enjoy the sweet internal music of the Self.

Relationship management: Gita guides us on what should be the basic value in each of our relationships. Gita says there are three types of people we will have to interact with: people who are confronting us, people who are facing success and people who are facing misery. Gita recommends the attitudes towards them. We should not hate any living being, including those who are confronting us. We should be friendly towards the successful, without any feeling of jealousy. We should be compassionate towards the unfortunate who are facing some misery. (XII.13) In several places, Gita says “consider every living being as your own self”, “see yourself in all living beings and all living beings in yourself”, etc. (V.7, VI.29-32) Gita says very clearly and repeatedly that it is God who dwells in the hearts of all living beings and experiences the results of our interactions with them. (VI.30-31, XVIII.61, XV.14-15)

Rightful control over sense and mind: Gita makes it very clear that the individual, as the decision maker is different from the senses and the mind. This is very clearly brought out in the verse VI.6, “The mind and senses are friends of the person who has them under his control. They behave as enemies to the person who does not have them under his control.” Gita goes to great length, especially in the second and sixth chapters, to explain how one should control the senses and the mind using the intellect. Gita recommends moderation in food, activity and sleep. (VI.16-17) Gita gives instructions on how to sit and meditate. (VI.10-14) It says that controlling the senses and the mind is not easy. (VI.35)

It has to be done gradually by repeated practice with a lot of persistence. (VI.36, VI.25-26)

Detachment as a path to supreme: The Lord says to Arjuna: “Therefore, without attachment, do thou always perform action which should be done; for by performing action without attachment man reaches the Supreme” (Pandey, 1988) ^[1]. It urges repeatedly that one should live in the world like the lotus-leaf, which is unaffected by water. He who acts placing all actions in the Eternal, abandoning attachment, is as unaffected by sin as a lotus-leaf by water Padmapatramivambhasa. Attachment is due to Moha. Non-attachment is born of Sattva. Attachment is an Asuri-Sampat (Prasad, 1995) ^[4]. Non-attachment is a DaiviSampat. Attachment is born of ignorance, selfishness and passion. Non-attachment is wisdom. Non-attachment brings freedom. Practice of detachment is a rigorous discipline indeed. Krishna says that no man can know happiness without peace. Infact, we start thinking about a particular thing than we want it, crave for it. If our desire for the thing is not fulfill, we become angry. Once we are angry, our ability to reason and think clearly is skewed. Delusion arises from our anger, then we tell ourselves absurd things. We tell that we deserve that thing and we have right to get it at any cost, no matter what the consequences. We forget that perhaps the thing is not ours to have, or that we don’t deserve it; or that it may not be the right time for us to have it. Thus, from anger arises delusion, from delusion loss of memory and from loss of memory we begin to lose conscious awareness of and contact with our own spirit. This is the death of the inner peace. Instead of allowing our desires to devour our peace of mind, we should develop evenness, a subtle, intelligent detachment and disinterest in the objects of the senses. Lasting happiness is not to be found in the external world. Temporal experiences of joy and suffering are in abundance, but real lasting peace and understanding are only found within. This is the Shanti that Krishna speaks of in the Bhagavad Gita.

Theism leads to peaceful and harmonious society: In number of verses of the Bhagavad-Gita, God is revealed as the one who brings peace. Whenever and wherever there is a decline in spirituality, O descendant of Bharata, at that time I descend myself (IV.7). This proclaims how God is actively involved in the affairs of men. A good example of God’s intervention to establish peace and harmony in the society can be seen in the Bhagavad-Gita at Chapter IV, Verses 1 to 3, where God says, “I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan, and Vivasvan instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikshvaku. Thus handed down in succession the royal sages knew this (Karma-Yoga). The Karma-Yoga was lost from this earth after a long time. Today I have described the same ancient science to you, because you are my sincere devotee and friend. Karma-Yoga is a supreme secret indeed.” (IV.1, 2, 3) The principle of Karma Yoga was taught by the Lord Himself to Vivasvan for good governance in the society. God is the peacemaker, and He desires to help men to settle their ever unrest mind just as He did for Arjuna.

God within: With great power and position, comes great responsibilities and thus God said to Arjuna, in order to convince him that God is all powerful to resolve any conflict: he says, “I am present equally in all beings. There is no one hateful or dear to me. But, those who worship me with devotion, they are with me and I am also with them.” (IX.29) “Engage your mind always in thinking of me, offer

obeisance and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in me, surely you will come to me.” (IX.34) “Fix your mind on me, be devoted to me, bow down to me, and you shall certainly reach Me. I promise you because you are very dear to me.” (XVIII.65)

Saattvik personality, the highest standard of being: In every idol of Hindu God and Goddess, we find the Abhaya mudra (hand gesture), betokening ‘fear not’, in which the fingers of the right hand are raised and the palm faces forward. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna has described the characteristics of a Saattvik personality and there fearlessness and truthfulness figures in the list. Lord Krishna says, “Fearlessness (Abhaya), purity of heart, perseverance in the yoga of knowledge, charity, sense restraint, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, honesty; (XVI.01) Nonviolence, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, equanimity, abstaining from malicious talk, compassion for all creatures, freedom from greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness; (XVI.02) Splendor, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, absence of malice, and absence of pride; these are the qualities of those endowed with divine virtues, O Arjuna.” (XVI.03)

Importance of collaboration for human existence: To lay importance on the benefits of collaboration for human existence in this world Lord Krishna says, “Work other than those done as a selfless service binds human beings. Therefore, be free from selfish attachment and do your duty efficiently for the good of humanity (III.09)”. In the beginning of the creation, the Lord created human beings and endowed them with a sense of sacrifice therefore Lord Krishna says, “By serving each other you shall prosper and the sacrificial service shall fulfill all your desires (III.10)”. “Nourish the Nature with selfless service, and it will nourish you. Thus nourishing one another you shall attain the Supreme goal (III.11)”

Inner peace transforms into global peace:
‘Vihaya kaman yah sarvan pumanscharati nispraha,
Nirmamo nirhankara sa shantim adhigachhati.’

This verse posits that the person who gives up all desires and leads a life without greed, attachment and egotism is the one who attains peace, giving up these four leads to an absence of krodh or anger, thus, leading the person to peace. Thus, kam, krodh, lobha, moha, and ahamkara are the five destabilizing forces that lead to personal disharmony and absence of peace is succinctly captured in this verse. Inner peace can be attained through control of desires, greed, attachment, and egotism. A person should effort to direct his attention away from the outside world and to focus on within the self, is called pratyahara, it is a yogic method or approach used to sublimate desires, which was proposed by Maharishi Patanjali in 500 B.C.

Conclusion

According to Mahatma Gandhi ‘If we are to teach real peace in the world we shall have to begin with children.’ Education is not a mere pile of facts and data for memorization but a source of enlightenment and strength. To have an access to the realization of thought and action with respect to Bhagavad-Gita’s Teachings will serve as a foundation of nurturing values oriented education. It will help pupils understand the nature of self, others and the world around us, not only this but the nature of conflict and

way of living in the situation of dilemma and otherwise. National Curriculum for School Education, NCERT (2000) has observed that curriculum has to provide learning experiences which will improve individual’s thoughts, feelings and actions. Content related to ‘Bhagavad Gita’ is already included in National Council of Educational Research & Training (NCERT)’s Class XII Sanskrit text book, namely, Shashwati, Part-II (Chapter IV: Karma Gauravam) since 2007-08. This is a positive step towards value oriented education but its just one little step because not all students opt for Sanskrit and not all know it. Thus, Value-Oriented Education Regarding Bhagavad-Gita’s Teachings is less explored. For the appearance of the value education in the development of the educational system, in this connection, Kothari Commission (1966) pointed out, “In the development that we envisage in the future, we hope that the pursuit of men, material affluence and power would be subordinated to that of higher values and the fulfillment of the individual.” The National Education policy 1986 also reflects the light on value based education. Furthermore, there is a more problem of achieving value-oriented education by the individuals in our India today because each and every school or college or university suffers from such wisdom knowledge and devotion and it is because of this problem that our entire educational system is going aimlessly. Therefore it should be taught at different levels of education in widely understood languages in a neutral nature to enhance spiritual intelligence.

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