



Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Environmental Protection

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DOI Number: 10.14704/Nq.2022.20.17.Nq88015

Neuroquantology 2022; 20(17):96-105

Introduction

The Bhagavad Gita, an important Hindu scripture, is one of the outstanding religious classics in the world. Its unique feature is the emphasis given to the discharge of duties, irrespective of their nature, as an effective discipline for the realization of God. Bhagavad Gita advises people to maintain a balance in thoughts and actions, including materialistic consumption and conservation. This requires the calming of the mind, which is easily distracted and seeks fulfilment at all times. Thus, Gita starts from the materialistic level going all the way to the spiritual level, encouraging purity of the mind. It advises human beings to avoid excess consumerism, which leads to Tamasic behaviour, does not give lasting fulfilment and also damages individual health, society and environment. The role of training the sense organs and organs of action through the holistic understanding and implementation of Yoga, even while in the midst of household life, is highlighted. A person believing in and practicing a balanced lifestyle is generally contented and his actions augur well for himself and the world at large. This leads to Satvic behaviour emerging from inside, rather than being forced from outside.

The contribution of the Bhagavad Gita is very significant to our Indian philosophy. The holy book Gita accepts God as the ultimate cause and ground of sustenance of the universe. Purushottam, Ishvara and Brahman are some of

the epithets used to describe Him. Sri Krishna often identifies himself with God and uses the words 'I' or 'Me' to denote Him. He is a two-fold Prakriti or Nature: the Para Prakriti and the Apra Prakriti and creates the universe through them. The former comprises of the Jivas or living beings and the latter consists of three Gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Out of these two have been designated as Akshara Purusha and Kshara Purusha. Prakriti or nature evolves out of this universe under His command and created universe is supported by Him as the string supports the pearls threaded on it. The Jivas are described as His amsa or part. They are really the Atman, birthless, deathless and eternal, they wear and discard the bodies as a man wears good clothes and discards the ones worn out. The bodies are Kshetra or the field since the fruits of actions are reaped through them. The Jivas are essentially the Atman get themselves identified with the Kshetras through ignorance and suffer the agonies of birth, disease, old age and death. Liberation as Brahmanirvana, Brahmisthi, Samsidhhi, Para-gati described by Sri Krishna as attaining Him comes through the direct experience of one's Atman nature as well as knowing God. The path of spiritual discipline designated as Yoga has four broad aspects, those of Bhakti, Jnana, Dhyana, Nishkama Karma. All these aspects of Yoga singly or in combination can lead to spiritual perfection. Karma was interpreted in a narrow sense as purely ritualistic action the desired motivated Yajnas

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Relevant conflicts of interest/financial disclosures: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest



and Yagas. The logic of the Upanishads seems to be Karma invariably produces bondage of the spirit and by abandoning it altogether we can avoid its consequences.

Slokas of Bhagavad Gita related to environmental protection

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ 47 ॥

*karmany-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi*

॥ 2-47 ॥

Meaning: To work alone, you are entitled, you have the right, but never claim its results. Let not the results of actions be your motive, nor be attached to inaction.

Explanation: Do your duty. But its fruit is not in your hands. Students are to prepare well for the examination and take them well with all sincerity. They cannot award marks to what they write. Marks are awarded by the examiners and degrees are awarded by the institutions. The duty of the student is only to read and write. The results are announced by the universities. Our elders have built schools, colleges and hospitals; they might not have enjoyed the fruits of their service. We have to serve the posterity

our duty is to work. It is immaterial whether we have the fruits or not. Nor do we hope to have a wonderful fruit always. In a court of law, the lawyers are only to argue with all shraddha. But the judgement is pronounced by the judge not by the lawyers. We are only to do our duties. Fruits are not in our hands. Nor we are sure of enjoying the fruits.

In **Chapter III** of Srimad Bhagavad Gita “*The Way of Action*” which deals with some specific slokas related to environmental protection. These are:

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥ 10 ॥

*saha-yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovācha prajāpatiḥ
anena prasaviṣhyadhvam eṣha vo 'stviṣṭa-kāma-dhuk*

॥ 3-10 ॥

Meaning: Prajapati, creating of yore beings who co-exist with a sacrifice, said: “By this you multiply, let this yield you covetable objects of desire”.

Explanation: Animals and plants are also beings deserving to be kindly treated. They live and serve humanity directly or indirectly. The flora and fauna are important to maintain the ecological balance. Rats and owls have their part to play for the well being of all. Wild life has to



be preserved in our own interest. So, also the plants and trees, rivers and hills and all nature should be looked after with love and endearment. The more we foster them the better they serve us. Preserve nature and it nourishes you well. The quality of mercy is not strained. It drops a gentle rain from heaven above. To be kind is to be good. Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ, Shibi, Rishi Dadhichi are great because they are kind. To save the life of a lamb, Siddharth was prepared to die; and to save the life of dove, Shibi was ready to offer his all. Dadhichi parted with his back bone to carve the vajra ayudha out of it for the use of Indra. Yajna it is when we look after all including the dumb animals and plants. "They alone live who live for

others; the rest are more dead than alive". Eknath was a great devotee. He was once carrying water in a pot to offer it to Siva in abhisheka. But on the way he saw a donkey thirsty and it was on the verge of death for want of water. The saint was able to see Siva in the animal and so offered the water to quench its thirst.

Noble souls see divinity in all. Therefore, they serve all.

God is love. To be divine is to be loving. To love is to serve.

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।
यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥ 14॥

*annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḍ anna-sambhavaḥ
yajñād bhavati parjanyaḥ yajñāḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ*

॥ 3-14 ॥

Meaning- From food come forth beings: from rain food is produced: from Yajna arises rain and Yajna is born of Karma.

Explanation: This one beautifully represents the nature animal relation. 'yagya' is the work performed with the motive of selflessness and in the interest of others. If 'yagya' is thought as sacrifice and service to the environment, then

this completes the cycle of nature and living beings mutual dependence. Animal lives on food (crops) which require rain to grow. Rain will only be sufficient if human performs good behavior to the environment. In another verse it is directly mentioned that every work are governed by the nature.

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।
अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥ 27॥

*prakṛiteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśhaḥ
ahankāra-vimūdhātmā kartāham iti manyate*

॥ 3-27 ॥

Meaning: The Gunas or Prakriti perform all action. With the understanding deluded by egoism, man thinks, "I am the doer".

(Every work is governed by the grace of the nature, but only the arrogant people deny it.)



Explanation: This sloka signify the nature as the key controller of every work. On the other way it can be said that doing harm to the nature will affect its regular activities that may reflect

on the human livings. The verse also puts warning to the arrogant people, who does not believe in the power of the nature.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ 7॥

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmyaham*

॥ 4-7 ॥

Meaning: Whenever, O descendent of Bharata, righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, rise of Adharma, I incarnate Myself.

Explanation: The cosmos or the universe is full of polarities. We find everywhere pairs of opposites: good and bad; right and wrong; beautiful and ugly; rich and poor; high and low; man and woman; oppressor and the oppressed; North and South; West and East; hard and soft and so on. As long as neither of them is more or less than what is ought to be, there is no problem. But if they exceed their limits they cause an ecological imbalance, emotional imbalance, intellectual imbalance and even physical imbalance. We can never find absolute

In **Chapter IV** of Srimad Bhagavad Gita “The Way of Renunciation of Action in Knowledge” which deals with some specific slokas related to environmental protection. These are:

good or absolute bad anywhere. We find them both in a balance. When it is loop sided to be elimination of the other when the bad is trying to swallow the good, there is need for the divinity to interfere and restore the balance as a doctor to the patient and a master to the student. As and when the evil is on the ascent and righteousness is on the decline we find God incarnating to restore balance. Each of the Avatars is a role model for balancing efforts.

In **Chapter VII** of Srimad Bhagavad Gita “The Way of Realization” which deals with some specific slokas related to environmental protection. These are:

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ 4॥

*bhūmir-āpo 'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhir eva cha
ahankāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*

॥ 7-4 ॥

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥ 5॥

*apareyam itas tvanyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat*

॥ 7-5 ॥



एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ।
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥ 6॥

*etad-yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya
aham kṛitsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*

॥ 7-6 ॥

Meaning: Sloka 4: Bhumi (earth), Ap (water), Anala (fire), Vayu (air), Kha (ether), mind, intellect and egoism: such is the eightfold division of My Nature.

Sloka 5: This is the lower Prakriti. But different from it, know thou, O mighty-armed, My higher Prakriti-the principle of self-consciousness by which this universe is sustained.

Sloka 6: Know that these are the womb of all beings; I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe.

(Land, water, fire, air, space, mind, intelligence and arrogance these eight are 'apara', my non-living elements. Except these eight there is another element of mine, different from those-'Para', the sense. It is the agent which holds the

whole universe. All animals are originated from these 'Para' and 'Apara'. I am creating and enforcing the whole world.)

Explanation: Beyond the curtain of 'Para' and 'Apara', these verses have focused on the human environment relation. These are the mind, intelligence and senses of human which act as the driving force to keep the other elements of the nature like land, water, air and space healthy. The good sense of human to the nature holds it and a beautiful nature helps the animal kingdom to flourish. In some other verses from the same chapter are pointing to the integral relationship of every elements of the nature.

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय ।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥ 7॥

*mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñchid asti dhananjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*

॥ 7-7 ॥

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः ।
प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु ॥ 8॥

*raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śhaśhi-sūryayoḥ
praṇavaḥ sarva-vedeṣhu śhabdaḥ khe pauruṣhaṁ nṛiṣhu*

॥ 7-8 ॥

Meaning: Sloka 7: Beyond me, O Dhananjaya, there is naught. All this is strung in Me as a row of jewels on a thread.

Sloka 8: I am the sapidity in water, O son of Kunti; I, the radiance in the moon and the sun; I am the Om in all the Vedas, sound in Akasa and manhood in men.

(O Arjuna, I am the highest, the supreme. You will find everything resting in me as the pearls strung on a thread.

O son of Kunti, I am the taste in water, the luminosity of the sun and the moon. In the Vedic Mantras I am the Om of the holy words. I am the sound in ether, and the ability in man.)



Explanation: Everything in the universe is created from the almighty God itself. Those

creations are not resting distinct, those are strung on a single thread as the beads and forms a beautiful necklace. Water, the sun, the moon, the life wind (sacred syllable Om) are all related with each other. These verses are pointing to the integral relationship among every elements of this universe. Each of them is beautifully

arranged on a string and is governed by a unique force to drive this universe. If one of these is affected, the whole system will be in unstable condition, like that necklace-if the string is torn, there will be no existence of the necklace.

In **Chapter IX** of Srimad Bhagavad Gita “*The Way of The Kingly Knowledge & The Kingly Secret*” which deals with some specific slokas related to environmental protection. These are:

सर्वभूतानि कौन्तेय प्रकृतिं यान्ति मामिकाम् ।
कल्पक्षये पुनस्तानि कल्पादौ विसृजाम्यहम् ॥ 7॥
प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य विसृजामि पुनः पुनः ।
भूतग्राममिमं कृत्स्नमवशं प्रकृतेर्वशात् ॥ 8॥

*sarva-bhūtāni kaunteya prakṛitiṁ yānti māmikām
kalpa-kṣhaye punas tāni kalpādau visṛijāmyaham
prakṛitiṁ svām avasṭabhya visṛijāmi punaḥ punaḥ
bhūta-grāmam imam kṛitsnam avaśham prakṛiter vaśhāt*

॥ 9-7 ॥ ॥ 9-8 ॥

मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।
हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥ 10॥

*mayādhyakṣheṇa prakṛitiḥ sūyate sa-charācharam
hetunānena kaunteya jagad viparivartate*

॥ 9-10 ॥

Meaning: Sloka 7: At the end of a Kalpa, O son of Kunti all beings go back to my Prakriti: at the beginning of another Kalpa I send them forth again.

Sloka 8: Animating My Prakriti, I project again and again this whole multitude of beings helpless under the sway of Prakriti.

Sloka 10: By reason of My proximity, Prakriti produces all this, the moving and the unmoving the world wheels round and round, O son of Kunti because of this.

At the end of one kalp (the millennium or life time), all material elements are merged into My primitive material energy. At the beginning of the next millennium, O son of Kunti, those are again

created by my potency. Presiding over My material energy, I created those in numerous forms repeatedly, according to the power of their nature. Working under my supreme command, these elements bring all the vigorous and inactive

forms of energy, O son of Kunti. For this reason, the material world undergoes the changes of creation, maintenance, and dissolution.

Explanation: The evaluation is beautifully explained in these verses. After the end of some duration all energy and materials are returned to that Super power and waits for being manifested for the next life time (Kalp). The



world undergoes the changes accordingly (The evaluation) under His direction. Evaluation of the nature is a natural phenomenon. The livings have to change their structure and behaviour in order to sustain in the world. It is really amazing that so many years ago the Hindu community

had the concept of evaluation, though mentioned as a play of the supreme!

In **Chapter XII** of Srimad Bhagavad Gita “*The Way of Devotion*” which deals with some specific slokas related to environmental protection. These are:

अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ 13॥
सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ 14॥

*advēṣhā sarva-bhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva cha
nirmamo nirahankārah sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣhamī*

*santuṣhṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dṛiḍha-niśhchayaḥ
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

॥ 12-13॥ ॥ 12-14 ॥

Meaning: He who never hates any being and is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from the feelings of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and even-minded in pain and pleasure, who is forbearing, ever content and steady in contemplation who is self-controlled and possessed on firm conviction and who has consecrated his mind and understanding to Me-dear to Me is the one who is thus devoted to Me.

Explanation: Never hate any being even those who cause him pain for he regards all creatures

as Himself. Friendly and compassionate to all-He is a sannyasi has given assurance of fearlessness to all. In his heart a universal love dwells and from it a universal compassion flows. Even minded pain and pleasure do not cause in him hatred and attachment. Ever content he is satisfied whether he obtains the means of bodily sustenance or not. Firm conviction regarding the essential nature of the Self. He is a soul of peace with whom all are at peace.

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः ॥ 17॥

*yo na hṛiṣhyati na dveṣhti na śhochati na kāṅkṣhati
śhubhāśhubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ*

॥ 12-17 ॥



Meaning: He who rejoices not and hates not, who grieves not and desires not, who has renounced both good and evil and is full of devotion- he is dear to Me.

Explanation: Rejoices not-On attaining what is desirable, Hates not-The Undesirable, Grieves Not- On parting with a beloved object, Desires Not- The unattained, Renounced both good and

evil- because a devotee regards all things coming from God as good. The Lord stresses sameness, desireless and freedom from the claims of the lower egoistic nature as the foundation of spiritual life.

In **Chapter XIII** of Srimad Bhagavad Gita “*The Discrimination of The Ksetra and the Ksetrajna*” (Discrimination between Matter and Spirit) which deals with some specific slokas related to environmental protection. These are:

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव विद्ध्यनादी उभावपि ।
विकारांश्च गुणांश्चैव विद्धि प्रकृतिसम्भवान् ॥ 20॥

*prakṛitiṁ puruṣhaṁ chaiva viddhy anādi ubhāv api
vikārānś cha guṇānś chaiva viddhi prakṛiti-sambhavān*

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कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते ।
पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते ॥ 21॥

*kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛitve hetuḥ prakṛitir uchyate
puruṣhaḥ sukha-duḥkhānām bhoktṛitve hetur uchyate*

II 13-21 II

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान्गुणान् ।
कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ॥ 22॥

*puruṣhaḥ prakṛiti-stho hi bhunkte prakṛiti-jān guṇān
kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asadyoni-janmasu*

II 13-22 II

Meaning: Sloka 20: Know thou that Prakriti and Purusha are both beginningless and also know that all modifications and Gunas are born of Prakriti.

Sloka 21: In the production of the body and the senses, Prakriti is said to be the cause in the experience of pleasure and pain, Purusha is said to be the cause.

Sloka 22: Purusha seated in Prakriti experiences the Gunas born of Prakriti the reason of his birth in good and evil wombs in his attachment to the Gunas.

Both the prakṛiti, the material nature and the puruṣha, the distinct souls are beginningless, i.e. they are forever. All the transformations of the body and the modes of matter are generated by

the material energy. It is the material energy, the nature which is said to be the cause of all material activities and effects, on the other hand, it is the living entity which is responsible for the various sufferings and enjoyments (Happiness and distress) in this universe. The puruṣha (individual soul) seated in the material energy follows the way of life and desires to enjoy the modes of

nature. The nature and deepness of the attachment becomes the cause of its next birth in superior and inferior wombs.

Explanation: The nature is a form of material energy and it is eternal. The individual souls are also eternal. When a soul lives in a body, it is a



living. The body performs its transformation from the material energy. In other words, the living has to depend on the nature to grow. Nature plays the key role to perform activities and effect is received accordingly. For the suffering and enjoyment of the world the livings are responsible. In other words, suffering or enjoyment in the world depends on the activities of the living entities. The activities of a living, determines the soul in it (as soul is

endless) to take next birth in superior and inferior wombs. In another approach it can be said that the uplift or downslide in a society of an individual depends on its behavior to its surroundings.

In **Chapter XIV** of Srimad Bhagavad Gita “The Discrimination of the Three Gunas” which deals with some specific slokas related to environmental protection. These are:

मम योनिर्महद् ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम् ।
सम्भवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ॥ 3॥
सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः सम्भवन्ति याः ।
तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता ॥ 4॥

*mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbham dadhāmy aham
sambhavaḥ sarva-bhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata
sarva-yoniṣhu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ
tāsām brahma mahad yonir aham bīja-pradaḥ pitā*

II 14-3 II II 14-4 II

Meaning: Sloka 3: My womb is the great Prakriti in that I place the germ from thence, O descendent of Bharata is the birth of all beings.

Sloka 4: Whatever forms are produced, O son of Kunti in all the wombs the great Prakriti is their womb, and I the seed giving Father.

The total material substance is Brahma, the prakṛiti. It is the womb, from where the livings are born. I impregnate it by providing distinct souls, and make the birth possible for all living beings. Whatever forms are produced, O son of Kunti, in all the wombs, the great prakṛiti is their womb, and I the seed-giving Father.

Explanation: The nature is the mother of all the livings. The life is created only from the nature. The Lord is the Father and Mother of the Universe. Matter and Spirit are His two aspect and inhere in Him. As the Over-Soul, His cast and seed; as the Mother, the Nature-soul, He receives it. From the embryo thus formed, from Hiranyagarbha, are produced all created beings. Created beings are produced from the union of Purusha and Prakriti, by the power of the Lord. The Soul, or Spirit becomes entangled in the world by its contact the body or matter.

Conclusion

The Bhagavad Gita is a gospel of action in all spheres of life, physical and psychological. As

per the holy book, bondage is not out of Karma but the wrong attitude with which it is performed. Sri Ramakrishna puts it if a cheat forges cheque in the light of a lamp, it is not the fault of lamp. Karma is performed without egoism bordering on vanity without attachment to the fruits it can't bind. It helps to cleans the mind, thus paving the way to spiritual enlightenment. It expands in scope to include

actions voluntarily undertaken including the secular ones. This converts work into worship by cultivating the right attitude. While expanding his philosophy of Nishakama Karma Yoga and expanding the concept of Yajna, Lord Sri Krishna has revealed two concepts: Svadharma and Lokasangraha. Arjun is advised that it is better to die performing Svadharma rather than accepting Paradharma to save one's skin. Swadharma is any act which is a result of his own choice guided by this moral sense, devoid of external pressure from legal, social, religious sources. Moral sense does not mean mere obedience to a religious or social commandments. It is an inner awakening in man that incites us to do what is right and checks him from doing wrong. Man's duties and responsibilities are governed by his nature. Dharma is essential nature of purity, freedom, wisdom, love and bliss. Swadharma means



living in the Self or God who is real home. Srimad Bhagavad Gita explains Swadharma beautifully: “The true fulfilment of the proper discharge of one’s duties, sacred or secular, is the awakening of love for the Divine”.

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