



THE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BASED ON INSIGHTS FROM THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

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Abstract

This paper explores educational strategies for sustainable development by following insights from Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad-Gita is a part of Indian epic, the Mahabharata which is a well-known Indian spiritual and philosophical text and its teachings are universal, non-sectarian. It provides educational strategies for sustainable future which aspires to increase pro-environmental behaviour. In this article, the researcher employs hermeneutics, a qualitative methodology which is the interpretation of ancient or classical literature, the Bhagavad-Gita. The existing findings are interpreted by analysing the verse of Bhagavad Gita. At the end, it is concluded that timeless teaching of Bhagavad Gita has educational strategies to enhance the sustainable development. This article is expected to provide spiritual as well as philosophical approach to education for sustainable development based on spiritual insights from Bhagavad Gita.

Keywords: *The Bhagavad-Gita, Education, Sustainable Development*



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Introduction

On eve of apocalyptic Mahabharata War, World Teacher, Krishna imparts His supreme teaching to humanity through great warrior Arjun. The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are concerned with the relationship between humanity and the environment. Now humanity in 21st century is facing grave challenges. Humanity's entire life support system depends on the well-being of all the species living on earth. Nature is being exploited. Development is not sustainable. The relationship between human beings and the earth is increasingly complicated and urgent. There is less peace, order and harmony at individual, social, national and global level. The universal teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are the ways and means of education to sustainable development.

Purpose of study

The purpose of study is to investigate the educational strategies for sustainable development based on Insights from the Bhagavad-Gita. The message of the Gita is not merely a general

spiritual philosophy or ethical doctrine but it has a bearing upon the practical aspects in the application of environmental principles in our day-to-day lives.

Objectives of study

1. To explore the broad educational strategies for sustainable development in Bhagavad Gita.
2. To enhance the efficiency of students by developing their awareness about creation, nature and God.
3. To explore and uncover the intrinsic educational perspectives from the Bhagavad-Gita for sustainable development.
4. To find out relationship between human being and environment.

Methodology

This paper is a qualitative research paper which involves a review and analysis of literature and also the interpretation of selected verses of the Bhagavad-Gita . The methodology used for the interpretation is Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is related to the name of the Greek God Hermes in his role as the interpreter of the messages of the Gods. The Hermeneutics method is the theory and practice of interpretation. It is a stimulating and deeply interpretive research approach which can examine complex human phenomena from multiple perspectives to produce rich theoretical and experiential interpretations. In the current context, hermeneutics can be described as the interpretation and understanding of ancient literatures. Hermeneutics is widely applied in many field of social science such as philosophy, religion and theology, law, sociology and also international relations.

Educational strategies for Sustainable development from Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita teaches that the entire universe is the manifestation of divine energy. Its educational instructions for sustainable development are clear, concise, logical, and scientific—not just appeals to faith, belief, personality, or culture. There is struggle everywhere, in everything, at all times, a struggle to maintain a balance. Although human beings are seen as the most intelligent life form on earth, they are responsible for almost all the damage done to the planet. The application of Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita teaches the inner discipline which leads to the liberation of the self and to a higher understanding of the unity and significance of humankind. Yoga teaches purposefulness to maintain balance in life. To establish balance within ourselves ensures our own welfare as well as welfare of the society. We must, at all times, perform our duties because all activities have a role to play in maintaining stability of our society and the universe.

Concept of Sustainable development

Sustainability is a dynamic concept born out of the environmental issues. Environment plays a very significant role in human civilization. Human beings have close relations with the biosphere in which they live. The whole environment and ecology consisting of earth, air, water, plants and animals provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for sustaining human life. Sustainable development provides a "natural balance" or natural equilibrium in developing a human civilization.

Education for Sustainable development

Education is a proactive force bringing about modification in a person's behaviour on a durable basis. Education for sustainability requires an understanding of the interdependence and interconnections of humans and the environment. Sustainable Development can be made a total way of life, not by passing laws but by bringing about change in the attitude, and value system of people. This can be done only by education not by legislation. Education can reorient thinking, planning and execution to ensure development to be interdependent of sustainable development as economic development, social development and environmental protection. The universal teachings of Bhagavad Gita shows the direction to follow the path towards sustainable development.

Educational strategies for Sustainable development from Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita has universal application - and is not limited by time, space, culture and other usual constraints. Education strategies provided in Bhagavad Gita for sustainable development has multi-dimensional approach that involves historical, cultural, linguistic, philosophical, artistic, scientific, technological and spiritual aspects. It requires shifts of paradigms in the following fields: individual-centred to God-centred as well as shift from individual-centred development to development that emphasizes the harmonious relationships of the individual with society, nature and God is required.

Educational strategies are as follows

1. Following Universal path of Yoga

Yoga, derived from the Sanskrit word meaning "to yoke" or "to unite," refers to a series of mental and physical practices designed to connect the individual with this divine energy. Yoga is union of the individual consciousness with cosmic consciousness. In the context of the Bhagavad Gita, the term "Yoga" describes a unified outlook, serenity of mind, skill in action and the ability to stay attuned to the glory of the Self (Atman) and the Supreme Being (Bhagavan). According to Krishna, the root of all suffering and discord is the agitation of the mind caused by selfish desire. The only way to overcome desire is by simultaneously stilling

the mind through self-discipline and engaging oneself in a higher form of activity by following yoga.

2. Protecting universal Dharma

Dharma is the law that maintains the cosmic order as well as the individual and social order. It sustains human life in harmony with nature. When we follow dharma, we are in conformity with the law that sustains the universe. Dharma — often translated as “duty” — can be reinterpreted to include our responsibility to care for the earth. Protecting the environment is part of Dharma. Dharma has been translated into English as duty, virtue, cosmic order and religion. The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes in protecting the environment is an important expression of dharma. Dharma is our true place in the cosmic process: in time, in space, in awareness, in thought, deed and desire. The eternal principle of Dharma determines the harmonious functions of the cosmic machine. Dharma for a human being means developing divine virtues and performing actions that are in harmony with the divine laws.

2. Following universal law of action

The Universe is a living organism and every element in it tends to fulfill the law of cosmic order. The duty of everyone, therefore, is to be conscious of this organic structure of the cosmos and attune oneself to its way of working. The environmental actions affect our karma. Karma holds that each of our actions creates consequences — good and bad — which constitute our karma and determine our future fate, including the place we will assume when we are reincarnated in our next life. Moral behavior creates good karma, and our behavior toward the environment has karmic consequences. The law of universal causality connects man with the cosmos and condemns him to transmigrate -- to move from one body to another after death -- indefinitely. In the Gita, Krishna makes an allusion to the eternal soul that moves from body to body as it ascends or descends the ladder of a given hierarchy, conditioned on the nature of one's own karma -- work of life or life deeds. The Bhagavad-Gita states that a human being is accountable for his actions. The propensity for action is inherent in the soul, but under the bodily conception, the soul engages in activities for material sense gratification.

Karma teaches that resources in the world become scarce because people use them for their own ends. People should use the world unselfishly in order to maintain the natural balance and to repay God for the gifts he has given

annaad bhavanti bhootani parjanyaad anna sambhavah

yajnaad bhavati parjanyo yajnah karma samudbhavah // 3.14 //

From food all creatures are born; from rain food is produced; from sacrifice comes rain; sacrifice is born of action. Food is the life of all beings, and all food comes from rain above. Sacrifice brings the rain from heaven, and sacrifice is sacred action.

prakriteh kriyamaanaani gunaih karmaani sarvashah

ahamkaara vimoodhaatmaa kartaa'hamiti manyate // 3.27 //

All actions are being performed by the Gunas of Prakriti. But he, whose mind is deluded by egoism, thinks 'I am the doer'. All actions take place in time by the interweaving of the forces of Nature; but the man lost in selfish delusion thinks that he himself is the actor

tattwavittu mahaabaaho gunakarma vibhaagayoh

gunaa guneshu vartanta iti matwaa na sajjate // 3.28 //

But he who has true insight into the respective spheres of Gunas and their actions, holding that it is the Gunas (in the form of senses, mind etc.) that move among the Gunas (objects of perception) does not get attached to them, O Mighty Arjuna. But the man who knows the relation between the forces of Nature and actions, sees how some forces of Nature work on other forces of Nature, and becomes not their slave.

prakriter gunasammoodhaah sajjante gunakarmasu

taan akritsnavidu mandaan kritsnavin na vichaalayet // 3.29 //

The man of perfect knowledge should not unsettle (the understanding of) the foolish who is of imperfect knowledge, who deluded by the Gunas of nature, attach themselves to the functions of the Gunas. Those who are under the delusion of the forces of Nature bind themselves to the work of these forces. Let not the wise man who sees the All disturb the unwise who sees not the All.

3. Interconnected to Supreme spirit of Nature

Human beings are never alone as a species in the Universe. They are also inter-connected with the Earth, Sun, Moon and other planets orbiting in their appointed domains. In the ultimate reality, nothing remains unconnected in the cosmos. Aligning one's consciousness in line with the principles of natural law, he can march towards perfection and maximize his efficiency as well as effectiveness. Maintenance of natural order and pristine ecological balance is the sine qua non for ensuring human well-being.

bhoomiraaponalo vaayuh kham mano buddhireva cha

ahamkaara iteeyam me bhinnaa prakritirashtadhaa // 7.4 //

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, reason and ego - such is the eightfold division of My nature. The visible forms of my nature are eight: earth, water, fire, air, ether; the mind, reason, and the sense of 'I'.

apareyamitastwanyaam prakritim viddhi me paraam

jeevabhootaam mahaabaaho yayedam dhaaryate jagat // 7.5 //

O Mighty Armed, this is my lower nature. But different from it, you know My higher nature, the indwelling spirit by which the universe is sustained.

'Purusha' for the indwelling spirit and 'Prakriti' for the matter. Matter is inert, insentient while spirit is sentient, dynamic. A combination of these two ingredients causes things to be born and function.

Principle 1: Consciousness which is called Atma which is unconditioned, uninfluenced, un-circumscribed by the time and space.

Principle 2: Whole creation in causal matter form called Maya

At the Micro level i.e., with reference to an individual, consciousness is given the name of Atma. The very same consciousness at the Macro level is called Brahman. Therefore Atma and Brahman are synonymous meaning the same thing i.e., consciousness.

Atma means Apnoti Sarvam Iti Atma – the boundless all-pervading one. The word Brahman means infinite derived from the root 'Bruh' – to be big – therefore Brahman means the Big One, the Absolutely Big One. Thus the study of cosmology begins with two beginning-less principles known as Brahman and Maya or Consciousness (Spirit) + Matter.

tadyoneeni bhootaani sarvaaneetyupadhaaraya aham

kritsnasya jagatah prabhavah pralayastathaa // 7.6 //

Know these two - My higher and lower natures - form the womb of all beings. Therefore, I am the origin and dissolution of the whole Universe.

mattah parataram naanyat kinchidasti dhananjaya

mayi sarvamidam protam sootre maniganaa iva // 7.7 //

There exists nothing whatsoever higher than Me, O Dhananjaya. All this is strung on Me, as a row of gems on a thread. In this whole vast universe there is nothing higher than I. All the worlds have their rest in me, as many pearls upon a string.

There exists no other cause of the universe except the Lord. To show that the Self is one and the same in all created beings on the earth it is stated here that The Lord is the supporter of the Universe just as the string is of the gems on a garland. Without the string the gems will be scattered.

raso'hamapsu kaunteya prabhaasmi shashisooryayoh

pranavah sarva vedeshu shabdah khe paurusham nrishu // 7.8 //

O Son of Kunti, I am the savor of waters, the radiance of the sun and moon, the syllable OM in all the Vedas, the sound in ether and the manliness in man. I am the taste of living waters and the light of the sun and the moon. I am OM, the sacred word of the Vedas, sound in silence, heroism in men.

punyo gandhah prithivyaam cha tejashcha'smi vibhaavasau

jeevanam sarvabhooteshu tapashchaasmi tapaswishu // 7.9 //

I am the sweet fragrance in earth and brilliance in the fire, the life in all beings and I am the austerity in the ascetics. I am the pure fragrance that comes from the earth and the brightness of fire I am. I am the life of all living beings, and the austere life of those who train their souls.

In these two verses the doubt as to what is the eternal factor which is common in all and yet not readily perceptible to anybody is cleared. That which remains always from beginning to end and without which the thing cannot be identified as such is declared to be its essence, its Dharma - the law of its being. All examples given by The Lord like savor in water, radiance in the sun and the moon, syllable OM in the Vedas, the principle of sound in Space, manliness in man, brilliance in the fire, life in all beings etc. indicate that the Lord is that factor or subtle principle which gives the individual creatures different characteristics of their own..

beejam maam sarvabhootaanaam viddhi paratha sanaatanam

buddhir buddhimataamasmi tejjastejaswinaamaham // 7.10 //

Know Me, O Partha, as the eternal seed of all beings that exist; I am the intelligence of the intelligent and the splendor of the splendid (things and beings). And I am from everlasting the seed of eternal life. I am the intelligence of the intelligent. I am the beauty of the beautiful.

4. Universal knowledge about Self ,Creation and God

All of creation has the Supreme Being as its soul, its inner controller and support. All physical forms have Brahman or the Supreme Being as their ultimate Self or soul.

The five elements — space, air, fire, water and earth — are the foundation of an interconnected web of life. Pancha Mahabhutas (The five great elements) create a web of life that is shown forth in the structure and interconnectedness of the cosmos and the human body. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that the five great elements (space, air, fire, water and earth) that constitute the environment are all derived from prakriti, the primal energy. Each of

these elements has its own life and form; together the elements are interconnected and interdependent. It explains the interdependence of these elements in relation to Brahman, the supreme reality. The human body is composed of and related to these five elements, and connects each of the elements to one of the five senses. This bond between our senses and the elements is the foundation of our human relationship with the natural world. Nature and the environment are not outside us, not alien or hostile to us. They are an inseparable part of our existence, and they constitute our very bodies.

God is the universal force, the Brahman that is the basis for all creation and the continuous cycle of life. It is without beginning or end. It is the infinite, indivisible reality underlying all life. It is the essence of all existence. It is the life spirit behind all life forms. It is all pervasive. It is inside all of us (Jivatama) and also connects all existence. Thus, the individual soul may also be looked upon as a fragment of the universal spirit.

mayaa tatamidam sarvam jagadavyaktamoortinaa

matstaani sarvabhootani na chaaham teshvavasthitah // 9.4 //

All things in this universe are pervaded by Me in My unmanifest aspect; all beings exist in Me but I do not exist in them. All this visible universe comes from my invisible Being. All beings have their rest in me, but I have not my rest in them.

na cha matsthaani bhootaani pashya me yogamaishwaram

bhootabhrinna cha bhootastho mamaatmaa bhootabhaavanah // 9.5 //

And yet the beings do not exist in Me; behold, that is My Divine mystery. My Spirit which is the support of all beings and the source of all things does not dwell in them. And in truth they rest not in me: consider my sacred mystery. I am the source of all beings, I support them all, but I rest not in them.

yathaakaashasthito nityam vaayuh sarvatrago

mahaan tathaa sarvaani bhootani matsthaaneetyupadhaaraya // 9.6 //

As the mighty wind moving everywhere rests always in space (The Akasa), even so you know that all beings rest in Me. Even as the mighty winds rest in the vastness of the ethereal space, all beings have their rest in me. Know thou this truth

sarvabhootaani kaunteya prakritim yaanti maamikaam

kalpakshaye punastaani kalpaadau visrijaamyaham // 9.7 //

O son of Kunti, all beings, go back to My nature at the end of a time-cycle (Kalpa); I send them forth again at the beginning of the next cycle. At the end of the night of time all things return to my nature; and when the new day of time begins I bring them again into light.

prakritim swaamavashtabhya visrijaami punah punah

bhootagraamamimam kritsnamavasham prakritervashaat // 9.8 //

Controlling My own nature, I again and again send forth all this multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of maya. In these two verses Sri Krishna describes how His power of maya is instrumental in the process of creation and dissolution of the universe. Thus through my nature I bring forth all creation, and this rolls round in the circles of time.

na cha maam taani karmaani nibadhnanti dhananjaya

udaaseenavadaaseenamasaktam teshu karmasu // 9.9 //

These acts do not bind Me, O Dhanajaya, for I remain unattached to them as one unconcerned. But I am not bound by this vast work of creation. I am and I watch the drama of works.

mayaadhyakshena prakritih sooyate sacharaacharam

hetunaanena kaunteya jagadwiparivartate // 9.10 //

By reason of My proximity, Prakriti produces all things, the moving and the unmoving; because of this, O Kaunteya the world revolves. I watch and in its work of creation nature brings forth all that moves and moves not: and thus the revolutions of the world go round.

6. Following Nature and Spirit

The universe is the divine creation, and must be honoured in all its parts. Animals and plants, mountains and rivers, all form part of the earth, and many are worshipped for the noble qualities they possess.

avibhaktam cha bhooteshu vibhaktamiva cha sthitam

bhootabhartru cha tajjneyam grasishnu prabhavishnu cha // 13.17 //

He is undivided, yet He exists as if divided among beings; He is to be known as the supporter of beings; He destroys them and creates them afresh.

iti kshetram tathaa jnaanam jneyam choktam samaasatah

madbhakta etadvijnaaya madbhaavaayopapadyate // 13.19 //

Thus the Field as well as the Knowledge and the object of Knowledge have been stated. My devotee who understands this enters into My Being.

Sri Krishna concludes the theme of His discourse so far by saying those who seek the light through devotion to Him reach Him. Devotion implies not only emotional surrender unto The Lord but intellectual apprehension of the Truth, the Self, through a correct understanding of the Field and the Knower of the Field. One who is able to recognize the one Sri Krishna as the vitalizing Consciousness Principle in all fields of matter envelopments, he is the true

devotee who as The Lord says 'enters into His Being', attains liberation or release from birth and death.

prakritim purusham chaiva viddhyanaadee ubhaavapi

vikaaraamshcha gunaamshchaiva viddhi prakritisambhavaan // 13.20 //

Know you that Prakriti and Purusha are both without beginning and know you also that all forms and gunas are born of Prakriti.

kaaryakaaranakartrutwe hetuh prakritiruchyate purushah

sukhaduhkhaanaam bhoktritwe heturuchyate // 13.21 //

Prakriti is said to be the cause of the generation of the body and the organs and Purusha is said to be the cause of the experience of pleasure and pain. Nature is the source of all material things: the maker, the means of making, and the things made. Spirit is the source of all consciousness which feels pleasure and feels pain.

purushah prakritistho hi bhungte prakritijaan gunaan

kaaranam gunasango'sya sadasadyoni janmasu // 13.22 //

Purusha seated in Prakriti, experiences the qualities (gunas) born of Prakriti. It is attachment to these qualities is the cause of His birth in good and evil wombs.

Purusha seated in Prakriti: When the knower of the Field (Purusha) identifies himself with the Field (Prakriti), he becomes the experiencer. He experiences the qualities born of Prakriti: Purusha identi

upadrashtaanumantaa cha bhartaa bhoktaa maheshwarah

paramaatmeti chaapyukto dehe'smin purushah parah // 13.23 //

The Supreme Purusha in this body is also called the Witness, the Approver, the Supporter, the Experiencer, the Sovereign Lord and the Supreme Self. He who knows in truth this Spirit and knows nature with its changing conditions, wherever this man may be he is no more whirled round by fate.

Know that Prakriti, Nature, and Purusha, Spirit, are both without beginning, and that temporal changes and Gunas, conditions, come all from nature.

The Gita (13.28) puts it succinctly: "He who perceives the one Lord dwelling in all beings as their Self cannot harm another, for the Self cannot harm itself." This is the key message of the Gita.

5. Adopting Non-violence (Ahimsa)

Non-violence — ahimsa — is the greatest dharma. Ahimsa to the earth improves one's karma. For observant Hindus, hurting or harming another being damages one's karma and

obstructs advancement toward moksha — liberation. A commitment to a nonviolent way of life emanates from the profound understanding of the moral and metaphysical basis of life. It is only when one is able to perceive and “realize one’s self in the Self of all” can one become nonviolent in the truest sense

6. Belief in reincarnation

Belief in reincarnation supports a sense of interconnectedness of all creation. It believes in the cycle of rebirth, wherein every being travels through millions of cycles of birth and rebirth in different forms, depending on their karma from previous lives. So a person may be reincarnated as a person, animal, bird or another part of the wider community of life. Because of this, and because all people are understood to pass through many lives on their pathway to ultimate liberation, reincarnation creates a sense of solidarity between people and all living things. Through belief in reincarnation, it teaches that all species and all parts of the earth are part of an extended network of relationships connected over the millennia, with each part of this network deserving respect and reverence.

7. Renunciation.

Sanyasa (asceticism) represents a path to liberation and is good for the earth. It teaches that asceticism — restraint in consumption and simplicity in living — represents a pathway toward moksha (liberation), which treats the earth with respect. Gandhi is a role model for simple living. Gandhi’s entire life can be seen as an ecological treatise. This is one life in which every minute act, emotion or thought functioned much like an ecosystem: his small meals of nuts and fruits, his morning ablutions and everyday bodily practices, his periodic observances of silence, his morning walks, his cultivation of the small as much as of the big, his spinning wheel, his abhorrence of waste, his resorting to basic Hindu and Jain values of truth, nonviolence, celibacy and fasting.

Analysis and Findings of Study

The findings of educational strategies for sustainable development from Bhagavad Gita are analyzed to understand the self in related to finite as well as infinite world. Essentially, Arjuna wishes to abandon the battle, to abstain from action; Krishna warns, however, that without action, the cosmos would fall out of order and truth would be obscured. The Bhagavad-Gita emphasized the concept of duty and its importance for sustainable development.

Relevance of the Study

The perennial teachings of Bhagavad Gita follows the problem solving and inquiry based learning .The problems are related to self, society and world at large related to sustainable development.From the very beginning, human life and the environment are interdependent and interrelated to each other. Human beings always depended on their ecosystem for food, fuel, fertilizers, etc. Environment has got a direct impact on the social life of mankind. Today environment degradation has become one of the most serious global problems.Education for sustainable develop as well as cultivate divine qualities and regulate our lives with righteous conduct.We will follow swadharma to do our duties towards environment. It is our true place in the cosmic process; in time, in space, in awareness, in thought, deed and desire. we ought to do right things, at the right time in the right way and for the right reason.

Educational Implications of Study

The current deplorable environmental crisis demands a spiritual response. A fundamental reorientation of human consciousness, accompanied by action that is born out of inner commitment, is very much needed. An awareness of environmental ethics has to be created among various groups of people through education and mass awareness programmes.This paper has explored and uncovered the educational strategies from the Bhagavad-Gita to enhance the efficiency of students related environmental consciousness.The whole teaching of the Gita is centered on balance, equanimity, a putting in order of everything that is not in order—samatva. For attaining self-respect and self-realization one should respect and realize everything around him. The environmental protection must be taken into account in developmental programs, and then only the progress of mankind and preservation of ecology will be guaranteed. For the very existence of this earth the mutual support of all living and nonliving things is very important.

Conclusion

Sustainable development is a demanding concept. The preoccupation for an eco-friendly development process and sustainable lifestyle must remain deep and enduring, on all levels of society, international, regional, national and local. It is imperative that all of us put our minds and our hearts into the process of designing the desired new sustainable society. Sustainable development requires much broader public awareness and understanding of the natural resource and economic challenges facing the world in the 21st century. We should explore the intellectual, institutional, and operational changes that are needed to make the shift to sustainability.Let us follow the great words of Swami Vivekananda “Uttisthata Jagrata

Prapya VarannibodhataKshurasanna Dhara Nishita Dustayadurgama Pathah tat kavayo Vadanti.” (Arise! Awake! Approach the great and learn .Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, so the wise say—hard to tread and difficult to cross.)

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