

A Philosophical Analysis of Karma and Liberation in the Bhagavad Gita

NEENA T.S.

Professor

Post Graduate and Research Department of Philosophy
Maharajas College, Ernakulam (Kerala) India

ABSTRACT

The Bhagavad Gita is the most beautiful and comprehensive text about how ordinary people might transcend their personal worries and become the magnificent immortal Spirit. It is written in the style of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. Krishna's response expresses the Gita's basic themes. The Gita is also characterized as a scripture of liberation since it discusses the Absolute and teaches how to reach eternal freedom. The Law of Karma states that every thought, word, and deed contributes to a person's identity. The Gita teaches that all actions have consequences, and we are responsible for the results of our actions. It believes that action is unavoidable for everyone, under any conditions. Man achieves spiritual liberation by performing actions in the true spirit.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita, Karma, Liberation, Guna, Yoga, Krishna

INTRODUCTION

The most well-known work of Sanskrit literature that imparts ethical, religious, and philosophical teachings is the Gita. Scholars place the date of this important manuscript anywhere between the fifth and second centuries before Christ. Every student of Indian culture recognizes its influence on the ideas of reformers, sages, prophets, and the laity throughout the course of millennia, as well as on Hindu life and philosophy in general. One may argue that the Gita is the first example of pure, applied wisdom that is simultaneously magnificent and accurate. The Gita's popularity has grown over time, not just because it is a religious textbook, but also due to its universal appeal and hope for universal wisdom that transcends race, religion, and tradition. It is evident from reading the Gita that its teachings are intended for everyone in mankind, including men and women who are having difficulty realizing the higher manifestations of their souls. One defining feature of the Bhagavad Gita is the dialogue

between Krishna, who is God or, Narayana and Arjuna, who symbolizes man or, Nara. Krishna's response expresses the Gita's basic themes.

Law of Karma:

Karma has had a significant impact on Indian philosophy, and it is considered to be the cornerstone of Indian thought due to its profound and wide-ranging significance. The idea known as the law of karma holds that all actions, whether good or bad, leave behind impressions that, depending on how good or bad they were, can either predict happiness or sorrow in the future. To put it another way, every action has an effect on the world and shapes the doer's tendencies, which constitute the basis of subsequent actions. Every action, word, and thought shapes a man's identity, according to the law of karma. The law of karma applies to an individual's character since it is the outcome of numerous small mental actions. It seems that the primary goal of the law of karma is to highlight the importance of human conduct.

Man is a creature that shapes his own fate through his words, deeds, and thoughts. His personality is clearly impacted by every action he performs. The moral counterpart of the law of cause and effect is said to be the law of karma. According to Prof. Hiriyanna, "in the first place, the doctrine (of karma) extends the principle of causation to the sphere of human conduct and teaches that, as every event in the physical world is determined by its antecedents, so everything happens in the moral reaction is pre-ordained" (Hiriyanna 46). It is said that the law of karma is the law of conservation of moral values, merits and demerits of action (S.C. Chattejee and D.M. Datta 15).

Gita's concept of Karma:

The Gita teaches that all actions have implications, and we are accountable for the outcomes of our activities.

It emphasizes that as long as man is alive, he is obligated to act in order to sustain the order of existence. His future is controlled by his current actions, which are also influenced by his natural tendencies. Man's bondage is owing to the three gunas, or attributes of prakriti, which serve as the foundation for his finite nature. The gunas are the conditions that place constraints on the soul. This bondage causes the soul to have a mistaken sense of reality. In this state, it can only sense the diversity and separation of things, not their inherent unity in God. As Lord Krishna says, "The pure clear (*Sattva*), the affective-active (*rajas*), and the inert-dark (*tamas*), these nature - necessity - born modalities (*gunas*) bind, O, Mighty- armed (*Arjuna*) the imperishable embodied one." (Gita, XIV, 5)

Sattva guna represents intelligence and light, Rajas activity, and Tamas dullness and darkness. Janmabandha refers to the threefold link that man forms as a result of these natural attributes. Gita also mentions another kind of bind to which one is subjected. They are karmabandha, or the outcome of a person's own deeds.

One's natural tendencies, disposition inclinations, and the social and physical situations he finds himself in are all under the control of Karmabandha. Since a person's character is just the culmination of all the impressions that his past actions—whether they be verbal, physical, or mental—have left on him, it is the result of karmabandha.

According to the Gita, humans are vulnerable to maya, or delusion, and have lost themselves in appearances. Man will continue to suffer from the world

of afflictions as long as he is blind to the truth. Only when he overcomes maya, or delusion, and recognizes his actual nature and status will he be free and able to overcome his limitations and defects. Man discovers his true character by acts performed with complete disregard for the repercussions, not by creation. Man starts to resemble God, who is always working selflessly, in such an active life. The true self is unique and unalterable. According to Gita, "This is neither born nor does die, nor, having once *come* into being, does it cease to become any more: Unborn, perpetual, eternal *is* This Ancient one. It is not killed on the killing of the body" (II: 20)

Gita views the doctrine of rebirth as an essential corollary to the doctrine of karma. According to the Gita, the attainment of another body is as important to the embodied soul as childhood, youth, and old age in this body (II: 13). The soul moves from birth to death in a cycle—just as a man would lay down his worn-out garments and put on fresh ones. (II: 22) This kind of birth is determined by the character we have acquired. As we develop personalities dominated by sattva, rajas, or tamas, we are born in celestial realms, as men on earth, or as animals. Every person's gradual journey toward perfection is encouraged by the Gita. Reincarnation is therefore seen as a means of progressively achieving his ultimate goal. Until the objective is accomplished, rebirth keeps happening. It is a discipline that enables us to reach our full potential. The subtle body, which includes the intellect and senses, has character and endures beyond death (XV:8). As a result, an individual's character is passed on from one generation to the next.

A verse in Chapter IV, 5, strongly affirms the Gita's strong belief in rebirth. As Sri Krishna declares, "Many are the lives that I have gone part for one as also far you, Arjuna; I am *conscious* of them all; you, O Paramtapa (Arjuna), are not conscious of them" (IV: 5). The soul incarnates only as long as it is unaware of its true nature and thus of God. According to Krishna, achieving the utmost perfection and attaining it frees the great-souled ones from rebirth. All the worlds, including the realm of Brahman, are subject to return, but once attained, there is no rebirth (VIII: 15-16). When one attains awareness of the ultimate self, the law of karma no longer applies to him because he has overcome all karma and reincarnation. "Just as fire when kindled reduces to ashes the fuel, O Arjuna, likewise the fire of wisdom reduces all works to ashes" (IV: 37).

Gita on liberation or realisation:

The Gita focuses on practical techniques to overcome universal and particular soul associations, known as Janmabandha and karmabandha. While the Upanisads place a strong focus on jnana, the Gita places an equal emphasis on karma (activity), jnana (knowledge), and bhakti (devotion).

Karma Yoga, or the Path of Action:

The path to liberation through fulfilling one's own obligations as a service to God is known as karma yoga. According to the law of karma, a person's future is determined by their words, deeds, or thoughts. It is seen as having no beginning in this sense. In the end, the entire cosmos is meant to manifest as a delicate karma seed that is prepared to sprout once more at the beginning of the subsequent creation (XIII: 18-19). In this regard, God is the Lord of Karma. According to Gita, activity is what keeps the world moving. As a result, each individual should do his or her part to keep it functioning by carrying out their respective responsibilities.

Gita believes that action is unavoidable for all people under all circumstances. Man achieves spiritual liberation by performing actions in the proper spirit. However, emancipation does not entail the end of activity. It liberates man, allowing him to continue working perfectly as God's instrument for the benefit of the world. Spiritual freedom allows him to recognise his responsibility to aid others and to see the divine in them. For this, one must perform his duties as if he were doing nothing. Therefore Gita recommends, "one who is able to *see* action in inaction, and inaction in action, he among men is intelligent; he is one of unitive attitude (*yogi*) which still engaged in every (possible) kind of work" (IV: 18). Throughout, the Gita emphasizes the importance of carrying out life's obligations with a heart free of attachment and ideas of earthly wealth and completely dedicated to God's worship.

The Gita dispels the misconception that the ideal of renunciation can only be fulfilled in a solitary cave or inside a monastery, rejecting the practice of monastic life because the spirit of renunciation is lacking in the heart. Many modern-day readers insert contemporary secularism into the pages of this ancient Indian text because they fail to recognize the Gita's true spiritual direction. They find criticism of 'otherworldliness' and a desire to live in the world in order to fulfil the duties of the world, rather than renunciation. According to them,

the concepts of knowledge, devotion, and non-attachment are submissive to Karma, the Gita's primary doctrine. Western ideas of humanitarian assistance and societal upliftment are linked to the Gita's Karma Yoga concept. All of these principles exist, and the Gita does not condemn them; nonetheless, it is apparent that they are not taught as karma yoga. Even if these values are mentioned in the Gita, they have no bearing on karmayoga unless they are spiritualised.

The core of the doctrine, according to the Gita, is karma yoga, or union with God by action, as opposed to sacrifice for humanity. Instead, it is service to humanity in a selfless way as a sacrifice to God, whose image we eventually see in man, is the true ideal. Regardless of how our deeds turn out, the Gita's essential message is to fulfil our responsibilities in accordance with our station in life. Therefore, the Gita calls on people to renounce their selfish tendencies rather than give up their usual goals. It is an action-oriented philosophy that blends the virtues of asceticism and activism. Both idleness and self-indulgence are strongly reflected in it. The Gita prepares man to fulfil all of his responsibilities in a spirit of sacrifice for the outcome of actions by combining action with the abandonment of egoistic reasons. If a man learns to work in a spirit of sacrifice, he will not revel in success or lament his failure. The end consequence will be a life of calm and tranquillity. Thus, the finest path to self-realization is a life dedicated to performing all of one's duties without regard for reward.

Jnana Yoga, or Way of Knowledge:

The jnana marga required by the Gita for man to achieve ultimate good is the realization of authentic knowledge of reality. The Gita makes a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: one that can only be attained by intuition and the other that aims to thoroughly understand the aspects of existence by intellect. The second type of knowing recognizes the ultimate reality behind all changing and transitory events. However, these two types of knowledge are simply different aspects of the same goal, because all knowledge is knowledge of God.

Gita thinks that in order to achieve spiritual vision, one must learn to discipline oneself and focus solely on the heights of reality. For this reason, the Gita supports the yoga system as a method of mental training to attain knowledge of absolute reality. According to the Gita, the ultimate realization is a spiritual light achieved in a joyful

environment. It binds one to discover his entire life's aim as one continuous worship of the infinite.

Bhakti Yoga, or Way of Devotion:

In the same way that a man of action can attain freedom through appropriate action, one can fully dedicate oneself to God and accomplish his greatest goal through unwavering commitment to Him. Everyone can follow the Bhakti Yoga; both the powerful and the weak, the ignorant and the learned, can do so. Gita makes it quite evident how crucial this emancipation road is. As Gita says, "Those who worship Me, renouncing all actions in Me, regarding Me supreme, meditating on Me by that exclusive of all else, for them whose minds have entered into Me, I become ere long, O Partha (Arjuna), the saviour out of the ocean of death and repeated cyclic existences" (XII: 6-7)

A man will be free of all bandages if he offers God whatever he accomplishes as a sacrifice. In order for his followers to approach Him and dwell in Him, just as God resides inside them, God grants them spiritual freedom. It is clear that those who fully rely on devotion as the ultimate form of spiritual life will experience their highest good as a connection with the Supreme Person rather than as an immersion in the everlasting impersonal. The greatest attitudes toward God, according to the Gita, are total surrender and achieving devotion. When devotion is completed, God's grace leads the devotee to the ultimate realization that he is one with God.

Conclusion:

According to Gita, the three modes of self-realization differ only in the lowest sense of the term. From a higher

perspective, they are all representations of the same spiritual perfection. We are obligated to take action, but our attitude must be that of a devotee, *i.e.*, we must yield all control of action to God and so see in all activities that it is not I, but God operating through me. Thus, in the highest sense, work, worship, and wisdom are all identical.

Lord Krishna's teaching on the law of karma is to act with detachment, without regard for the fruits or rewards of that action. In a nutshell, the attitude of 'do your best without attaching to its result' permits one to transcend the cause-effect bondage of action and reaction.

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