

**BHAGAVAD GITA AND INDIAN ETHICS PREACHING OF
GREAT PHILOSOPHER ADI SANKARA**

EDITORS

Dr I Parvin Banu

Dr R Sivaramakrishnan

Mr D Nanee

Dr T Kanimozhi

STANZALEAF PUBLICATION

TITLE OF THE BOOK: *BHAGAVAD GITA AND INDIAN ETHICS PREACHING OF GREAT PHILOSOPHER ADI SANKARA*

Editor(s):

Dr I Parvin Banu

Dr R Sivaramakrishnan

Mr D Nanee

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PUBLISHED BY: STANZALEAF PUBLICATION

PUBLISHED ON: 11/07/2025

PAGES: 809

PRICE: 899 INR

ISBN: 978-81-987746-4-4



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Registered Address

3, Karichankadu, Attanur, Thengalpalayam post, Rasipuram TK,

Namakkal DT, 636 301, Tamil Nadu, India.

Email: stanzaleafpublication@gmail.com

Website: www.stanzaleafpublication.in



Stanzaleaf Printers, Namakkal, Tamil Nadu, India.

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71. Ethics in public life: lessons from Gita

Dr.P.Archanaa

Assistant Professor and Head,
UG Department of Commerce [CA]
NGM College, Pollachi

Abstract

Today, Gita occupied an immense area in Indian Philosophy. The essential notion of Gita influences the deliberation of western thinkers. Even it has a considerable impact on the theory of consciousness and Philosophical Psychology. Nevertheless, it has been a trend to treat Gita Philosophy now as a spiritualistic solitary. It seems that there is no ethical and implicit impact of Gita Philosophy. This paper attempts to bring out the ethics in public life, relating to Gita Philosophy. Mainly, contemporary Indian Philosophy claims that the way how Materialistic Cāravāka Philosophy is unsuitable; Gita Philosophy is, in the same way, incomplete to provide a solid ground for honest discourse. Whether Gita Philosophy does not influence making a man ethical, or does this philosophy fail to bring out of the moral codes and guide a man to be an ethic alone? Is there, state forwardly, no scope of morality?

Key Words: *Gita, Philosophy, Mahabharata, charioteer, traditions*

Introduction

The Gita is a discussion between Krishna and Arjuna before the start of the Kurukshetra War in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. Two considerable armies had gathered to destroy each other. The Pandava asked his charioteer Krishna to impel to the centre of the arena so that he can get a good look at both the armies and all those "so keen for war". The Pandya King saw that some among his enemies were his relatives, favorite friends, and valued teachers. He does not want to fight to kill them and he was filled with doubt and despair on the battlefield. He dropped his bow, wondered if he should leave his duty and just leave the battlefield. He turns to his charioteer and guide, Krishna, for advice on the motivation for war, his choices, and the right thing to do. The Bhagavad Gita is the anthology of Arjuna's questions and moral dilemma and Krishna's answers and insights that elaborate on a variety of philosophical concepts. The Gita is a fusion of Vedic and non-Vedic traditions. Reconciling renunciation with action by arguing that they are inseparable; while following one's dharma, one should not consider oneself to be the agent of action, but attribute all one's actions to God. It is a Brahmanical text that uses Shramanic and Yogic expressions to proliferate the Brahmanic idea of living according to one's duty or *dharma*, in contrast to the ascetic ideal of liberation by avoiding all karma. According to Hiltebeitel, the

Bhagavad Gita is the sealing achievement of the consolidation of Hinduism, merging Bhakti traditions with Mimamsa, Vedanta, and other knowledge based traditions.

Ethics in Public Life: Lessons from the Gita

1. Duty without Attachment (Nishkama Karma) — from the Bhagavad Gita

Nishkama Karma, in Bhagavad Gita, refers to performing procedures without attachment to their results. It emphasizes selfless action provoked by duty and morality, rather than personal gain or the belief of rewards. This philosophy encourages individuals to focus on the process and their actions, rather than being consumed by the outcome. The Following are the important aspects of Nishkama Karma:

- **Important Aspects:**

Nishkama Karma involves performing without selfish motives or the craving for personal benefit. It emphasizes performing one's duties without being emotionally involved to the outcome, whether success or failure. Individuals are encouraged to fulfill their errands and obligations without being driven by personal desires. By practicing Nishkama Karma, one can get inner peace, freedom from attachment, and transcend ego-driven wishes. This philosophy is considered a path to spiritual growth and liberation from the cycle of karma. In essence, Nishkama Karma encourages a shift in perspective from being driven by desires and outcomes to focusing on the present action and fulfilling one's duty with a selfless attitude.

2. Equanimity and Impartiality

Equanimity, is the ability to stay steady and balanced in the face of life's ups and downs. It's about not being influenced by emotions like delight or dejection caused by desirable or undesirable situations. Impartiality, means treating all beings with equal consideration, regardless of their status, relationship to the individual, or perceived qualities.

- **Practice:**

The Gita suggests that equanimity can be cultivated by appreciating the nature of reality and detaching from the fruits of one's actions. It involves recognizing that all beings are part of a unified consciousness and therefore treating everyone with respect and without bias. The Gita emphasizes seeing all beings as fragments of the same underlying consciousness, which fosters a sense of unity and encourages impartiality. This includes treating friends and foes with the same level of respect and understanding.

- **Benefits:**

By developing equanimity, individuals can overcome the tendency to be perturbed by external events and find inner peace. This allows for more effective and selfless action.

Impartiality, when combined with equanimity, helps individuals overcome prejudice, bias, and discrimination, leading to more harmonious relationships and a more just world.

3. Self-Realization as the Foundation of Ethical Action — Gita Vedanta

Self-realization is presented as the foundation for ethical action. It emphasizes understanding one's true self beyond ego and desires, leading to Karma Yoga and fulfilling Dharma without attachment to outcomes. This recognition allows individuals to act virtuously, not out of obligation, but from a place of inner wisdom and harmony.

- **Understanding the True Self:**

The Gita's central teaching revolves around discovering the true self, distinct from the ego and material attachments. This involves introspection and understanding one's nature, motivations, and place in the world.

- **Renouncing Ego and Attachment:**

Self-realization involves letting go of ego-driven desires, attachments to outcomes, and the illusion of control. This detachment allows for actions to be performed with a sense of duty and without being swayed by personal gain or loss.

- **Karma Yoga and Ethical Action:**

The Gita promotes Karma Yoga, the path of selfless action, as a means to self-realization. By performing actions without attachment, individuals contribute to the greater good and align themselves with the divine will.

- **Holistic Development:**

Self-realization is not just an individual pursuit but also contributes to a more ethical and harmonious society. By understanding their true nature and acting selflessly, individuals contribute to the well-being of others and the world.

Conclusion

Fulfilling one's duty (Dharma) is an integral part of ethical action. However, the Gita emphasizes performing these duties with a detached mindset, recognizing that actions are ultimately guided by a higher power. The Bhagavad Gita's teachings on self-realization offer timeless wisdom for personal development and spiritual fulfillment. By understanding and applying these principles, individuals can navigate life's challenges with wisdom, compassion, and a sense of purpose. The Gita's philosophy extends to education, advocating for holistic development that includes self-awareness, ethical conduct, and the integration of knowledge and action. Teachers are seen as guides who help students on their journey of self-realization.

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