



The Significance of the Bhagavad Gītā Philosophical Principles in Contemporary Education Systems

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the integration of the Bhagavad Gītā into the modern Indian education system, emphasizing its potential to address the decline in moral values while complementing contemporary educational advancements. It explores the historical evolution of Indian education from the Vedic tradition to the present, identifying challenges such as rote learning, outdated curricula, and inequality in access to quality education. By incorporating Gita's teachings, the most important religious text of Hinduism, the education system can foster holistic development, aligning academic and personal growth. The Bhagavad Gītā, an ancient text offering timeless wisdom, provides valuable insights for personal and educational growth. As a cornerstone of Hindu philosophy, the Gita encapsulates the essence of Vedantic teachings and guides spiritual seekers across generations. The study highlights how Gita's teachings on Dharma (duty), Karma Yoga (selfless action), and inner strength can help students overcome fear, self-doubt, and stress, fostering a positive mindset and emotional

resilience. The paper explores the role of the Gītā in developing ethical decision-making and leadership qualities, emphasizing its relevance in contemporary education. By integrating Gita's principles into curricula and extracurricular activities, educational institutions can promote holistic development, enabling students to achieve academic and professional success while maintaining inner harmony. The research underscores the enduring value of the Bhagavad Gītā in shaping well-rounded individuals capable of navigating life's challenges with wisdom and confidence, ultimately leading to a more harmonious and enlightened society.

Introduction

The education system in India has evolved significantly from ancient to modern times, reflecting changes in cultural, philosophical, and technological contexts. Ancient Indian education was deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition, emphasizing holistic development, moral and spiritual growth, and the transmission of knowledge through oral traditions. Gurukula and pathshalas were the primary institutions where students lived with their teachers, studying various subjects, including philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine (Srivastava, 2020). This system was characterized by a personalized teacher-student relationship and a focus on developing the inner self (Layek & Rani Sil, 2021).

In contrast, the modern education system in India, introduced during British colonial rule, is more structured and formalized. It emphasizes scientific and technological education with a standardized curriculum and formal assessments (Ramagya School, 2021). The modern system aims to be inclusive, providing free and compulsory education to all children under the Right to Education Act (2009) and incorporates technology to enhance learning experiences (Ramagya School, 2021).

However, despite its advancements, the modern education system in India faces several significant challenges that hinder its effectiveness. One major issue is the overemphasis on rote learning, where students are encouraged to memorize information rather than understand concepts. This approach limits critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential in real-world applications (Thakkar, 2023). Additionally, the curriculum often remains outdated, failing to align with the rapidly changing job

market and technological advancements (Lall, 2005). Another critical concern is the inequality in access to quality education. Students in rural and economically disadvantaged areas often lack access to adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers, and learning resources, perpetuating a cycle of limited opportunities and unequal outcomes (Chatham House, 2005). This disparity is exacerbated by the reliance on technology, which, while beneficial, can widen the digital divide for students without access to necessary devices and internet connectivity (Ramagya School, 2021). Furthermore, the Indian education system places immense pressure on students through standardized testing, leading to stress and anxiety. This focus on exams often detracts from holistic education, which should include skill development and creative thinking (Youth Ki Awaaz, 2023).

This modern education system has increasingly driven students into a competitive race for high marks, lucrative salaries, and materialistic gains, often at the expense of moral and ethical development. This focus on academic performance and financial success can lead students away from the path of dharma, or righteous living, which traditionally emphasizes moral values and ethical principles (Kaur, 2023). The intense pressure to excel in standardized tests and secure admission to prestigious institutions often results in a narrow focus on rote learning rather than critical thinking and ethical reasoning (George, 2023). This educational approach can lead students to adopt a culture that prioritizes material success over moral integrity. The emphasis on grades and financial outcomes can overshadow the importance of developing virtues such as honesty, compassion, and social responsibility (Thakkar, 2023). As a result, students may become more susceptible to unethical behaviours and less inclined to engage in community service or ethical decision-making. This decline in moral values among Indian youth is a growing concern, as it can lead to societal issues such as corruption and a lack of civic responsibility (Rajput, 2023). To address these challenges, it is crucial for the education system to integrate ethical teachings and promote holistic development, ensuring that students are equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with the moral compass necessary to navigate the complexities of modern life (Sundararajan, 2021). Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms prioritizing student-centred learning, equitable resource distribution, and curriculum modernization.

The solution to this problem lies in the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. Integrating the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā into the formal education system in India could effectively address the decline in moral values while complementing modern educational advancements. With its profound philosophical insights, Gītā emphasizes ethical conduct, duty, and self-realization, offering a framework for instilling noble virtues such as integrity, compassion, and selflessness in students (Singh, 2023). By incorporating



these teachings, the education system can nurture a well-rounded development that aligns with academic and personal growth.

The Gītā promotes critical thinking and decision-making skills, encouraging students to analyze situations and make informed choices, which is essential in today's complex world (Laureate High School, 2023). Moreover, its focus on emotional intelligence and resilience can help students manage stress and maintain mental equilibrium amidst academic pressures (Laureate High School, 2023). This integration does not detract from modern learning concepts but enhances them by providing a moral compass guiding students in their personal and professional lives.

By fostering a sense of purpose and ethical responsibility, the Gītā can help bridge the gap between academic learning and practical life skills, leading to a more harmonious and enlightened society (Singh, 2023). Therefore, incorporating the Gītā into the curriculum could be a transformative step towards holistic education that balances modern advancements with timeless values.

Objective –

To examine the potential benefits of integrating the Bhagavad Gītā's teachings into the modern Indian education system, with the aim of addressing moral decline, fostering holistic development, and enhancing students' ability to navigate life's challenges while achieving academic and professional success.

Gita at A Glance –

The Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, a key scripture within the Mahābhārata's Bhīṣma Parva, consists of 700 verses across 18 chapters. It presents a dialogue between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, addressing Arjuna's moral and philosophical dilemmas as he faces a fratricidal war. Each chapter offers profound insights into life and spirituality. In the context of modern education, these teachings can help address challenges such as ethical decision-making, stress management, and the pursuit of knowledge and self-awareness. The following table outlines the 18 chapters of the Bhagavad Gita and summarizes their significance in addressing contemporary educational challenges: –

Table 1. Bhagavad Gita in Education: A Chapter-wise Exploration

Chapter Name	Importance in Modern Education System
1. Arjuna Viṣāda Yoga	Highlights the importance of understanding and addressing emotional distress.
2. Sāṅkhya Yoga	Emphasizes the need for knowledge and discernment in decision-making.
3. Karma Yoga	Encourages action and responsibility, which are essential for practical learning.
4. Jñāna Karma Sannyāsa Yoga	It stresses integrating knowledge and action, which is crucial for holistic education.
5. Karma Sannyāsa Yoga	Teaches the balance between action and renunciation, aiding stress management.
6. Dhyāna Yoga	Promotes meditation and focus, enhancing concentration and mental well-being.
7. Jñāna Vijñāna Yoga	Encourages understanding of both theoretical and applied knowledge.
8. Akṣara Brahma Yoga	Discusses the eternal nature of knowledge and the importance of lifelong learning.
9. Rāja Vidyā Rāja Guhya Yoga	Highlights the value of profound and confidential knowledge in education.
10. Vibhūti Yoga	Inspires appreciation of diverse talents and skills in students.
11. Viśvarūpa Darśana Yoga	Encourages a broader perspective and understanding of the world.
12. Bhakti Yoga	Emphasizes devotion and passion in learning, fostering intrinsic motivation.
13. Kṣetra Kṣetrajña Vibhāga Yoga	Teaches the distinction between body and soul, promoting self-awareness.
14. Guṇatraya Vibhāga Yoga	Discusses the influence of qualities on behavior, aiding personal development.
15. Puruṣottama Yoga	Highlights the importance of understanding one's higher self and

	potential.
16. Daivāsura Sampad Vibhāga Yoga	Encourages the cultivation of virtues over vices, essential for character building.
17. Śraddhātraya Vibhāga Yoga	Stresses the role of faith and belief in shaping one's educational journey.
18. Mokṣa Sannyāsa Yoga	Concludes with the ultimate goal of liberation through knowledge and action.

Literature Review

Dabas and Singh (2018) argue that the Bhagavad Gītā teaches students that failure is a step towards success, encouraging them to look forward to the future with hope and positivity. This perspective highlights Gita's positive and pragmatic impact, instilling confidence and the capability to handle failures with optimism and hope (Dabas & Singh, 2018).

Ashraf and Naz (2020) noted that in ancient education systems, students studied the R̥g Veda and other texts alongside the Bhagavad Gītā, with gurus teaching these scriptures as a religious duty, which aligns with Lolla's (2021) observations that modern Indian educational institutions, such as Indian Institute of Technology, have included the Bhagavad Gītā in their curriculum to foster inner and outer peace among students, demonstrating the positive influence of the Gītā in their daily lives (Ashraf & Naz, 2020; Lolla, 2021). The value and importance of the Bhagavad Gītā can be assessed through the ways students incorporate its teachings and principles. According to Lolla (2021), a survey revealed that after participating in a Bhagavad Gītā course, approximately 64 students reported experiencing inner peace and sanctity, which helped them manage stress and generate optimistic thoughts, aiding in maintaining calm during turbulent situations. Additionally, nearly 90 students noted improvements in their daily lives and a sense of satisfaction, which indicates the relevance and essence of the Bhagavad Gītā remain intact and continue to be practised in Indian schools as a fundamental part of education.

Nagar (2021) opined that in the Bhagavad Gītā, Lord Krishna emphasizes the importance of karma yoga for cleansing the soul by detaching from bodily attachments. This educational philosophy aims to awaken and make individuals aware of their senses so that they can make right and wrong decisions. Similarly, modern Indian education teaches students about ethical decision-making and mental and

physical cleansing through meditation. Thus, the relevance of the Bhagavad Gītā is timeless and remains equally significant in both early and modern education systems (Nagar, 2021).

Rampal et al. (2022) highlighted that early psychological writings and wisdom described in the Bhagavad Gītā were ideal for human development. However, it wasn't until the 1970s that empirical research began exploring this wisdom, which has seen a resurgence in the 21st century and reflects the worth of the Bhagavad Gītā as significant today as it was in earlier times, underscoring its relevance in modern education systems.

We can understand the relevance of the Bhagavad Gītā philosophy in modern Indian education through its teachings on overcoming fear and self-doubt by tapping into one's inner strength and true nature. The Gītā helps students recognize the eternal soul, gaining conviction and courage. According to Dwivedi (2022), the Bhagavad Gītā acts as a catalyst for academic inspiration, facilitating the accomplishment of educational philosophies by integrating its principles into modern education systems to help students achieve their goals and succeed. He also references vital teaching from the Gītā: "You have the right to action, never to its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be thy motive, but let me be thy root in inaction" (BG 2.47). This principle can be critically assessed with students' success and failure in their personal and academic lives. The Bhagavad Gita's teachings profoundly impact students' educational perspectives, enabling them to rise from failure to success with a strong belief in religion, culture, and the wisdom of the Gītā (Dwivedi, 2022).

Key Principles from the Bhagavad Gita for Holistic Education and Personal Development

The principles from the Bhagavad Gītā provide a framework for holistic education, emphasizing ethical values, personal growth, and intellectual development, which can be integrated into educational curricula to nurture well-rounded individuals. A few important principles are summarized below -

- **The Principle of Dharma (Duty and Righteousness)** – Krishna Says, "It is better to live your destiny imperfectly than to live an imitation of somebody else's life with perfection."¹ This principle encourages students to understand and follow their path and responsibilities, fostering a sense of purpose and ethical conduct in their educational journey.

¹ *śreyān sva-dharmo vigrahaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt | sva-dharme nidhanam śreyaḥ para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ || (BG 3.35)*



- **The Principle of Karma Yoga (Selfless Action)** - "You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions."² It teaches students to focus on their duties and efforts without attachment to outcomes, promoting diligence and perseverance in learning.
- **The Principle of Jnana Yoga (Path of Knowledge)** - "The wise see that there is action amid inaction and inaction in action."³ It encourages critical thinking and self-reflection, helping students to discern more profound meanings and truths in their studies.
- **The Principle of Equanimity (Mental Balance)** - "Perform all actions, O Arjuna, being established in union with the Divine, renouncing attachment, and balanced in success and failure."⁴ This principle promotes emotional stability and resilience, helping students manage stress and focus amidst challenges.
- **The Principle of Detachment (Non-Attachment)** - "He who is unattached, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, and who works for the sake of sacrifice, all his actions dissolve away."⁵ It teaches students to detach from distractions and focus on their academic and personal growth.
- **The Principle of Self-Discipline and Control** - "One must deliver himself with the help of his mind, and not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well."⁶ This principle encourages self-regulation and discipline, which are essential for academic success and personal development.

² *karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana |
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmani || (BG 2.47)*

³ *karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarmani ca karma yaḥ
sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karma-kṛt || (BG 4.18)*

⁴ *yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañ-jaya |
siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate || (BG 2.48)*

⁵ *gata-saṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthita-cetasah |
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagraṁ pravilīyate || (BG 4.23)*

⁶ *uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet |
ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ || (BG 6.5)*



- **The Principle of Mindfulness and Meditation** - "When meditation is mastered, the mind is unwavering like the flame of a lamp in a windless place."⁷ It promotes concentration and mindfulness, aiding students in achieving mental clarity and focus in their studies.

These principles emphasize critical thinking and ethical decision-making, encouraging students to analyze situations and make informed choices, which are essential skills in today's complex world (Laureate High School, 2023). Moreover, its focus on emotional intelligence and resilience can help students manage stress and maintain mental equilibrium amidst academic pressures (Dabas & Singh, 2018). This integration does not detract from modern learning concepts but enhances them by providing a moral compass guiding students in their personal and professional lives.

By fostering a sense of purpose and ethical responsibility, the Gītā principles can help bridge the gap between academic learning and practical life skills, ultimately leading to a more harmonious and enlightened society (Bodhi International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science, 2024). Therefore, incorporating the Gītā into the curriculum could be a transformative step towards holistic education that balances modern advancements with timeless values.

The Role of the Bhagavad Gītā in Enhancing Teacher-Student Relationships

The Bhagavad Gītā emphasizes understanding and adhering to one's dharma or duty. This concept helps students discover their true passions and callings in modern education systems. According to Kakarla (2023), education encompasses practices, skills, wisdom, and knowledge for Dharmic and Karmic life, which can relate to the strong connection between learners and teachers through meaningful conversations. This relationship is mirrored in the Bhagavad Gītā, where Arjuna's confidence and potential are nurtured under Krishna's guidance, reflecting a pure and faithful teacher-student bond. Similarly, in modern education, students benefit from a strong rapport and trust in their teachers' guidance and leadership (Kakarla, 2023).

Contribution of the Bhagavad Gītā in Shaping Personalities and Behavior of Students

The contribution of the Bhagavad Gītā philosophy is widely recognized and appreciated by modern Indian educational institutions and students alike. Dafaik (2023) suggests that the Gita's teachings connect with eternal truths such as bhakti (devotion), dedication, and the path to salvation and Divine

⁷ *yathā dīpo nivāta-stho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā |
yogino yata-cittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ || (BG 6.19)*

communion. Through unwavering faith, individuals can tap into their inner strength to confront challenges and adversity. Therefore, incorporating the Bhagavad Gita's concepts into modern Indian schools and universities could help students develop an optimistic and spiritually grounded personality, enabling them to approach their education with positive feelings and emotions, setting aside negativity and weakness (Dafraik, 2023).

As students internalize these teachings, they will likely enhance their performance with a positive mindset and balanced life. This transformation can effectively shape their behaviour and personality, helping them make calm and informed decisions between right and wrong, ultimately leading to success in their educational and professional lives. Harshavardhana and Srinivas (2021) also highlight that the Bhagavad Gītā advocates for leadership roles and the "art of active listening." By incorporating the Gītā, educational institutions can cultivate leaders free from discrimination and biases, capable of making wise decisions that lead to inner harmony and contentment. Such unbiased leaders are followed by other people (BG 3.21) (Harshavardhana & Srinivas, 2021).

Integrating the principles of the Bhagavad Gītā into the Indian education system can be achieved through various practical approaches that align with modern educational goals while fostering holistic development. Here are some strategies:

- 1. Discussion Groups and Debates** - Create platforms for students to engage in discussions and debates about the teachings of the Gita. This encourages them to connect these principles to real-world situations, thereby enhancing their critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills.
- 2. Values-Based Projects** - Design projects that delve into themes of duty, responsibility, and ethical behavior across various professional and social settings. This method helps students apply the Gita's teachings in practical ways.
- 3. Mindfulness Practices** - Incorporate meditation and breathing exercises derived from yogic traditions to foster relaxation and concentration, aiding students in stress management and improving emotional intelligence.
- 4. Guest Lectures** - Invite scholars and practitioners to share insights on the Gita's teachings, facilitating interactive sessions that engage students in meaningful dialogue.

5. **Incorporate Gītā Verses** - Integrate selected verses from the Gita into subjects like ethics, philosophy, and psychology to provide a moral and ethical framework alongside academic content
6. **Reflective Exercises** - Encourage students to participate in reflective exercises that prompt them to consider how the Gita's teachings can be applied in their daily lives, promoting self-awareness and personal growth.
7. **Interdisciplinary Projects** - Support projects that examine the intersections between Gita philosophy and contemporary issues, fostering a comprehensive understanding of its relevance in today's world.

These methods can create a nurturing educational environment that balances modern advancements with timeless values, ultimately leading to the development of well-rounded individuals who are both academically competent and morally grounded.

Beyond the Classroom: Applying Gītā Teachings for Personal and Ethical Growth

The principle of Gītā can be effectively integrated into extracurricular activities to enhance students' personal and ethical development. Here are some practical ways to achieve this -

1. **Service-Oriented Projects** - Motivate students to engage in community service, such as volunteering at shelters or organizing environmental clean-up events. These activities help cultivate a sense of social responsibility and altruism, aligning with the Gita's concept of selfless action, or Nishkāma Karma.
2. **Leadership Roles in Clubs** - Provide students with leadership positions in various clubs, like debate or environmental organizations. This experience fosters decision-making skills and accountability, mirroring the Gita's teachings on fulfilling duties with integrity and commitment.
3. **Mindfulness and Reflection Sessions** - Implement regular mindfulness and reflection sessions where students can consider their roles and responsibilities in different activities. This practice promotes self-awareness and detachment from outcomes, reflecting the Gita's advice on performing duties without attachment to results.
4. **Workshops on Ethical Decision-Making** - Organize workshops that address ethical dilemmas and decision-making processes. These sessions can help students apply the Gita's principles of righteousness and moral clarity to real-world situations, strengthening their ethical understanding.

5. Creative Arts and Drama Integration - Utilize drama and the arts to portray stories and scenarios from the Gita, allowing students to explore its teachings in a creative manner. This method makes the concepts more relatable and memorable, deepening their understanding of duty and responsibility.

By embedding these principles into extracurricular activities, students can develop a balanced perspective that values personal growth and ethical conduct, preparing them for responsible citizenship and leadership.

Discussion

Integrating the Bhagavad Gītā into the modern Indian education system offers a multifaceted approach to addressing the challenges faced by contemporary educational practices. The Gita's teachings provide a moral and ethical framework that complements the existing curriculum, promoting holistic development and ethical reasoning among students. This integration is particularly relevant in a system that prioritizes rote learning and standardized testing over critical thinking and personal growth.

The principles of the Bhagavad Gītā, such as dharma (duty), Karma Yoga (selfless action), and Jnana Yoga (path of knowledge), encourage students to engage in self-reflection and ethical decision-making. These teachings help students develop a sense of purpose and responsibility, fostering a balanced education approach that values academic achievement and personal integrity. By promoting mindfulness and emotional resilience, Gita's teachings equip students to manage stress and maintain mental equilibrium, addressing the pressures of modern academic life.

Moreover, the Gita's emphasis on teacher-student relationships mirrors the traditional Indian educational model, where personalized guidance and mentorship play a crucial role in student development. This approach can enhance the educational experience by fostering trust and open communication between teachers and students, leading to a more supportive and nurturing learning environment.

The practical application of the Gita's teachings through discussion groups, values-based projects, and mindfulness practices further enriches the educational experience. These activities encourage students to apply ethical principles in real-world contexts, enhancing their ability to navigate complex social and professional landscapes. By integrating the Gītā into extracurricular activities, students can develop leadership skills and a strong sense of community service, aligning with the Gita's teachings of selfless action and duty.

Conclusion

Incorporating the Bhagavad Gītā into the modern Indian education system presents a transformative opportunity to balance academic rigour with timeless ethical values. The Gita's teachings provide a comprehensive framework for nurturing well-rounded individuals who are both intellectually competent and morally grounded. By addressing the limitations of the current education system, such as an overemphasis on rote learning and a lack of ethical focus, the Gītā can help cultivate a generation of students equipped to face the challenges of the modern world with integrity and wisdom.

Integrating Gita's principles into the curriculum enhances students' academic and personal growth and contributes to developing a more harmonious and enlightened society. By fostering a sense of purpose and ethical responsibility, the Gītā can bridge the gap between academic learning and practical life skills, ultimately leading to a more balanced and fulfilling educational experience. As educational institutions continue to evolve, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā offer a valuable resource for shaping the future of Indian education, ensuring that students are prepared to lead with compassion, resilience, and a commitment to the greater good.

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