

Original Paper

Srimad Bhagawat Gita as a Part of Mahabharata and its Comparison with Other Religious Literature

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Abstract

Mahabharata is great Indian epics which discusses about facets of human life. It teaches many virtues in the form of story that is applicable even today in this technological world. It teaches Dharma always wins over adharma. We should be in the side of Dharma and follow good virtues. Our greed and lust ultimately will destroy our peace and will destroy us. This study introduces Mahabharata gives a snapshot of it and why Dharma-yuddha became inevitable. The confusion of Arjuna in the beginning of the war and how Lord Krishna clarifies it. The discourse between Arjuna and Lord Krishna is known as Bhagawat Gita. Certain verses of Bhagawat Gita is discussed and a comparison is made with other religious literature. The methodology used here is Analytical and Critical method for analysis of the philosophical content.

Keywords

Mahabharata, Bible, Quran, Thirukural, Bhagawat Gita and Dharma-yuddha

1. Introduction

Bhagawat Gita is a great philosophical work it contains all the essence of Veda and Vedanta. The whole text is written in the form of conversation. It is written in the form of question and answer. Asking questions is an art and each and every question asked by Arjuna shows his intelligence. Lord Krishna answers each and every question asked by Arjuna and clarifies his doubt. In order to understand about Bhagawat Gita let us first understand about Mahabharata. The whole story circulates around Kuru Family. (Basu, 2016) Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa, himself a character in the epic, composed it; as, according to tradition, he dictated the verses and Ganesha wrote them down. At 100,000 verses, it is the longest epic poem ever written, generally thought to have been composed in the 4th century BCE or earlier. The main story revolves around the two branches of family the Pandavas and Kauravas they

fight in the Kurukshetra War for the throne of Hastinapura. (Basu, 2016) It was first narrated by a student of Vyasa at a snake-sacrifice of the great-grandson of one of the major characters of the story. Including within it the Bhagavad Gita, the Mahabharata is one of the most important texts of ancient Indian, indeed world, literature.

Shantanu, the king of Hastinapur marries Ganga with whom he gets son Devavrat. Several years after he falls in love with Satyawati this is the root cause of all the events that will happen latter. Satyawati's father demands that he will agree for marriage provided his daughter's (Satyawati) son and her decedents will inherit the throne. But Shantanu did not agree for this demand but latter Devavrat vowed to renounce throne and to remain celibate throughout his life. Satyawati's father agreed for marriage by this way Shantanu and Satyawati's marriage took place. Two sons were born to Satyawati and Shantanu couple but the elder one dies when he reaches adulthood. Therefore the younger son Vichitravirya was enthroned. Vichitravirya married two princess with the help of Bhishma (Devavrat) but latter he dies soon after childless. Satyawati summoned her son Vyasa to impregnate the two queens. Vyasa had been born to Satyawati of a great sage named Parashar before her marriage to Shantanu. Thus by Niyogi custom the two queens each had a son of Vyasa the elder queen delivers Dhritarashtra (blind son) and the younger one Pandu. Vyasa also impregnates the maid of these queens and she delivers a son named Vidur. Dhritarashtra grew up to be the strongest of all princes in the country, Pandu was extremely skilled in warfare and archery, and Vidur knew all the branches of learning, politics, and statesmanship. Pandu was crowned as king because Dhritarashtra is handicapped and cannot become king by laws. Dhritarashtra's married Gandhari, and Pandu married Kunti and Madri. Everything was going smoothly but Pandu announced that he want to go to jungle with his wives for some time and all duties related to kingdom was assigned to Dhritarashtra. Few years latter Kunti returned to kingdom with her five sons and with bodies of Pandu and Madri. (Basu, 2016) The five boys were the sons of Pandu, born to his two wives through the *Niyog* custom from gods: the eldest was born of Dharma, the second of Vayu, the third of Indra, and the youngest - twins - of the Ashvins. In the meanwhile, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari too had children of their own: 100 sons and one daughter. The Kuru elders performed the last rites for Pandu and Madri, and Kunti and the children were welcomed into the palace.

All the 105 princes were send to gurus ashram for learning first to Kripa's ashram and then to Drona's ashram. It was in this ashram hostilities developed between Kaurava's (hundred sons of Dhritarashtra collectively called as Kaurava's the decedent of Kuru dynasty) and Pandavas (patronymic of their father Pandu). Duryodhana, the eldest Kaurava tried to poison Bheem the second Pandava. Karna from suta clan developed hostilities with Arjuna therefore joined with Duryodhana. After completion of the learning all 105 princes returned to the royal palace. The eldest Kaurava arranged for public skills exhibition of the princes but during this exhibition the citizens understood the hostilities between the two branches of the royal families. It was also during this time that questions began to be raised about Dhritarashtra occupying the throne, since he was supposed to be holding it only in trust for Pandu, the crowned king. Dhritarashtra after analysing the situation he declared that the eldest Pandava,

Yudhishtir, as the crown prince and heir apparent. But Duryodhana was not happy with this decision (because he thought his father was de facto king) therefore he planned to kill Pandavas and Kunti. Pandavas and Kunti were sent to a palace made of inflammable material. But Pandavas were aware of this plan as they were alerted by their uncle Vidur. But Vidur had a counter plan ready he dug an escape tunnel underneath their chamber for escape in case of fire. Pandavas themselves sets fire in this palace and escaped through the secret tunnel.

Pandavas and Kunti went into hiding they travelled from one village to another in disguise as poor Brahmins. During this time Bheem marries a demoness called Hidimba and they are blessed with a demon child called Ghatotkach. Arjuna marries Panchal princess Draupadi during the swayamvar arranged by her father. Kunti without knowing what they brought she tells her sons to share equally among themselves whatever they have. Thus Draupadi becomes wife of all the five Pandavas. After wedding ceremonies at Panchal palace they return to Hastinapur. (Basu, 2016) Dhritarashtra made a great show of happiness on discovering that the Pandavas were alive after all, and he partitioned the kingdom, giving them a huge tract of barren land to settle in and rule over. The Pandavas transformed this land into a paradise. Yudhishtir was crowned there, and he performed a sacrifice that involved all of the kings of the land to accept—either voluntarily or by force—his suzerainty. The new kingdom, Indraprastha, prospered.

(Basu, 2016) The prosperity of Indraprastha and the power of the Pandavas was not something that Duryodhan liked. He invited Yudhishtir to a dice game and got his uncle, Shakuni, to play on his (Duryodhan's) behalf. Shakuni was an accomplished player; Yudhishtir staked—and lost—step by step his entire wealth, his kingdom, his brothers, himself, and Draupadi. Draupadi was dragged into the dice hall and was insulted. There was an attempt to disrobe her but she was saved by Lord Krishna. In the next dice game the condition was that the loser would go on a 12-year exile followed by a year of life incognito. This time also Yudhishtir lost the game therefore Pandavas should go for 12-year exile followed by a year of life incognito. After completion of the mission Virat king's daughter (princess) was married to Arjuna's son Abhimanyu. After the exile Pandavas returns to their kingdom but Duryodhan refuses to give back their kingdom. Therefore war becomes inevitable. This war is known as Kurukshetra war because it took place in Kurukshetra and this war is also known as Dharma-yuddha: dharma (धर्म) meaning righteousness, and yuddha (युद्ध) meaning warfare.

the Gita, is a 701-verse Hindu scripture that is part of the epic Mahabharata (chapters 23-40 of Bhishma Parva), dated to the second century BCE. It is considered to be one of the main holy scriptures for Hinduism.

(The Wikimedia Foundation, 2021) The Gita is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Krishna, an avatar of Lord Vishnu. At the start of the Dharma Yuddha (righteous war) between Pandavas and Kauravas, Arjuna is filled with moral dilemma and despair about the violence and death the war will cause in the battle against his own kin. He wonders if he should renounce and seeks Krishna's counsel, whose answers and discourse

constitute the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna counsels Arjuna to “fulfill his Kshatriya (warrior) duty to uphold the Dharma” through “selfless action”. The Krishna–Arjuna dialogues cover a broad range of spiritual topics, touching upon ethical dilemmas and philosophical issues that go far beyond the war Arjuna faces.

2. Overview of Mahabharata and Srimad Bhagawat Gita

The Bhagavadgita or the song of the Lord is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and his friend and disciple, Arjuna. This dialogue is a part of Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata. The Bhagavadgita is composed of 700 verse (slokas) arranged in 18 chapters. It is one of the best known philosophical texts of Hinduism, and is said to contain the essence of all Vedanta thoughts. This dialogue takes place in Mahabharata before the great battle begins. The battle was fought between army of the Pandavas and army of Duryodhana. Pandavas tried all possible ways to settle the matter peacefully. Duryodhana refuses to any compromise. The Pandava brothers decide to fight a war against Duryodhana to gain justice. This is known as Dharmayudha which means this is a battle fought for Dharma (rights). This is not a simple battle but clearly explains that Dharma ultimately triumphs. We face this type of situation in our day today life the fight between Dharma and Adharma. Its teachings are the core of Hindu’s fundamental beliefs. It is ageless and it is relevant even today. Each verse has in depth meaning and people have interpreted in many ways.

This script is icon of true Sanatana-dharma (Jayaram , An Introduction To The Bhagavad-Gita And Its Three Secrets, 2017). It contains the message of divine centred living based upon right knowledge, faith, devotion, self-surrender, detachment and dispassionate performance of tasks as opposed to the ego centred living, which is characterized by incessant striving, self-centred thinking, egoism, and suffering arising out of non-attainment of desires, or union with the undesired objects or separation from the desired objects. This is an ancient and valuable discourse it plays the role to alleviate suffering is all walks of life, especially for today’s technological fast moving world which has become more stable and complex. Its history and content are intimately connected to Lord Krishna, incarnation of Lord Vishnu and he is also called Yadhava Kula Murali played crucial role in the great epic Mahabharatha.

3. Triumphs of Dharma over Adharma

Lord Krishna clearly says that when adharma over rules Dharma, He will come to re-establish Dharma. This does not mean that God will come only when there is grave destruction of Dharma. It is true that he is everywhere, he is everything and of course he is present well inside us also. But it only means that He will take his full power (manifestation) whenever needed. The important verses of Bhagavat Gita which conveys this message is (Chapter 4, Verse 7-8)

यदायदाहिधर्मस्यग्लानिर्भवतिभारत।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्यतदात्मानंसृजाम्यहम्॥४-७॥

परित्राणायसाधूनांविनाशायचदुष्कृताम्।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थायिसम्भवामियुगेयुगे॥४-८॥

The verse in Roman script

Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati bhārata

Abhythanamadharmasya tadatmanam srijamyaham

Paritranaya sadhunang vinashay cha dushkritam

Dharmasangsthapanarthay sambhabami yuge yuge

(Bhagavad Gita Chapter 4, Verse 7-8: Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya, 2014) The meaning of these two *slokas* is as follows:

Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata,

And there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I Myself come forth;

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers,

For the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age.

4. The Concept of Dharma in Other Religious Literature

4.1 The Concept of Dharma in Ramayan

In Ramayana Rama (Dharma) defeated Ravana (Adharma) and rescued Sita.

4.2 The Concept of Dharma in Thirukural

In Thirukural அதிகாரம்செங்கோன்மை kural number 547 we can see similar concept

இறைகாக்கும்வையகம்எல்லாம்அவனை

முறைகாக்கும்முட்டாச்செயின். (Kural 547)

(Tamil Karpom, 2001) King protects his citizens if he adopts righteous path then that path will protect him.

4.3 The Concept of Truth in Bible

(Bible Gateway, 2001) “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [a] In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [b] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.”[c] Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.[d] From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”

4.4 The Concept of Truth in Quran

(Stacey, 2017) “Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah (obligatory charity); [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and ailment and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.” (Quran, p. 2, p. 177)

5. Wisdom is Powerful than Physical Strength

Arjuna, the third of the five Pandavas was the most powerful and renowned warrior and known for heroism. Before the battle begins both Duryodhana and Arjuna meets Krishna and asks for help. Krishna agrees and he is ready to give two types of help they can choose whatever they want. One type is he is ready to give his army with all weapons they can use them. Another type is he will accompany with them in fight but he will never fight directly or will use his weapon. Duryodhana chooses the first one, thinking he will be the most powerful with more soldiers and arms with this he can easily win the battle. But Arjuna’s choices was different he asked Lord Krishna to accompany him throughout the battle. Krishna agreed to drive Arjun’s chariot during the battle.

Arjun is choosing wisdom rather than army power because wisdom is most powerful than anything else. This similar meaning is conveyed by the following Thirukural couplet (Kural குறள்) number 430

**அறிவுடையார்எல்லாமுடையார்அறிவிலார்
என்னுடையரேனும்இலர். (Kural 430)**

Meaning: (Karpom T., The Possession of Knowledge, 2018) Those who possess wisdom possess everything; those who have not wisdom, whatever they may possess, have nothing.

Duryodhana is having huge army but he is afraid of Pandava brothers who have very less army. Similar meaning is conveyed by Thirukural couplet (Kural குறள் 599) number 599

**பரியதுகூர்ங்கோட்டதுஆயினும்யானை
வெருஉம்புலிதாக்குறிள். (Kural 599)**

*“Huge bulk of elephant with pointed tusk all armed,
When tiger threatens shrinks away alarmed!”*

Meaning: (Karpom T., The Possession of Knowledge, 2018) Although the elephant has a large body, and a sharp tusk, yet it fears the attack of the tiger.

6. Review Related Literature

The investigator have reviewed two studies related to the topic under study (Pillai, 1999) in his study “Educational ideas in Bhagavad Gita and its relevance to modern world”. The content of Education should include both the temporal and spiritual subjects so that the temporal and

spiritual knowledge may supplement and complement each other; but priority should be given for the attainment of self-realisation. A properly educated person is one who is free from ego desire, anger, hatred, jealousy and selfishness. A real scholar or pandita his one who is not influenced by emotions. A perfect individual is a realised soul who controls his intellect by the self (Atman), the mind by the intellect, the senses by the mind, and the body by the senses. Self-Realisation as an aim of education is very often correlated with idealistic school of philosophy in Education. But the self-realisation as stated in Gita as an aim of education is very comprehensive.

(Bhagabati, 2009) "The philosophy of the bhagavadgita its upanisadic sources." The Upanisads as we have seen is called Brahma vidya or the science of reality which may be called monistic and idealistic. The statement 'All this is Brahman (sarvam khalvidam brahma), insists on the unity of everything that exists and they are idealistic in the sense that all are pervaded by the Supreme Consciousness, who is of the nature of self. It is the Real of all reals (satyasya satyam). The Bhagavadgita also refers to the reality of one Absolute Brahman whose nature is pure consciousness. It communicates the Supreme knowledge of the Upanisad to humanity. Brahman manifests Himself in external material world and also as individual beings. The Bhagavadgita also refers to the reality of one Absolute Brahman whose nature is pure consciousness as Upanishid. It communicates the Supreme knowledge of the Upanisad to humanity. Brahman manifests Himself in external material world and also as individual beings. In the Kathopanishad the work is compared to a peepul (asvattha) tree, which is uprooted and eternal in its branches are scattered below in the form of variety of existence. Similar idea is found in the Bhagavadgita also.

7. Methodology of the Study

The study adopted Analytical and Critical method for analysis. (shodhganga) Analysis is a very dominant philosophical tendency. It involves "breaking down" (i.e., analyzing) philosophical issues. Analysis may be explained as an understanding of fundamental concepts, other related concepts, and interrelationship between these concepts. Critical analysis can be defined as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

8. Implication of the Study

- 1) We should fight for Dharma we should not keep quiet when there is adharma happening in front of our eyes.
- 2) Dharma ultimately triumphs therefore we should always follow right path but we should have patience.
- 3) Dharma is the path of God which is clearly discussed in all world religions.
- 4) Wisdom (Intelligence) is most powerful than our physical strength.

9. Conclusion

This study analysis the inevitable war between the two parts of the Royal family Pandavas and Kauravas and this war is known as Dharma- Yuddha which means fight for Dharma. Beginning of this war Arjuna gets confusion whether to fight or stop the war because there will be lot of destruction both families will face heavy casualties of war. Lord Krishna explains Arjuna about kshatriya Dharma and clarifies all confusions of Arjuna. This discourse between Arjuna and Krishna is known as Bhagawat Gita because Lord clarifies all doubts and it contains essence of all Veda and Vendhanda. A comparison is made between certain verses of Bhagawat Gita and other religious literatures which preaches the same concept to make the understanding better.

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