

Pedagogy of Value Education in the Light of Teachings of the Bhagavad Gita

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ABSTRACT

This paper is the outcome of a doctoral level research study by the same title and brings forth an indigenous model for value inculcation among the youth in a very systematic way. It points to a very significant pathway for inspiring excellence through educational inputs and evolves a design for value education through real life experiences or experiential learning for the students. Analyzing the various layers of personality of the learner and addressing each aspect of the developing personality of the learner at the appropriate juncture, this approach based on the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita inspires the learner to see the reality for himself/ herself and makes him/ her capable of carving out his/ her own path to righteousness (Swadharma) according to the innate nature or Swabhava, thus leading to a journey in excellence for each movement of life as an offering to the presiding deity or the revealed divinity within each individual. The eleven steps suggested here come out as the eleven cardinal principles of education for righteousness and incorruptibility, the twin pillars of an ideal human life rooted deeply in values. These values are then the guiding lights for a life committed to self knowledge manifesting the divinity within in each and every action for the joy of existence and the glory of God. Such a life, the author asserts becomes the life modelled to excellence and becomes an inspiration for the race for the ages to come. The present juncture of human history demands such a radical approach to value education as the stories and parables have failed to have deeper impact for value education.

Keywords: Value Education, Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita is such a wonderful treatise on human development that it has drawn the attention of innumerable scholars from almost all walks of life all over the world. The way a confused and illusion-struck

friend and disciple is led to the state of clarity of vision in order to establish himself in balance, equanimity and righteousness is a remarkable achievement of Indian spiritual heritage especially preserved in the form of The Gita for such a long period of time. The ideas expressed herein and the pathways indicated are very logical, scientific and relevant even in the most trying situations of life, what to talk of our day to day struggles of existence.

Swami Krishnananda (1981) has rightly observed, '*the great author of this epic (Mahabharata, of which the Gita is a part) achieves a double stroke by this masterpiece that he has*

Access this article online	
Publisher	Website: http://www.ndpublisher.in
	DOI: 10.5958/2230-7311.2016.00052.0

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given to mankind. He gives directly a message that has to go into our souls and at the same time makes it appealing to the various psychological features which constitute our emotional personality...' He further says that '*this song*'- the Gita- is not merely the song of the Lord, but many messages are conveyed through the various chapters and verses so that every disease conceivable of human nature can be remedied by some medicine or the other that is there in the form of some words of the Bhagwad Gita. It is a medicine for every illness of life".

A Brief Analysis of the Method Used by Sri Krishna in Value Clarification to Arjuna

When we look very closely to the presentation of ideas and thoughts in the Gita, we find that starting from the most material or gross level, the Gita takes us patiently to the highest level of our possible development in a very systematic and fantastic way. Swami Krishnananda (1981) says, '... and the Bhagwad Gita takes its stand as a good teacher in a school or a college and leads us by our hand by degrees to the various levels to which we have to rise for the purpose of the real freedom that we have to achieve.'

A close scrutiny of the development of the thought structure of the Bhagwad Gita indicates a way, a definitive path to create and inculcate strong value system in the consciousness and personality of Arjuna, the representative man of his age. The very first chapter depicts how Arjuna is made to face the reality of the situation which he is going to confront in the battlefield. Here the teacher does not give him any readymade recipes/ formulae for success, but very patiently makes his disciple realize the vastness and complexity of the matter at hand. He lets the disciple freely express his ideas and arguments and see for himself the critical failure of his own pseudo self-confidence. The situation is slowly brought to the point of such a delicacy that Arjuna recoils from the idea of the warfare at the very first experience of the inner crisis. Then, the second chapter of the Gita elucidates the way the teacher makes a fine balance of mental, emotional and spiritual appeals with his characteristic smiling attitude. Here it is also a fact that Arjuna is made to engage willingly in the dialogue to get clarification on various related issues.

The approach of the teacher with regard to his clarification in response to Arjuna's queries bears resemblance to the scientific method. The teacher does not impose his own views, but puts forward very systematically, with appropriate examples from the contemporary situations as well as history; all relevant and logical points related to the issues at hand and provides freedom of choice to the disciple, Arjuna. The attitude of the teacher is very empathetic and compassionate. He envisages greatness in his disciple, makes him grow in maturity with confidence by his firm belief in the positive qualities and strength / valour of Arjuna. At every point of the dialogue, we find a new level and quality of confidence being developed in Arjuna. The dialogue goes on with active and motivating / enthusiastic participation of Arjuna, yet the teacher seems to be very careful in that he provides only those ideas which Arjuna asks for in the context of his problems. He does not go on discussing the things / issues merely for the sake of discussion. That is why the main point of reference remains always in sight and both of them turn again and again to the macro and micro issues of the impending battle which has to be faced.

The teacher is also careful enough in developing a state of higher consciousness or what Krishnamurti (1929) calls the state of 'choice less awareness' in the mind and psyche of his disciple, Arjuna. With enhanced / expanded level of consciousness, he is able to see the entire picture dispassionately for himself and is made free to have his own responsible choice for his actions. And, by the time he is given the power/ freedom of choice, his inner state has been made so pure and strong / value-based that whatever he decides is guided by his developed *Inner Self* and not by his superficial emotional / mental outrages as it happens in case of most of the human beings, the people living in the ordinary/ general pool of human consciousness. Also the teacher does not provide one-sided solution to Arjuna's queries but offers a wide variety of alternatives with sufficient explanation in order to lead him to the balanced state of mind by initiating him in the triune of Action, Knowledge and Devotion (Integrity)- representing/ resembling the three basic powers of man- the power to do, the power to know and the power to believe. That is why we find,

again and again, that He asserts our dutifulness guided by true / higher knowledge (the right kind of sufficient fund of knowledge) but as an offering to the Lord of our being. And, then, at last, comes the crowning verse of the Gita:

*Yatra yogeshwarah Krishno yatra Partho dhanurdharah,
Tatra Srihvijayobhutirdhruva nitih matih mama; 18/ 78.*

Meaning that 'wherever is Krishna, the lord of Yoga, wherever is Partha, the wielder of the bow, there is prosperity, victory, welfare and constant justice; such is my conviction.'

Sri Krishna, the man of vision, of farsight and foresight, combined with the tremendous energy of implementation in Arjuna, the man of action, the hero of action, ensures, in any nation, these blessings: *Srih*-the economic prosperity, *Vijayah*-victory in all righteous actions, *bhutih*- welfare of all beings and *dhruva-nitih*-definitive state of moral awareness. Here Sanjaya says, economic prosperity, success in all undertakings, that high concept of social welfare, and finally, ethical sense, moral awareness, constant justice and righteousness in the society will be the result of such a combination of the energy of vision and the energy of action.

Hence, the method of value education in the Gita is unique in the sense that it makes the learner value oriented during the very process of interaction. Also, the teacher has the patience to educe values gradually by making the disciple realize his true nature and making him aware of his duties towards himself, towards society and towards *Dharma* or righteousness. In the words of Campbell (2004), 'we have to go from science to God without taking recourse to irrational belief. The final outcome will be a diamond-like consciousness where we shall be like facets of the brilliant illumination of a cultural communion.

The following logical steps emerge out of a careful study of the method used in the Bhagwad Gita for the purpose of value clarification to the representative man of his age.

Steps of Value Education Programme as in the Gita

The pattern of thought structure of the Gita can be

summarized under the following steps so far as the way to value development in the disciple is concerned:

(i) Developing / Establishing A High Degree of Rapport

The very first thing, which strikes in the Gita, is the characteristic relation of the Teacher and the Taught. The high degree of rapport that exists between the two is conducive to a qualitative dialogue of the teacher and the disciple, which leads to unraveling of various issues one by one. The confidence of Arjuna in the leadership of Sri Krishna and simple, yet unmoving faith in his guidance in all matters in itself the result of a very high degree of rapport between them.

Also, the kind of questions that Arjuna raises as well as the way in which these questions are raised amidst the worst crises of his life and action are possibly the result of this kind of rapport. At the same time, the loving kindness and caring guidance that Sri Krishna provides throughout the dialogue speaks volumes about their intimate friendliness.

(ii) Making One Face the Reality of Life

Despite the fact that the two have very good rapport and Sri Krishna is a divine incarnation, He makes Arjuna realize the vastness and complexity of the situation first hand. He neither does explain the situation and its outcome beforehand nor prepares Arjuna for the great battle in advance. Instead, He makes Arjuna come face to face with the actual situation by bringing the chariot in the very middle of the armies ready to fight the fiercest battle of their life.

A parallel picture can be drawn with the situation students are facing today in the era of high quality technology and low quality human responses in every walk of life. Particularly, this is more true in case of students facing cut-throat competitions in career and life. The way out, as per the message of the Gita, is to let the students come face to face with the situation and watching them carefully so that whenever the need for help arises, the teacher is available there, but no a-priori preaching / conclusion is thrust upon them. This will make them strong and confident in handling /

dealing with their problems as in the process of critical participative observation of the situation, their response-potential will get sharpened and strengthened.

(iii) Understanding the Delicacy of the Situation

The crisis of values that this world is facing today is not the result of one single factor. Rather a multitude of forces are responsible to bring mankind to this sorry state of affairs where, in words of Oliver Goldsmith (Ranganathananda, 2000) 'wealth accumulates and men decay.' The situation is also not so gross as to be grasped easily to get rid of it. Moreover, increasing fund of information (and knowledge of course, without self-knowledge) added with the degeneration in human values has put the society upside down. One single emotion of a single individual or a group may disturb the pseudo-equilibrium state of the social fabric today. Hence, the situation has become very delicate. People are ready to kill themselves and others at the slightest provocation or non-fulfilment of desires. Hence, the solution, in the light of the message/ teachings of the Gita, seems to lie in the proper understanding of the delicacy of the situation, the problems and issues concerned, especially with young/ adolescent students. This demands a greater degree of awareness of their roles and responsibilities by the teachers, along with an enhanced / expanded state of awareness / consciousness of their own emotional structure and its reactions.

(iv) Making a Fine Balance of Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Constructs/ aspects of Personality

For the purpose of value development, it is important to take into consideration the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of the personality of the student. Sri Krishna, in the Gita, starts with the emotional aspect of Arjuna's personality when he is facing an emotionally trying situation in the form of despondency. After duly addressing this aspect, He goes on to the logical arguments of mental aspects of Arjuna's personality where He answers, very logically, all his questions, one by one, giving very relevant explanations / illustrations to bring home the main points related to his questions. And, finally, He brings in, the spiritual truths, joining these truths with the relevant question of Arjuna in many ways.

Here we get one hint that values are not just mental or emotional constructs. Rather these have their roots deep into the spiritual domains of our existence. Hence, any effort towards inculcation of values needs mental, emotional as well as spiritual appeal in a balanced way. Neglect of any one or two of these may jeopardize the process and spell disaster for the proper development of human values in the personality of the students. In the absence of such a right approach, even if we get success seemingly, that success cannot be of lasting value, as is shown by many recent examples, where people, capable of giving very logical thoughts and strong emotional appeal, were reportedly found indulging in undesirable activities because of their hollowness on the spiritual front.

(v) The Way of Empathy, Science and Compassion

It is rightly said that 'values are caught and not taught'. In the sphere of human values, it is essential to approach the person/ student with empathy, logic as well as compassion and most importantly with a positive appeal. Without these tools in hand, the teacher trying to inculcate human values may prove to be a miserable failure. The Gita shows this path as Sri Krishna helps Arjuna in enhancing his value-capital through empathy and compassion. At the same time, his way is highly logical, scientific and systematic. Nowhere in the entire Gita, have we found erratic ideas and egoistic declarations. Also, the appeal is always positive which ultimately leads Arjuna to declare emphatically that all his doubts have been dispelled and he is ready to take part in the battlefield of life with righteousness as his guide.

(vi) Developing the Dialogue in the Right Spirit and Direction

The way ideas and values have been developed in the Gita through dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna is characteristic of a vast synthetic/ organic approach to life. The dialogue starts from the most pressing problem of external nature, develop logically into the sincere exploration of the nature and the root cause of that problem, and finally leads to the messages and revelations that are of eternally valid significance for

human life. All the relevant issues of life and conduct have been systematically explored through this dialogue in the spirit of earnest search by the representative man of his age. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (1928), 'There are three things in the Gita which are spiritually significant, almost symbolic, and typical of the profoundest relations and problems of the spiritual life and of human existence at its roots; they are - the divine personality of the teacher, his characteristic relations with his disciple and the occasion of his teaching.' The characteristic relation of the two is prominently shown in the nature and output / outcome of the dialogue between the two, which ensures dispelling of all illusions of Arjuna's mind through this dialogue in a very logical and thought-provoking way.

(vii) Creating a State of Receptivity for Higher Consciousness

It is often said that 'small minds see the problems whereas great minds see the opportunities.' In most of the cases, our attitude and approach to any issue of life decides significantly the final results in that context. If we are limited in our approach and vision, we will get the results accordingly. In the whole of the Gita, this truth has been emphasized, again and again, that whatever be our duty, we must do it rightly with a view to uplift our consciousness. Every action done in this spirit becomes a '*sadhana*' and is capable of leading one to the highest possible state of spiritual upliftment / development- this is the assurance by the Lord Himself

In the context of value-education, it is very significant that we learn to perform our duty, with mind fixed in the goal of raising our consciousness to higher levels. The litmus test of any work/ activity, from the point of view of its utility for value education is whether it is leading one to higher states of consciousness/ awareness or not.

(viii) Providing Freedom of Choice to the Disciple:

From the very beginning of the Gita to its concluding verse, we find a unique feature that although the teacher shows various ways and means to overcome the immediate crisis, yet He is careful enough in the sense that He never imposes His own views on the disciple. He provides freedom of choice to him from among a

number of alternatives to Arjuna and leaves it on him to decide which path to select. In this way, His work is that of 'a guide by the side' and not that of 'a sage on the stage.' This brings us to the modern trend in education where facilitator role of the teacher is being emphasized.

Because of this freedom, the disciple feels that the decisions are his own and he readily takes the credit and responsibility for further course of action in the most enthusiastic way. This, in turn, leads to more and more self-confidence and maturity in the disciple which help him inculcate and imbibe more of human and spiritual values.

(ix) Showing the Way to Complete Surrender to the Self

The discussions and dialogue of the Gita leads Arjuna to be awakened to the inner self and helps him make it a point of reference for all actions and aims in life. Although it (the discussion) starts with the description of outer circumstances, but as it advances, it leads to the realization of the true reference point- the true *Self*- which finds culmination in the verse 61 of chapter 18 where the lord himself declares:

Ishwarah sarvabhutanam hriddeshe Arjuna thisthati

Bhramayan sarvabhutani yantrarudhani mayaya; 18 / 61

Meaning

'The supreme lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the heart of all beings, causing all beings, by his *maya*, to revolve (as if) mounted on a machine.'

The first teaching to be given to a human child, as has been found in the Bhagvad Gita, is self-reliance; it says, 'have faith in yourself; work out your own destiny; work hard; it is a stress on personal effort. When the 'I' or the ego has become sufficiently developed and chastened, then it is made to realize gently, the other truth. Life's first stage is: education for manliness and strength. Manliness and strength, courage and character-efficiency-all these will lead to a profound experience- and then comes complete self surrender.

And, this stage is conducive to the highest development of an individual as it is at this stage only that one

becomes a manifesting instrument of the divine plan of action. Whatever one thinks, whatever one does -all come from higher planes and one feels completely like a child playing safely under the protection of the divine Mother (Sri Aurobindo,1928). This state of mind and heart creates a fertile ground for nurturing of all human values, which are basically 'the manifestations of divine perfection already in man' in the words of Swami Vivekananda.

(x) Ensuring the Growth of the Disciple in the Trinity of Action, Knowledge and Devotion

As values flourish in the atmosphere where right action guided by right knowledge leads one to a state of devotion to the lord of life in the natural order of things, it is essential that the student is joyously led to the confluence of right action, knowledge and sincere devotion. For this, the teacher and the student together have to travel on the pathless land (Krishnamurti, 1929).

Through the systematic and scientific clarification with loving kindness as well as generous moral support or positive reinforcement, the teacher of the Gita makes the student aware of his powers and capabilities in a way that instills self-confidence at every step. Also, the student is helped to perceive the realistic picture with his own eyes and then is helped to take his own decisions

(xi) Making the Disciple/Student Self-Dependent and Self-Directed for Righteous Action in Life

The ultimate maturity required of an educated person is that of self-directedness for decisions and actions in the life for personal, social as well as spiritual development. To this end, the contribution of the Gita is enormous. From the very first stage, the purpose of the teacher in the whole of treatise seems to set Arjuna free unconditionally (in the words of Krishnamurti) and lead him to a frame of mind and heart where he becomes self directed for righteous decisions and righteous actions in life. This is what is achieved when he declares that all his illusions have been dispelled and now he is ready to work according to the commands of the Lord (within and without both) whom he has established in himself as the guiding light of his life. This is, in fact, the essential step towards excellence in life.

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