

Exploring the Concept of Self in Srimad Bhagwat Gita for Developing Environmental Consciousness

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Abstract

In the contemporary era, we identify ourselves based on what we consume or what we possess. Besides, various advertisements, celebrities, and other influential personalities encourage and make us believe that we can make a new identity by consuming a specific brand, or relating to a particular institution or connecting with an extraordinary group, etc. Hence, we tend to identify ourselves with consumer goods. In such conditions, Srimad Bhagwat Gita becomes significantly relevant to look for alternative way of life. This paper attempts to explore the concept of Self in Gita as a model for realizing environmental consciousness. Largely, it will analyse the concepts of *Nishkama Karma* (Detached Action) and the Self to see what it may contribute in developing an apt environmental consciousness. With the analysis of these concepts the paper tries to probe for an epistemological and metaphysical alternative to the Ecology understanding.

Keywords: Environmental consciousness, Bhagwat Gita, Nishkama Karma, Consumerism, Self-realization, Cosmic consciousness.

Introduction

Contemporary culture of consumerism, mechanistic relationships and self-alienation is causing environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. In order to visualize and move towards a more sustainable and vibrant way of living, our relationship with nature and understanding of human beings must undergo a thorough reevaluation and reappraisal. For this task, we can take great inspiration for alternative worldviews from ancient wisdom. Srimad Bhagavad Gita (here onwards Gita) is one of the richest ancient texts that offers inspirational insights in this regard. With this view, this research paper has three objectives – one, to underline the connection between self-identity, consumerism, and environmental degradation. It will highlight the impact of consumerism on self and environment. Second, it will examine the association between the ethical and metaphysical assumptions taken by Bhagwat Gita on the concept of self. It will also probe an epistemological and metaphysical alternative for the Ecology. This section will strive to comprehend the intrinsic human nature explained by Gita and learn the ethics that is in tune with the cosmos. Third, in the light of spiritual insights of the Gita, the paper will explore the possibility to develop a holistic approach to address the environmental crisis which implies emotional and ethical aspects along with cognitive aspects.

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While exploring the issue of human existence Erich Fromm (1976), in his book *To Have or To Be?*, has made a significant distinction between two modes of existence i.e., having and being. He asserts that our contemporary society more or less falls under the “having” mode. He further explores the concept of interpersonal relations and shows that once the “having” mode works in relationships, it inclines to own another person instead of “being” with. Consequently, interpersonal relations become the cycle of dominance and submission instead of being equal partners in sharing an experience. In his analysis, he argues that the “*Modern consumers may identify themselves by the formula: I am = what I have and what I consume*”². Eventually, the human being becomes a commodity for himself, which he sells like other commodities. His personality, to be valuable, must be saleable¹. Accordingly, such an identity, or sense of self, is necessarily externalized and mediated through objective relations³. Therefore, there is an exponential growth in the demand of consumer goods.

Acquiring more products has become a status symbol in our society. Yet, the real problem is that despite having more products and comfort in our lives, people find themselves more anxious and unsatisfied than ever before. Further, instead of aspiring for love, peace, rationality, brotherhood, and creativity, we wish to acquire more and more material goods. In the last two decades, we have witnessed the extinction of numerous species. Moreover, environmental degradation has become a threat to humans as a species⁴. Accordingly, well-being has been reduced to sensual pleasures. This tendency has not only polluted the environment but the very nature of humanity. This paradox nudges us to reconsider our contemporary approach for living life.

The burning issue and need for change

Now, an important question emerges, what are the impacts of the contemporary way of life on the notion of self and environment? Thinkers have observed various impacts that will be discussed briefly.

The first such impact on self has been found in form of *inflated narcissism*. Briefly, narcissism can be explained in two ways - first, in this condition, an individual identifies himself with the imaginary sense of self. Second, he remains in a dreamy, lethargic, unconscious state that is the result of advertisements. Walter Benjamin called it a “*dream-filled sleep*”, which is the collective characteristic of contemporary society. Other impacts include the feeling of dependency, despair, anxiety, emptiness, and inferiority, etc. In short, it

² Fromm, Erich. “To have or to be?”. Continuum publications: New York, 2008. P. 62

³ Ewen, Stuart. All consuming images: The politics of style in contemporary culture. Basic Books, 1988.

⁴ Cort, John E. "Visions of a New Earth: Religious Perspectives on Population, Consumption, and Ecology." (2003): PP.208-210.

is a “*floating self*” that is alienated from her inner feelings, emotions, reason, and fundamental nature of oneself⁵.

From the environmental perspective, the unchecked desire to possess things has resulted in an irreversible crisis. This global crisis raises the question of protecting ourselves as a species. Thus, to preserve the ecosystem, we formed an international strategy for sustainable development; which includes the sustainable development of human society along with the natural environment of the planet. Yet, even defenders of sustainable development strategies do not fully realize the necessity of developing consciousness in every human being. In this regard, we should learn that the obstacles to environmental awareness and environmental responsibility could not alter essentially, unless, we concede the relationship among ecological thinking, consciousness, and human responsibility towards nature. Besides, instead of concentrating on a specific ecological problem, we need to address this issue holistically. It requires a profound understanding of the way we humans think and perceive ourselves in this world.

Therefore, we should be very clear about the epistemological and metaphysical bearing on our actions. In this regard, we should be cautious about epistemology based on the subject-object dichotomy⁶. This epistemology proceeds with the rivalry between humans and nature. So, this approach suggests an axiological position of the subject of consciousness towards the natural world. Further, it emphasizes the external relationships with the object. However, studies show that environmental consciousness is a complex mental process that involves emotional and ethical aspects along with cognitive aspects⁷. Therefore, it is a dire need to find an alternative to this epistemological approach to comprehend environmental issues.

While metaphysically, we need to look for the central theme a “*man - the natural environment (planet)*” as a holistic system of joint development⁸. This paradigm is based on the interaction of man and the environment defined by universal life principles. Further, it indicates a transcendental principle concerning man and the environment as a component in an organic relationship. In this system ecological consciousness, thus, appears like the structure of consciousness and psychic processes. Therefore, man is not separate from the social and natural structure, rather developed in collaboration. It allows an individual to feel unity with the world around him directly.

⁵ Walter, Benjamin, Eiland Howard, and McLaughlin Kevin. "The arcades project." Tr. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge: Harvard UP 1999.P. 391

⁶ Draper, Peter. "Quality of life as quality of being: an alternative to the subject-object dichotomy." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 17.8 (1992): PP. 965-970.

⁷ Immordino- Yang, Mary Helen, and Antonio Damasio. "We feel, therefore we learn: The relevance of affective and social neuroscience to education." *Mind, brain, and education* 1.1 (2007): PP. 3-10.

⁸ Panov, V. I. "Ecological thinking, consciousness, responsibility." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 86 (2013): PP.379-383.

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Moreover, **holistic metaphysical paradigm** offered by Gita offers an alternative to the existing pedagogical approach that is based on a scientific discipline called 'Ecology'. It is developed based on the content taken from disciplines like biology and geography, etc. Therefore, it follows the natural science approach of the **subject-object dichotomy**. Besides, it considers subjects as **arbitrary architects** who decide the fate of the planet and ultimately leads to anthropocentrism. Again, the ecological approach is limited to the cognitive aspects of environmental consciousness and fails to develop effective aspects such as moral and spiritual.

Considering the above issues in the contemporary environmental approach, a constant search for new, more effective methods is absolutely essential. In the light of such challenges, we will investigate the concepts of Nishkama Karma (Detached Action) and the Self as outlined in the Bhagwat Gita. The paper uses this probe to explore environmental consciousness beyond the subject-object dichotomy as well as explore connective & effective aspects as well as cognitive aspects.

What does Bhagwat Gita offer?

Gita offers an in-depth understanding of the concepts of 'Nature' and 'Man' as a component of the higher divine self. It also provides a comprehensive account of Man's nature and its relationship with other human beings and natural environment. The Gita lays out universal principles that can guide human actions. Self-realization and broader aspects of humanity are at the core of these guiding principles. Therefore, it serves as a basis for the emergence of cosmic consciousness within humans that is particularly significant for ecocentric consciousnessⁱⁱⁱ. The realization of self in a broader sense enlarges the responsibility towards the world. Moreover, this responsibility is not imposed from outside, but it is a natural outcome of aligning personal will with the Universal Will. The gradual unfolding of text facilitates self-realization in a more concrete and applicable way. Besides, Gita elaborates on Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Gyan Yoga which can be compared with the conative, affective and cognitive components respectively⁹. Hence, Gita provides a holistic approach in comparison to Ecology. Now let's begin with the core concepts of Gita which can help us contemplate on the present environmental crisis and related implications.

The concept of Nishkama Karma (detached action)

Sri Aurobindo Gosh in his book *Essays on the Gita* (1953) holds that the purpose of Gita is to transform superficial, shallow, and narrow human thinking, feeling, and being into wide and deep spiritual consciousness. The former is based on the emotions, sensations, desires, and self-repeating thoughts centered on the superficial ego. While the latter is the integration of external and internal divine being; it is the experience of the Supreme Being that is one in all.

⁹ Sahu, Bhagirathi. *New Educational Philosophy*. Sarup & Sons: New Delhi 2002. P.44

When Arjuna shows his incapacity to fight against the respected men like Bheeshma and Dronacharya and kill his elders and teachers¹⁰. At that time, finding the contradiction in his lamenting, Krishna describes the characteristics of an imperishable soul with the help of various analogies and brings his attention from the body identification to embodied soul¹¹.

Along with providing a very elaborative account of the higher self, Gita prescribes various ways to attain it. Yet, it does not recommend inaction and absolute merger into the highest form. Despite accepting the greatness of the departure into the Supreme Being, it still urges to act for the betterment of this world. This position of Gita, I think, makes its message so powerful that it has inspired the Karma yogis of India for millennia. For this very reason, Gita becomes quite relevant for environment consciousness too. The key point, in this regard, is Gita's emphasis is on the change in spirit and outlook towards the work instead of abandoning it. At this juncture, Nishkama Karma (detached action), the most popular but intricate concept of Gita, is very significant to ponder upon. According to this concept, Karma Yogi performs every action without any attachment for its fruits and devotes them to Supreme Being.

*karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana/
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi//2.47//¹²*

Translation - You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.

With this verse, Gita prepares oneself to do his/her duties without concerns about the results. It also warns the doer that the results are not personal enjoyment, thus one should give up the pride of doership, yet not being attached with inactiveness. Consequently, one does not get entangled by the senses driven by three gunas (modes) of Prakriti (Nature)^{iv}. Therefore, s/he acts as an instrument of the Divine Will, instead of knowing himself as a doer. Accordingly, "The true worker (karma yogi) is also the true renouncer (Nitya Sannyasin), for he works in a detached spirit."¹³ The selfless action leads one to perform egoless and desireless acts. Since these actions are driven by selfless work for the welfare of all beings, they prepare an individual for self-realization. By surrendering his will to the Supreme Being, s/he frees himself from the primal emotions i.e. desire, fear, anger and partakes in the timeless consciousness. To grasp the inherent relationship between the Nishkama Karma and the Higher Being, we should first elaborate on the two metaphysical concepts – Prakriti (Nature) and Purusha (Spirit).

¹⁰ For detailed explanation, see Verses 4-5 in the chapter 2, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

¹¹ see chapter 2 from Verses 12 to 25, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

¹² Chapter 2, verse 47, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

¹³ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. "The Bhagavadgita, with an introductory essay, Sanskrit text, English translation and notes." (1948). P. 175

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Metaphysical basis for Nishkama Karma and Higher Self

*etad-yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṅītyupadhāraya/
aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā//7.6//¹⁴*

Translation- Know that all living beings are manifested by these two energies of mine. I am the source of the entire creation, and into me it again dissolves.

According to Gita, the union of Prakriti (the principle of mind and matter), and Purusha (the principle of pure spirit) underlies all creation. These both energies are sourced into the Supreme Being¹⁵. The interaction of Prakriti and Purusha initiates the activation of three gunas in Prakriti which causes the creation of this universe. Though, before creation Prakriti itself as the creative power or a conscious force resides in the Purusha in the form of Para-Prakriti. When this creative force of God, through the action of Maya, (Cosmic Delusion) becomes materialized and engrossed in the Gunas (triple modes of Nature), it hides the underlying Spirit and pure manifestation of Spirit's blissful Nature.

*tribhir guṇa-mayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat/
mohitaṁ nābhijānāti māmebhyaḥ param avyayam//7.13//¹⁶*

Translation - Deluded by the three modes of Maya, the people in this world are unable to know me, the imperishable and eternal.

Thus, it is called the Impure Cosmic Nature or Apara Prakriti. The three gunas i.e., Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, make up the veil of Maya. The Sattva guna represents goodness, light, and purity and is elevating. The Rajas stand for passion, activity, and energy and it is activating. While, Tamas embodies darkness, ignorance, and inertia, hence, it is considered obstructing. All manifested creations owe their existence and character to the constant action and interaction of the three inherent gunas¹⁷. Various combinations of three gunas determine the nature of any existent thing or being. An individual influenced by this Maya could not see the Supreme, eternal, and the unborn beyond it. Radhakrishnan compared this cosmic delusion with Plato's analogy of the cave¹⁸.

An individual has both (Prakriti and Purusha) the elements in oneself. Therefore, he has both the possibilities of being and acting. A man acts mechanically under the influence of ignorance, laziness, deluded intellect and a demoniac nature without realizing his true nature¹⁹. In this case, he identifies himself with ego, and the central force behind all his actions is desire. This attitude is the source of our inclination towards the external relationship with people and things. We aspire to possess more and more things to find a

¹⁴ Chapter 7, verse 6, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

¹⁵ See verses 4-5 in the chapter 7, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (Accessed on 20/01/2022)

¹⁶ Chapter 7, verse 13, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

¹⁷ See verses 1-10 in chapter 14, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/>(Accessed on 20/01/2022)

¹⁸ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. "The Bhagavadgita, with an introductory essay, Sanskrit text, English translation and notes." (1948). P. 217

¹⁹ See chapter 7 and verse 15. <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (Accessed on 20/01/2022)

place in others' eyes. Actions done under the influence of these gunas are determined by ego, desires and illusions and causing the environmental destruction in contemporary world.

To awaken oneself from the identification of ego and body, one must realize his True Nature, the Supreme within. It is the vision of the highest evolution for Man. While being identified with body and mind is devolutionary for Gita^v. The evolution is a continuous process, Gita, thus, stepwise guides the seeker to live and act in harmony with the world. Gita calls this harmony Yoga which means union. It is through yoga that we understand that 'I', the self, and the entire universe are the product of the Supreme Being, and that, therefore, we are not separate. It leads to inclusiveness and show a path that not based on external relationship with environment. It is an **alternative approach to the subject-object dichotomy** to connect with the world. Yoga prepares an individual for the manifestation of divinity. One has to strive towards this by controlling the sensory impulses, overcoming activating ambitious Rajasic forces, and dampening Tamasic inclinations to harmonize with Sattva. Control does not signify psychic suppression in Freudian sense; instead, it is steadily striving to go beyond sensory pleasures towards the self-realization.

*viśhayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ/
rasa-varjaṁ raso 'pyasya param dṛiṣṭvā nivartate//2.59//²⁰*

Translation- Aspirants may restrain the senses from their objects of enjoyment, but the taste for the sense objects remains. However, even this taste ceases for those who realizes the Supreme.

Thus, consciousness outlines its way from Tamas –Rajas - Sattva and then liberates itself from all gunas. The Sattvic activities awaken and lead an individual towards the Cosmic Consciousness (Brahman).

*guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī deha-samudbhavān/
janma-mṛityu-jarā-duḥkhair vimukto 'mṛitam aśhnute//14.20//²¹*

Translation-By transcending the three modes of material nature associated with the body, one becomes free from birth, death, old age, and misery, and attains immortality.

In the thirteenth chapter, two terms—kṣhetra (the field) and kṣhetrajña (knower of the field) are introduced. The term 'field' includes the mind, intellect, ego, and all other components of material energy that make up our personality. The 'field' of the body refers to all the material aspects of our whole character, with the exception of the soul, who is the 'knower of the field.'

*ichchhā dveṣhaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṅghātaś chetanā dhṛitiḥ/
etat kṣhetraṁ samāsenā sa-vikāram udāhṛitam//13.7//²²*

²⁰ Chapter 2, verse 59, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

²¹ Chapter 14, verse 20, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

²² Ibid, chapter 13, verse 7

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Translation: Desire and aversion, happiness and misery, the body, consciousness, and the will—all these comprise the field and its modifications.

It is advisable to practice austerity of body, mind, and speech in order to peel away the layers of self-glamour and illusion in chapter 17. This will reveal the truth for what it is and provide insights into the self and its relationship with everything.

dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate 'nupakāriṇe/
deśhe kāle cha pātre cha tad dānam sāttvikam smṛitam//17.20//²³

Translation- Charity given to a worthy person simply because it is right to give, without consideration of anything in return, at the proper time and in the proper place, is stated to be in the mode of goodness.

Self-realized men are said to understand their true selves and the world around them by living with humility, with compassion, with detachment, and by controlling their thoughts. An individual like this is constantly aware of his actions, reactions, and interactions with the outside and inside worlds. The self-realized man stands as a responsive and willing servant of the Supreme Lord and humanity when he balances himself between his inner self and the outer world.

Once active consciousness has withdrawn from ego identification, it may remain and perceive inner reality with holistic faith. It opens up another realm of life; thus, the action takes new meaning and purity. Our being no longer lingers to the limited egoistic nature instead evolves to the divine, vital, spiritual within. The more one opens oneself up for the divine, the more he takes his will away from ignorance²⁴. It is a difficult path but once taken, it leads to man's authentic being, innermost supreme nature. This transformation is enormous and needs a complete consecration of everything else to this highest form. It needs acceptance for new truth, the new self, new knowledge about others, the world, God, and nature. This knowledge of oneness and divinity begins first as an understanding but ends in a vision, consciousness, and a permanent state of being.

samam pashyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam ishvaram|
na hinasty atmanatmanam tato yati param gatim ||13-29||²⁵

Translation- Those, who see God as the Supreme Soul equally present everywhere and in all living beings, do not degrade themselves by their mind. Thereby, they reach the supreme destination.

Aurobindo in his book *Essays on the Gita* (1922) calls such individuals as the elect. The elect, for him, is the one who can adopt the faith in the greater law. He asserts, there is a

²³ Ibid, chapter 17, verse 20.

²⁴ Chopra, Sadna. "The Bhagavad Gita: The Roadmap to Conscious Evolution: Understanding the Eternal Reality of Consciousness." *Journal of Conscious Evolution* 8.8 (2018): P. 2.

²⁵ Chapter 13, verse 29, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

total truth in nature greater than our individual choice²⁶". This state orders one, "to be perfectly equal in all happenings and to all beings, and to see and feel them as one with oneself and one with the Divine; to feel all in oneself and all in God; to feel God in all, oneself in all²⁷". In this state, human joy is not dependent on the desire of any outward mortal thing. It contains the delight of an "inalienable self-sufficient" spirit. Then, rejecting the root of all desire, the birth, one may pass on to his end by concentrating into Absolute.

We can see once the actions are free from one's anxiety, whims and eccentric desires generated from inferiority and body & ego identifications. One works in alignment with the cosmic order for the well-being of the whole and we can call it the environmental consciousness.

Finding one's True Nature or Svadharma

Like Arjuna, we all find ourselves in a state of despair, doubts, and anxiety in our lives. At these moments, we hope and pray for an answer that can show us a clear path. One can compare Arjuna's condition with an individual predicament or common crisis like the environmental crisis we are currently facing and seek guidance from the Gita. In such circumstances, Gita advocates turning inward to seek our inherent intuitive wisdom for guidance. Further, it holds that the problems that we are facing in our lives are due to our conditioning of body, mind, and intellect. As a consequence of this conditioning, we fail to recognize our true selves, the seat of wisdom and strength. Thus, self-knowledge is the only path to find liberation from this situation of disorder and grief.

Moreover, Gita states that to rise above the present situation of life, a seeker must discipline his mind beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, success and failure, etc. Krishna tells Arjuna to establish in the yoga that equanimity and evenness of mind. This lesson is not for the spiritual seeker only, but it is significant for all of us. As if a person cannot handle favorable and unfavorable circumstances adequately, then he will not be able to follow his chosen path uninterruptedly.

*sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ sva-sthaḥ sama-loṣṭāśhma-kāñchanaḥ/
tulya-priyāpriyo dhīras tulya-nindātma-sanstutiḥ//14.24//
mānāpamānayos tulyas tulyo mitrāri-pakṣhayoḥ/
sarvārambha-parityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa uchyate//14.25//²⁸*

Translation-Those who are alike in happiness and distress; who are established in the self; who look upon a clod, a stone, and a piece of gold as of equal value; who remain the same amidst pleasant and unpleasant events; who are intelligent; who accept both blame and praise with equanimity; who remain the same in honor and dishonor; who treat both friend and foe

²⁶ Gosh, Aurobindo. "Essays on the Gita, Vols. 1-2." Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry 1927. P. 97

²⁷ Ibid. P.101

²⁸ Chapter 14, verse 25 , <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/> (accessed on 01/20/2022)

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alike; and who have abandoned all enterprises – they are said to have risen above the three guṇas.

Gita holds that every individual has his innate nature (Svabhava). It depends on the combination of three modes of Prakriti and his past life Karmas. The actions, knowledge, ego, constancy of purpose, and happiness of that person are defined and influenced by this nature. Thus, Gita has explained four kinds of social beings and their characteristics and duties. These are called Four Varnas by Gita. In Radhakrishnan's words, "*Man's outward life must express his inward being*".²⁹ Gita suggests that by following one's intrinsic nature, an individual can find accomplishment in his area of action. Moreover, the execution of duties intended by one's nature and compatible with his station (Svadharmā) will lead to excellence. The emphasis on finding one's true nature helps one to attain excellence & satisfaction in one's work instead of mindless consumerism.

Furthermore, if each individual performs his best work according to his innate nature; then, he contributes best to the efficiency and smoothness of the whole organic system. Moreover, acting according to one's innate nature and station helps one weaken his Vasanas (ingrained impressions) developed by repetitions of actions and reactions. An individual will perform actions to his best ability, and it will become a means to attain a higher state of being. To be free from the landscape created by past life karmas in which an individual functions, Gita recommends to act with the conscious will to carry the dutiful task in the spirit of surrender to the Divine.

The actions, if performed in such a way, prepare an individual for deep meditation to comprehend the Divine Consciousness within. Further, this Divine Consciousness, the innate wisdom within, urges man to elevate himself by himself to the state of Supreme bliss that is within all of us. If we allow the individual self for the Higher Self, then the latter works as our mentor and teacher. After showing the cosmic wisdom of Sankhya, Krishna says that self-knowledge cannot be attained by merely philosophical knowledge and theories. He further warns that those who engage in rituals for gaining power and pleasure, they remain prey to their desires, hence miss the spiritual path. Therefore, the path of self-realization has to be pursued with a single-minded concentration on the supreme. The understanding of one's nature is setting oneself on the natural course of evolution. Thus, the true seeker recognizing the right Guru and right path strives for inner awakening through action and meditation. This fulfills the affective aspects of human beings.

Conclusion

Gita provides an alternative path to the present way of life where external relationships based on desires and possessions are dominant factor for one's action. It widens the horizon of the notion of self and provides glimpses of consciousness that is much wider than the ego-identified self. Along with theoretical explanation, it reveals various paths to

²⁹ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. Hindu view of life. George Allen And Unwin Ltd, London, 1926. P. 364

attain that state. In elaborating these paths, it gives an opportunity to recognize one's true nature and choose the path of liberation accordingly. Hence, Gita turns an individual's attention towards finding one's nature (Svadharna) in life and devoting oneself to it. Consequently, one stops running after mindless consumption and super facial identities created by the market and products.

Moreover, the explication of the Cosmic Consciousness in Gita negates the subject-object polarity taken by natural sciences. It provides an alternative way of looking at the universe to develop environmental consciousness. The most significant thing about Gita is that it not only provides a theoretical basis for the oneness of all. It also outlines practical paths to discover the Higher Being within oneself. It sets a higher goal for the human being that provides meaning to the life of an individual. The unusual piece is that despite setting a goal for an individual, it does not promote a specific deity to pray for; neither does it promote a particular doctrine to adhere to. For Gita acknowledges the differences among individuals despite knowing the underlying unity. Hence, it prescribes various practical ways to choose according to one's nature (Svadharna).

Gita does not promote asceticism and inactiveness. The concept of Nishkama Karma redirects an individual to act according to one's nature without attaching to the fruits of the work. As these acts are not driven by ego identity, they are performed with the sense of duty ordained by the inner self. If an individual is perusing this path, he would not bother much about the other's opinion about him or her. Besides, s/he would also understand the difference between the needs of nature. Thus, there will be less probability of an individual getting trapped by the constructed demands. The demands generated by markets are causing overproduction and ultimately causing the environmental crisis. The actions performed in the spirit of *Nishkama Karma* are not blindly driven by desires; they are rather guided by divine Will. Hence, working in this manner will help us reduce psychological problems (depression, anxiety, despair, etc.) developed due to ego identification.

As one finds an internal connection with the world and other human being based on his/her connection with divine being, so s/he works in the broader self-consciousness. The broader consciousness remains cautious of not harming or degrading others who are the part of divine being. This consciousness develops an environmental consciousness which is qualitatively different from the Ecological cognitive consciousness.

Gita invariably urges us to realize the Higher Self within all of us; it is in a synergistically interwoven relationship with Nature and all beings. The realization of this divine being can create environmental consciousness in a tangible sense. Unlike ecological consciousness, it is not limited to cognitive aspects only. Moreover, it addresses spiritual and moral dimensions in a much better way. Therefore, exploring various concepts and methods prescribed by this ancient scripture may prove immensely vital to develop an effective environmental consciousness.

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Notes

ⁱFromm has shown the impact of consumerism incredibly and his book *To have or To be?* is significant for finding examples from our daily lives on this phenomenon. But there is a difference in the approach of Fromm and Gita. Fromm attempted to understand this phenomenon from the psychoanalytical, philosophical anthropology, and social psychological prospects while Gita intensifies the metaphysical approach along with psychological.

ⁱⁱ Here the term 'man' is used following the previous writing style, though it is used in gender-neutral connotation for a human being.

ⁱⁱⁱ The ecocentric environmental consciousness affirms priority-oriented values and meanings of human interaction with the natural world -- Ecological pedagogy and psychology. Rostov-on-Don, 1996

^{iv} These two are metaphysical notions which are explained in the next sections.

^v One may compare this conception of evolution with Darwin's conception of evolution. The latter is based on the survival of the fittest and ultimately causes Human vs. Nature rivalry.