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Revisiting Indian Philosophy: A Study of Ethical Codes in Bhagwat Gita

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Abstract

Aim: *This comprehensive study aims to conduct a deep dive into the intricate fabric of Indian philosophy, as encapsulated in the Bhagwat Gita, with a particular emphasis on elucidating its profound ethical codes.*

Methodology: *By meticulously examining the text, we endeavor to unravel the underlying principles and moral frameworks that have provided spiritual and ethical guidance to individuals for centuries, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries.*

Outcome: *Through a rigorous and multifaceted analysis of the ethical teachings embedded within the Bhagwat Gita, this study endeavors to unearth timeless wisdom and philosophical insights that resonate with contemporary society. By elucidating the relevance and applicability of these ethical codes to the complexities of modern life, we seek to offer invaluable guidance for navigating moral quandaries, fostering personal growth, and promoting societal harmony.*

Conclusion: *The Bhagwat Gita stands as a beacon of ethical enlightenment, offering profound guidance and moral clarity that transcends the passage of time. Its teachings serve as a roadmap for leading a life of integrity, virtue, and spiritual fulfilment. By revisiting Indian philosophy through the lens of the Bhagwat Gita, this study underscores the enduring significance of its ethical principles, inviting individuals to engage in profound introspection and self-discovery as they embark on the journey towards a more meaningful existence.*

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There are both parallels and distinctions between the Western philosophical school of thinking and the ethical precepts found in the ancient Hindu text known as the *Bhagwat Gita* when it comes to morality, obligation, and virtue. A fundamental idea in the *Bhagwat Gita* is dharma, which includes doing what is proper or fulfilling one's responsibility. It highlights the significance of carrying out one's responsibilities in accordance with one's place in society without regard to the outcome. The Gita instructs people to carry out their responsibilities with altruism, driven more by a feeling of duty than by self-interest.

In Western philosophy, duty is frequently connected to deontological ethics, especially in Immanuel Kant's writings. According to Kant's categorical imperative, it is crucial to follow general moral norms out of a sense of obligation, regardless of the consequences. The virtues of self-control (tapas), dedication (bhakti), non-attachment (vairagya), and justice (dharma) are all praised in the *Bhagwat Gita*. It places a strong emphasis on developing moral qualities as a prerequisite for enlightenment and spiritual emancipation (moksha). According to thinkers like Aristotle, virtue ethics is concerned with the formation of moral character. According to Aristotle, moral education and practical wisdom foster the development of character habits, which lead to virtuous behavior. The emphasis of virtue ethics is on the value of virtues like justice, courage, and temperance in living a moral life.

There are interesting similarities and differences between the *Bhagwat Gita*'s ethical precepts and Western philosophy when it comes to morality and virtue. A fundamental idea in the *Bhagwat Gita* is dharma, which includes doing what is proper or fulfilling one's responsibility. "Perform your duty equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure," is the advice that Lord Krishna gives Arjuna on the battlefield. We call this calmness "yoga." (*Bhagwat Gita* 2.48) The Gita's teaching of selfless action is in line with this instance, where the emphasis is on performing one's task without regard to the outcome.

A unifying theme of Western philosophy and the *Bhagwat Gita* is disengagement from the outside world. The Gita imparts the virtue of vairagya, or non-attachment, which counsels people to carry out their responsibilities without

getting unduly attached to the results. “You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions,” says Lord Krishna in advice to Arjuna. (*Sargadgita* 2.47). This is like stoic philosophy, especially the ideas of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, who support distancing oneself from the outside world. According to Epictetus, “Make the best use of what is in your power, and take the rest as it happens.” (*Enchiridion*, 1.1) Both faiths place a strong emphasis on accepting external situations with composure and concentrating on what one can control.

Notwithstanding the cultural and historical differences between the *Bhagwat Gita* and Western philosophy, they have a common understanding of basic ethical concepts like responsibility, virtue, and detachment. Whether it is through the Western emphasis on universal moral rules and virtuous character, or the Hindu concept of dharma, both traditions give insightful advice on leading a morally upright and satisfying life. Through examining these similarities and differences, one might get a deeper comprehension of ethics in many philosophical systems:

In the ethical teaching of the Gita there is much that at a first glance seems to be conflicting, and it is natural that so it should be; for ethics deals with the details of conduct and therefore cannot be rigid and absolute like metaphysical truths, but must vary according to the circumstances, the environment, the age and the temperament of the individual. The teaching of the Gita is universal, yet it is given with a specific object; it is a gospel of works, but it insists constantly on renunciation; it insists on the performance of one’s own duties, yet it declares that the relinquishment of all work is the highest course. These apparent contradictions disappear when we look at the matter more deeply and get a more profound insight into the truth behind the phenomena of life and conduct. (Aurobindo, Sri. “Essays on the Gita” Lotus Press, 1995.)

The *Bhagwat Gita* places great emphasis on the concept of duty, or dharma, as a means of directing people towards moral fulfilment and virtuous behavior. Dharma includes not just one’s social obligations but also the greater cosmic

order and moral code that rule the cosmos. In his speech to Arjuna, Lord Krishna explains the importance of living according to one's dharma in the face of life's challenges, especially considering the Kurukshetra battlefield.

According to the *Bhagwat Gita*, duty reflects one's inner nature and spiritual journey as well as a matter of outward obligations. "It is better to perform one's own duties imperfectly than to master the duties of another," Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna. An individual never experiences grief if they carry out their innate responsibilities." (*Gita Bhagwat* 3.35). Here, the focus is on the significance of accepting one's assigned responsibilities, or svadharma, without lusting for the obligations of others. This theory emphasizes the idea that every person has a special function to play in the greater scheme of things, and that by following one's dharma, one helps maintain the equilibrium of the cosmos.

The *Bhagwat Gita* also emphasizes the importance of performing duties with a sense of detachment from the outcome. "You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions," says Lord Krishna to Arjuna. (*Sargadgita* 2.47). This lesson emphasizes the value of operating altruistically and without regard to one's own interests or results. Regardless of success or failure, people can develop a sense of equilibrium and inner serenity by letting go of attachment to the results of their actions.

Furthermore, the *Bhagwat Gita's* definition of obligation goes beyond traditional ideas of good and wrong to include cosmic law and divine intent. Declares Lord Krishna: "I am the same for all creatures." I accept none and favor none. However, I live with those who fervently adore me, and I become alive in them." (*Sargad Gita*, 9.29) Duty and devotion to the divine are equated here, highlighting the need of yielding to the will of the Almighty and coordinating one's acts with the cosmic order. Essentially, the *Bhagwat Gita* clarifies a deep comprehension of responsibility as a necessary component of moral integrity and spiritual development. People are called upon by the idea of dharma to carry out their assigned duties with devotion, detachment, and alignment with the cosmic will. One moves closer to self-realization and ultimate liberty by accepting responsibility for one's actions and behaving morally. The *Bhagwat Gita*, then,

provides ageless insight on the role that duty plays in pointing people in the direction of a life that is moral, fulfilling, and spiritual.

The *Bhagwat Gita*'s ethical framework heavily emphasizes virtue ethics, which holds that developing virtuous character qualities is necessary for living a life that is both ethically upright and fulfilling. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna throughout the text the value of modelling different qualities and moral precepts in one's deeds and mind-set. One of the primary values that are praised in the *Bhagwat Gita* is dharma, or righteousness. "It is better to perform one's own duties imperfectly than to master the duties of another," Lord Krishna counsels Arjuna. An individual never experiences grief if they carry out their innate responsibilities." (*Gita Bhagwat* 3.35). In this case, the significance of sincerely and devotedly upholding one's assigned obligations, or svadharma, is emphasized. This is consistent with virtue ethicists' emphasis on living up to one's moral nature and carrying out one's social obligations.

The *Bhagwat Gita* also highlights the virtue of tapas, or self-discipline, which entails developing inner strength and control. "Arjuna, you have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions," advises Lord Krishna to Arjuna. Never attach oneself to inaction or believe that the outcomes of your actions are your fault." (*Sarga Vaggadas* 2.47–48) This lesson emphasizes the value of exerting self-control and distancing oneself from the results of one's conduct, which is consistent with the virtue ethicist's focus on forging morally resilient and fortitude.

Additionally, the *Bhagwat Gita* exhorts readers to practice vairagya, or the virtue of non-attachment, as a way to achieve inner tranquilly and spiritual emancipation. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "He who is able to withdraw his senses from sense objects, as the tortoise draws its limbs within the shell, is to be understood as truly situated in knowledge" (*Sugaravad Gita* 2.58). This teaching emphasizes the value of separating oneself from worldly cravings and sensual delights to promote calmness of mind and spiritual clarity.

In addition, the *Bhagwat Gita* highlights the importance of bhakti, the virtue of devotion, to develop a close, loving relationship with the divine. Lord

Krishna says, “In all actions, dedicated to me, your refuge, Arjuna, with mind intent on me, freed from longing and selfishness, fight.” (3.30) *Bhagwat Gita* Instilling a sense of dedication and reverence in all facets of life, this doctrine emphasizes the significance of committing one’s acts and intentions to the service of the divine.

Essentially, the *Bhagwat Gita* provides a broad ethical framework based on virtue ethics, stressing the importance of cultivating virtues like dedication, self-control, self-discipline, and righteousness to live a life of moral integrity and spiritual fulfilment. Individuals can attain self-realization and oneness with the divine by embodying these virtues in their thoughts, words, and deeds, which will ultimately help them negotiate the intricacies of existence with knowledge, compassion, and inner strength. Consequently, virtue ethics plays a pivotal role in molding the ethical perspective expounded in the *Bhagwat Gita*, providing enduring direction for moral existence and spiritual development

The idea of karma, or the law of cause and consequence, is central to the *Bhagwat Gita*’s teachings on moral responsibility and behavior guidance. The concept of karma includes the idea that every action—thought, word, or deed—has repercussions that will unavoidably impact one’s experiences and situations in the future. Arjuna receives significant information from Lord Krishna about the concept of karma and how it affects moral behavior.

The *Bhagwat Gita* emphasizes the importance of doing without regard to the consequences as one of its main karmic lessons. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna, “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.” (*Bhagwat Gita* 2.47-48) Here, Lord Krishna highlights the significance of carrying out one’s responsibilities with diligence and conscientiousness, without of any desire for fame or personal gain. This lesson emphasizes the idea that people should accept the consequences with composure and concentrate on their activities and intentions rather than becoming fixated on the results.

The *Bhagwat Gita* also imparts the lesson that people are accountable for the results of their deeds, whether good or bad. Lord Krishna declares, “As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” (*Bhagwat Gita* 2.22) This concept emphasizes the idea that life is cyclical and that people pay a price for their previous deeds in later life cycles. As a result, people are urged to behave morally and virtuously to guarantee favorable results in the future.

The *Bhagwat Gita* also stresses the significance of carrying out one’s responsibilities without expecting anything in return, but rather as a sacrifice to the almighty. “Abandon all attachment to the results of action and attain supreme peace,” is the advice that Lord Krishna gives Arjuna. You must act entirely dependent on me, my devotee.” (*Sargadgita* 12.18) In order to develop a sense of devotion and faith in the cosmic order, this doctrine emphasizes the idea that people should submit their intentions and deeds to the divine will.

All things considered, the *Bhagwat Gita* provides deep understanding of the idea of karma and its consequences for moral obligation and ethical behavior. The Gita offers advice to those who want to negotiate the intricacies of life with wisdom, integrity, and spiritual clarity by highlighting the principles of action without attachment, acceptance of consequences, and selfless devotion. People can develop a feeling of moral responsibility and make compassionate, righteous contributions to the well-being of the world by having a deeper grasp of karma.

Respected in Hindu philosophy, the *Bhagwat Gita* offers significant insights into the ideas of selflessness and altruism, with important ramifications for moral conduct. The concept of overcoming the ego and behaving for the greater benefit and well-being of others rather than being motivated by self-interest or personal gain is fundamental to the Gita’s teachings. In the *Bhagwat Gita*, the divine teacher Lord Krishna highlights the value of selflessness by emphasizing the idea of carrying out one’s obligations without regard to the outcome. He counsels Arjuna, “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.” (*Bhagwat Gita* 2.47-48) This lesson emphasizes the idea that people should be unaffected by goals for themselves or for other people’s results and instead concentrate on the deed itself, carrying out their tasks with honesty and devotion.

The *Bhagwat Gita* also encourages the development of kindness and compassion for all living things. Krishna, the Lord, says, “He who sees me in all things, and all things in me, is never far from me, and I am never far from him.” (*Bhagwat Gita* 6.30). This profound concept emphasizes how everything is interrelated and how every being is inherently divine. People are motivated to treat everyone with love, empathy, and respect when they realize that everyone possesses a divine nature, which cultivates an attitude of generosity and compassion.

In addition, the *Bhagwat Gita* praises the virtue of *seva*, or selfless service, as a way to show one’s dedication and devotion to the divine. “Abandon all attachment to the results of action and attain supreme peace,” is the advice that Lord Krishna gives Arjuna. You must act entirely dependent on me, my devotee.” (*Bhagwat Gita* 12.18) People can develop a sense of personal peace and spiritual fulfillment in addition to improving society by serving others without expecting anything in return. This selfless service, given without thinking about getting anything in return, turns into a devotional and worshipful act that unites one’s activities with the will of God.

The *Bhagwat Gita* concludes by highlighting the critical significance of selflessness and generosity in moral conduct. People can live up to the highest standards of moral behavior, improving society and reaching their spiritual potential, by overcoming their ego, developing compassion, and doing selfless service. The *Bhagwat Gita*’s ageless wisdom can help one live a life of virtue, integrity, and great ethical significance through a greater comprehension and application of these concepts.

Though it primarily addresses moral behavior and personal spiritual development, the *Bhagwat Gita* also provides insightful viewpoints on equality and social justice that are applicable in a variety of situations. Even though the

Gita's ethical lessons aren't specifically framed as social justice discourse, they nevertheless contain ideas that can guide conversations about equality, justice, and societal peace.

The idea of equality in the eyes of God is one of the core lessons of the *Bhagwat Gita* that is pertinent to social justice. "I am not partial to anyone, nor do I envy anyone," states Lord Krishna. I am on par with everyone. (*Sargad Gita*, 9.29) This declaration emphasizes the idea of equality for all people and the divine's neutrality towards all living things. The *Bhagwat Gita* also encourages people to carry out their responsibilities without bias or discrimination. Arjuna receives advice from Lord Krishna: "One's own dharma, even if it is clumsily performed, is better than the dharma of another who performs it properly. One commits no sin when they carry out the task that their inherent nature dictates." (18.47) *Bhagwat Gita* in this case, the focus is on people carrying out their social tasks and obligations in accordance with their innate abilities and traits rather than fitting into predetermined social categories. This lesson promotes the notion that everyone should have equal opportunity to follow their own life pathways free from prejudice or discrimination.

In addition, the *Bhagwat Gita* promotes moral leadership and just governance as means of promoting the well-being of society and preserving social order. Krishna declares, "Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, at that time I manifest myself." (*Sargad Gita* 4.7) This lesson emphasizes how crucial it is to preserve moral values and make sure that justice and fairness are served in society. It emphasizes the necessity for moral leadership and social responsibility by implying that divine intervention happens when society ideals are undermined.

Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna in the *Bhagwat Gita* is a timeless manual for moral leadership and judgment. Beyond the Kurukshetra battlefield, Krishna gives wisdom that leaders can use to tackle difficult problems in a variety of situations. Krishna imparts wisdom, compassion, bravery, and selflessness, clarity of purpose, ethical leadership, and devotion through his teachings. He exhorts Arjuna to behave honorably, putting the greater good ahead of personal gain, and

to basing judgments on moral standards. Inspired by Krishna's teachings, ethical leaders work hard to serve their organizations and communities with humility and dedication, promoting social fairness, accountability, and trust. Through emulating these values and seeking direction from higher ideals, leaders can face obstacles with honesty and motivate others to follow in their footsteps.

Moreover, the advice given by Lord Krishna emphasizes how crucial flexibility and resilience are to moral leadership. He helps Arjuna get over his worries and uncertainties and motivates him to stick to his principles in the face of difficulty. Like this, resilient leaders must show that they can adjust their plans and choices as necessary while upholding their moral principles. A culture of trust, creativity, and ethical excellence may be fostered within organizations or communities by leaders who possess resilience and flexibility. This allows them to manage unpredictable situations with grace and instill confidence in those under their leadership.

In addition to offering viewpoints that are sympathetic to both ethical absolutism and relativism, the *Bhagwat Gita* also sheds light on the difficulties involved in moral judgement and reasoning. Although the text's focus is on the significance of upholding one's moral obligations, it also recognizes that morality is a subjective and contextual concept.

The *Bhagwat Gita* emphasizes the presence of universal moral principles that govern human action from an ethical absolutist perspective. Lord Krishna emphasizes the value of purity and loyalty to one's dharma, or moral duty, and counsels Arjuna to carry out his military duties without regard to the results. This implies that some moral duties are intrinsically good and relevant to every person, irrespective of their social or cultural background. Furthermore, Krishna's teachings on the impermanence of the material world and the everlasting soul suggest a metaphysical basis for ethical ideals that cut beyond cultural and chronological barriers.

From an ethical absolutist standpoint, the *Bhagwat Gita* highlights the existence of universal moral principles that guide human behavior. Lord Krishna gives Arjuna advice to fulfil his military obligations regardless of the outcome,

emphasizing the importance of purity and devotion to one's dharma, or moral duty. This suggests that certain moral obligations are universally applicable and of inherent goodness, regardless of one's social or cultural upbringing. Moreover, Krishna's teachings on the transience of the material world and the immortality of the soul point to a philosophical foundation for ethical principles that transcend temporal and cultural boundaries.

The *Bhagwat Gita*, in short, provides a balanced viewpoint that goes beyond the ethical absolutism and relativism poles. It highlights the significance of upholding universal moral principles, but it also recognizes the variety of human experiences and circumstances, implying that moral obligations may change depending on personal characteristics and contextual factors. The *Bhagwat Gita* acknowledges the complexity of moral reasoning in many cultural and societal circumstances while offering a comprehensive framework for ethical decision making that guides people towards righteousness and spiritual realization. This is achieved by integrating these perspectives.

To sum up, the *Bhagwat Gita* bridges the gap between ethical absolutism and relativism by providing significant insights into the nuances of moral thinking and ethical decision-making. The essay recognizes the contextual and subjective character of morality while highlighting the significance of abiding by universal moral principles and performing one's duty without regard to results. The advice that Lord Krishna gives Arjuna urges people to recognize the diversity of human experiences and cultural circumstances while navigating moral quandaries with courage, clarity, and compassion. The *Bhagwat Gita* offers a thorough framework for moral behavior and spiritual development by combining these viewpoints. This framework guides people towards self-realization and righteousness while acknowledging the complexity of moral judgments in many cultural and societal contexts. In the end, the lessons of the Gita encourage people to develop discernment, morality, and kindness in their deeds, promoting peace, fairness, and wellbeing in the world.

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