Environment and Environmental awareness in the Bhagavad Gita

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ABSTRACT
This article focuses on the environment and its related things mentioned in the Simad Bhagavad Gita, the holy book to the Hindu community. The Aryan civilization, which molded to the Hindu or ancient Indian civilization was a riverine one, thus nature was in the mind of the inhabitants. This was reflected in most of the scriptures and the Gita is not the exception. In the current article we have mainly pointed to the slokas (the verses) describing the nature and relation of living with it, human nature and behavior connected to the nature, the evaluation of the nature and its living etc.

Keywords: Simad Bhagavad Gita, Nature and environment, nature and livings mutual dependence

I. INTRODUCTION
The Bhagavad Gita is considered as a holy book to the Hindu community. Bhagavad comes from the word Bhagavan, the God with supreme power and the word Gita means song. Thus the title Bhagavad Gita refers to the song of God [1]. The Gita is the narrative framework of advices given to middle pandava Arjuna by his mentor and charioteer Lord Krishna during the beginning of the Kurukhetra war. Lord Krishna counseled mentally broken Arjuna to fulfill his duty as the warrior and to establish ‘Dharma’, the rule with good governance. The Gita is the part of Bhismaparba of the great epic Mahabharata, scripted by Veda Vyasa. Researchers believe the composition of the Gita between some years from fifth century BCE to second century BCE [2][3]. The Gita contains 700 Sanskrit verse (slokas) among which one by Dhrtrashtra, forty one by Sanjaya, eighty four by Arjuna and the rest five hundred seventy four are from Lord Krishna.

The Gita is extensively studied from different angles and researches highlighted on different topics that can be learnt from the Gita. In this article we have highlighted the verses describing the nature, human nature relationship, the evaluation, nature centric human behavior etc. Mainly we have tried to establish that the Hindu civilization had a keen relationship with the nature which has been reflected in the holy book. The verses in Devnagari script are collected from [5] and the corresponding English meaning are taken from [4].

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The objectives and the methodology are presented in section 2 and 3 respectively. A literature survey of researches on the Gita from different angles is presented in section 4. Verses of the Gita related to environment are discussed in section 5. Finally conclusion is drawn in section 6.

II. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS :
Here researchers considered the following as objectives of this paper:

- To identify and analyze the verses (slokas) in Gita related to environment and related issues.
- To interpret the meaning of the slokas with respect to environment and human-nature relationship.

Considering the objectives researchers framed the following questions for the paper:

- Which are the slokas in Gita related to environment and related issues?
- What are the natures of these slokas those are related to environment and related issues?
- What are the meanings and interpretations of these slokas with respect to environment and relation between human-nature?

III. METHODOLOGY:
The methodology of the paper is qualitative in nature. Researchers analyzed the data qualitatively. The paper is organized as follows.

- A literature survey of researches on the Gita from different angles is presented.
- Verses (slokas) of the Gita related to environment are discussed.
- Finally conclusion is drawn.
IV. RESEARCHES ON THE GITA FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES

In the modern days the Bhagavad Gita has emerged itself as a research interest to the scholars from many directions. The verses of the Bhagavad Gita originated at the time of war. Robert Hume[6] described the Gita as a book which insist war and violation against injustice. By quoting some verses from the Gita he tried to establish that those verses glorify the war. In [7] the Gita is described as a conflict between peace and war (between Arjuna and lord Krishna) and according to the author of the article the holy book has several verses justifying the reasons why killing in warfare is permissible. Bina Gupta[8] in her article highlighted on the co-existence of duty and virtue in the Bhagavad Gita. A related work is noticed in [9] where the Gita is described as a combination of dharma and karma (virtue and duty) in ethical symcrtism. Muniapanet al.[10] have focused on the corporate social responsibilities like corporate governance, ethics, human resource management under dharma and karma in the Bhagavad Gita. Management lessons of Bhagavad Gita are highlighted in [11]. A detailed description of ‘principles of managements’ mentioned in the verses of Bhagavad Gita are addressed in [12]. Some similar types of researches [13][14][15] have drawn critics’ attention.

In Bhagavad Gita lord Krishna is inspiring Arjuna to act as a leader in the battlefield to bring win for the dharma (Truth and justice). In [16] an author has mentioned the Gita as relevant book to learn basic of leadership which can be applied for smooth running an organization in critical situation. Low et al. [17] have performed an extensive study and examines the verses of the Gita applicable for good leadership. Finally the authors have concluded that the Gita can assist the leaders in developing the leadership character and essential conducts. A recent book [18] have highlighted the verses of the Gita relevant for effective leadership. DebashisChatterjee [19] have provided eighteen leadership sutras like winning the war: the secret of invincibility, a Problem is a solution, 24 hours leadership, negative side of positive thinking, winning the war by fighting with yourself etc. that we can gain from the Gita. [20][21][22] are some articles focusing the leadership education from the Gita.

In addition to the above researches the Gita has been studies from different other angles like decisiveness, self confidence [23], leadership perspectives from business ethics [24], realization of God [25], emotional intelligence [26], spiritual intelligence and conflict resolution [27] etc.

In this article we have focused on the environment related verses in the Gita. Environment and pollution are two burning issues now a days and several researches are carried out regarding the environmental concern and environment friendly behavior of the people. The Hindu civilization is believed to flourish from 2000 BCE at Indus Vally Civilization [28]. Some historian [29] believe that Hindu civilization started from the arrival of the Aryan to India. Though both the civilization were riverine till a distinct boundary is noticed between these two civilizations. The Indus Vally Civilization was a city centric whereas the Aryan civilization was a rural centric civilization. One common observation in both the civilizations is the respect to the nature. Though the script of the Indus Vally Civilization is still not deciphered but the retrieved terracotta plates clearly signify their belief and worshipping the nature.

The Bhagavad Gita is believed as the verses of Lord Krishna. Though the Gita was narrated at the Kurukhetra war, still it is not only war centric. Nature, relation between living and nature, effect of nature on human mind, environmental awareness etc. have been mentioned in many folds in the holy book. In the following section we have presented the verses of the Gita related to the nature.

V. Environment related issued issued in the slokas of the Gita

In a war centric environment Lord Krishna explained Arjuna the necessity of war in favor of dharma (right judgment). While narrating, Krishna mentioned the universe as creation from His power and he is the governor of birth and death of living element. He is the ruler of the universe and everything are acted according to His direction. He is the creator of the nature and the living, his another creation are brought up in the lap of the nature. He has established the rule upon which the relation between the living and the nature are governed. In this section we have focused on the verses of the Gita which are pointing to the nature and its relationship with the living. The verses in Devnagari script are collected from [5] and the corresponding English meaning are taken from [4].

A verse from chapter 3 of the Gita has explained the cycle of cloud, rain, food and human behavior to the nature.
Meaning: Living beings live on food, which is generated from cloud (rain) and further cloud is generated from ‘yagya’, the offering to God. The accumulated ‘yagya’ will be used as a means of action, i.e. today’s offering will be gained in tomorrow.

Explanation: This one beautifully represents the nature animal relation. ‘yagya’ is the work performed with the motive of selflessness and in the interest of others. If ‘yagya’ is thought as sacrifice and service to the environment, then this completes the cycle of nature and living beings mutual dependence. Animal lives on food (crops) which require rain to grow. Rain will only be sufficient if human performs good behavior to the environment.

In another verse it is directly mentioned that every work is governed by the nature.

Meaning: Every work is governed by the grace of the nature, but only the arrogant people deny it.

Explanation: This sloka signify the nature as the key controller of every work. On the other way it can be said that doing harm to the nature will affect its regular activities that may reflect on the human livings. The verse also puts warning to the arrogant people, who does not believe in the power of the nature.

Chapter 7 of the Gita contains some beautiful verses in relation to living and non-living elements the nature.

Meaning: Land, water, fire, air, space, mind, intelligence and arrogance these eight are ‘apara’, my non-living elements. Except these eight there is another element of mine, different from those- ‘Para’, the sense. It is the agent which holds the whole universe. All animals are originated from these ‘Para’ and ‘Apara’. I am creating and enforcing the whole world.

Explanation: Beyond the curtain of ‘Para’ and ‘Apara’, these verses have focused on the human environment relation. These are the mind, intelligence and senses of human which act as the driving force to keep the other elements of the nature like land, water, air and space healthy. The good sense of human to the nature holds it and a beautiful nature helps the animal kingdom to flourish.

In some other verses from the same chapter are pointing to the integral relationship of every elements of the nature.
Meaning: O Arjuna, I am the highest, the supreme. You will find everything resting in me as the pearls strung on a thread.

O son of Kunti, I am the taste in water, the luminosity of the sun and the moon. In the Vedic Mantras I am the Om of the holy words. I am the sound in ether, and the ability in man.

Explanation: Everything in the universe is created from the almighty God itself. Those creations are not resting distinct, those are strung on a single thread as the beads and forms a beautiful necklace. Water, the sun, the moon, the life wind (sacred syllable Om) are all related with each other.

These verses are pointing to the integral relationship among every elements of this universe. Each of them is beautifully arranged on a string and is governed by a unique force to drive this universe. If one of these is affected, the whole system will be in unstable condition, like that necklace-if the string is torn, there will be no existence of the necklace.

The following verses of the Gita pointing to evaluation.

Meaning: At the end of one kalp (the millennium or life time), all material elements are merged into My primitive material energy. At the beginning of the next millennium, O son of Kunti, those are again created by my potency.

Presiding over My material energy, I created those in numerous forms repeatedly, according to the power of their nature.

Working under my supreme command, these elements bring all the vigorous and inactive forms of energy, O son of Kunti. For this reason, the material world undergoes the changes (of creation, maintenance, and dissolution).

Explanation: The evaluation is beautifully explained in these verses. After the end of some duration all energy and materials are returned to that Super power and waits for being manifested for the next life time (Kalp). The world undergoes the changes accordingly (The evaluation) under His direction. Evaluation of the nature is a natural phenomenon. The livings have to change their structure and behavior in order to sustain in the world. It is really amazing that so many years ago the Hindu community had the concept of evaluation, though mentioned as a play of the supreme!

Chapter 13 has some verses relating individual with material nature.
Meaning: Both the prakṛiti, the material nature and the puruṣa, the distinct souls are beginningless, i.e. they are forever. All the transformations of the body and the modes of matter are generated by the material energy. It is the material energy, the nature which is said to be the cause of all material activities and effects, on the other hand, it is the living entity which is responsible for the various sufferings and enjoyments (Happiness and distress) in this universe.

The puruṣa (individual soul) seated in the material energy follows the way of life and desires to enjoy the modes of nature. The nature and deepness of the attachment becomes the cause of its next birth in superior and inferior wombs.

Explanation: The nature is a form of material energy and it is eternal. The individual souls are also eternal. When a soul lives in a body, it is a living. The body performs its transformation from the material energy. In other words the living has to depend on the nature to grow.

Nature plays the key role to perform activities and effect is received accordingly. For the suffering and enjoyment of the world the livings are responsible. In other words suffering or enjoyment in the world depends on the activities of the living entities.

The activities of a living, determines the soul in it (as soul is endless) to take next birth in superior and inferior wombs. In another approach it can be said that the uplift or downslide in a society of an individual depends on its behavior to its surroundings.

In chapter 14 the following verses clearly signify that the nature is the mother of all the livings.

Meaning: The total material substance is Brahma, the prakṛiti. It is the womb, from where the livings are born. I impregnate it by providing distinct souls, and make the birth possible for all living beings.

Explanation: The nature is the mother of all the livings. The life is created only from the nature.

VI. Conclusion:

The interdependency of environment and living is highlighted in this article. It's astonishingly wondering that people about 3000 year ago had concept about the intensive binding of nature and living. Even more surprising is that they had the concept of evaluation! The Gita is presented like a discussion and offering of knowledge by a teacher to a student, and the matters are presented lucidly with examples. Inclusion of the Gita in the syllabus will certainly enrich the learners to play environment friendly behavior and will help to grow environmental values within their mind.

References