

Eco-Social Work : The teachings from Srimad Bhagavad Gita

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intersection of the teachings of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita and eco-social work, focusing on the environmental ethics embedded in its philosophical principles. The Gita, a key spiritual text, provides insights on interconnectedness, selfless action (Nishkama Karma), duty, compassion, and detachment from materialism, all of which align with the core values of green social work. The study examines how the Gita's teachings promote sustainable practices, social justice, and the moral responsibility to care for the environment. Key concepts like **Vasudeva Kutumbakam** (the world is one family) and **Nishkama Karma** (selfless action) offer a holistic approach to addressing both environmental and social issues. The research also demonstrates how the Gita's wisdom can guide eco-social workers, encouraging them to integrate ethical action, environmental advocacy, and compassion into their practice. Emphasizing the need to align social work with environmental sustainability, the study proposes a framework for eco-social work that prioritizes the well-being of both people and the planet, fostering a balanced, harmonious relationship between humanity and nature.

Keywords: Interconnectedness, Selfless action, Detachment, Vasudeva Kutumbakam, Compassion

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INTRODUCTION

Srimad Bhagavad Gita' is a true mirror of the way of living life. But continuous exploration is essential to understand the secrets contained in it. This divine book is like a thousand-faced mirror which reflects various aspects of the deepest knowledge according to the intellect and capacity of the seeker. For a less knowledgeable person, it sheds light on the first step of spirituality. For a knowledgeable person, it is an invaluable research work. For a Sanyasi, it is the limit of renunciation and for a worldly person, it is an complete help in human relations. This intuitive knowledge is a scale for science and also a guide for every seeker. It is an infallible medicine to get rid of the various troubles of the world.'

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is also called 'Geetopanishad'. It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and is the most important Upanishad of Vedic literature. Bhagavad Gita is a wonderful book. It has a unique place among the religious and spiritual texts of the world. Although according to tradition, it was composed about five thousand years

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ago, but it is still fresh and relevant today. Mainly it is a part from the 25th chapter to the 42nd chapter of the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata epic. Thus it has eighteen chapters. Which have 700 verses. Despite being a part of the Mahabharata, it is a complete gem of a book in itself. Which is considered to be the representative text of Indian culture and Sanatan Dharma. Bhagavad word comes from the word Bhagwan

which means the God the supreme power and the word Gita means the song. Thus the meaning of Bhagavad Gita is the song of the God. The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is undoubtedly the most significant work of religious literature in the world. The mystick contains the divine message delivered by Lord Krishna to Arjuna. Bhagavad Gita contains unique ideas that are inaccessible, unfathomable, and infinite. The divine message is conveyed through verses in the Gita by Krishna. An integral part of scripture integration is the narrator of authoritative statements narrated in an effective manner, which effectively provides the message of divine guidance to mankind at all times. A new field called "green social work" blends social work concepts with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability. It promotes social fairness and ecological responsibility by highlighting the connection between human well-being and the health of the world. The ageless knowledge found in the spiritual and philosophical Srimad Bhagavad Gita is consistent with the fundamental principles of green social work. The Gita offers a moral framework that highlights the interdependence of all life forms and the necessity of sustainable, responsible behavior through its lessons on compassion, connection, selfless action, and stewardship of nature.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this research is to analyze and clarify the environmental ethics found in the Bhagavad Gita, a revered work of Hindu literature, with an emphasis on comprehending the philosophical ideas that govern how people should interact with the natural world. This study attempts to draw attention to the Gita's lessons' applicability to modern environmental ethics and offer insights into how its moral precepts can support the development of a peaceful and sustainable coexistence between people and the environment. As well this paper examines how the deep lessons found in the Gita might direct green social work, encouraging a moral strategy for resolving environmental issues and advancing the welfare of mankind.

Review of Literature

The literature on the environmental ethics of the Bhagavad Gita is limited but steadily growing. several scholarly works and articles have explored the philosophical aspect of the Geeta, shedding light

on its teaching related to nature and ethical conduct.

Interconnectedness of All Life (Vasudeva Kutumbakam):

Dharma (Duty and Righteousness):

Selfless Action (Nishkama Karma):

Balance and Harmony (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas):

Compassion and Service to Others (Karuna):

Detachment from Materialism:

Teachings from the Bhagavad Gita for Eco-Social Work:

Interconnectedness of All Life (Vasudeva Kutumbakam):

The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes the idea that all life forms are interconnected. This is captured in the idea that "the whole world is one family" (Vasudeva Kutumbakam), which resonates with the core principles of eco-social work. This interconnectedness calls for collective responsibility in caring for the environment and addressing social inequalities.

- Practitioners are encouraged to understand and respect the interconnectedness of the social and environmental spheres.
- Actions to protect the planet should go hand-in-hand with actions for social justice, recognizing that environmental degradation disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.

Dharma (Duty and Righteousness):

In the Gita, Krishna urges Arjuna to act according to his dharma (duty), which involves fulfilling one's responsibilities without attachment to the results. This teaching encourages social workers to remain committed to the well-being of others, including both human and non-human communities, while acting ethically.

- Social workers must perform their duties with a sense of responsibility, engaging in actions that support both the people and the environment.
- This includes advocating for environmental justice, promoting sustainable practices, and ensuring that those most vulnerable to ecological damage are supported.

Selfless Action (Nishkama Karma):

One of the central teachings of the Bhagavad Gita is performing nishkama karma—action without attachment to the outcomes. By focusing on selfless service, social workers can engage in meaningful work without being overly attached to immediate results, which can be essential in the long-term efforts required for social and environmental change.

- Practitioners can commit to long-term solutions for the environment and society, even when immediate results are not visible.
- The focus remains on serving communities and ecosystems, without self-interest or personal gain.

Balance and Harmony (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas):

The Bhagavad Gita describes three primary qualities (gunas): sattva (purity, goodness), rajas (activity, passion), and tamas (inertia, darkness). A balanced life, characterized by sattva, is conducive to peace and harmony. Social workers can apply this understanding to their personal and professional lives by cultivating balance and inner harmony, which can support more sustainable and equitable social and environmental change.

- Advocating for systems that promote balance—both within communities and with nature—is central to eco-social work.
- This involves fostering sustainable lifestyles that maintain ecological balance while addressing social injustices.

Compassion and Service to Others (Karuna):

Compassion is a key value in the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna encourages Arjuna to act with empathy and compassion, and to treat others with kindness and respect. This principle applies to both human and non-human communities.

- Practitioners must be empathetic to the struggles of marginalized communities, especially those facing environmental challenges.
- Acts of kindness towards nature, such as advocating for conservation, reducing waste, and supporting sustainable agricultural practices, are essential for addressing both social and environmental crises.

Detachment from Materialism:

The Bhagavad Gita teaches the importance of detachment from material wealth and desires. It encourages individuals to focus on their spiritual growth and higher purpose, which transcends the pursuit of personal gain.

- In the context of eco-social work, this teaching is crucial in addressing overconsumption and the exploitative practices that harm the environment and exacerbate social inequality.
- Social workers can advocate for a shift away from materialistic values towards more sustainable, holistic approaches that honor both people and the planet.

Field work practices to Integrate Gita's Teachings in Eco-Social Work:

Community-Based Projects: By embracing the interconnectedness of life, eco-social workers can organize community projects that address both environmental and social issues—such as promoting renewable energy, waste management, or sustainable agriculture practices.

Advocacy for Policy Change: The ethical teachings of the Gita can guide social workers in advocating for policies that promote environmental sustainability, social justice, and equitable resource distribution.

Eco-Spiritual Practices: Incorporating eco-spiritual practices such as mindfulness, meditation, or other techniques derived from the Gita's teachings can help eco-social workers maintain clarity and focus while navigating complex environmental and social issues.

Environmental Education and Awareness: Social workers can use the teachings of the Gita to educate communities about the interdependence of humans and nature, fostering a collective responsibility for protecting the environment.

Conclusion

Eco-social work grounded in the teachings of the **Srimad Bhagavad Gita** provides a holistic approach to social and environmental problems. The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita offers profound teachings that are deeply relevant to contemporary environmental ethics and eco-social work. Its principles of interconnectedness, selfless action, compassion, and duty provide a moral framework that can guide efforts towards a sustainable and harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment. By incorporating these teachings into social work practices, we can promote both environmental sustainability and social justice, addressing the challenges of our time. Principles of Srimad Bhagavad Gita apply in the field work practices of eco-social work that will affect the individual, group and community and provide a social and environmental consciousness. The Gita's timeless wisdom encourages us to view the world as a unified whole, where the well-being of all life forms is interconnected, urging collective responsibility for the protection of both people and the planet. Comprehensive study of Srimad Bhagwad Gita and critical analysis undoubtedly proves it clear that Srimad Bhagavad Gita is scripture, grammar, religion, philosophy, art-music, culture-civilization,

yoga rituals, management, commerce, politics, literature, finance, science, knowledge, environment, spirituality, devotion, ethics, moral values, research, diplomacy, justice, history, archaeology, tourism, Samarastha, education is a unique text, the Gita is Purushartha in itself. There is a complete 'epic' of retreat. Gita is the complete 'Geeta' Gita is the complete 'geet-sangeet' of Purushartha Gita is the 'Guru', the voice of Gita is the 'Naad' of salvation.

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