

The Srimad Bhagavad Gita's Perspective on the Environment: Nature as Divine Manifestation

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Abstract

This paper examines the philosophical view of nature as a manifestation of God found in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita and how it relates to contemporary environmental ethics. Instead of depicting nature as a resource to be used for profit, the Gita views it as an expression of the divine that merits reverence and harmonious cohabitation. Through its teachings on the interdependence of all beings, the three gunas, the cosmic order (ṛta), and the concept of yajña (sacrifice), the Gita offers a comprehensive ecological worldview. This study demonstrates how a spiritual perspective on nature, based on the Gita's teachings, might help address the ecological catastrophe of our day. This paper helps us in understanding our roles and responsibilities in respect to the environment and how we can maintain it spiritually. This research paper focuses on improving our basic understanding that nature is a divine manifestation; then our actions will be qualitatively improved, and consequently their results. In this paper, various shlokas of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita have been discussed for improving the dharma of modern people, which is very useful in protecting the environment at the spiritual level. Without spirituality, we are unable to address the material issues we all confront in the current competitive scenario. This research work is based on the teachings of Lord Sri Krishna.

Keywords: Srimad Bhagavad Gita, environment, ecology, nature, divinity, sustainability, dharma, yajña

INTRODUCTION

Given the current environmental crisis, which is marked by pollution, deforestation, and climate change, it is necessary to reconsider what it means to be human. As the environmental crisis of the twenty-first century worsens, academics, activists, and decision-makers are being forced to reevaluate the deeper philosophical and spiritual aspects of humanity's relationship with nature rather than focusing solely on technological solutions. The world's degradation, from pollution and deforestation to climate change and biodiversity loss, is rapidly becoming recognized as a moral and spiritual disaster in addition to a scientific and economic problem. On the Kurukshetra battlefield, Lord Krishna and Arjuna engage in a spiritual conversation. Despite its primary focus on the concepts of duty (dharma), action (karma), and release (moksha), the literature offers a cosmic perspective in which the Divine pervades all aspects of existence—animate and inanimate, visible and invisible.

Through powerful metaphors, celestial revelations, and scholarly debate, the Gita constructs a model of the universe in which all of nature—sun, moon, wind, water, trees, animals, and people—is interconnected and divinely decreed. This holistic cosmology is particularly evident in verses that describe Lord Krishna's universal form (Vishvarupa), in which all of nature is revealed as a part of the

holy body. The concepts of dharma (righteous deed), yajña (sacrifice), and the three gunas (modes of nature) are also discussed in the Gita. Taken together, they provide a moral and philosophical framework that encourages environmental harmony and balance. In a society where nature is regularly exploited for profit, the Gita's depiction of nature as divine and sacred offers a counter-narrative grounded in spiritual ecology. The purpose of this essay is to examine how the teachings of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita can impact modern environmental ethics. It aims to show how humanity might have a more respectful and long-lasting connection with the environment—one that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life and the purity of the natural world—by viewing nature as a divine creation, as the Gita portrays it.

Nature in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita: A Sacred Vision

In several verses, Lord Krishna affirms the divine presence in all aspects of nature. For example:

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्ञ स्वधाहमहमौषधम् :|

मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यमहमग्निरहं हुतम् || 16||

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामह :|

वेद्यं पवित्रमोङ्कार ऋक्साम यजुरेव च || 17||

BG 9.16-17: I am the Vedic rite, the sacrifice, and the oblation offered to the ancestors. I am the Vedic chant and the therapeutic weed. I am the act of offering, the fire, and the clarified butter. Lord Sri Krishna says that in this cosmos, I am the Grandsire, the Mother, the Father, and the Sustainer.

I am the holy word Om, the purifier, and the end of knowledge.

I am the R̥ig Veda, Sāma Veda, and the Yajur Veda. (*Bhagavad Gita* 9.16, Prabhupada, 1983). This illustrates the sanctity of all natural elements, which are seen as direct expressions of the Divine.

The Three Gunas and Ecological Balance

According to the Gita, the universe is governed by three *gunas*:

- Light, harmony, purity, and wisdom are the components of *sattva* guna. Through attachment to joy and wisdom, it ties the soul together. People dominated by *sattva* are calm, thoughtful, compassionate, and spiritually inclined.

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् |

सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ || 6||

BG 14.6: According to Lord Sri Krishna, the purest, most enlightened, and healthiest of all is the mode of kindness, or *sattva* guṇa. It ties the soul together, O blameless one, by fostering attachment for joy and wisdom.

- Motion, vigor, ambition, and restlessness are traits of **Rajas**. Through attachment to activity and its results, it ties the soul together. A rajasic person is motivated by desires, has a spirit of competition, and is frequently engaged in a vicious cycle of discontent and ambition.

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् |

तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् || 7||

BG 14.7: Rajo Guṇa, O Arjun, is a passionate person. It comes from material passions and wants and connects the soul to productive activities.

Tamas is the guna of sloth, ignorance, sluggishness, and gloom. It ties the soul together by carelessness, incoherence, and ignorance.

A tamasic person may resist change, avoid responsibility, and remain stuck in delusion and inaction.

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत ॥ 8॥

BG 14.8: According to Lord Sri Krishna, O Arjun, ignorance, or tamo guṇa, is the cause of the illusion of the embodied spirits. It fools all living things by being careless, lazy, and sleeping.

Yajña and Ecological Reciprocity

In Chapter 3, Verse 14, The Gita describes the circle of dependency :

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।
यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥ 14॥

BG 3.14: Lord Sri Krishna says that, the food that all living things eat is produced by rainfall. Rains originate from the act of making sacrifices, and doing assigned tasks results in sacrifice. (*Bhagavad Gita* 3.14, Prabhupada, 1983).

Here, *yajña* represents all selfless actions that sustain life, symbolizing ecological reciprocity and human responsibility.

Dharma and Environmental Ethics

The concept of *dharma* (righteous duty) includes acting in harmony with the environment. Lokasangraha, or the wellbeing of the world, is emphasized throughout the Gita as the main driving force behind action:

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥ 21॥

BG 3.21: "Lord Sri Krishna says, 'People follow the footsteps of a great person.'" People follow whatever norm he establishes.

This duty includes protecting natural resources and promoting sustainability for future generations.

Vishvarupa Darshan and the Cosmic View of Nature

In Chapter 11, the *Vishvarupa Darshan* reveals Krishna's cosmic form:

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः ।
प्रणव खे पौरुषं नृषुः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः ॥ 8॥

BG 7.8: O son of Kunti, I am the brightness of the sun and moon, and I am the taste in water. I am the sound in ether, the human ability, and the holy syllable Om in Vedic mantras.

This vision illustrates that all elements of nature—light, water, plants, animals—are part of God's universal form, reinforcing the idea of nature as divine.

Contemporary Implications

The Gita's ecological principles—interconnectedness, sacrifice, and divine immanence—have profound relevance for today's environmental challenges. Unlike exploitative frameworks, the Gita inspires spiritual stewardship rooted in balance, humility, and compassion. As Dwivedi (1993) asserts, the Gita inspires a form of **spiritual stewardship** grounded in **humility, balance, and compassion**. It encourages individuals and societies to live in accordance with *dharma*—ethical and ecological duty—which includes protecting the Earth and acting for the welfare of all beings (*sarva-bhuta-hita*). In an age of environmental crises—ranging from global warming to mass extinction—the Gita's teachings offer

not only moral guidance but also practical wisdom for creating a more harmonious and sustainable world. (Dwivedi, 1993)

Conclusion

The *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* presents a timeless and spiritually grounded ecological vision that is highly relevant in the face of today's environmental challenges. By portraying nature as a manifestation of the Divine, the Gita invites a fundamental shift in human consciousness—from exploitation to reverence, from dominance to stewardship. Its teachings on the three *gunas*, *yajña* (sacrifice), *dharma* (righteous duty), and the *Vishvarupa* (universal form of the Divine) foster an awareness of the sacred interdependence that unites all beings and elements of the cosmos.

This spiritual framework directly addresses the root causes of ecological degradation—greed, ignorance, and disconnection from the natural world—by cultivating values such as humility, balance, compassion, and selfless action. The Gita does not merely advocate environmental protection as an external duty but integrates it deeply into the spiritual evolution of the self. Living in balance with nature turns into a kind of karma yoga, which is a way of moral behavior that is in line with the well-being of all living things. By embracing the Gita's vision, modern society can reimagine its relationship with the environment not as one of utility, but of mutual respect and divine participation. The Gita thus serves as both a philosophical guide and a practical ethical compass, reminding humanity that environmental responsibility is not separate from spiritual responsibility. In understanding nature as divine manifestation, we elevate our environmental efforts from obligation to devotion—and only through such spiritual ecology can we hope to restore harmony between humanity and the natural world.

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