

Mahatma Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita: Reclaiming Duty as the Ethical Core of Peace and Harmony

Author:

Parveen

M.A History, Department of History, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana.

Abstract:

The paper under investigation explores how Mahatma Gandhi reworked the main concept of swadharma, as a moral obligation of a person, in the Bhagavad Gita to apply it as a universal rule of establishing peace and harmony in society. Where the classical exegeses by Sankara, ramanuja and tilak had led their explanations of duty to be based on obedience to divine or social hierarchies, Gandhi redefined the concept of duty as moral obligation based on the three truths (satya), ahimsa, and atmasanyam. The gap in the scholarly literature which inspires such a question is the lack of interest in the morally which brings together the swadharma understood by Gandhi and the metaphysical nishkama karma (desireless action) of the Gita. The current paper attempts to illustrate how the concept of Anasaktiyoga by Gandhi transformed ritual obligation into an act of personal moral obligation by integrating and aligning personal peace and the wellbeing of the larger community (sarvodaya).

The study based on a qualitative, hermeneutic, and interpretive methodology makes use of the textual exegesis and thematic analysis of Bhagavad Gita, Anasaktiyoga, and the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG) and uses Iyer (1973), Parekh (1989), Bilgrami (2014), and Skaria (2016) as the triangulation of findings. The analysis has resulted in the description of four dimensions of Gandhian ethics which are interrelated namely: Duty (Kartavyanishtha), Peace (Shanti), Self-Mastery (Atmasanyam), and Harmony (Sadbhavana). These dimensions form a holistic moral system which involves the internal control of the self and the external social responsibility.

These results have shown that Gandhi internalised the Gita battlefield allegory to mean an inner moral conflict and consequently reformulated the concept of peace as a moral force and self-denial as the core upon which non-violence can be defined. The model of ethical secularism produced by the synthesized Gita -Gandhi paradigm is the one according to which the duty is the channel of communication between spiritual disengagement and civic action. It is concluded in the paper that the interpretive perspective of Gandhi provides enduring revelations to the contemporary discussion of political ethics, peace studies and environmental stewardship due to his reconceptualization of the concept of moral freedom as service without desire.

Keywords: Swadharma, Ahimsa, Anasaktiyoga, Peace, Self-Mastery, Harmony

I. Introduction

Depending on each other, the Bhagavad Gita (hereafter Gita) and the moral philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi are these two testaments of the intellectual and ethical tradition of India. Gandhi did not see the Gita as a ceremonial or dogmatic book, but instead a book of spiritual reference of all humankind, which influenced his behaviour during all crises of his life, with his moral dilemmas (Gandhi, 1926/1999, p. 12). The main thesis

of the scripture which is Swadharma or the duty of one self-promotes what is right out of inner conviction and not an external gain. This doctrine was the basis of truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa) and service to other people (Seva) which was his moral life. His lifetime occupation with Gita in his translation and commentary Anasaktiyoga had changed its battlefield metaphor to inward moral struggle that made no distinction between ethical action and peace and self-discipline (Desai, 1946; Iyer, 1973).

Context and Significance

Depending on each other, the Bhagavad Gita (hereafter Gita) and the moral philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi are these two testaments of the intellectual and ethical tradition of India. Gandhi did not see the Gita as a ceremonial or dogmatic book, but instead a book of spiritual reference of all humankind, which influenced his behavior during all crises of his life, with his moral dilemmas (Gandhi, 1926/1999, p. 12). The main thesis of the scripture which is Swadharma or the duty of one self-promotes what is right out of inner conviction and not an external gain. This doctrine was the basis of truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa) and service to other people (Seva) which was his moral life. His lifetime occupation with Gita in his translation and commentary Anasaktiyoga had changed its battlefield metaphor to inward moral struggle that made no distinction between ethical action and peace and self-discipline (Desai, 1946; Iyer, 1973).

Throughout the centuries, the Gita has been viewed by scholars as a dialogue between duty and liberation but the exegesis of Gandhi is ethically humanist. He noted that the Gita is not a historic discourse, but a moral fight in each individual being, between what is good and evil (CWMG, Vol. 32, p. 127). He redirected metaphysical deselection with the help of Anasaktiyoga, which understood Nishkama Karma as service without self-interest and Swadharma as duty (Bilgrami, 2014). Other commentators who came earlier, like Tilak and Aurobindo saw the Gita as a synthesis of action and knowledge. Swadharma was the Swadharma of Tilak (1915/2000) and the Swadharma of Aurobindo (1997) seemed to be defined as Swadharma of Lokasangraha and Swadharma of works, respectively (p.14). This moral ideal was spread in civic life by Gandhi; in *Hind swaraj he related Swaraj with self mastery (Gandhi, 1909/1997) and later in a book called Young India he stated that, service without desire was the supreme religion (Gandhi, 1929, July 2). The Gita-Gandhi paradigm is a rigorous way of finding peace and ethical coexistence in a moral uncertainty and a divided society (Skaria, 2016; Brown, 1977).

Research Problem

Despite the fact that ethics of Gandhi have been analyzed by other researchers like Iyer (1973), Parekh (1989), and Bilgrami (2014), there is not a lot of work that systematically relates the Swadharma of the Gita with the conception of moral duty that is proposed by Gandhi in order to achieve peace and social harmony. Gandhi already, in 1909/1997, in Hind swaraj argued that Swaraj, or self-rule, begins with rule over oneself (p.72), a precursor to his subsequent Gita-based belief that is what self-mastery is what true moral duty is. His observations in Young India also highlighted the point on that he placed his highest religion as service without desire (Gandhi, 1929, July 2), which was another show of how his political ethics started to be shaped as a direct offshoot of his spiritual interpretation of Swadharma. This work fills the gap because it discusses how Swadharma is redefined by Gandhi to be a universal value that brings together ethical action (duty), psychological balance (peace and self-mastery) and social unity (harmony). The research question, thus: How does the interpretation of the Gita by Gandhi change duty as a ritual duty into a principle of peace and harmony which is universal?

Aims and Objectives

The current paper has the following three interrelated objectives:

1. To evaluate the ethical Gita concept of duty and how it has been redefined in the Gandhian philosophy.
2. To investigate how Swadharma and Ahimsa make one a peace producer (Shanti), a master of self (Atmasanyam) and harming (Sadbhavana).
3. To consider how well it applies philosophically and practically to modern ethical issues, and specially in government, education, and environmental ethics.

These purposes bring the research on the border of Indian moral philosophy and contemporary political thinking where spiritual self-control and civil duty need to be combined.

Research Questions

The research questions that would direct the research are as follows:

1. How does the vision of the Gita by Gandhi transform the idea of duty as religious conformity to ultimate moral responsibility?
2. So what is the role of self-detachment in Gandhian ethics such as the principle of detachment (Sanskrit: Anasakti)?
3. What does this morality combination imply to social peace and political existence in contemporary world?

Scope and Relevance

This question applies to various fields and disciplines: political ethics, peace studies, philosophy of education and environmental responsibility. By connecting the metaphysical vision of Gita with the real-life application of ethics in the work of Gandhi, the paper provides the bond between the inner and outer world of morality: Atmasanyam (self-discipline) as the source of personal peace and Sarvodaya (welfare of all) as the source of social peace (Rao, 1978; Iyer, 1973). This combination brings out an integrative structure where execution of duty, with regard to conscience, and independent of self-benefit, causes personal peace, and general good.

Amidst the violence, environmental suasion and ethical exhaustion, in our age, it is time to consider the interpretation of Gandhi in his sees, to find a way of ethical modernisation, the classification of Gandhi into anasaktiyoga. Reviving Swadharma as an active moral code, Gandhi is challenging the people and community to discover the sense of duty as a freedom of morality rather than that as a coercion, the way to self-governance, peace and world solidarity. The conversation between the Gita and Gandhi is, therefore, still very insightful as to what, morally, a human action can achieve.

II. Literature Review

1. Classical Interpretations of the Gita

The Bhagavad Gita has been traditionally understood as a discussion about moral action (karma) and performance of his duty (swadharma) without caring about the result (nishkama karma). Indian commentators like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva can also highlight the theological aspects of the text like devotion (bhakti), knowledge (jnana) and action (karma) but all agreed on the need to maintain the moral aspects of right conduct in accordance with their role in the cosmic order (Radhakrishnan, 1948). Swadharma as an obligation of self through self-knowledge was read by Śaṅkara, whereas Rāmānuja emphasized on the Devotion as the purpose of action and saw duty as a service to God.

The Gita was translated by Western interpreters in the nineteenth century, such as Charles Wilkins, Edwin Arnold, and subsequently William von Humboldt, into moral-philosophical and idealistic terms, as a nishkama karma, which was a universal moral law of action. These streams were combined into a modern commentary by Radhakrishnan, who presented the Gita as a synthesis of action, knowledge and devotion with an orientation to spiritual liberation by responsible action in the world (p. 47). The key perception cuts across traditions, that is, detachment is not the apathy but the moral training. This ideal formed the foundation of the new ethical interpretation of the Gita by Gandhi as a means of worldly obligation with spiritual mission.

2. Gandhi's Engagement with the Gita

The constant interest in Gita started when Gandhi was in London and South Africa. He initially studied the text in Edwin Arnold's book, *The Song Celestial* and further elaborated in Sanskrit with the Theosophists and Indian academicians. He described the Gita as his spiritual dictionary, which he claimed had all solutions to all life and conduct issues (Gandhi, 1926/1999, p. 3). His commentary and translation *Anasaktiyoga* (Desai, 1946) transformed the meaning of Gita into a message of non-physical warfare, but as an allegory of inner struggle between virtue and desire. To Gandhi, nishkama karma implied self-less service to the human being and swadharma implied moral responsibility instead of social conformity. He stated that religion was doing what is right regardless of success because renunciation did not imply laziness but rather, lack of selfishness (CWMG, Vol. 32, p. 128). By reading this ethical text, Gandhi made metaphysical indifference civic duty. According to scholars, the synthesis made the classical Indian ideals of spirituality meet contemporary social ethics by redefining renunciation as the act in truth and love (Iyer, 1973; Skaria, 2016).

3. Scholarly Perspectives on Gandhian Ethics

Bhikhu Parekh (1989) refers to Gandhi as a moral politician who aimed at rebuilding politics on basis of ethics. In the case of Parekh, Gandhi based his moral politics on the reading of the Gita: the political action had to be in line with swadharma, the inner sense of what is right, but not expediency or collective passion. Duty was thereby the way of the self-realization of morality in social life.

According to Raghavan Iyer (1973), the philosophy of Gandhi can be explained as a combination of truth (satya) and duty (dharma), which can be defined as a kind of fusion of moral idealism and empirical realism (p. 214). According to Iyer, the unity of thought and action that was founded by Gandhi upon his movements of non-violence and civil disobedience was through his adherence to nishkama karma.

Akeel Bilgrami (2014) develops this idea and introduces a moral vision of Gandhi as a kind of ethical secularism. To Bilgrami, the understanding of swadharma by Gandhi goes beyond religious identity as ethics is based on the freedom of conscience. The reason that makes duty to be sacred is not due to the command of god but rather it represents faithfulness to the truth.

These analyses are supplemented by Judith Brown (1977) who stresses on the political spirituality of Gandhi. She contends that his inner discipline (his call to self-control in the Gita of 2.27: *ātmasaṃyam*) is inseparable not only from his non-violent resistance but also from his reasoning that political change must first start with the self. Brown places the use of Gita to the context of Gandhi, a struggle that had to be waged throughout the history of India as Gandhi sought to moralise the power and to balance personal peace with the justice of the entire community.

Combined, these scholars demonstrate a similar pattern: Gandhi universalised the message of the Gita when he translated spiritual detachment into an ethical politics of social reconstruction framework.

4. Gaps in Existing Research

Although this has been much discussed, the scholarship remains inclined to divide the spiritual reading of the Gita by Gandhi and his realistic politics. Not many comparative studies take swadharma as the ethical basis of his doctrine of peace and harmony. Although Parekh (1989) and Iyer (1973) researched on the moral and political aspects, they do not completely follow how Gandhi merges the aspects of duty, detachment, and social harmony into one ethics. Likewise, the discussion of ethical secularism presented by Bilgrami (2014) and the discussion of unconditional equality presented by Skaria (2016) focus on universal ethics of Gandhi without considering swadharma as the text in which he expressed them. This vacuum calls across a specific re-evaluation of the Gita-Gandhi dialogue, the importance of duty as the ethical resolution between inner tranquillity and outer accord.

5. Conceptual Framework

This paper is based on a conceptual framework that synthesises four dimensions of Gandhian ethics which are interrelated and are based on the reviewed literature and primary sources:

1. Duty (कर्तव्यनिष्ठा / Kartavyanishtha) -Moral responsibility which is based on swadharma; acting because it is true, but not because it results in reward.
2. Peace (शान्ति / Shanti) - Calmness of mind through detachment (anasakti) and lack of possession, with which one must be able to view morally.
3. Self-Mastery (आत्मसंयम / Atmasanyam) Self-mastery, which involves control over the passions and is the psychological foundation of non-violence.
4. Harmony (सद्भावना / Sadbhavana) Inter-communal unity and universal goodwill as an expression of Sarvodaya.

Such a structure makes the understanding of the Gita by Gandhi a form of integrative ethic that brings peace to oneself and the community. Duty (swadharma) serves as the moral pole, and the self-control is connected to the social pity. In such a manner, Gandhi internalized the moral universal concept of the Gita and reformulated it into a universal philosophy of the moral way of governance, reform of education and a sustainable human development.

III. Methodology

1. Research Design

The research design that is chosen is qualitative, interpretive and hermeneutic design that was intended to clarify the moral and philosophical dialogue between the works of Bhagavad Gita and Mahatma Gandhi. Qualitative inquiry is a method that is especially ideal in examining values, meanings, and ethical arguments instead of quantitative numbers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interpretive approach allows the researcher to read the writings of Gandhi as dynamic responses, but not as beliefs, and concentrates on such concepts, as truth (satya), duty (swadharma), and peace (shanti). The style of analysis is guided by the hermeneutics, which is, in this case, the art of interpretation of the text, in its philosophical and historical context (Gadamer, 1975). In this design, the inquiry aims to find out how Gandhi internalized the ethical teachings of Gita and made them live moral practice based on self-discipline, service, and harmony.

2. Data Sources

The research is based on primary and secondary data to provide conceptual and textual adequacy.

Primary Sources.

1. The Bhagavad Gita (trans. by Radhakrishnan, 1948) is the main philosophical document that defines the concepts of swadharma and nishkama karma.
2. The Anasaktiyoga of Gandhi (Desai, 1946) can be considered his own commentary and reinterpretation of the Gita, and how he connected spiritual detachment and moral responsibility.
3. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG, 1958-1994) offers large volumes of evidence supporting the questions of how Gandhi changed his mind about the duty, non-violence and peace.
4. Young India and Harijan journals of Gandhi include his own statements of ethical and political implementations of principles of Gita.

Secondary Sources.

Scholarly literature peer-reviewed supplements the main corpus by providing theoretical discursive methods of interpretation. The main sources are Iyer (1973) about the moral and political synthesis of the thought of Gandhi, Parekh (1989) about his ethical politics, Bilgrami (2014) on the idea of ethical secularism, and Skaria (2016) about the concept of unconditional equality of Gandhi. These pieces provide interpretive scaffolding of how to relate the ethical theory of Gandhi to the general discussions in moral philosophy and political ethics.

3. Analytical Approach

The textual exegesis and thematic interpretation is used in the analysis. Textual exegesis is a critical approach to primary texts, based on the extraction of ethical material of swadharma, nishkama karma and anasakti. All the examples given in Gandhi writings are discussed with the reference to the verses in the Gita. The thematic analysis, after Braun and Clarke (2006), reveals repetitive patterns including: duty as service, detachment as freedom and harmony through non-violence. These themes are then grounded together in order to create an integrated ethical framework. The textual accuracy of the study is combined with the ability to treat the thematic abstraction which allows keeping the textual meanings faithful and places the thought of Gandhi into the context of modern moral discourse.

4. Validity and Reliability

Triangulation is utilized in order to provide the analytical rigor by use of multiple commentaries and cross-references. The comparisons are made of the interpretation between the primary texts (Anasaktiyoga, CWMG) and secondary analysis (Iyer, 1973; Brown, 1977). The internal consistency is increased by cross-checking what Gandhi said in Young India with what he had previously said in the Gita in a philosophical context. The hermeneutic principle of fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1975) makes the validity of interpretation even stronger as it allows the researcher to balance the historical background and the current ethical meaning. This is reliable as the academic editions followed are known and trusted, including Government of India published official Collected Works and verified translations of the Gita.

5. Limitations

This paper concentrates more on the ethical-philosophical issues of how Gandhi has dealt with the Gita, and not its history or political timeline. It never attempts to do the sociological analysis of Gandhian movements

and philological critique of Sanskrit sources. Rather, it focuses on the way, in which Gandhi redefines swadharma as an unifying moral value that brings together duty, peace, self-mastery, as well as harmony. Although this breadth can probably restrict the ability of the empirical generalizations, it grants richness of knowledge about the normative bases of the idea of Gandhi. The interpretation framework could be further developed with the assistance of the future research, which would perform comparative studies between Buddhist moral philosophy or Western moral philosophy.

Overall, the selected methodology, the qualitative, hermeneutic, and textually based approach would guarantee the dialogue between Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita is explored on the philosophical, textual, and even ethical level.

IV. Findings / Discussion

A. Duty and Moral Action

Bhagavad Gita places Swadharma, or duty to moral righteousness (to self), rather than the other way round, as the superstructure of the righteousness (right action). That is written (3: 19), Krishna tells Arjuna to act without attachment in that he will achieve the Supreme by acting without desires. This injunction brings about Nishkama Karma, the wrongdoing of self-less engagement attempting in benefit of its own sacred worth and not in terms of reward (Radhakrishnan, 1948). To Gandhi this was not a metaphysical abstraction, but the meaning of life in morality. He said the Gita was the universal mother, the door of which was open to all, (CWMG, Vol. 32, p. 127); and he understood Nishkama Karma to mean Seva -selfless service to truth and humanity.

A prominent Indian philosopher of earlier times Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sri Aurobindo provided major premises of this ethic. Tilak (1915/2000) considered the involvement in social welfare (Lokasangraha) to be Swadharma whereas Aurobindo (1997) construed the Gita as a prescription of the divine action moderating the work, knowledge and devotion. Gandhi took this wisdom into the field of political ethics giving Satyagraha, the truth in action, a new definition.

In Anasaktiyoga, Gandhi stated that duty becoming desire free is the action and that action combines both spiritual restraint and civic duty (Desai, 1946, p. 61). His thoughts in Young India once again affirmed that service without want is the supreme religion (Gandhi, 1929, July 2). The Kurukshetra battlefield to him was symbolic of the inner battleground of conscience (Satya) and ego and fear. The moral strength to do what is right in a world of injustice was not orthodoxy to caste or rank but obligatory duty.

Raghavan Iyer (1973) notes that the metaphysical ethic of Karma -Yoga was turned into a moral action political ethic by Gandhi. Gandhi interpreted karma in a new manner unlike the classical interpretations which guided individuals on their social roles and instead his new interpretation of karma proposed duty as a moral duty to truth and this could be achieved through conscience. This change had transformed religious discipline into a social reform tool. Bhikhu Parekh (1989) toils the moralisation of politics, that in the case of Gandhi, the political action was some kind of spiritual duty. The action of Swadharma thus became Satyagraha, which means, in a literal meaning, war by truth. Gandhi during his efforts to fight the colonial injustice had highlighted in his campaigns that civil disobedience was not disobedience but rather moral obligation to rebel against falsehood without violence (CWMG, Vol. 44, p.256).

According to Judith Brown (1977), we can discuss this as the political spirituality: a blend of moral boldness and social dedication that turned the activism of Gandhi into the religious discipline. Gandhi interpreted Nishkama Karma as Satyagraha, and related the idea of duty to that of truth-commitment and transformed an

ethic of detachment to an ethic of service. The order of the Gita to do without adhering to things was politically implemented when Gandhi asserted on moral courage, self-restraint and serving the people together. Therefore, confronting the world, GitaGandhi synthesis creates a scale of continuum between individual discipline (Swadharma) and social duty (Ahimsa): Duty (Swadharma) as source, Selfless action (Nishkama Karma) as mode and Truth (Satya) and Non-violence (Ahimsa) as results.

This revival of moral action makes religious obedience a universal ethics and proves that people do their true duty without self-interest and in the interests of peace and justice (Skaria, 2016).

B. Peace and Detachment

The Bhagavad Gita also teaches peace not as retreating the world but conquering desire. During the conversation, Krishna explains that an individual can achieve inner peace by not being attached to the results of deeds (Gita 2:48; Radhakrishnan, 1948). This is not indifference but restraint. Sri Aurobindo (1997) interpreted it as the tranquility of a spirit not moved by pleasure and pain, attained through balance (and not evasion) (p. 112). Gandhi internalised this ideal and applied it to the psychological non-violence that was a moral aspect of psychology which replaced an active method of conquering violence with peace which was love held by self-control.

Self-rule to Gandhi was based on detachment (anasakti). He defined the peace in My Religion saying that the peace cannot be attained by ignoring evil, by learning to control anger and desire (Gandhi, 1959, p. 112). Detachment was not any indifference, then, but feigned righteousness. He interpreted the battle ground of Kurukshetra as being symbolic of the battle within as self-conquest comes before harmony in society. The peace of the soul (shanti), he said, is a calm of the spirit through following duty without desiring to be rewarded (CWMG, Vol.38, p.205).

This notion had social reflection in the writings of Gandhi, published in his Gandhi *Harijan* periodicals, in which he argued that non-violence was not an instrument of the weak; but the peace of the strong (Gandhi, 1940, March 23). In this case, it is the inner peace and exterior bravery meeting. The mixture of the Nishkama Karma to the Gita and the spiritual practice of his own made Gandhi define the concept of peace as the active, living energy; energy that would not tolerate injustice and would not hate either. According to Raghavan Iyer (1973), the idea of peace as articulated by Gandhi is not the end of the conflict process, but the change of the self that would eliminate the occurrence of the conflict.

The psychological explanations of the Gandhi peace include his practice of Anasaktiyoga. When one tries acting detached, it cleanses the will and helps the mind out of the fear. This withdrawal in action becomes a service, and through a state of service the ego becomes transformed to offer peace by compassion and strength on the inside. In this way, to Gandhi, peace was not an inert condition but rather the state of morality that was to be attained when the self-control, the duty and the truth were in harmony as long as their actions are in harmony.

C. Inner Discipline and Self-Mastery.

Bhagavad Gita makes the notion of aatmasaonyama (self-control) the invaluable requirement of ethical conduct. According to Krishna, one who has conquest over himself and is at peace in the couples of opposites, is one that lives in maxim Brahman (5:19; Radhakrishnan, 1948). This ethical psychology of balance deeply appealed to Gandhi both in thought and speech since he believed that self-control was the first step to self-realisation (CWMG, Vol. 32, p. 182). In Anasaktiyoga he did not scale back the mastery over desire to the stifling of desire, but it was the mastery of desire that has the key to moral freedom (Desai, 1946).

Raghavan Iyer (1973) understands such a concept by Gandhi as *Zatmasa* abolition of self as polity (*swaraj*). The truth and restraint which in man subordinate the self makes him worthy of being a part in common self-governance. Consequently, these two factors, inner discipline, and outer freedom, are causally connected: no independence of nations is impossible without the independence of the soul (Gandhi, 1926/1999, p. 59).

Celibacy and control of the senses was one of the key tools of this field namely *brahmacharya*. Gandhi took it to be a training of the purity of intention instead of denial of the body. According to him, *Brahmacharya* refers to restraint of senses in thinking, speech and action (CWMG, Vol. 40, p.121). To Bilgrami (2014), that is the ethically asceticism of Gandhi, a means of putting moral power in the right direction of the truth. The diversion of passion to service made Gandhi think that the act of non-violence (*ahimsa*) was strengthened by *brahmacharya*.

The psychological foundation of *satyagraha* of Gandhi was also self-mastery. Brown (1977) further notes that Gandhi had to have an extraordinarily high level of emotional control in practicing non-violent discipline a call to equanimity in the *Gita* during conflict. Iyer (1973) also notes that all austerities that Gandhi practiced through diet, fasting and silence were not ritualistic but laboratory of conscience (Labs) whose purpose was to build moral stamina (p. 228). The process of self-purification makes the self-purified person able to endure pain without hatred and use moral power.

It is the linkage between internal control and external non-violence which shows on the level of psychological insight that Gandhi had. His dominant ideas are that violence is the result of unchivalrous impulse, and self-control rises the violence into compassion. Skaria (2016) dubs this as the politics of inwardness, which is a complete opposite of the contemporary activism, aiming to transform the world by initially reforming the self. However, in the *Gita* miles synthesis, *Oatmasafromyam* is not only a spiritual practice, but it is also social responsibility in the ethical domain.

D. Harmony and Social Unity

Both the *Gita* and moral philosophy of Gandhi have the concept of harmony (*sadbhavananaya*) in their center. Krishna, in the *Gita* (3:20), encourages Arjuna to engage in action in the interest of *lokaca* — *agraha*, or, in other words, the welfare and unification of the world. Gandhi applied the same concept to *sarvodaya* -the welfare of all- believing in his argument that real religion is to create unity of all living things (CWMG, Vol.43, p.312).

Parekh (1989) notes that Gandhi thought social harmony was the natural consequence of responsibilities done as part of the service. The *swadharma* of every individual when performed correctly is a part of the balance of the entire. This perception conflicts the idea of contemporary individualism by basing social collectivity upon ethical and mutual dependence instead of coercion by the law. The vision of the community that Gandhi had in his mind was a community of self-governing people linked by the responsibility towards each other.

Radhakrishnan, (1948) explains the meaning of *lokasa- an- graha* to mean the cosmos aspect of morality - doing to maintain order. Gandhi applied this concept in the Constructive Programme in which service to the villages, eradication of untouchability and communal amity were developed into *swadharma*. According to Brown (1977), Gandhi subordinated his religion in social harmony but it was expressed in the secular revival with a view to harmonize caste, creed systems as well as class differences.

The form of *swadharma* applied by Gandhi in plural scenarios can be depicted by inter-religious harmony. He insisted that the teaching of the *Gita* on duty did not separate any sectarian lines: “The ways are many, but duty one (CWMG, Vol. -48, p. 97). Bilgrami (2014) asserts that such universalism is what Gandhi calls his

ethical secularism a domain of moral in which both believers and non-believers would belong. With tolerance towards each other and communication, Gandhi was convinced that the interreligion peace would not be attained through compromising on doctrines, but upon honoring his moral obligation.

Another Gandhian idea is that of trusteeship that is based on the Gita and defines harmony in the realm of economy. Based on the concept of non-possessions (aparigraha), the concept of trustee-ship is that an asset of money is a trust to do social good not to maximize individual benefits (Iyer, 1973). Gandhi frequently based his decision on the teaching of the Gita, which stated that a person was to work without wanting the fruit of labour (2:47), since it justified him to share his wealth voluntarily. In his vision moral restraint in property would abolish class antagonism and bring a social togetherness.

The interpretation of Gandhi as a sarvodaya (a religion of equality) by Skaria (2016) makes the ideal of lokasa2graha of the Gita more democratic. When Gandhi made compassion the justice parameter, he made moral unity a practical one. Therefore, harmony in the Gandhian model is not concurrent, but an active collaboration in an active way attained by moral responsibility.

Overall, Gandhi reconsidered the cosmic order of the Gita in the form of social ethic of interdependence. By swadharma every person will help in sarvodaya; by ahimsa and trusteeship, there will be harmony within society. Peace therefore becomes the external expression of inner peace the shared realisation of oneness that Gita envisions and gandhi lived.

E. Contemporary Relevance

The Gita-Gandhi synthesis of duty, peace and harmony is still immensely applicable to modern-day governance, education and environmental ethics crises. Gandhi has redefined swadharma in an ecological time of moral relativity as a way of making ethical decisions based on responsibility and not expediency (Bilgrami, 2014; Parekh, 1989).

1. Financial and ethical Leadership.

The other model of leadership ethics would be the truth-oriented action defining duty as reflected upon by Gandhi. He said that political leaders should serve as guardians of the common good who followed their conscience and not their own ambition (CWMG, Vol. 68, p. 215). According to Brown (1977), Gandhi applied moral transparency in the development of his non-violent politics, Mandela needed to be the embodiment of the change he wanted to bring. This principle presents a remedy in the form of accountability ethics in the current day governance systems which are characterized by corruption and populism.

According to Gandhi, the synthesis of swadharma and satyagraha, which Raghavan Iyer (1973) describes as establishing a participatory ethic of governance in which the moral persuasion has to substitute coercion, was what made him worthy of emulation. When institutions internalise this ethos then they can strike a balance between power and service as well as law and compassion. Therefore, the modern issue of ethical legitimacy and accountable leadership is expected by the fact that Gandhi modifies the Gita.

2. Training and Personality Development.

The Nai" Talim or Basic Education programme introduced by Gandhi touches upon the lesson of inner discipline and self-knowledge advocated by the Gita. According to him, education was training of the head, heart and hand in the harmony (CWMG, Vol. 62, p. 403). Gandhi tried to foster self-reliance and moral sensitivity, through a programme called Nai Talim, where education became the swadharma. Bilgrami (2014)

links this teaching vision to moral secularism and says that schools can be a place of the development of moral autonomy. =

This argument was little different as Radhakrishnan (1948) argued that human education should be based on the call to self-control and service that was made in the Gita. To this extent, Gandhian pedagogy is a combination of the knowledge (jnana), action (karma) and devotion (bhakti) into a complete discipline. To the twenty first century, this assimilation provides an ethical ground to citizenship education as well as peace studies.

3. Environmental Ethics and Sustainable Lived-In.

The environmental awareness of Gandhi was the direct result of his interpretation of the doctrine of non-possession in the Gita and the harmony with nature. According to him, the earth would support all the people but not all the greed of the people (CWMG, Vol.72, p.85). Iyer (1973) understands this in terms of a modern expansion of lokasa facet of moral responsibility: duty to the planet. The lifestyle of simplicity and promotion of local economies by Gandhi anticipates the topic of sustainability nowadays.

According to Skaria (2016), the ecological ethics of Gandhi were founded on his religion of equality, where his compassion was not limited to humans, but to all sentient life. That universal interconnection vision in the Gita is manifested in the insistence by Gandhi that violence on nature is violence on self. When, therefore, swadharma becomes an ecological commitment - a moral need to coexist with the environment.

4. International Coexistence and Nationality.

Global citizenship based on the Gita-Gandhi ethic provides an alternative of living at peace with others and being collectively responsible. According to Bilgrami (2014) and Brown (1977), the principles that were upheld by Gandhi foresee the current peace-building introductory models that presuppose dialogues, empathy, and moral restraint. With the time of polarization and technological aggressiveness, the doctrine of ahimsa by Gandhi stands out as the most radical kind of ethical realism. It bases the peace on the treaties rather than self-mastery and justice.

The combination of metaphysical knowledge of the Gita and practical morality generated by Gandhi formed a universal moral language which can be used in any culture. Slavery (swadharma) is turned into world ethics; non-violence (shanti) is turned into non-violent coexistence; self-control (atmasaamyam) is turned into civic control; and harmony (sadbhavananay) is turned into global intercourse. This synthesis is no going back to tradition but it is a resurgence of moral consciousness in humanity.

V. Conclusion

1. Summary of Key Insights

The composition of Bhagavad Gita and moral philosophy of Gandhi proves that the sense of duty (swadharma) is the moral principle that brings the peace of spirits and social peace. Gita defines nishkama karma as action without attachment to be the paramount moral discipline (Radhakrishnan, 1948). This principle was translated by Gandhi into living after the truth (satya) and non-violence (ahimsa). He stated that when one acts without his desire, it is duty cleansed thus stating that selfless duty was moral strength as well as spiritual freedom (Gandhi, 1926/1999, p. 47). Gandhi associated civic action, mental balance and conscience by redefining the battlefield of the Gita to mean a field of internal conscience.

This work emphasizes swadharma as a morality deviation between self-mastery (*ātmasaṃyam*) within a people and harmony (*sadbhāvanā*) within a group. The person will live in peace (*śānti*), the society will live in unity (*sarvodaya*), through the sense of duty. The hermeneutic of the Gita introduced by Gandhi therefore turns a religious book into a moral codex of how individuals ought to live and work towards peace (Iyer, 1973; Skaria, 2016).

2. Theoretical Contribution

The paper adds a Gita-Gandhi ethical framework that facilitates the combination of individual morality and the morality of the society. Raghavan, Iyer (1973) explains that the thought of Gandhi was the combination of the idealism of morality and the realism of politics (p. 214). This model reports four dimensions of interrelationships and build on duty, peace, self-mastery, and harmony dimensions which operate as a contiguum of morality. Duty performs action on truths foundational, peace on disconnection (*anasakti*); self-discipline on the will; and harmony on moral order on social relations.

Bilgrami (2014) understands the framework of Gandhi as a variant of such ethics secularism when faith and reason meet each other on the basis of moral conscience and not dogma. Gita-Gandhi synthesis is an example of this secular spirituality and it provides a normative framework that cuts across the boundaries of religion. Gandhi developed a moral language, which was available both to politics and to education and a social reform by changing the metaphysical detachment to ethical involvement (Parekh, 1989). In theory, this direction will bridge Indian moral philosophy with modern virtue ethics; it shows that spiritual seeking can help govern the world and live as a citizen.

3. Practical Implications

The implications of the findings on the dissertation on peace studies, leadership ethics and sustainable development are vast. Gandhi interpretation of swadharma places the resolution of conflicts on the platform of self-discipline and does not involve coercion. This is one of the models on non-violent revolution in peace studies where reconciliation is developed through self-restraint and sympathy (Brown, 1977). Gandhi also viewed leadership in ethics as trusteeship where duty is converted into responsible stewardship, the leaders are custodians of the common good not a power taker (Iyer, 1973).

To guarantee a sustainable development, the combination of the non-possession (*aparigraha*) of the Gita and the ecological responsibility by Gandhi can offer environmental ethics, rooted in morals. As Skaria (2016) points out, Gandhi does not show any discriminating character but treats every form of life holistically making it his duty to preserve nature. As a result, the Gita Gandhi ethic educates modern global issues, such as the ethical state and corporate responsibility as well as climate justice, by the common good of unselfish duty.

4. Future Research Directions

Although this paper has paid attention to the issues related to ethics and philosophy, there is more that can be done through studies that are comparative in scope. To begin with, a conversation with the Buddhist ethics, namely this principle of the Eightfold Path, right action and mindfulness could help to better grasp the idea of non-attachment and compassion as a power of morality. Second, the activity of contemporary humanist ethics (e.g., the writings of Albert Schweitzer or Martha Nussbaum) might show some similarities between the war-generated peace, which is a duty, and global citizenship, as it is now perceived. These interdisciplinary comparisons would provide a better understanding of the way the classical Indian moral understandings still have relinquishments in the ethics that are universal.

Besides that, empirical implementations of the Gita-Gandhi framework in a peace-education curriculum or sustainable-leadership programmes may show that it is a viable approach. These guidelines would add to the staple of Gandhian studies as well as moral-philosophical debates.

5. Closing Reflection

The essence of this exchange between Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita is limited to one fundamental but immense belief, that to live righteous by doing your task without any self-centered motives is to serve the truth in tandem with peace and humanity. The intersection of swadharma and ahimsa is a moral image on eternalism, that is, the ethical action is not only the vow of a person but also a social covenant. This vision comes at a time when there is so much moral confusion and conflict in the world and it tells us that peace is not a dormant phenomenon but the active, results of right conducting obligation done rather than out of wants. Thus, as a witness philosophy of moral responsibility, the Gita-Gandhi synthetic is capable of giving this world a way out of the clash of war to the light of awareness, of self-control to universal unity.

VI. References

- Aurobindo, Sri. (1997). *Essays on the Gita*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram. (Original work published 1922).
- Bilgrami, A. (2014). *Gandhi's integrity: The philosophy behind the politics*. Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/colu16774>
- Brown, J. M. (1977). *Gandhi and civil disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian politics, 1928–34*. Cambridge University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Chinmayananda, S. (1984). *The Holy Geeta*. Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Desai, M. (Trans.). (1946). *The Bhagavad Gita according to Gandhi (Anasaktiyoga)*. Navajivan Publishing House.
- Edgerton, F. (1944). *The Bhagavad Gita: Translated with an introduction and critical essays*. Harvard University Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1975). *Truth and method* (G. Barden & J. Cumming, Trans.). Continuum.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1909/1997). *Hind Swaraj or Indian home rule*. Navajivan Publishing House.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1927/1993). *The story of my experiments with truth*. Beacon Press.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1929, July 2). *Young India*. Navajivan Publishing House.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1940, March 23). *Harijan*. Navajivan Publishing House.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1959). *My religion* (B. Kumarappa, Ed.). Navajivan Publishing House.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1999). *The Bhagavad Gita according to Gandhi* (Original work published 1926). Navajivan Publishing House.

- Iyer, R. N. (1973). *The moral and political thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. Oxford University Press.
- Kripalani, K. (Comp.). (1962). *The unity of all religions: Selections from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. Navajivan Publishing House.
- Parekh, B. (1989). *Gandhi's political philosophy: A critical examination*. Macmillan.
- Prabhu, R. K., & Rao, U. R. (Eds.). (1945). *The mind of Mahatma Gandhi*. Oxford University Press.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1948). *The Bhagavad Gita*. George Allen & Unwin.
- Rāmānuja. (1907/1977). *The Gita Bhāṣya of Rāmānuja* (M. Rangacharya, Trans.). Theosophical Publishing House.
- Ranganathananda, S. (1985). *The Universal Message of the Bhagavad Gita*. Advaita Ashrama.
- Rao, K. L. S. (1978). *Mahatma Gandhi and comparative religion*. Indian Council for Philosophical Research.
- Śaṅkarācārya. (1897/2008). *Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya* (S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, Trans.). Samata Books. (Original work published ca. 8th century).
- Sargeant, W. (1984). *The Bhagavad Gita: Translated from the Sanskrit with notes and essays*. State University of New York Press.
- Skaria, A. (2016). *Unconditional equality: Gandhi's religion of resistance*. University of Minnesota Press.
- The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG). (1958–1994). Publications Division, Government of India.
- Tilak, B. G. (1915/2000). *The Bhagavad Gita Rahasya (Karmayoga Shastra)*. Tilak Brothers.
- Vivekananda, S. (2007). *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda: Vol. 4 – Lectures and Discourses*. Advaita Ashrama. (Original lectures 1896).
- Zaehner, R. C. (1969). *The Bhagavad Gita: With a commentary based on the original sources*. Oxford University Press.

Copyright & License:



© Authors retain the copyright of this article. This work is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), permitting unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.