

Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta and a pedagogical perspective to NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the integration of the Bhagwad Geeta within the pedagogical framework of National Education Policy 2020 in India. Indian education has historically been shaped by classical Hindu texts such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which have contributed significantly to moral, ethical, and educational thought. Against this backdrop, the study highlights the relevance of the Bhagwad Geeta in informing contemporary educational reforms, particularly in relation to pedagogy, value-based education, critical thinking, and creativity. Through an analysis of the dialogic engagement between Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna, the paper demonstrates how the educational principles articulated in the Bhagwad Geeta align with the core objectives of NEP 2020, including holistic development and learner-centered education. The emphasis of the Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta on dialogue, ethical reflection, experiential learning, and intellectual inquiry resonates with NEP 2020 goals of fostering innovation, multidisciplinary learning, and reflective thinking. The paper argues that incorporating pedagogical insights from the Bhagwad Geeta can strengthen the implementation of NEP 2020 by providing a culturally grounded and philosophically robust framework capable of addressing contemporary educational challenges and promoting comprehensive learner development.

Key words: Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta, NEP2020, Pedagogical perspectives

Introduction

In India, both before and after independence, the education system has consistently integrated the faith, beliefs, and traditions of Hindu culture. From an early age, Indian learners are often

introduced to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which form an integral part of their cultural and educational exposure. These texts, along with other Hindu scriptures, have significantly influenced educational thought and policy by infusing curricula with moral and ethical perspectives. Among these texts, the Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta occupies a distinctive position as a philosophical and pedagogical guide, particularly in the context of the National Education Policy 2020.

The teachings of the Bhagwad Geeta are especially relevant to the pedagogical vision of NEP 2020, which emphasizes holistic development, innovation, inquiry-based learning, and ethical grounding. Scholars and researchers have examined the philosophical foundations of the Bhagwad Geeta to demonstrate its applicability in shaping an effective and value-oriented educational framework. Pedagogy fundamentally concerns the selection and application of appropriate teaching methods, and NEP 2020 seeks to strengthen pedagogical practices by drawing upon both ancient Indian educational traditions and the Bharatiya Knowledge System. The inclusion of Bhagwad Geeta inspired pedagogical principles in NEP 2020 reflects the policy objective of transforming education to prioritize holistic learning, critical thinking, and moral development. In the face of contemporary challenges such as unemployment, social uncertainty, and skill mismatch, effective pedagogy assumes a crucial role in preparing future-ready individuals. NEP 2020 addresses these concerns by emphasizing core values such as rationality, ethical reasoning, compassion, and character formation, drawing upon the enduring wisdom of the Bhagwad Geeta to inform its implementation.

The pedagogical model of the Bhagwad Geeta is vividly illustrated through the dialogue between Lord Shri Krishna, as the teacher, and Arjuna, as the learner. The text encompasses the teachings imparted by Krishna to Arjuna during a moment of profound psychological and moral crisis. Overwhelmed by the prospect of waging war against his own kin, Arjuna experienced emotional distress and cognitive paralysis, rendering him incapable of action. In this state of confusion, he sought guidance from Lord Krishna. In response, Krishna adopted a systematic and dialogic teaching approach, employing specific methods and strategies through the verses of the Bhagwad Geeta to clarify Arjuna cognitive dilemmas and restore his sense of purpose.

In this context, Lord Shri Krishna exemplifies the role of an ideal teacher who responds to the immediate needs of the learner while anticipating potential future uncertainties. By addressing Arjuna doubts with patience and clarity, Krishna reestablished his confidence and enabled him to fulfill his social and moral responsibilities. As highlighted by Maharaj and Malhotra (2021), the pedagogical approach demonstrated by Krishna underscores the importance of inclusivity,

humility, empathy, and sensitivity to learner diversity, irrespective of caste, gender, or social background.

Student-centric education constitutes a central principle of NEP 2020, which places learner needs, abilities, and learning processes at the core of pedagogical design. Emphasizing learner-centered pedagogy allows educators to move beyond uniform instructional methods and instead respond to individual learning dispositions and capacities (Dhungana and Neupane, 2021). Such an approach aligns closely with the pedagogical philosophy of the Bhagwad Geeta, which prioritizes dialogue, reflection, and experiential learning.

An analytical study of the Bhagwad Geeta conducted by Maharaj, Ahuja, and Malhotra (2021) highlights that NEP 2020 emphasizes several key pedagogical dimensions, including discussion-based teaching, critical thinking, multidisciplinary learning, innovation, discovery-oriented instruction, and decision-making skills. Effective teaching, according to this perspective, requires enabling learners to discover solutions independently rather than relying on passive transmission of knowledge. The study further demonstrates that the pedagogical methods employed by Lord Shri Krishna during the Kurukshetra discourse embody these principles, offering a model for contemporary educational practice. The authors argue that similar pedagogical strategies are essential for effective teaching and learning in the twenty-first century under NEP 2020.

Discussion Based Teaching

When Arjuna was not ready to fight with enemies in the battle, it was not a big deal for *Almighty* to change his mood through his magical power, but Shri Krishna took the path of discussion with his misguided pupil Arjuna. Teacher Shri Krishna asked Arjuna the reason behind his dramatic change in his decision to give up the war (Chapter 2(2)). According to Chapter 18(72), throughout the discussion, Shri Krishna could convince Arjuna to be capable and stand to fight and erase all misconceptions from his mind. The Bhagwad Geeta here tells how the ideal teacher should be in a standard education system. Teacher should put the student under question in classroom under two situations. First- student is incited to answer or justify his/her action giving his/her a chance to explain freely. Second- understanding of the student must be confirmed by posing questions related to discuss topics to know whether student is satisfied and convinced with the discussion or not (Ramsey, 1990: 420; Welty, 1989:41).

As far as Indian education system is concerned, discussion method of learning exists in only higher studies where it is not purely open for discussion but tilted with teacher because of his/her overshadowing position. Thus, the NEP 2020 targets emphasize participatory based

teaching practice to nurture student to take decisions instantly. To evaluate whether the discussion went penetrative to the mind of students, it is important for the teacher to probe it by asking questions randomly in population after the introduction of concepts. This method helps to identify to scan through the entire classroom and connect to the missing minds in the room. It also brings clarity among other students and alert inattentive students and welcome for their fresh participation in the live discussion between the teacher and the students.

Value Based Education

Several parts of the Bhagwad Geeta sermonize to develop value-based education among students by performing the innate duty of it without caring about results of duty. Shri Krishna teaches Arjuna that one must not give up their fundamental duty but rather practice the duty with a high value system. Shri Krishna showed the righteous path having bifurcated work (*karma*) in two parts such as virtue and evil actions in life. Similarly, the teachers in the classroom are also entitled and expected to teach students meticulous differences between right and wrong actions. They should also be trained to instill a value-based education to judge things themselves. This sort of practice leads students to build value based human beings.

Shri Krishna, in verse Ch-16 (2) also lays emphasis on communication qualities of individual need to be as such that is welcoming for others and importantly the communication should be free from ego, anger and spread peace, gentleness and calmness. Under verse 3rd of Chapter 16, Lord advocated the imperatives of generosity, forgiveness, free from hatred, zero-arrogance, and fortitude in the personality. Every one of us should never escape from performing the duty (*karma*) in any conditions, in his word sustaining as '*Karma Yogi*' and dutifulness. Lord Shri Krishna elucidates the great importance of 'value' in the life of individual over the importance of 'knowledge'. He emphasized the value by saying that no knowledge is virtuous and regarded without its contribution in the welfare of the society or helping in the betterment of others, knowledge is of no use if does not benefit others. This is strongly established that not knowledge, but values must shine from every action of human for welfare of mankind. It is the very duty of teachers to inject and motivate students adopt the values as their fundamental in all actions following the path of *Karma Yog*, prescribed under Ch-16(1) to Ch-16(3), Bhagwad Geeta.

Similarly, Patil and Patil (2023:244) highlighted the importance of value-based education that of India's traditional knowledge system in National Education Policy 2020. Shah (2023) and Mishra et al. (2023) also advocated for value-based education in the new NEP 2020. Since the NEP 2020 is committed to transform India into 'Knowledge Based Society', 'Bharat Centric

Education', 'Knowledge Based Education', the role of tradition knowledge system of education in the last thousand years back are going to be the best resources for taking this journey to its destination.

Developing Multi-disciplinary and Critical Thinking

Students during the previous education policy or existing education policy (where the NEP 2020 is yet to be implemented in every state) come to access multi-disciplinary curriculum once they reach higher education in colleges and universities. Similarly, the critical thinking ability of a student is not expected from the student at schools. It is practiced in the higher standard of education like colleges and universities. But NEP 2020 guideline has fostered for the development of students multi-disciplinary and critical thinking. The objective behind introduction of critical thinning and multi-disciplinary way of teaching is to develop capacity within students to visualize multiple perspectives of problems or situations (Maharaj et al. 2021:153).

In this regard, Lord Shri Krishna under the verse of Ch-1(24) explains himself as a teacher doing this duty by persuading Arjuna about the consequences of the war between giant armies of two sides. When Krishna realized Arjuna was confident in winning the war, the Lord Shri Krishna alerted him to not to be victims of singular and immediate calls of his mind but to investigate the matter with critical thinking. Since Arjuna was not aware of the robust structure and strategies of the opposition's side, he was falsely convinced to win the war easily. To clear his chimera, Lord Shri Krishna placed the chariot in middle of two giant armies where he was shocked seeing the great and undefeatable warriors on the enemy's side. As analyzed by Sahni and Rao (2017), Shri Krishna did take the chariot in the center of the battle to get Arjuna to confront with the panorama of possible challenges he might face in this war. This decision of Shri Krishna indicates an ideal for a teacher to present a critical and versatile perspective of any problems or solution to the students. Therefore, NEP 2020 is aspiring to develop critical minds from school ages children to increase problem solving capacity among them.

NEP 2020 wants a teacher in the classroom to train students that the results, reasons and outcome are not caused by singular act but there are several potential hidden factors of external and internal impacts. Where the doers have less control or zero control over these factors. Hence, developing the quality of education framework and teachers who can build new generation minds who can think diverse aspect of any situation is objective of NEP 2020. As discussed in the previous para referring to the Bhagwad Geeta, how Lord Sri Krishna taught his pupil to look at the situation critically and multiple perspectives to map the upcoming

challenges in the war. The Bhagwad Geeta pedagogy needs to be applied in the NEP 2020 for the successful and desired implementation of the new education policy.

Creativity and Discovery Oriented Teaching

The existing Indian education no doubt promotes and encourage for creative teaching to inspire students but present school education hardly able to create comfortable environment which can nurture student to think new. School education is yet to provide basic resources of educational tool. A couple of years ago schools were equipped with computers, not all schools. Therefore, igniting the creative talents of children is almost neglected as per the need of 21st century education (Agrawal, 1992:20).

Maharaj et al. (2021:154) in his paper provided the circumstances of growth, scope and aspects of creativity ability of children in school education. They have suggested that the education system must provide a conducive environment to enable students to create and innovate new things. As per their study, three components are indispensable to grow creative minds, such as fearless environment, playful flexibility, and freedom of students. A fearless environment to encourage for any experiments without caring any pressure from mistakes and judgments and Playful attitudes which can engage students tirelessly, and free attitude brings best quality of mind.

In this regard, the verses of Ch-2(31) and Ch-12(9), Srimad Bhagwad Geeta talks about how Lord Shri Krishna insisted Arjuna to avoid any hesitation in experimenting things if it doesn't derail from the principles of duty. Shri Krishna advised Arjuna, providing ample opportunity and freedom, to practice repeatedly experiencing multiple ways until you reach perfection. Teachers are also expected to be the same, as Shri Krishna stands with Arjuna, to provide and promote the enthusiasm for perfection and innovation through rigorous practice (Maharaja et al., 2021: 154). Amid the toughest situation during Mahabharata war zone, Lord Shri Krishna pushed Arjuna to do brainstorming and investigate for several alternatives and create new solutions by observation ability. He exhorted his pupils to learn from surrounding environments, situation, and carefully observing other's life to learn from their mistakes as well. This thoughtful observation will also help in creating new solutions for life. Since, Individual can easily learn and grab critical thinking and ideas of generations by observation of real life (Maharana, 2022: 81). Covid-19 suddenly brought out imperatives of digital learning and teaching in all stages of education system in India. As a result, an insurmountable task raised before National Council of Educational Research & Training (NCERT) and state governments to train its millions of teachers across India to go digital over everything. Both

Teachers and students struggled in coping with unprecedented challenges posed by dearth of digital infrastructure in every school (Ministry of Education, 2021:16).

Shri Krishna pointed, in verse no Ch-10(11), the significance of an ideal teacher. A teacher should always direct his student in search of new knowledge and truth (Maharana, 2022: 77). Teacher is expected to teach students to search for light in darkness. The students should be propelled to search for solutions and alternatives to the problems themselves. Their own student learns through participatory method by engaging himself/herself into problem. On the other hand, it is the fundamental responsibility of a teacher to transform knowledge and empower his/her pupil so that the teaching helps student in every walk of life (Sahni and Rao, 2017: 720). After humblest request and grovel by Arjuna to see divine form (*Vishwarup*) of Shri Krishna and shower knowledge, Shri Krishna decided to present *Vishwarup* before of him to assuage his desire (Maharaja et al. 2021: 154). The implication of Arjuna's *Vishwarupa Darshan* to the teaching method is directly related to learning methodology through experience, observation, and participation which last forever in the mind and life of learner to combat many situations in life for solutions.

In Ch-18 (63), after a thorough discussion, conversation, experiments, observation and other various activities were held between Shri Krishna and Arjuna. Shri Krishna said to Arjuna, that he has imparted all wisdom in him (Arjuna), now it is time for Arjuna to take decision according to his conscience and learned philosophy to take part in the battle or not. This signifies the developing decision-making ability of your pupil, which is the most important at the end of all exercises. Because of the right decision only one can take himself/herself to the desired destination in life. Like Shri Krishna, the teacher also should provide the student freedom to think to take decisions (Maharaj et al., 2021; Kaushal et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2022).

In the above discussion, various aspects of pedagogies are analyzed with their perfect coordination with the NEP 2020 for the successful implementation. Starting from quality education to extra ordinary skills encompassing decision making skill, freedom, fear, confidence, creativity, innovation, multidisciplinary approaches, critical thinking ability, and student-teachers relationship are broadly explained. Which says that the holy Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta and its principles regarding the Shri Krishna and Arjuna conversation is sufficiently capable of addressing crucial aspects of pedagogies in National Education Policy 2020.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the integration of the teachings from the Bhagwad Geeta into the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 exemplifies a profound synthesis of ancient wisdom with contemporary educational needs. The enduring influence of Hindu texts, including the Ramayana and Mahabharata, has long shaped the Indian educational landscape, instilling values and pedagogical approaches deeply rooted in cultural and philosophical traditions. The Bhagwad Geeta, with its rich tapestry of moral, ethical, and pedagogical guidance, offers invaluable insights for shaping modern educational practices.

The NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic education, critical thinking, and innovation aligns seamlessly with Bhagwad Geeta's teachings. The dialogue between Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna not only underscores the importance of a value-based education but also advocates for a pedagogy that is reflective, discussion-oriented, and student-centric. By incorporating Bhagwad Geeta's principles, the NEP aims to foster an education system that not only imparts knowledge but also nurtures virtues such as empathy, integrity, and responsibility.

The discussion-based teaching method, value-based education, multi-disciplinary approaches, and encouragement of creativity highlighted in the Bhagwad Geeta resonate with the NEP's objectives. These pedagogical strategies are designed to enhance students' decision-making abilities, foster critical thinking, and promote a more engaging and transformative learning experience. As we navigate the challenges of the 21st century, including the pressing issue of unemployment, Bhagwad Geeta's teachings offer a blueprint for developing a more resilient and ethically grounded generation.

In essence, NEP 2020, guided by the philosophical richness of the Bhagwad Geeta, aspires to create a robust educational framework that balances traditional values with modern educational imperatives. This harmonious integration promises to not only uphold the cultural heritage but also equip students with the skills and values needed to thrive in an ever-evolving global landscape.

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