Research Paper



Exploration of Administrative and Leadership Activities in the *Bhāgavata- Gītā*: A Perspective of *Guṇa* Theory

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Abstract: This article endeavors to explore the administrative and leadership activities in the Bhāgavata- Gītā from the perspective of guna theory. The researcher uses the relevant verses of the Bhāgavata- Gītā as evidences for the reliability of the research. The major objective of the study is to highlight how admirable gunas of a ruler make him successful in his administrative activities. The text motivates human beings for the development of their leadership and the administrative activities. The precepts which Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives in the Bhāgavata- Gītā to Arjuna are admirable to improve our guṇas to be an ideal administrator. The researcher uses Gerald James Larson's idea of guṇa for self improvement and to prove the person respectable in society. The research is significant because it gives new ideas to rulers how rule successfully in a country without antagonism as Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Bhāgavata- Gītā become the roadmap for rulers and other people to succeed in their plans. It is expected that this research article will contribute for the improvement in the guna of humans to be successful leader and administrator.

Keywords: Administration, guna, raja, sattva, tama.

I. Use of *Guna* Theory in Literature

The word guna (quality) refers to the theory of human behavior and conduct that incorporates logical appeal in the *Vedic* and the *Paurānic* texts. For the academic study to the *Paurānic* texts, this theory "is grossly neglected" (Chakraborty 39). This notion further supports that guna theory is a reliable tool for the analysis of the *Vedic*, *Paurānic* and other literary texts. As the analysis of the personality traits, humans have three basic constituents (*Sattva, Rajas*, and *Tamas*). In the words of Aditi Kejriwal and Venkat R Krishan: "They are not only the form-giving substances but also act and interact with the environment to find expression as qualities or personality traits" (31). This standpoint clarifies that gunas determine the personality of an individual.

The aforementioned three *gunas* become the base in the disposition of humans and they show their behaviors and activities as the influence of the particular *guna*. Sattva (super ego) makes one worship Gods and Goddesses realizing the worth of divine tendencies. Unlike *satya* (super ego), *rajas* (ego) is the centre point of property and power. It works as a referee between id and super ego. In the different line of argument, the quality of *tama* (id) incorporates ghostly spirits (Kerijwal and Krishnan 32). In this regard, human disposition belongs to these *gunas* and their qualities are reflected in their works and words. To strengthen the argument further, we can intensify that the particular *guna* leads to a human in the certain time. Kerijwal and Krishnan stress on the point that the "dominant *guna* could be identified along 12 different dimensions" (31). These dimensions are faith, food, sacrifice, austerity, gift, obligatory, knowledge, action, agent, intellect, determination and happiness.

For the base of the administrative and leadership activities, a leader should follow the above gunas to higher level of motivation. If there is maturity in morality, the person traces perfectness in his decisions. An administrator or a leader should display his gunas to make decision properly. They should have the qualities of *Sattva* in their personalities to establish themselves as ideal rulers. The primary focus of human qualities is to inscribe the superiority of *Sattva Guna* over other dimensions of *Gunas*. *Sattva Guna* owes positive activities whereas *Tama Guna* is visible "owing to its negative relation with most of the variables" (qtd. Kaur and Sinha 27). There seems to be no denying the fact that everybody has keen interest to acquire, enhance, and retain the *Sattva*

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Guna. In this regard, *Sattva Guna* is superior to *Raja* and *Tama Gunas*. It should be noted that administrative and leadership activities cannot be conducted without the use of *Gunas*. This is why, the theory of *Guna* is necessary for the establishment of good administration and leadership in a country.

Recent years, the academicians, philosophers and researchers are interested to demonstrate the interpretations of Sanskrit literature such as *Vedas, Upanishad, Purāņas Bhāgvata Gītā* among others. Over the centuries many renowned scholars and philosophers from all over the world have commented on the *Bhāgvata Gītā* and elucidated it's teaching in many publications and lectures (Muniapan, 10). Veda Vyāsa's *Bhāgavata-Gīta* is the centre of attention for different readers, thinkers, and academicians. To strengthen the argument on the *Bhāgavata-Gīta*, Madan Mohan Malaviya rightly observes: "I believe that in all the living languages of the world, there is no book so full of true knowledge, and yet as handy as the *Bhagawad Geeta*" (Duneja 13). From this stand point what he argues seems to be plausible and believable. In this regard, Swāmī Vivekānanda writes in confirmation with his notion that the "*Gīta* has the message of selfless action for social upliftment that India and the world needs today" (Agarwal16). This explanation further supports that the use of the *Bhāgavata-Gīta* is the base for the improvement of human lifestyle and their activities.

Devdutt Pattanaik extends the scope of $G\bar{t}ta$ from his notion: "The $G\bar{t}ta$ to do with peace" (30). In this line of thought, one can argue that the $G\bar{t}ta$ hints for peace in the life of humans in the present world. Basing his argument on such idea, we remarks that $Bh\bar{a}gavata$ - $G\bar{t}ta$ pleads for the sake of peace and humans are motivated to make good relation to each other for the establishment of ideal society. But Ronald W. Neufeldt contradicts his view from the arguments of Duneja, Swāmī Vivekānanda, Agarwal and Pattanaik relating to the use of the $Bh\bar{a}gavata$ - $G\bar{t}ta$. In his notions: "Krishna as Logos becomes the guru who teaches Arjuna, the student, how this immortality is to be acquired" (15). In this connection, one argues that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the protagonist as well as the planner of the $Mah\bar{a}bh\bar{a}rata$ war. The $Bh\bar{a}gavata$ - $G\bar{t}ta$ is the precepts to Arjuna to participate in the war for justice and *dharma* (righteousness). It shows that war is necessary if other ways to establish justice and peace fail.

Unlike Neufeldt, N. Gayathri is apt to state: "Krishna advises Arjuna to fight the war not on the selfish grounds of attaining the kingdom but as an obligatory duty" (78). Elaborating this argument, everybody comes to know that Arjuna does not have intention to participate in the war of the *Mahābhārata*. Despite his unwillingness, Krṣṇa studies his mind and prepares for the war. Basing the interpretation on such idea, R.S. Garg writes ahead: "Arjuna's wavering mind needs to be compared with the perpetually recurring predicament of an ordinary man" (194). It is true in the vapid sense that Arjuna refers to the predicament condition of humans. In this situation, Kṛṣṇa applies different techniques to encourage Arjuna to participate in the war. Thus, indecision of Arjuna traces the perplexed condition of humans before making any decision.

Likewise, Yubaraj Pandey extends the scope of the *Bhāgavata-Gīta* from his argument: "The *Bhāgavata-Gīta* represents the many struggles, or battles, now people face many problems and have to do their responsibilities to the society" (99). At the same time, however, it is also crucial to realize that the text intensifies the struggle within a family. We find same crux of logic when we find critics' evaluative comments on the *Bhāgavata-Gīta*. Emerson W. Shideler goes a step ahead when he associates his idea referring Kurukshetra as the body of every human (309). Within the mind of the human, there is always conflict and it is difficult for him to get mental peace in his life. This stand point justifies the discussion of the notion that the *Bhāgavata-Gīta* refers the positive and negative aspects within human mind. With the similar belief, Scott R. Stroud remarks that the "*Bhāgavata-Gīta* begins as a martial narrative about a localized war" (2). Explaining this statement, one clarifies that the *Bhāgavata-Gīta* indicates that the war within the family members is dangerous because the enemies know every weaknesses of their opponents.

Unlike the above critics, John McKenzie notes: "The essential ideas in the reply which offered to Arjuna was that through the discharge of the duties of one's station without thought of fruit one was on the way to salvation"(125). It further proves that the *Bhāgavata- Gīta* is a beautiful philosophical song. With all these logical descriptions, one can conclude that *Bhāgavata- Gīta* introduces a subtle tension between the concepts of *dharma* and *moksha*-salvation. No one has analyzed the text referring the administrative and leadership activities from the perspective of *guna* theory. In this regard, it is necessary to examine this theory for the implementation of the text in the life of leaders and the administrators to performance their works successfully.

II. Problem, Objectives and Methodology

In the history of Sanskrit literature, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa is incomparable poet in the *Vedic* and the *Paurānic* eras who includes *Guṇas* and their significance in his literary works. In the words of Malcolm Innes-Brown and Samir Chatterjee: "*Guṇa* theory provides insight of considerable power" (101). This theory has its connection to the orientalism and the *Bhāgavata-Gīta* is an illustration for the application of the *Guṇa* theory. Though there are many general problems in the text, primarily this study concentrates to address the following specific research questions:

- What problems do the characters face in leadership and administration in the *Bhāgavata-Gīta*?
- How do the characters show their *Gunas* for the administrative and leadership activities?
- Why do they have intention for the performance of *Guna* in the administrative and leadership activities?

The major objective of the study is to assess the administrative and the leadership activities in the *Bhāgavata-Gīta*. To find out the reason, the researcher analyses in the light of Gerald James Larson's idea of *Guṇa*. In his words: "*Guṇa* implies moral distinctions in that it refers to the activity of *Prakrti* as the basis of satisfaction, frustration, and confusion, or moral excellence, moral decadence, and a moral indifference "(65). On the basis of this theory, this study explores the uses of the administrative and the leadership activities in the *Bhāgavata-Gīta*. The researcher uses the *Bhāgavata-Gīta* translated and edited by Prabha Duneja as the main text for the study. If other texts of the *Bhāgavata-Gīta* are used, they are especially referred.

III. Administrative and the Leadership Activities in the *Bhāgavata- Gīta*

"Whatever a great man does, the others also do the same; whatever standard he sets, the people follow"¹ ($G\bar{t}t\bar{a}$ 3:21). The *Bhāgavata* $G\bar{t}t\bar{a}$ provides us the value of leadership and the ways for the improvement in administration. On the basis of this relation, one can argue that the notions of Kṛṣṇa in administration and the leadership skills in the $G\bar{t}t\bar{a}$ draw the attention of humans to succeed in their works. No one can deny the fact that the text provides readers for their enhancement in skills and the social improvement. In support of this line of argument, we can portray that the very ancient text is useful in the present context. Appropriate *guṇa* is necessary for the proper administration and leadership. There are number of noticeable evidences in the *Bhāgavata* $G\bar{t}t\bar{a}$ which instruct the leaders and administrators to succeed in their works. Of course, these evidences become the code of conduct for the performance of their works in favor of citizens. In this context, the argument turns out to be valid as the role of *guṇa* is the base for the sake of the establishment of an ideal administration. If the *guṇa* of a ruler or an administrator is used for the negative sense, it creates problems in the country.

The Bhāgavata Gītā motivates the readers to follow sattva guṇa to be a good administrator for the leading capacity. In this connection, Śrī Kṛṣṇa corroborates Arjuna: "Of these, Sattva being immaculate, is illuminating and flawless, Arjuna; it binds through attachment to happiness and knowledge"² (14:6). This explanation further supports that the Bhāgavata Gītā highlights the importance of sattva guṇa to be a model leader and the administrator. Basing the argument on such notion, Ramananda Prashed explicates that sattva guṇa is the base for happiness and knowledge (218). Other guṇas such as raja and tama are not appropriate to be a popular administrator and leader among the citizens. These other guṇas concentrate on the self-seeking tendency of the administrator and the leader. In this context, it is important to highlight the sattva guṇa to be a popular administrator.

Likewise, Kṛṣṇa is correct when he indicates the supremacy of *sattva guṇa* over *Raja* and *Tama guṇas*. Kṛṣṇa, the speaker argues with his logic in the *Bhāgavata Gītā* to distinguish among the three *guṇas*. According to him: *Sattva* promotes knowledge and *Rajas* promotes greed, while heedlessness and delusion arise from *Tamas* and also the ignorance^{"3} (14:17). Explaining this statement, we ponder on the appropriateness of *sattva guṇa* for the sake of appropriate leadership and administration in our society and country. In this connection, Prabhupāda writes ahead to clarify the matter referring the quality of good rulers:"When they are actually educated in the mode of goodness, they will become sober, in full knowledge of things as they are. Then the people will be happy and prosperous"(740). Explaining this statement, one clarifies that the *Bhāgavata-Gītā* is the mine of knowledge for the administrator and leaders to service to the citizens.

Guna theory provides us the theory of personality and humans behave differently as the influence of the particular *guna* in their lives. To support the idea of *guna* in the life of administrators and leaders, Subhash Sharma postulates: "In nature, *tamas* leads to gloom, *rajas* boom, and *sattva* creates the bloom"(111). It proves the validity and practicality of *sattva guna* for every administrator and leader. In this context, Kṛṣṇa intensifies: " Who maintains his balance in honor and dishonor, who is equal to a friend and foe, who is detached in all undertakings-he is said to have transcended the *Guṇas*"⁴ (14:25). Keeping the notion of *guṇa* in mind, this expression remarks the qualities of a leader. On the basis of this idea, one can express that a leader should be the dealer of thoughts and his new and creative plans should be implemented for the sake of development in the country. In the same way, a good administrator should be sensitive to provide the facilities to the public. In this regard, R. S. Garg is apt to state that a leader or an administrator" would eat whatever is left after meeting the needs of others" (170). This realization in life by a leader establishes him a good politician among the subjects and other politicians and administrators are encouraged to follow him.

The *Bhāgavata-Gītā* confirms that both the leader and the administrator should control their senses. In line of this idea Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna: "Therefore, O' Arjuna, control thy senses from the very beginning and kill this sinful destroyer of knowledge and experiential wisdom"⁵ (3:41). To add more bricks on this line of argument, we can opine that the text motivates the leaders and the administrators not to be the slave of senses. If yes, there is the birth of corruption and bribery in the country. At present, almost all the leaders and the administrators run after to satisfy their senses so that there are problems in their works. If they follow the path of the *Bhāgavata-Gītā*, they hesitate to satisfy their senses. This notion contributes in the administrative activities. But Arjuna faces the problems in the administrative and leadership activities before the war of the *Mahābharata*. To explain this idea further, Śrī Śrī Paramahansa Yogananda's view is reliable. The ascetic claims that the leaders should control their senses to remain free from corruption (304). Explaining this statement, we incorporate that the knowledge of the *Bhāgavata-Gītā* is the key for every leader and the administrator of the present world.

In this context, it is important to note the significance of the selfless activities by an administrator. In the text, Kṛṣṇa instructs humans through Arjuna to work attentively without expecting the result from it. In Kṛṣṇa's words: "Your right is to perform your work only and not at all to its fruit; let not the fruit of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction"⁶ (2:47). Elaborating this argument, the readers come to know that every leader and the administrator should exhibit their *guṇas* to perform their works impressively. Being a leader, s/he should not show the consequences of a work before its completion. But we can observe the contradictory condition at present. Many leaders and the administrators have not studied the *Bhāgavata-Gītā* sincerely and seriously so that they have many defects in their decisions. In this connection, Prabhupāda supports the point that "work with results becomes the cause of bondage" (146). The most visible aspect of this poem is to work without any attachment to its results. In the same way, an administrator should show his works to the people and he should not try to impress them only by his tongue distributing different kinds of dreams. The above extract instructs the leaders and the administrators to be practical in their activities.

In the similar vein, a leader or an administrator should conquer the demands of his senses to prove himself as a perfect ruler. With this idea at the centre of attention, Kṛṣṇa is correct to argue: "To him who has conquered his lower-self by the Higher-Self, his Self becomes a friend; but for him who has not conquered his lower-self his own Self acts as an enemy"⁷ (6:6). Above mentioned example confirms that every human has a friend and an enemy within himself. If a leader exposes his bad quality, he is unable to do works as a good leader and the administrator. As he conquers his lower-self, he can establish him as an inspiring leader and the citizens expect too much from him. It is, therefore, essential to understand that every becomes either a friend or an enemy of himself (Agarwal 54). Responding to such claims, one concludes that every leader should be aware of his inner bad quality to be the centre of attention among the citizens. After conquering the lower-self, an administrator or a leader can impress the citizens with the help of *sattva guna*.

In the same line of argument, Kṛṣṇa is correct when he manifests the scenario of a good state ruled by appropriate leaders and administrators. According to him: "Non-violence, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, aversion to fault finding, compassion towards all beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty and absence of fickleness"⁸(16:2). Scholars have same opinion regarding the condition of a good state ruled by appropriate leaders and administrators. If a political leader is good, the administrators also become the same because the administrators have their obligation to obey the instructions of the political leaders. In this connection, Jayadayal Goyandaka formulates his view: "Taking a vow not to inflict pain on another is called *Ahimsā* or non violence, by the name of *Daya*" (667). Goyandaka's view explores that the text motivates the leaders to complete difficult works from the way of *Ahimsā*. Moving ahead in this line of logic, the readers, scholars and philosophers point out the significance of the *Bhāgavata-Gītā* especially in the life of the leaders and the administrators.

Supporting the notion of *Guna* theory, Kṛṣṇa makes conscious to Arjuna reminding his duties, responsibilities, and righteousness in the text. In his words:" When like a tortoise, which withdraws its limbs from all sides (into the shell), he withdraws his senses from the objects of senses, then his wisdom becomes firmly set" ${}^{9}((2:58))$. It is interesting to compare the similarities between a tortoise and a leader or an administrator. To remain safe from the enemies, a tortoise keeps its limbs into the shell. In the similar vein, all leaders and administrators must control their senses to highlight their popularity in public. The most agreeable factor concerning the matter is that a leader should control his passion relating to senses. In this context, Franklin Edgerton postulates on the activities of leaders and the administrators expressing that "work is their passion for identification of one thing with another" (13). To support the idea of *Guna* theory in the life of leaders and the administrators, the precepts of Kṛṣṇa are reliable and useful for the decision makers in the present context. Above-mentioned examples relating to the *guna* of leaders and the administrators from the *Bhāgavata-Gītā* confirm that this text is a guidance for the decision-makers of a society or a country.

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IV. Conclusion

The *Bhāgavata-Gītā* provides the theory of *Guņa* for the improvement of the activities of leaders and the administrators. In the theistic mode, it is the voice of Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna to prepare himself in the war of the *Mahābhārata*. It shows that Kṛṣṇa gives the skills of leadership and administration to his mate Arjuna. If there is the dominance of *sattva guṇa* in the life of a leader or an administrator, he can perform his activities successfully and other people praise him. In the contradictory form, the *raja* and *tama guṇas* are the obstacles in the life of leaders and administrators. These *guṇas* make the decision makers always in problems. To establish himself as an ideal leader or an administrator, the person should pay attention in the significance of his *guṇas*. If the citizens follow good and inspiring qualities of a leader or an administrator, the society realizes the value of justice, truth, goodness, and beauty. Thus, the main *guṇa* of a leader should make conscious to the citizens to do good works from his works and words. The text teaches the managerial skills to the leaders, administrators, and the common humans at present despite its origin more than five thousand years before. In this way, everybody should follow the precepts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be a good leader, ruler, and an administrator at present. Thus, the *Bhāgavata-Gītā* is the *Hindu* Bible for the enhancement of leading and administrative activities.

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Appendix

1.न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन । नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥ ३-२२॥ 2. तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम । सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ॥ १४ -६॥ 3. सत्त्वात्सञ्जायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च। प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥ १४ -१७॥ 4. मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः । सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥ १४ -२५॥ 5. तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ । पाप्मानं प्रजहि होनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम ॥ ३-४१॥ 6. कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गो≤स्त्वकर्मणि ॥ २-४७ 7. बन्धरात्मात्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः । अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत् ॥ ६-६॥ 8. अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशनम् । दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं हीरचापलम् ॥ १६ -२॥ 9. यदा संहरते चायं कुर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः । इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ २-५८॥