Freedom and desire in the Bhagavad Gītā

Abstract
The Bhagavad Gītā, a classical Sanskrit text, describes a spiritual practice called karma yoga. Central to this practice is niṣkāma karman or action without desire. A number of philosophical issues present themselves in connection with this teaching. First, while the Gītā enjoins action, action seems prima facie problematic in the Gītā in light of metaphysical claims that seem to deny human freedom. Second, Western scholars who hold that desire is necessary for action find the Gītā's desirelessness requirement problematic. Finally, while the sense of karma yoga seems clear enough, the teaching is connected with two notions that are obscure: transcendence of the guṇa-s and surrender of action to Krishna. This dissertation explores and seeks solutions to these problems. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the Gītā's philosophy and selected classical Indian commentaries. Chapter 2 tackles the assumption by some scholars that the Gītā shares tenets of the determinist metaphysics of classical Śamkhya. This assumption is shown false and the argument made that the Gītā, as a yogic text, implies voluntarism. Chapter 2 offers an analysis of the Gītā's concept of guṇa (literally 'strand'), and argues that the puruṣa, or self, which is called a 'consenter' exercises agency in consenting. Chapter 3 addresses the worry that niṣkāma karman, or desireless action, is a contradictory notion because desire is necessary for action. Based on examination of the Gītā's theory of action, it is shown that the Gītā does not hold desire necessary for action and that in fact the text articulates four distinct types of niṣkaāma karman. Chapter 4 explores the concepts of transcendence of the guṇa-s and surrender of action to Krishna and develops a definition of karma yoga involving these concepts. The chapter concludes with an argument that karma yoga requires creativity. The dissertation closes with the suggestion that through karma yoga a practitioner might come to enjoy an extraordinary sort of freedom that surpasses the ability to exercise will.
Bhagavad-gītā is also known as Gītopaniṣad. It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important Upaniṣads in Vedic literature. Of course there are many commentaries in English on the Bhagavad-gītā, and one may question the necessity for another one. This present edition can be explained in the following way. One who is absorbed in the thought of bodily conceptions cannot understand his situation. Bhagavad-gītā was spoken to liberate one from the bodily conception of life, and Arjuna put himself in this position in order to receive this information from the Lord. One must become free from the bodily conception of life; that is the preliminary activity for the transcendentalist. The Bhagavad-Gita God Talks to Arjuna Yogananda’s Translation and Commentary Just as Yogananda’s Autobiography of a Yogi has established itself as peerless and eternal among the masses of spiritual biographies and surveys published each century, God Talks to Arjuna is becoming recognized as that singular presentation of the Bhagavad Gita which will be studied and restudied by sincere seekers and. The Bhagavad-Gita by Barbara Stoler Krishna’s Counsel in Time of War Barbara Stoler Miller’s translation of ‘The Bhagavad-Gita’ faithfully retains the charm, lyricality and essence of the original. $3.99 Kindle eBook Buy from Amazon.com. They are dominated by material desires, and consider the attainment of heaven as the highest goal of life. Bhagavad-gītā is also known as Gītopaniṣad. It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important Upaniṣads in Vedic literature. Of course there are many commentaries in English on the Bhagavad-gītā, and one may question the necessity for another one. This present edition can be explained in the following way. Mukti or liberation means freedom from material consciousness. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam also the definition of liberation is given: Mukti means liberation from the contaminated consciousness of this material world and situation in pure consciousness. In the Bhagavad-gītā it is clearly explained that there are three kinds of activities according to the different modes of nature: the activities of goodness, of passion and of ignorance.