



Bhagavad Gītā, Bhakti Movement, and Indian Buddhism: An exploration of the Connecting Contours

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Abstract:

Hinduism and Buddhism are, undoubtedly, the two best known philosophical traditions of India. Despite the fact that they seem to hold mutually opposed points of view in relation to some major philosophical questions such as those of God, Idol Worshipping , Soul, Scriptural authority etc, they are both held in very high esteem, and are acclaimed for their Moral earnestness, Spiritual insight and Philosophical profundity. Both Hinduism and Buddhism in the long course of their continued growth, have given rise to many schools, sub Schools and their Literature.

The concept of Bhakti is an age-old one. Right from the time of the Vedas, the word Bhakti has come into existence. In Ṛg Veda Saṃhita, Brihadarāṇyaka Upaniṣad, Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Kaṭha and Kauṣīṭaki Upaniṣad, the word Bhakti has been referred to numerous times. The Gītā and the Bhakti movement, according to R.G. Bhandarkar, owe their origin to the stream of thought which began with the Upaniṣads and culminated in the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in eastern India and arose about the same time as the latter. ¹

The Hindu tradition collectively endorses a hierarchy of means to *mokṣa*, Vyāsaṭīrtha quotes a variety of sacred texts, mostly *purāṇas*, that support the view that there is a correlation between the *sādhana* one uses to achieve *mokṣa* and the quality of *mokṣa* one achieves. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* indicates that some *mumukṣus* worship God for the fulfillment of a personal desire and others do it out of pure devotion -*Bhakti*.² The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is among the most important texts on bhakti, presenting a fully developed teaching on bhakti that originated with the Bhagavad Gītā.

¹ Vaispavisin,P.V Bapat 2500 years of Buddhism, 2012:342

² Stoker, Polemics and patronage in the city of victory: Vyāsaṭīrtha, Hindu sectarianism, and the sixteenth-century Vijayanagara Court, 2016 :106-129

Bhakti is presented as a path of yoga, or "union with the divine". Many of the bhakti teachings in the Bhagavad Gītā are presented as yogic activities—meditating, hearing and singing about Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa; remembering, serving and worshiping him; dedicating all of one's actions to him, all are among nine activities of Bhakti Yoga taught in the Bhagavad Gītā. While classical yoga attempts to close down the mind and senses, the Bhakti Yoga in the Bhāgavata teaches that the focus of the mind is transformed by filling the mind with thoughts of devotion for Viṣṇu avatar.³

The Vedic and Brāhmaṇical concept in Buddhism

Buddhism, for most of those who now defined themselves as Hindus, was most often seen as a kind of protestant Hinduism. In their view, it arose out of the basic philosophical ideas of early 'Hinduism'; it protested against the ritualism and violence of Vedic sacrifices and the rigidities of the caste system; but these protests either won their point (as Vedic sacrifices were done away with and vegetarianism became a way of life for the Brahmanic elite) or were carried on through the ages by the bhakti movement and by other reformers.⁴

Once the Buddha had been raised to the status of an Incarnate Being, his followers gave him all the honours due to a Hindu Incarnate God. They began to worship the image of the Buddha for the same reasons as the Hindus, namely, to stimulate feeling and meditation. It is now the generally accepted view that the worship of idols among the Hindus is as old as Panini (500—450 B.C.). Today, in Ceylon, Burma, China and other Buddhist countries, people worship the Buddha's image in the same fashion as the Hindus do in India, by offering flowers, food, cloth, incense and prayers.⁵ The incorporation and subordination of the Buddha within the Brāhmaṇical cult of Viṣṇu as well as his replacement as the Cosmic Man within the mythic ideology of Indian kingship occurred at about the same time.⁶

According to Inden, the first imperial dynasties that elevated Viṣṇu, Śiva, and surya to the status of supreme deities (*parame., vara, mahe., vara*), equivalent to the Cosmic Man, and relegated the Buddha to a secondary position, were the short-lived Karakotaṭa dynasty of Kashmir and the Gurjara-Pratihara at Kanyakubja in northern India, the Rastrakutas—as in the Deccan, and the Pallavas in south India.⁷

³ Bhaktivedanta, A. C, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* Watford: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 2014:10th canto

⁴ Omvedt, G, *Buddhism in india: Challenging brahmanism and caste*. Sage Publications Pvt Ltd, 2003:212

⁵ In Bapat, P. V: *2500 years of Buddhism*, 2012: 355-356

⁶ J.C. Holt, *The Buddhist Viṣṇu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004:11

⁷ Ronald Inden, "Ritual, Authority, and Cycle Time in Hindu Kingship," in J.F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998: 41-91

Previously the Buddha had been offered imperial-style worship (*pooja*). Now, as the Buddha was replaced by one of the Brāhmaṇical-Hindu gods at the imperial centre and top of the cosmo-political system, the image or symbol of the Brāhmaṇical-Hindu god came to be housed in a monumental temple and accorded increasingly elaborate imperial-style *pooja*.⁸

Inden points out that in its Vaiṣṇava dress, the developing ideology of Indian theories of kingship was undergoing a decisive turn which also generated a major change in the manner in which the Buddha and Buddhism came to be regarded from within a newly regenerated Brāhmaṇical and Bhakti framework. According to him, within this reinvigorated Brāhmaṇical-Hindu tradition dominated by the Bhakti cults of Viṣṇu (and in some cases Siva), the king was considered as partial descent of the great god Viṣṇu, the preserver of dharma, the natural and moral order, and himself a form of the Cosmic Overlord.⁹

"Srimad- Bhagavatam Canto 1 Chapter 3 Text 24-27.

Text 24:

tataḥ kalau sampravṛtte
sammohāya sura-dviṣām
buddho nāmnāñjana-sutaḥ
kīkaṭeṣu bhaviṣyati

TRANSLATION

Then, in the beginning of Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Añjana, in the province of Gayā, just for the purpose of deluding those who are envious of the faithful theist.

PURPORT

Lord Buddha, a powerful incarnation of the Personality of Godhead, appeared in the province of Gayā (Bihar) as the son of Añjana, and he preached his own conception of nonviolence and deprecated even the animal sacrifices sanctioned in the Vedas. At the time when Lord Buddha appeared, the people in general were atheistic and preferred animal flesh to anything else. On the plea of Vedic sacrifice, every place was practically turned into a slaughterhouse, and animal killing was indulged in unrestrictedly.

The reification of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*, masks a historical process of assimilation in which indigenous religious cults have been brought into the Brāhmaṇical Vaiṣṇava tradition and thereby subordinating them under a Brāhmaṇical Vaiṣṇava umbrella. In this way, the device of Viṣṇu *avatāra* provided a convenient means of

⁸ J.C. Heesterman, "The Conundrum of the King's Authority," in J.F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998: 12

⁹ J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966: 92.

assimilating, subordinating, and legitimating other deities.¹⁰

Thus, the device of Viṣṇu's *avatāras* was an ingenious and convenient means used to assimilate and then to subordinate the figure of the Buddha and put him in his Brāhmaṇical place thereby undermining his historicity by making him an appendage of the Vaiṣṇava mythic hierarchy.¹¹

The historical Buddha was fully metamorphosed into a savior God who is the eternal and immutable Lord of beings, unborn Creator of the world and bestower of fortune on all beings. In the words of *the Saddharmapundrīka*, the famous Mahāyāna work, the Buddha becomes the Self-born, Father of the World, Lord of all beings and Remover of ills.¹²

The adoption of Buddhist concepts of spiritual merit consisting of egalitarianism, love, and self-sacrifice by *bhakti* brought Buddhism within the striking range of Brāhmaṇical -Hinduism and as a result, Bhakti movement was able to supervene upon Buddhism to a great degree. The Buddhist deities were worshipped by the non-Buddhists despite obligations to their own sectarian cults. Lack of clear identity, if it had to avoid being swamped and assimilated by overarching Brāhmaṇical -Hinduism, was a major drawback of Buddhism and it was certainly made worse by the development and growth of Bhakti. Thus, it has been pointed out that when the *bhakti* element became full-grown and well-settled in the two traditions, theological and devotional ideas and even names came to be used almost indistinguishably in the two traditions. Avalokiteśvara of the Mahāyāna, for example, is depicted with lotus in his hand, just as is Viṣṇu and the name '*Padma-pāṇi*' (lotus-handed) was used for Viṣṇu and Avalokiteśvara alike.¹³

In other words, as pointed out by N.N. Bhattacharyya, the elaborate growth of Mahāyānanism in Buddhism was a triumph of the Bhakti cult.¹⁴

Bhakti movement successfully adopted the media of song and dance to invoke popular enthusiasm. The cult of the temple with its pilgrimage centres and associated settlements and tenants played an *avant garde* role in helping Brāhmaṇical -Hinduism temporarily assume a relatively egalitarian and democratic approach unlike the rigid Brāhmaṇical discipline. The upshot of this is that in the end the Bhakti movement overtook Jainism and Buddhism not so much because of royal patronage, but more because it adopted several media that

¹⁰ J.C. Holt, *The Buddhist Viṣṇu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004:10

¹¹ J.C. Holt, *The Buddhist Viṣṇu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004:11-12

¹² *yam eva ham lokāpitā svayaṃbhuh cikitsakaḥ sarvaprajān nāthaḥ (XV.21)*

¹³ K.N. Upadhyaya, 'The Impact of the Bhakti Movement on the Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in A.K. Narain, *Studies in History of Buddhism*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1980: 356

¹⁴ N.N. Bhattacharyya, *History of the Sākyā Religion*, 2nd rev. edn., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996: 88

evoked popular enthusiasm, such as song and dance, and also because it had an egalitarian and democratic approach that was different to the rigidity of the classical Brāhmanical discipline.¹⁵

When one observes the diverse spectrum of Buddhist ritual activities the practice of *gcod* stands out dramatically. One reason this ritual is so conspicuous is because it contains an abundance of terrifying sacrificial imagery. Describing *gcod* presents scholars with a multitude of fascinating and complex issues and yet, in general, only two typologies have been used to classify *gcod*. One describes the practice as a form of sacrificial ritual, providing little to no qualification or clarification as to the implications of such a characterization. The other approach tends to classify the practice as an activity with strictly soteriological aims, with little to no qualification of the ritual performance. I argue in the following thesis that by doing the work of theorizing *gcod* as a type of religious sacrifice we will be able to see how the authors of Buddhist tradition have historically and contemporaneously dealt with the problem of sacrifice.¹⁶

devas: their existence was accepted by the Buddha but they were not allowed any causal role in the universe—they were merely super-human¹⁷ and like all others in *samsāra* were subject to death and rebirth. The Buddha, in fact, increased their number, since each of the world-systems of Buddhism had its complement of *devas*. He did, however, allow for three categories of *devas*—*sammuti-devas* “conventional *devas*”, i.e. kings, etc., since *deva* can mean both “god” and “king”, *upapattidevas* “rebirth *devas*”, i.e. the gods of Hinduism, and *visuddhi-devas* “purity *devas*”—the last of which one included Buddhas like himself.¹⁸

myths and fables: in the *Brahmajālasutta* the Buddha jokes about the way in which Brahmā thinks that he has created other beings, and he makes reference to the creation myth in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. In his comments in the *Aggaññasutta* on the way in which brahmins are born the Buddha satirizes the *Puruṣasūkta* of the *Ṛgveda*. I include these myths, etc., under my general heading of Brahmanical terms in a Buddhist guise because the Buddha is using them in a different way from the brahmins. His aim is not to present a

¹⁵ Sarao, K. T. S, *The decline of Buddhism in India: A fresh perspective*. New Delhi: Munshirm Manoharlal Publishers, 2012:202-204

¹⁶ Schliff, Henry M, and Holly Gayley. *Cutting to the Root: Buddhist Sacrifice, the Gcod Ritual, and Expressions of Orthodoxy*. , 2012

¹⁷ K.R. Norman, “The Buddha’s View of Devas”, *Beiträge zur Indienforschung: Ernst Waldschmidt zum 80, Geburtstag gewidmet*, Berlin, 197, 329

¹⁸ Schliff, Henry M, and Holly Gayley. *Cutting to the Root: Buddhist Sacrifice, the Gcod Ritual, and Expressions of Orthodoxy*. , 2012

cosmogony according to the brahmins, but to use the stories as a source of mockery and a means of attack upon the brahmins, as Richard Gombrich has shown.¹⁹

brāhmaṇa: in Brahmanical Hinduism a brahmin (< *br̥mh-* “to be strong”) was a brahmin by birth, and was a kinsman of Brahmā. This idea was known to the Buddha,²⁰ but by adopting a different etymology (< *br̥mh-* “to destroy”), he was able to justify his view that a brahmin was one who had destroyed evil.²¹ The Buddha points out that a brahmin does not become a brahmin by birth, but by his actions.²² He gave a revised version of the theory that a brahmin was only a true brahmin if seven generations before him were pure-born brahmins,²³ if he knew the *Vedas*, if he was handsome and of brahma-colour and brahma-splendour, if he was virtuous and if he was wise. He was able to persuade the brahmin Soṇadaṇḍa that only the last two of these five conditions really matter, and it is virtue and wisdom which make a true brahmin .

jhāna: Sanskrit *dhyāna* is “religious thought, meditation”. For the Buddha, *jhāna* applies to a very specific type of “trance”, and it is only rarely employed with a wider application. “Absorption”, rather than “meditation”, has been suggested as a more appropriate translation.²⁴

kamma: the word *karman* is used in a Brahmanical context to refer specifically to the ritual act enjoined by Brahmanical ideology. The Buddha stated that he would interpret “act” to refer to intention,²⁵ with the result that there is a shift from ritual to ethics. Whereas the performance of the ritual action of sacrifice gave an

¹⁹ R. Gombrich, “Recovering the Buddha’s Message”, T. Skorupski, *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. 1, 1990, 13 ff., and 14 n. 25.

²⁰ So it is said of *Aṅgaṇikabhāradvāja*: *ito pubbe jāti-mānena brāhmaṇa-bhāvato brāhmaṇānaṃ samaññāya brahma-bandhu nāma āsiṃ*, Th-a II 85, 4–5 (ad Th 221)

²¹ *bāhita-pāpattā pana idāni kho arahattādhigamena paramatthato brāhmaṇo amhi*, Th-a II 85, 5–6 (ad Th 221). See Dh 383–423 (*Brāhmaṇavagga*)

²² Not *jātiyā* but *kammaṇā*. Sn 142.

²³ *yato kho bho ubhato sujāto hoti mātito ca pitito ca saṃsuddhagahaṇiko yāva sattamā pitāmahayugā akkhitto anupakku ho jātivādena, ettāvātā kho brāhmaṇo hoti*, Sn 115, 13–16

²⁴ L.S. Cousins, “Buddhist *jhāna*: its Nature and Attainment According to the Pāli Sources”, *Religion*, III, 2, 1973, 116

²⁵ *cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*, A III 415, 7. See R. Gombrich, “Notes on the Brahmanical Background to Buddhist Ethics”, *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalava Saddhatissa*, Nugegoda, 1984, 91

automatic result, this development in the interpretation of kamma meant that the quality of the next life is determined by the quality of the actions.²⁶

Bhagavad Gītā

Bhagavad Gītā integrates various schools of thought, notably Vedānta, Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and other theistic ideas. It remains a popular text for commentators belonging to various philosophical schools. The *Bhagavad Gītā* has been looked upon in traditional Hinduism as containing the quintessence of the Upaniṣads and the latter in turn have been regarded as “the culmination of the vedic thought” (Vedānta). The *Bhagavad Gītā*, therefore, has rightly been regarded as representing “Hinduism as a whole” and constituting the philosophical basis of it.

Coverging and diverging Lines of The Bhagavad Gītā and Buddhism

Now, in the light of this account of the historical back ground of both the *Bhagavad Gītā* and Buddhism, they bear some striking similarities in spite of divergent approaches to some other problems. As a matter of fact both have emerged from new thought which was heralded by the kṣatriyas in the upaniṣadic period.

In *Bhagavad Gita*, evidently a kṣatriya Kṛṣṇa is teaching another kṣatriya (Arjuna) his svadharma saying that there is no higher good than the righteous fight for a kṣatriya.²⁷

swa-dharmam *apī* *chāveḷṣhya* *na* *vikampitum* *arhasi*
dharmyāddhi yuddhāch chhreyo 'nyat kṣhatrīyasya na vidyate

Translation:

Besides, considering your duty as a warrior, you should not waver. Indeed, for a warrior, there is no better engagement than fighting for upholding of righteousness

Purport:

Swa-dharma is one's duty as an individual, in accordance with the Vedas. There are two kinds of *swa-dharmas*, or prescribed duties for the individual—*para dharma*, or spiritual duties, and *apara dharma*, or material duties. Considering oneself to be the soul, the prescribed duty is to love and serve God with devotion. This is called *para dharma*. However, since a vast majority of humankind does not possess this spiritual perspective, the Vedas also prescribe duties for those who see themselves as the body. These duties are defined according to one's *āśhram* (station in life), and *varṇa* (occupation). They are called *para dharma*,

²⁶ Collins, Steven. *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 55–56

²⁷ K.N. Upadhyaya, ‘The Impact of the Bhakti Movement on the Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in A.K. Narain, *Studies in History of Buddhism*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1980: 146

or mundane duties. This distinction between spiritual duties and material duties needs to be kept in mind while understanding the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Vedic philosophy at large.

By occupation, Arjun was a warrior, and so his occupational duty as a warrior was to fight for the protection of righteousness. Shree Krishna is calling this *swa-dharma*, or prescribed duty at the bodily level.

Again in the chapter 9 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the teaching is called “*rāja-vidya*” and *raja-guhya*. Similarly Buddhism also is advocated by a person of the *kṣatriya* clan, and the repudiation of the *Brāhmanical* system of thought is quite patient from his teachings. It is also remarkable that the superiority of the *kṣatriyas* in mundane matters is uniformly affirmed in Buddhism.

Both of them owe something to the common cultural heritage of the *Upaniṣads*. Then again the *Bhagavad Gītā* seeks to combine the metaphysical theories of *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta*, and justifies its etical teachings in relation to the immutability of *Atman*, accounts for the world – process in the light of *Sāṅkhya* metaphysics. All these are of no interest to Buddhism. Then there are some new tenets of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, namely, duty for duty’s sake or activism and devotion to God, to which Buddhism gives no place. On the other hand, it is atheistic and favours renunciation. It is, precisely in respect of this atheism and renunciation that the *Bhagavad Gītā*, seems to run counter to Buddhism. It is undeniable that during the time of rise of Buddhism as well as before and after it, there was a widespread tendency to give up worldly life and take it to the life of homelessness, and it was greatly valued by such influential systems as Jainism and Buddhism. Renunciation was considered the first step to a higher life. Again, many of the systems that flourished during this time were aesthetic and indulged in mere moral discourse unassociated with any theistic faith. The *Bhagavad Gītā* seeks to counteract these tendencies by advocating a philosophy of active worldly life coupled with a firm faith in God. It utilizes its conservatism to collect the scattered theistic ideas of the *upaniṣads* and combining them with the sectarian elements of faith, puts forward an easy way of redemption.²⁸

Bhakti Yoga in Bhagavad Gītā

One of the fundamental aspects of Hinduism revolves around the spiritual paths one must take in order to reach a state of *Moksha* or enlightenment. As *Moksha* is the ultimate goal for any practitioner of the Hindu tradition, it is obvious that concerns over the correct way to achieve this end are approached in a wide variety of ways. *Bhakti Yoga* is one such path to achieving enlightenment within orthodox Hindu teachings. *Bhakti Yoga*, also commonly known as the Path of Devotion, teaches that *Moksha* is achieved by means of selfless and utter devotion, love, and trust towards a particular deity. Those on the Path of Devotion often listen to stories about God, sing devotional hymns, recite *mantras*, worship at temples and shrines at the home, and undergo pilgrimages in hopes of becoming closer to God. The word *bhakti* is made up of two parts, the root *bhaj*, meaning service and the suffix *ktv*, which means love. *Moksha* following this pathway, one must have a pure devotion to God, as having other desires leaves one incapable of fully devoting themselves to

²⁸ K.N. Upadhyaya, ‘The Impact of the Bhakti Movement on the Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in A.K. Narain, *Studies in History of Buddhism*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1980: 150

God. *Bhakti* is additionally dualistic in that the term may describe both the path by which one realizes enlightenment, as well as the ultimate goal of enlightenment itself .

Bhagavad Gītā - Chapter 12, verse 8

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ह्य
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयारु ह्यद्य ४द्यद्य

mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhim niveshaya
nivasiṣhyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na sanśhayaḥ

Translation :

Fix your mind on Me alone and surrender your intellect to Me. There upon, you will always live in Me. Of this, there is no doubt

Commentary

Having explained that worship of the personal form is better, Shree Krishna now begins to explain how to worship Him. He asks Arjun to do two things—fix the mind on God and also surrender the intellect to Him. The function of the mind is to create desires, attractions, and aversions. The function of the intellect is to think, analyze, and discriminate.

The importance of the mind has been repeatedly stated in the Vedic scriptures:

chetah khalvasya bandhāya muktaye chātmano matam
guṇeṣhu saktam bandhāya ratam vā puṁsi muktaye (Bhagavatam 3.25.15)

“Captivity in Maya and liberation from it is determined by the mind. If it is attached to the world, one is in bondage, and if the mind is detached from the world, one gets liberated.”

mana eva manuṣhyāṅām kāraṇam bandha mokṣhayoḥ (Pañchadaśī)

“Bondage and liberation are decided by the state of the mind.” Mere physical devotion is not sufficient; we must absorb the mind in thinking of God. The reason is that without the engagement of the mind, mere sensory activity is of no value. For example, we hear a sermon with our ears, but if the mind wanders off, we will not know what was said. The words will fall on the ears but they will not register. This shows that without engaging the mind the work of the senses does not count. On the other hand, the mind is such an instrument that in it all the senses reside in the subtle form. Thus, even without the actual sensory activity the mind experiences the perceptions of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. For example, at night when we sleep our senses are inactive. Yet while dreaming, our mind experiences the objects of all the senses. This proves that the mind has the capacity to experience all perceptions even without the gross senses. Therefore,

while noting our karmas, God gives importance to the mental works and not the physical works of the senses.

Even beyond the mind is the intellect. We can only fix the mind upon God when we surrender our intellect to Him. In material pursuits as well, when we face situations beyond the capability of our intellect, we take guidance from a person with superior intellect. For example, we visit a doctor when we are sick. We have no knowledge of medical science ourselves, and so we follow the advice of a qualified medical doctor. The doctor checks our symptoms, looks at our medical reports, makes a diagnosis, and then prescribes the medicines. We surrender our intellect and take the medicines according to the doctor's prescription. Similarly, if we are involved in a legal case, we take the help of a lawyer. The lawyer instructs us how to handle the interrogation by the opposing lawyer. Having no knowledge of law ourselves, we surrender our intellect and simply do as the lawyer says.

In the same way, at present our intellect is subject to many defects. Akur, the messenger of Shree Krishna to the gopis, described these imperfections of the intellect in the Bhagavatam (10.40.25): *anityānātmā duḥkheṣhu viparyaya matirhyaham* Akur said: "Our intellect is strapped with wrong knowledge. Though we are eternal souls, we think of ourselves to be the perishable body. Although all the objects of the world are perishable, we think they will always remain with us, and hence, we busily accumulate them day and night. And though the pursuit of sensual pleasures only results in misery in the long run, we still chase them in the hope that we will find happiness." The above three defects of the intellect are called *viparyaya*, or reversals of knowledge under material illusion. The gravity of our problem is further aggravated because our intellect is habituated to this kind of defective thinking from innumerable previous lifetimes. If we run our lives in accordance with the directions of our intellect, we will definitely not make much progress on the divine path. Thus, if we wish to achieve spiritual success by attaching the mind to God, we must surrender our intellect to Him and follow His directions. Surrendering the intellect means to think in accordance with the knowledge received from God via the medium of the scriptures and the bonafide Guru. The characteristics of a surrendered intellect are described in verse 18.66.

Bhakti Movement and Buddhism

Devotional Buddhism was part of the general development of bhakti in India, preceding the well-known bhakti or 'Hindu' devotional movements centered around Krishna, or Shiva, or other gods. 'Bhakti' devotionism meant throwing oneself on the 'grace' of a transcendent God, who was separate from the worshipper, to whom was given worship and love in exchange for grace. This was alien to both the early Brahmanic and the samana tradition, and to the early Dhamma which had emphasised self-control, not abandonment; righteousness, not propitiation of a god. 'Popular' religion itself is not necessarily devotional; it is often in fact very pragmatic, with believers performing their actions as a kind of 'bargaining' with the deity. Thus the emergence of bhakti was a radically new phenomenon.

Naturally, then, analysis of these movements has been controversial. While some anti-caste radicals of the 19th and 20th centuries have tended to reject them altogether, others find solace and hope in the rise of lower-caste bhaktas and consider them as representing a religious revolt of the exploited and a proof of low-caste creativity. At the same time, questions have been raised about the relation of the bhakti movements to Buddhism; often they are considered to have been influenced by Buddhism, and quite often Buddhism and the bhakti movements are put in the same category as 'protest movements' against orthodox Brahmanism. For both these reasons their analysis is crucial.²⁹

Conclusion

Both the Bhagavad Gītā and early Buddhism are primarily concerned with the practical problems of human life. Their direct aim, therefore is to offer solution for the proper guidance of human conduct, and suggest ways and means for attaining the state of supreme perfection. The Bhagavad Gītā and Early Buddhism bear some striking similarities despite of their divergent approach to same problems. The approach of The Bhagavad Gītā is mainly metaphysical and it offers solutions mostly on the basis of traditional metaphysical presuppositions, whereas the approach of early Buddhism is thoroughly empirical in which the traditional metaphysical speculations are brushed aside. Bhakti movement was able to follow upon Buddhism to a great level. As a paucity of clear regularized identity of Brāhmanical-Hinduism was a major disadvantage of Buddhism in appellation of its long term existence, this problem was further antagonized by the expansion and phenomenon growth of Bhakti movement.

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²⁹ Omvedt, Gail. *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste*. New Delhi: SAGE India, 2003