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A Scholarly Review on P V Laxmiprasad's *The Philosophy of Bhagavadgita*

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Reviewed by:

Dr. D. Vijaya Lakshmi

P.V. Laxmiprasad is an eminent academician, an erudite scholar, a literary critic, a resource person, and a senior editor with a prolific career in English literature. He has published good number of books remarkable in the field, focusing primarily on Literary Criticism, which is his core area of research interest. In addition to this book, he has authored various research papers, poems, book reviews, and a few translations. He has also conducted interviews with various literary legends, contributing significantly to the academic and literary community. His research papers have been published in international and national journals of great repute, showcasing his outstanding credentials and long-standing contributions to literature. His research interests are diverse, including Indian Writing in English, English Language Teaching, and Literary Criticism. His passion for literature and music further enriches his academic pursuits.

P V Laxmiprasad's scholarship on Indian philosophy covers brief introduction, its meaning, origin, the subject matter, rational thinking, and its problems. The core branches of philosophy include Epistemology, Metaphysics, Axiology, the Vedas, Darsana or Vision of truth. This Darsana is a major philosophical system or school consists of nine. It is classified into two classes such as Orthodox and Heterodox. Mimamsa, Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisesika come under Orthodox and the Carvakas, the Bauddhas and the Jains are called heterodox who do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. Indian philosophy is not spared from problems such as metaphysics, ethics, logic and epistemology.

Laxmiprasad's description of Epistemology is a pivotal point to discuss the major systems of Indian Philosophy. It is divided into three major groups- Empiricism, Rationalism and

Authoritarianism. Empiricism focuses on sensory perception means observation and experience so the empiricists deny that the existence of God, rebirth and so on. David Hume and Francis Bacon are well known for this theory. In contrast to Empiricism, Rationalism gives priority to reason than experience. René Descartes and Baruch Spinoza are prominent rationalist philosophers. In an Authoritarian system, political power is concentrated in the hands of a single leader or a small group. Dictatorship and monarchies come into this system.

Laxmiprasad's trajectory focuses on Bhagavad Gita, as it integrates various strands of Hindu philosophy, including Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yoga philosophies. It deals with fundamental questions about life, duty, ethics, and the nature of existence, presenting a synthesis of knowledge and practice for spiritual growth. The Bhagavad Gita, often referred to simply as the Gita, is a Seven Hundred verse Hindu scripture that is part of the Indian epic The Mahabharata. It is a sacred text of the Hindu religion and is considered one of the most significant spiritual classics in the world. Despite its origins in Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita has gained widespread recognition and respect beyond India.

Laxmiprasad starts with the influence of the Bhagavad Gita on Western countries have been significant and multifaceted, especially in the realm of philosophy, spirituality, literature, and even political thought. The Bhagavad Gita's teachings on duty, righteousness, and the nature of existence have resonated deeply with Western philosophers and spiritual thinkers. It has influenced prominent writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, who saw in it a source of profound wisdom and spiritual insight.

The Bhagavad Gita played a vital role in the development of the Transcendentalist movement in America during the 19th century. Poets like Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman were inspired by its teachings, which emphasized individual intuition, the unity of all beings, and the importance of spiritual self-discovery. Thus, Laxmiprasad concludes that the Bhagavad Gita's influence in Western countries has been profound, contributing to a broader understanding of Eastern spirituality and philosophy while also influencing Western thought in diverse areas.

Historian James A. Hijiya, American thinkers, poets, and yoga teachers, Charles Wilkins, Jahn Das, Albert Einstein were the great scholars who researched and applied it to their experiments is mentioned by Laxmiprasad. The Bhagavad Gita's teachings have inspired interpretations across various disciplines, including science and philosophy, highlighting its

timeless relevance and depth of insight into the human condition and the nature of reality. Einstein's theories emphasized the interconnectedness of space, time, and matter. Similarly, the Bhagavad Gita emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life forms and the universe, viewing them as manifestations of the divine.

Laxmiprasad presents wonderful quotes on Bhagavad Gita, quotes in Gita, quotes on love, life, karma and so on. The Bhagavad Gita presents a comprehensive guide to living a righteous life, and fulfilling one's duties through various paths suited to different temperaments and inclinations. The Gita inspires people by offering profound insights into life's purpose, moral conduct, and the path to spiritual fulfilment, encouraging individuals to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

Laxmiprasad's introduction to the Bhagavad Gita is captivating and recollection of Sri Aurobindo at the beginning is a good sign to go any further in writing. He writes that the Bhagavad Gita, an integral part of the Mahabharata, has significantly influenced Hindu tradition in both literature and philosophy. As the sixth book of the Mahabharata, the Gita presents a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna, which has captivated readers and scholars for centuries. The exact date of the Gita's composition remains uncertain, with estimates suggesting it was written around 200 CE and subsequently integrated into the larger epic. Despite its ancient origins, the Gita is often regarded as the first fully realized yogic scripture, outlining various paths of yoga and providing comprehensive guidance on spiritual practices.

Laxmiprasad shows the Bhagavad Gita from Swami Krishnananda, Swami Shivannada and Swami Prabhupada in a different angle which describes the Bhagavad Gita as a universally recognized gospel, revered not just for its religious significance but as a practical guide for day to day life. According to him, the Gita transcends a purely religious framework and addresses the entirety of human life, providing wisdom applicable to all aspects of existence. The Bhagavad Gita's philosophy is deeply rooted in the Vedas, the foundational texts of Hinduism. It encapsulates Vedic wisdom, presenting it in a manner that addresses both the spiritual and practical dimensions of life. This alignment with Vedic philosophy underscores its importance within the broader context of Hindu thought, making it a key text for understanding Hinduism's core teachings and values.

Next important person to recall in the part of Laxmiprasad is Swami Vivekananda whose reverence for the Bhagavad Gita is evident in his numerous lectures and writings. He regarded it as a text of immense spiritual and practical value, capable of guiding individuals toward a life of purpose, strength, and self-realization. He saw the Gita as a source of inspiration for the rejuvenation of India. He encouraged his compatriots to draw strength from its teachings and work towards the upliftment of the nation with a spirit of dedication and selflessness. He saw it as a source of inspiration for individuals to face challenges with courage and determination. The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, in particular, was seen as an encouragement to rise above despair and take action.

Laxmiprasad collected a wide range of slokas from the The Bhagavad Gita, consisting of 18 chapters. Each chapter focuses on specific aspects of life and spirituality, forming a coherent dialogue between Lord Krishna and Prince Arjuna. Here is a summary of the themes of each chapter and a few slokas mentioned by Laxmiprasad in this text:

Chapter 1:

Arjuna's moral and dilemma on the battlefield, leading to his despondency and refusal to fight.

Dharmakshetre, kurushetre.....Sanjaya (1)

This is the opening verse of the Bhagavad Gita. This verse was said by Dhritarashtra, on the field of dharma, on the field of kurus gather together, eager for battle, what did the pandavas do?

Chapter 2:

Krishna begins teaching Arjuna, introducing concepts of the eternal soul (Atman) and the physical body.

Chapter 3:

The prominence of selfless action and performing one's responsibility without concentrating on results.

Chapter 4:

The significance of knowledge and wisdom in achieving liberation; Krishna's divine nature is revealed.

Yadaa yadaa hi..... Sambhavaame Yuge (Sloka 7 and 8)

Whenever there is a decline in righteousness God manifests himself on the earth to protect the virtue and re-establish the principles of dhrama.

Chapter 5:

The relationship between renunciation and selfless action, and how both can lead to liberation.

Chapter 6:

The habit of meditation as a means to direct the mind and achieve spiritual insight.

Chapter 7:

Understanding the nature of the divine and the relationship between the material and spiritual worlds

Chapter 8:

The eternal and indestructible nature of the soul and the process of attaining the supreme state.

Sahasra –yuga paryantam..... te ho ratra vido janah (17)

Thousand yugas is a day and another thousand yugas is a night for Brahma.

Naite stuti parthajanan..... yoga yukto bhavarjuna (27)

Lord Sri Krishna encourages Arjuna to engage in his duty with a disciplined mind, free from doubt and confusion, emphasizing the importance of performing one's duties without attachment to results.

Jara marana – moksaya..... karma cakhilam (29)

Performing all actions as a sacrifice to God, without attachment to their outcomes, one can be freed from the bonds of karma. It highlights the concept of karma yoga, the path of selfless action, as a means to achieve liberation (moksha).

Chapter 9:

The most confidential knowledge about the ultimate truth and the supreme form of commitment.

Aham hi sarvayajnaanaam..... tattwenaatashchyavanti te (24)

Lord Sri Krishna is explaining that He is the ultimate recipient and the Lord of all sacrifices and offerings. However, those who do not understand His true nature and divinity fail to attain liberation and remain bound to the cycle of birth and death.

Chapter 10:

Lord Sri Krishna's manifestations in the world and his divine magnificence.

Aham sarvasya prabhavo..... tushyanti cha ramanti cha (8-9)

Lord Sri Krishna is the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Him. The wise who perfectly know this engage in His devotional service and worship Him with all their hearts.

Patram, Pushpam, Phalam..... bhaktyupata mashnami Prayatatmanah (26)

Lord Sri Krishna emphasizes that what is offered to Him is less important than the devotion and love with which it is offered. The sincerity and purity of heart matter more than the material value of the offering. This teaching encourages devotees to offer whatever they can with genuine devotion, knowing that Krishna values the sentiment behind the act.

Chapter 11:

Arjuna's imagination of Krishna's entire form, showcasing his infinite and all-encompassing nature.

divi surya –sahasrasya..... tasya mahatmanah (12)

The awe-inspiring vision of Krishna's universal form (Vishvarupa) was observed by Arjuna. The brilliance and magnificence of this form are compared to the simultaneous rising of a thousand suns, illustrating its overwhelming and divine nature. This vision reveals Krishna's supreme power and the vastness of His divine presence.

mat-karma krn..... yah sa mam eti pandava (55)

Lord Sri Krishna outlines the qualities and actions of a true devotee who is assured of attaining Him. Such a person engages in actions dedicated to Krishna, regards Krishna as the supreme goal, remains devoted, stays free from attachments, and harbors no ill-will towards any being. These attributes lead one to union with the divine.

Chapter 12:

The way of devotion and the merits of a true disciple.

Yetu sarvani karmani..... mayyavesita cetasam (6-7)

Lord Sri Krishna says that dedicating all actions to the divine, maintaining a focused and steadfast mind, and acting without attachment or desire for the fruits of one's actions. It encourages a path of devotion and surrender to a higher power while performing one's duties.

yo na hrsyati na dvesti..... yah sa me priyah (17)

Lord Sri Krishna describes the qualities of a true devotee who is dear to the Lord. Such a person remains equanimous in all situations, free from attachment and aversion, and is wholly devoted to the divine. This state of equanimity and unwavering devotion is highly valued.

Chapter 13:

The difference between the body and the soul(atman).

sarvatah pani padam tat..... sarvam avrtya tishati (13)

Lord Sri Krishna explains the omnipresence of the Supreme Being, who pervades the entire universe and is present in every part of creation. The divine has countless forms and is all-seeing, all-hearing, and all-knowing, encompassing everything in existence.

karya –karana –kartrve..... bhoktrve hetur ucyate (20)

This verse explains that Nature is responsible for all activities and the means through which actions are performed, while the living entity experiences the outcomes, such as pleasure and pain. This delineation highlights the interplay between the material and spiritual aspects of existence.

Ya evam veti purusham..... na sa bhooyo'bhijaayate(23)

This verse conveys the profound understanding of the distinction and relationship between the soul and nature, and the qualities that pervade them, leading to liberation. It implies that realizing this knowledge can free one from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

yatha sarva gatam..... tathatma nopalipyate (32)

This verse highlights the nature of the soul by comparing it to space, which remains unaffected and untainted despite pervading everything. Similarly, the soul, though present in the body, remains pure and unaffected by the body's actions and conditions.

Chapter 14:

The three types of material nature (qualities) – sattva, rajas, and tamas – and their impact on human nature.

Tatra sattwam nirmalatwaat..... jnaanasangena chaanagha (6)

This verse describes the mode of goodness (sattva), highlighting its purity, illuminating nature, and healthfulness. However, it also cautions that even the mode of goodness can bind a person through attachment to happiness and knowledge.

Sarvendriya gunabhasam..... guna bhoktr cha (14)

This verse elaborates on the nature of the Supreme Being, who, despite being beyond sensory perception and detached from all things, sustains and interacts with the entire creation. The Supreme Being is not limited by the qualities (gunas) of nature but governs them.

Udaaseenavadaaseeno..... yo'vatishthati nengate (23)

This verse describes a person who has transcended the three modes of material nature (sattva, rajas, and tamas). Such a person remains unaffected and undisturbed by the modes, maintains a stance of indifference, and understands that it is the modes, not the true self, that are active. This realization and stability mark the transcendence of material influences.

Chapter 15:

The nature of the supreme person and the process of realizing one's connection with the divine.

Na tadbhaasayate sooryo..... taddhaama paramam mama (6)

This verse speaks about the supreme spiritual realm beyond the material world where ordinary sources of light do not reach, highlighting its transcendental nature. Is there anything specific you'd like to discuss about this verse?

Dwaavimau purushau loke..... sarvabhaavena bhaarata (16-19)

This verse contrasts the two types of entities in the universe: the perishable (Kshara), which includes everything that is subject to birth and decay, and the imperishable (Akshara), which represents the eternal and unchanging aspect of existence.

Chapter 16:

The qualities of the divine and demonic natures and their implications for spiritual progress.

Tejah kshamaa dhritih shaucham..... partha sampadamaasureem (3)

This verse describes the divine qualities (daiivi sampad) that characterize a person who has a divine disposition, contrasting with the demonic qualities. These divine qualities include brightness or radiance, patience, strength, purity, lack of enmity, and humility.

Chapter 17:

The different types of trust based on the three qualities and their impact on worship and lifestyle.

Tadity anabhisandhya..... moksa kanksibhith (25)

This verse emphasizes the importance of performing actions like sacrifices, austerities, and charity without attachment to the results. Such actions, when performed with selflessness and without a desire for personal gain, are considered to be in the mode of goodness (sattva), which leads to spiritual growth and liberation.

asraddhaya hutam dattam..... na ca tat pretya no iha (28)

This verse describes actions performed in ignorance or without faith. It emphasizes that sacrifices, gifts, and austerities performed without proper understanding or faith, or in opposition to scriptural guidelines, are considered to be in the mode of ignorance. These actions do not yield spiritual benefit and are ineffective in achieving spiritual progress.

Chapter 18:

The culmination of Krishna's teachings, emphasizing the paths to liberation through renunciation, selfless action, and devotion. 80 percent of the verses are explained in this chapter.

Na dweshtyakushalam..... na tu sannyasinam kvacit (10-12)

Jnanam karma ca karta..... viddhi saattwikam (19-20)

mukta sango haram vadi..... karta sattvika ucyate (26)

Adharmam dharmamiti yaa..... dhritih saa paartha saattwikee(32-33)

Swe swe karmanyabhiratah..... raagadweshau vyudasya cha (45-51)

man –mana bhava mad-bhakto..... moksayisami ma sucah (65-66)

Yatra yogeshwarah krishno..... bhootirdhruvaa neetirmatirmama (78)

anistam istam ca..... na tu sannyasinam kvacitu (12)

Yat tu krtsna vad-ekasmin..... tat tamasam udahrtam (22)

P.V. Laxmiprasad concludes that *The Bhagavad Gita* indeed holds a unique and revered position in spiritual literature for several reasons, encapsulating deep philosophical insights, poetic beauty, and practical wisdom. The Bhagavad Gita's unique setting, universal themes, and profound philosophical, psychological, and literary qualities contribute to its timeless relevance and enduring impact on spiritual literature and human thought.